# THE WORKS OF DAVID CLARKSON

by David Clarkson

*The collected works of David Clarkson, a 17th-century Puritan divine and colleague of John Owen, containing sermons and treatises on practical theology, Christian experience, and the doctrines of grace.*

4 Chapters

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The Works of

DAVID CLARKSON

Volume I

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PREFATORY NOTE

Respecting the personal history of David Clarkson, a volume of whose works we now submit to the reader, we regret that almost no information has been handed down to us. The following particulars are gleaned from a Memoir by the late Rev. John Blackburn, prefixed to a volume of his Select Works, published by the Wickliffe Society, the contents of which have been kindly placed at our disposal.

David Clarkson was born at Bradford, in Yorkshire, in the month of February 1621–2. He was educated at Clare Hall, Cambridge, and became fellow and tutor in that College in 1645. He gave up his fellowship in 1651, on his marriage with a Miss Holcroft; and he was afterwards Rector of Mortlake, Surrey, from which he was ‘ejected’ by the Act of Uniformity in 1662. After this he spent his time in retirement and study, until, in 1682, he was chosen as colleague to Dr John Owen in the pastorship of his congregation in London. On the death of Owen, in the following year, he became sole pastor of the congregation, and discharged his duty faithfully until his death in 1686. This is really all that is known of the personal history of our author. Perhaps it is not rightly matter of surprise, however much it is to be regretted, that we can obtain so little insight into the particulars of the every-day life of most of the Puritan Divines. We are not sure that it would be possible to ascertain many particulars of the lives even of distinguished ministers who died forty or fifty years ago, unless special memoirs of them were written immediately after their death; and, of course, the difficulty must be greatly enhanced when the stream of two hundred years has rolled over the sands upon which a man has imprinted his footmarks. And then it is to be remembered that our researches refer to a time when the periodical press had no existence.

If Owen be admitted to be, as by common consent he seems to be regarded, the ‘David’ of the Puritan host, and Howe, and Baxter, and Thomas Goodwin to be the ‘first three’ of its worthies, we believe that the second trio must include the name of David Clarkson, associated probably with those of Charnock and Sibbes, or perhaps Flavel. It is manifest, however, that such a statement is to be taken only in a very general sense. In some respects, Sibbes is as much superior to Goodwin, as in others Goodwin is superior to Sibbes; while in some most important particulars, and especially in respect of clearness and liveliness, Owen himself is unquestionably below all the seven others who have been named, and many others who might have been mentioned. From the very nature of the case, the question of precedence amongst writers cannot be determined but in a vague and general way. No man would ever think of asking the question whether Shakespeare or Bacon were the greater genius, the better writer; or even the more limited question, whether Hume

or Gibbon were the better historian, Addison or Johnson the more accomplished essayist. And in the domain of Christian and theological literature, the qualities of different writers are manifestly incommensurable. There are diversities of gifts; and it may not be determined whether the possession of a larger measure of one gift, and a smaller measure of another, be more or less valuable than that of a greater degree of the latter, and a less measure of the former. The clear eye of one may be as precious as the fine ear of another; the delicate touch of one as the firm standing of another; and the eye may not say to the ear, I have no need of thee, nor yet the hand to the foot, I have no need of thee.

It is, however, unquestionable that, in respect of the qualities of a theological writer, Clarkson occupied a very high place amongst the divines of the Puritan period. His vigorous and clear mind, his extensive and varied learning, his fervent piety and zeal for the glory of God and the good of men, enabled him to produce writings remarkable for soundness of reasoning and fervency of appeal, and adorned with the graces of a tasteful eloquence. There can be no difference of opinion as to the propriety of including in the present series, at least the non-controversial portion of these writings—the theological and practical, as distinguished from the ecclesiastical portion; and we do not doubt that many readers will regard them as, upon the whole, the most valuable, as they will certainly be found to be among the most generally attractive, of all the works of which the series is to be composed. His first appearance as an author was in the publication of a sermon which he preached at one of the Cripplegate Morning Exercises. Its title is, ‘What Christians must do, that the Influence of the Ordinances may abide upon them.’ His next publication was another Morning Exercise sermon, on the thesis ‘The Doctrine of Justification is dangerously corrupted in the Romish Church.’ This was followed by a quarto volume on ‘The Practical Divinity of the Papists, discovered to be destructive of Christianity and men’s souls,’ a work of great research and candour. His next publications related to the episcopal and liturgical controversy. They were a treatise entitled, ‘No Evidence for Diocesan Churches,’ and another under the title, ‘Diocesan Churches not yet Discovered in Primitive Times.’ His sermon on the death of Owen was also published. We find also allusions to anonymous tracts of which he was the author, but it is probable that these are irrecoverably lost. His posthumous works were, ‘Primitive Episcopacy stated and cleared from the Holy Scriptures and Ancient Records,’ and on the ‘Use of Liturgies,’ a ‘Discourse on the Saving Grace of God,’ and a large folio volume of sermons.

These sermons, which will occupy the greater portion of the three volumes which it is intended to include in our series, are thirty-one in number. They are of very various lengths, and, as we venture to think, of very various degrees of excellence. Some of them may be ranked amongst the finest sermons in our language, while others are of little more than average merit. They have the disadvantage which is incident to all posthumous publications, that they contain some things which their author would probably have cut out, and do not contain some things which he would have put in, had he prepared them for the press, or contemplated their publication. Even the fullest of them contain many passages which are evidently only heads and notes for fuller discussions, which were doubtless supplied in the delivery, and which would have been inserted had he revised them for publication. There are also some things which we venture to think he would have omitted. We cannot believe, for example, that so ripe a scholar as he evidently was, would have allowed to pass an argument which he founds on a Hebrew word in the sermon on Original Sin. The root ■■■ signifies to be warm; and by a very obvious process has the two secondary meanings, to

conceive, and to be angry. But Mr Clarkson founds upon this coincidence an argument that the anger of God rests upon man from the instant of his conception. By a slip of a similar character in another sermon, referring to the prodigal's coming to himself, he makes repentance to be a recovering from madness, rather than a change of mind, as if the composition of the Greek word were μετ■ + ■νοια, and not μετα + νοια. These things any man might write off-hand, but we cannot think that a scholar like Clarkson would have published them. But with a few slight drawbacks of this kind, Clarkson's sermons, as a whole, are exceedingly valuable. They appear to us, in respect of style of thought and language, to be in advance of many of the writings of the period. They contain no plays upon words, no grotesque similes, no verbal or logical conceits; but an earnest, strong vindication of great gospel truths, and most affectionate and fervent appeals to sinners to embrace the offered salvation. There is often a considerable resemblance to the matter of some of Goodwin's works; occasionally the same arguments employed in continuance. And we have no doubt that Clarkson was well acquainted with such of Goodwin's writings as were published up to the time when he wrote. The doctrine of Clarkson is very decidedly Calvinistic, and is occasionally somewhat harsher than that of most of the puritan Calvinists. There is, for example, an argument respecting the divine sovereignty (p. 380 of this volume) which, the author tells us, 'clears up the absolute dominion of God, and those difficulties which concern it, very much to his own satisfaction.' It is in subtance that God might, on the ground of absolute sovereignty, righteously deprive even a sinless creature of 'being or well-being.' This is, to say the least of it, harsh doctrine. We do not think that anything like it is to be found in Calvin, and we are sure that something very unlike it is to be found in Goodwin. We venture to recommend the reader to compare the sentiments of Clarkson and Goodwin, the one in the passage referred to, the other in the treatise 'Of the Creatures, and the Condition of their State by Creation,' Book II. Chap. i. (Goodwin's Works, Vol. VII. p. 22–27).

It is hoped that three volumes of our Series may contain all the extant works of Clarkson, with the exception of those on Episcopacy and Liturgies. The reader will be interested by the perusal of the following tract, entitled, 'A Short Character of that Excellent Divine Mr David Clarkson, who departed this life 14th of June 1686.' This tract Mr Blackburn unhesitatingly ascribes to Dr Bates, who preached Mr Clarkson's funeral sermon. To us it does not appear that his reason is at all sufficient, it being only that he has seen a copy of it bound up with that sermon.

'Although the commendation of the dead is often suspected to be guilty of flattery, either in disguising their real faults, or adorning them with false virtues; and such praises are pernicious to the living: yet of those persons whom God hath chosen to be the singular objects of his grace, we may declare the praiseworthy qualities and actions which reflect an honour upon the Giver, and may excite us to imitation. And such was Mr David Clarkson, a person worthy of dear memory and value, who was furnished with all those endowments that are requisite in an accomplished minister of the gospel.

'He was a man of sincere godliness and true holiness, which is the divine part of a minister, without which all other accomplishments are not likely to be effectual for the great end of the ministry, that is, to translate sinners from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Conversion is the special work of divine grace, and it is most likely that God will use those as instruments in that blessed work, who are dear to him and earnestly desire to glorify him. God ordinarily works in spiritual things as in natural; for as in the production of a living creature, besides

the influence of the universal cause, there must be an immediate agent of the same kind for the forming of it, so the divine wisdom orders it, that holy and heavenly ministers should be the instruments of making others so. Let a minister be master of natural and artificial eloquence, let him understand all the secret springs of persuasion, let him be furnished with learning and knowledge, yet he is not likely to succeed in his divine employment without sanctifying grace. 'Tis that gives him a tender sense of the worth of souls, that warms his heart with ardent requests to God, and with zealous affection to men for their salvation. Besides, an unholy minister unravels in his actions his most accurate discourses in the pulpit; and like a carbuncle, that seems animated with the light and heat of fire, but is a cold dead stone, so, though with apparent earnestness he may urge men's duties upon them, yet he is cold and careless in his own practice, and his example enervates the efficacy of his sermons. But this servant of God was a real saint; a living spring of grace in his heart diffused itself in the veins of his conversation. His life was a silent repetition of his holy sermons.

'He was a conscientious improver of his time for acquiring of useful knowledge, that he might be thoroughly furnished for the work of his divine calling. And his example upbraids many ministers, who are strangely careless of their duty, and squander away precious time, of which no part is despicable and to be neglected. The filings of gold are to be preserved. We cannot stop the flight of time, nor recall it when past. Volat irrevocabile tempus. The sun returns to us every day, and the names of the months every year, but time never returns. But this servant of God was faithful in improving this talent, being very sensible, to use his own words, "that the blood of the soul runs out in wasted time." When deprived of his public ministry, he gave himself wholly to reading and meditation, whereby he obtained an eminent degree of sacred knowledge, and was conversant in the retired parts of learning, in which many who are qualified to preach a profitable sermon are unacquainted.

'His humility and modesty were his distinctive characters wherein he excelled. What a treasure was concealed under the veil of humility! What an illustrious worth was shadowed under his virtuous modesty! He was like a picture drawn by an excellent master in painting, but placed in the dark, so that the exactness of the proportions and the beauty of the colours do not appear. He would not put his name to those excellent tracts that are extant, wherein his learning and judgment are very conspicuous. He was well satisfied to serve the church and illustrate the truth, and to remain in his beloved secrecy.

'In his conversation a comely gravity, mixed with an innocent pleasantness, were attractive of respect and love. He was of a calm temper, not ruffled with passions, but gentle, and kind, and good; and even in some contentious writings, he preserved an equal tenor of mind, knowing that we are not likely to discover the truth in a mist of passion: his breast was the temple of peace.

'In the discharge of his sacred work, his intellectual abilities and holy affection were very evident.

'In prayer, his solemnity and reverence were becoming one that saw him who is invisible: his tender affections, and suitable expressions, how melting and moving, that might convey a holy heat and life to dead hearts, and dissolve obdurate sinners in their frozen tombs.

'In his preaching, how instructive and persuasive to convince and turn the carnal and worldly from the love of sin to the love of holiness; from the love of the earth, to the love of heaven! The matter

of his sermons was clear and deep, and always judiciously derived from the text; the language was neither gaudy and vain, with light trimmings, nor rude and neglected, but suitable to the oracles of God. Such were his chosen acceptable words, as to recommend heavenly truths, to make them more precious and amiable to the minds and affections of men; like the colour of the sky, that makes the stars to shine with a more sparkling brightness.

“Briefly, whilst opportunity continued, with alacrity and diligence, and constant resolution, he served his blessed Master till his languishing distempers, which natural means could not remove, prevailed upon him. But then the best Physician provided him the true remedy of patience. His death was unexpected, yet, as he declared, no surprise to him, for he was entirely resigned to the will of God; he desired to live no longer, than to be serviceable: his soul was supported with the blessed hope of enjoying God in glory. With holy Simeon, he had Christ in his arms, and departed in peace to see the salvation of God above. How great a loss the church has sustained in his death is not easily valued; but our comfort is, God never wants instruments to accomplish his blessed work.” The following documents, detailing some portions of the Christian experience of two of Mr Clarkson’s daughters, will form an appropriate conclusion to this note.

‘The choice experience of Mrs Rebecca Combe, eldest daughter of the late Rev. Mr David Clarkson, delivered by her on her admission into fellowship with the church, late under the care of the late Rev. Mr Thomas Gouge.

‘In giving an account of the dealings of God with my soul, I desire truly and sincerely to represent the state of my case; I am sensible it will be in much weakness, but I hope my end is, that God may have the glory of his own work, which he hath wrought on so mean and unworthy a creature as myself.

‘I had the advantage and invaluable blessing of a religious education, both my parents being eminent for wisdom and grace. Under the instructions of my good mother, I had early and frequent convictions, though these impressions lasted not long, for I wore them off, either by a formal engaging in some religious duties, or else by running into such diversions as were suited to my childhood. But my convictions being renewed as I grew up, and it being impressed on my mind that this way of performing duties, by fits and starts, merely to quiet an accusing conscience, would not satisfy the desires of an immortal soul capable of higher enjoyments than I took up with; this put me on serious thoughtfulness what method to pursue, in order to bind myself to a more stated performance of those duties which, I was convinced, the Lord required of me.

‘Accordingly, I made a most solemn resolution to address myself to God by prayer, both morning and evening, and never on any occasion whatever to neglect it, calling the Lord to witness against me if I broke this solemn engagement. But, alas! I soon saw the vanity of my own resolutions, for as I was only found in the performance of duty through fear, and as a task, and, having once omitted it at the set time, I concluded my promise was now broke, and from that time continued in a total neglect of prayer, till it pleased the almighty Spirit to return with his powerful operations, and set my sins in order before me. Then my unsuitable carriage under former convictions, together with my breaking the most solemn engagements to the Lord, wounded me deep. Indeed, I was tempted to conclude I had sinned the unpardonable sin, and should never be forgiven.

‘Yet, in my greatest distress and anguish of spirit, I could not give up all hope, having some views of the free and sovereign grace of God, as extended to the vilest and worst of sinners, though I could not take the comfort of it to myself. My sins appeared exceeding sinful. I even loathed and abhorred myself on account of them, and was continually begging a deeper sense and greater degree of humiliation. I thought I could have been content, yea, I was desirous, to be filled with the utmost horror and terror of which I was capable, if this might be a means of bringing me to that degree of sorrow which I apprehended the Lord expected from so vile a creature. The heinous nature of my sins, and their offensiveness to the pure eyes of his holiness, were ever before me, insomuch that I thought I could not be too deeply wounded, or feel trouble enough.

‘This put me on a constant and restless application to God through Christ, from whom alone I now saw all my help must come. I had tried the utmost I could do, and found it left me miserably short of what the law required and I wanted. I was convinced that an expectation of some worthiness in myself, as the condition of my acceptance before God, was that which had kept me so long from Christ and the free promises of the gospel; and therefore, as enabled, I went to the Lord, and pleaded those absolute promises of his word, which are made freely to sinners in his Son, without the least qualification to be found in me. I was enabled to urge those encouraging words, Revelation 22:17, “Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely;” also Isaiah 55:1, “Without money and without price;” with many more of the like nature, which would be too tedious to mention. I desired to come to Christ, unworthy as I was, and cast my soul entirely upon him, for I clearly saw that all I had heretofore done profited me nothing, since my very prayers, considered as a sinner, were an abomination to the Lord. There was nothing left therefore for me to take the least comfort and encouragement from but the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, which I continued to plead with much earnestness, and found my soul enlarged beyond whatever I had experienced before.

‘Soon after, I providentially opened a manuscript of my father’s, and cast my eye upon that part of it where he was shewing what pleas a sensible sinner might make use of in prayer. Many things were mentioned which were very reviving. I was miserable, and that might be a plea. I might also plead his own mercy, the suitableness, the largeness, and the freeness of his mercy. I might plead my own inability to believe, of which I was very sensible. I might also plead the will of God, for he commands sinners to believe, and is highly dishonoured by unbelief. I might likewise plead the descent of faith, it is the gift of God, and the nature of this gift, which is free. Yea, I might plead the examples of others who have obtained this gift, and that against the greatest unlikelihood and improbabilities that might be. I might and could plead further, my willingness to submit to anything, so that I might but find this favour with the Lord. Moreover, I might plead Christ’s prayer and his compassions; the workings of his Spirit already begun; that regard which the Lord shews to irrational creatures; he hears their cries, and will he shut out the cries of a poor perishing sinner?—in short, I might plead my necessity and extreme need of faith, a sense of which was deeply impressed on my soul.*

‘On reading these pleas I found great relief, yea, they were to me as a voice from heaven, saying, This is the way, walk in it. I was enabled to go and act faith upon a Redeemer, and could give up my all to him, and trust in him alone for all. I was now convinced by his Spirit that he would work in me what was well-pleasing and acceptable to God, and that he required nothing of me but what his free rich grace would bestow upon me. Now was Christ exceeding precious to my soul, and I

longed for clearer discoveries of him, both in his person and offices, as prophet, priest, and king. And oh, how did I admire his condescending love and grace to such a poor, wretched, worthless creature as myself! I was greatly delighted in frequent acts of resignation to him, desiring that every faculty of my soul might be brought into an entire obedience, and could part with every offensive thing, and would not have spared so much as one darling lust, but was ready to bring it forth and slay it before him. In short, I could now perceive a change wrought in my whole soul; I now delighted in what before was my greatest burden, and found that most burdensome in which I before most delighted. I went on pleasantly in duty; my meditation on him was sweet, and my heart much enlarged in admiring his inexpressible love and grace, so free, and sovereign, to so wretched a creature, which even filled my soul with wonder and love. But this delightful frame did not long continue, for I was soon surprised with swarms of vain thoughts, which appeared in my most solemn approaches to God, and such violent hurries of temptation, as greatly staggered my faith, which was weak. Hereupon I was ready to give up all, and to conclude that I had mocked God, and cheated my own soul; that these wandering thoughts, and this unfixedness of mind in duty, could never consist with a sincere love to the things of God. I thought my heart had been fixed, but oh how exceeding deceitful did I then find it! which greatly distressed me, and made me conclude my sins were rather increased than mortified, insomuch that I was ready to cry out, “Oh, wretched creature that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!” and in consideration of the power and prevalency of indwelling corruptions and daily temptations which I had to grapple with, I was ready to say, “I shall one day fall by the hands of these enemies.”

‘But these discouragements were fully removed by reading some of my father’s writings, where it was observed that a person had no reason to conclude his sins were more increased merely because they appeared more, and became more troublesome, since this arose from the opposition they now met with, from that principle of grace which now was implanted. Hence I learned, that before the flesh reigned quietly in me, and therefore I perceived not the lusts thereof, but now all the powers and faculties of my soul were engaged against them, they gave me the greatest disturbance, and struggled more and more. Also these words were impressed on my mind with an efficacious power, 2 Corinthians 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for thee,” which gave me peace in believing that it should be to me according to his word.

‘Thus, after many conflicts, comforts, and supports, I determined to give myself up to some church, that I might partake of the Lord’s Supper, and have my faith confirmed in the blood of that everlasting covenant, which I hoped the Lord had made with me, since he had given me his Spirit as the earnest thereof. I accordingly was joined to a church, and in coming to this ordinance, found great delight: my faith was strengthened and my love increased from that sweet communion I then enjoyed with my Lord by his blessed Spirit, who often filled me with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus I walked under the sweet and comfortable sense of his love; and whilst in the way of my duty, I was thus indulged with such sights of the Redeemer’s glory, and such a taste of his grace, I frequently wished that I might never more go back to the world again. But after all these manifestations, oh wretched creature! God in his providence calling me more into the world by changing my condition, this new relation brought new afflictions and new temptations, which, being too much yielded to, insensibly prevailed, and brought me into such perplexing darkness that I want words to express it. I lost the sense of the love of God, and hence my duty was performed without that delight I had once experienced, the want of which made me often neglect it, and

especially in private, while I attended on public worship with little advantage or pleasure. The consideration of this decay in my love, and the loss of those quickening influences of the Spirit which I used to experience in duty, increased my darkness, and I had doleful apprehensions of my state. And my inordinate love to the creature, and want of submission to the will of the Lord, in disposing of what I had so unduly set my heart on, prepared me to look for awful things, in a way of judgment from the righteous God, which I afterwards found; his hand was soon laid on that very object by which I had so provoked him; for a disorder seized him, under which he long languished, till it ended in his death.*

‘This was a melancholy stroke, and the more so as I saw his hand stretched out still, for I continued in an unsuitable temper, and without that submission which such a dispensation called for. The Lord still hid his face from me, and it is impossible to give a particular account of those perplexing thoughts and tormenting fears which filled my mind. Everything appeared dreadfully dark both within and without. Oh, were it possible to describe it to others as I then felt it, they would dread that which will separate between them and God! I expected, if the Lord did return, it would be in a terrible way, by some remarkable judgment or other; but oftentimes, from the frame I was in, I could see no ground to hope he would ever return at all.

‘But was it to me according to my dismal apprehensions and fears? Oh, no! my soul and all that is within me bless and adore his name, under a sense of his free and sovereign grace, who manifested himself unto thee as a God, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin. This was the title by which he manifested himself to Moses when he caused his glory to pass before him, Exodus 34:6-7. And it was in the clear apprehension, and powerful application of this by the almighty Spirit that I was brought to admire so greatly the free grace of God, thus discovered to me in so extraordinary a manner, that it even transported my very soul with love and thankfulness, beyond anything that I had experienced in the whole of my past life.

‘The beginning of this wonderful alteration in my frame, was hearing the experience of one which I thought very much like my own, when the Lord first began to work on my soul. I concluded that this person was the subject of a real and universal change; on this occasion, I determined to consider my former experience, in doing of which I found the blessed Spirit of all grace assisting me, and witnessing to his work upon my heart, insomuch that, ere I was aware, my soul was like the chariots of a willing people; I was wonderfully enlivened in duty, and enlarged in thankfulness to God for thus manifesting himself, and directing me to those means which he had so inexpressibly blessed, beyond my expectation.

‘Thus the Lord drew me by the cords of love, and lifted up the light of his countenance upon me, so that in his light I saw light, which scattered that miserable cloud of darkness that had enwrapped my soul so long. Yea, he dispelled all those unbelieving thoughts which were apt to arise, on account of that low estate out of which he had newly raised me. It was suggested to me that this was not his ordinary way of dealing with such provoking creatures as myself, but that they are usually filled with terrors, and brought down even to a view of the lowest hell, &c. Thus Satan endeavoured to hold me under unbelieving fears, but the blessed Spirit, by taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them unto me, prevailed over the temptation.

‘I had a discovery of the glory of the Father’s love, as unchangeable, free, and eternal, which was discovered in pitching on me before the foundation of the world. And the glory of the Son as

proceeding from the Father, and offering a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, and in bringing in an everlasting righteousness, which by his Spirit he enabled me to rest wholly and alone upon, as the foundation of every blessing which I have received, or he has promised, for the whole of my acceptance before God, for my justification, sanctification, and full redemption. On this foundation he has enabled me stedfastly to rely, which greatly enlivens and enlarges my soul in its addresses to the Father, through the Son, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for pardon and strength, against those powerful corruptions which still remain in my heart.

‘Oh the love, the infinite, condescending, and unchanging love of the Father! and oh that fulness of grace which is treasured up in my Redeemer, to be bestowed on me by his promised Spirit, of which so much hath already been communicated, that my soul is even overwhelmed under the sense and consideration of it! The Lord appears to me as resting in his love, and joying over me with singing, as it is expressed, Zephaniah 3:17, which scripture, with many others, has been so opened and applied as makes my approaches to him exceeding delightful. And this sense of his love lays me low in the views of my own vileness and unworthiness, and constrains me to love him and live to him, and to give him all the glory of that change, which of his own free and sovereign grace, he has wrought in me. There was nothing in me to move him to this, yea, what was there not in me to provoke him to cast me off for ever? But thus it hath pleased him to magnify his grace and mercy on a creature the most unworthy of any that ever received a favour at his hands.

‘I know not where to end. He has recovered me from amongst the dead, and he shall have the glory of it whilst I live; yes, I will praise him, and tell of the wonders of his love to others, that so he may be honoured, and none may distrust him. He has filled me with his praises, though he has not given me that natural capacity which some have been blessed with, to express what I feel and find, of his work on my soul. But this I can say, I have found him whom my soul loves, he hath manifested himself to me, and there is nothing I dread so much as losing sight of him again. His presence makes all his ordinances, and all his providences, and everything delightful unto me. It is impossible to express the joy of my soul in sweet converses with him, with a sense of his love and the experience of his presence, under the influences of his Spirit, whose office it is to abide with me, and to guide, direct, and comfort me for ever.

‘It is from a sense of my duty, and a desire to follow the direction of that blessed Spirit, that I request fellowship with you of this church. Amongst you my Lord has been pleased to discover himself to me, and to make the ministry you sit under exceeding useful and comfortable to my soul; by it I have been built up and settled on the right foundation, the righteousness of Christ, that rock that shall never be moved. Your order likewise appears to me very beautiful and lovely, being, as I apprehend, most agreeable to the rules of my Lord. Hence I desire to have communion with you, that so by your example and watchfulness over me, and the other advantages arising from church-fellowship, I may find what I expect and earnestly desire in communion with you, namely, that I may experience fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the eternal Spirit, whilst I wait upon him in the ways of his own appointment.

‘Rebecca Combe.

‘December 17. 1697.’

‘The remarkable experience of Mrs Gertrude Clarkson, second daughter of the late Rev. Mr David Clarkson, given to the church with whom she lived in communion.

‘My education has been very strict. The constant instruction and example of my parents had so early an influence, that it is hard to tell which was my first awakening. Ever since I can remember anything of myself, I have had frequent convictions of the danger of sin and an unregenerate state, attended with fears of the punishment due to it; therefore was desirous of an interest in Christ, by whom I might be pardoned and saved from the wrath of God. This made me very fearful of omitting duties, or committing known sins; and, though these convictions wore off, yet they often returned, and rendered me uneasy, unless I was praying or learning scriptures, or something which I thought good. In these exercises I was well satisfied, though it was my happiness to be under the most careful inspection and judicious helps for the informing of my judgment.

‘Before I apprehended what it was to rely upon an all-sufficient Saviour for righteousness and strength, I remember my notion of things was this, that I was to hear, and pray, and keep the Sabbath, and avoid what I knew to be sin, and then I thought God was obliged to save me; that I did what I could, and so all that he required; and I further conceived, that if at any time I omitted secret prayer, or any other duty, yet if I repented it was sufficient; and, on this consideration I have often ventured upon the commission of sin, with a resolve to repent the next day, and then, having confessed the transgression, my conscience has been easy, and I was well satisfied. Indeed sin, at that time, was not burdensome. I truly desired that my sins might be pardoned, but thought the ways of religion hard; and, though I durst not live in the constant neglect of duty, yet I secretly wished that I had been under no obligation to perform it. When I reflect on the thoughts and workings of my heart and affections in these times, and the confused apprehensions which I then had both of sin and grace, I am fully persuaded that, through grace there is a real, and in some measure an universal, change wrought in my soul.

‘After my father’s death, I was reading one of his manuscripts, wherein both the object and nature of saving faith were described, and the great necessity of it pressed, &c. The plain and clear definition there given of the saving act of faith, caused other apprehensions of things than I had before.* I then began to see how short I had come in all my performances of that disposition of soul which the gospel called for, and how guilty I was while depending upon these performances for acceptance with God, not casting myself wholly and alone upon Christ, and resting on his righteousness entirely for pardon and justification. The concern of my mind was very great, that I had lived so long ignorant of those things which related to my eternal welfare. I was sensible, the means and helps I had been favoured with for improvement in knowledge were beyond what is common, but I had refused instruction, the consideration of which was very terrible to my thoughts, fearing lest I had sinned beyond all hope of forgiveness.

‘But in the most discouraging apprehensions of my case my heart was much enlarged in the confession of sin, and in bewailing my captivity to it, which was attended with earnest wrestlings with the Lord for pardoning and purifying grace. Those absolute promises in Ezekiel 36:1-38, of “a new heart and right spirit,” were my continual plea, together with Matthew 5:6, “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” I found longings and pantings of soul after that righteousness, and saw that it could only be received by faith; this faith I earnestly begged, and that the Lord would pardon that great sin of unbelief which so provoked and

dishonoured him, and that he would by his own Spirit enable me to embrace Christ as freely held forth in the gospel.

‘About this time I was much affected with the consideration of Christ’s offices, as prophet, priest, and king. And though I durst not claim an interest in them, yet was often meditating upon them, admiring that infinite condescension which is manifested therein. I thought whatever my condition was in this world, yet if I might be under his powerful and effectual teachings as a prophet, and have the benefit of his atonement and intercession as a priest, and be entirely subject to him in every faculty of my soul, as my Lord and King, then how satisfied and happy should I be!

‘I was under these strugglings a long time before I came to any comfortable persuasion that I was accepted. Sins against light and love deeply wounded me, and the many aggravating circumstances which attended them were so represented by Satan, that I could not tell how to believe such iniquities as mine would be forgiven. But in the midst of these distressing thoughts I found in that manuscript of my father’s, that none but unworthy sinners, who are empty of all good in themselves, were the objects of pardoning mercy, that the whole needed not the physician, but the sick. This encouraged me to plead with hope that the Lord would glorify the freeness of his own grace in my salvation, and to urge that Christ called “weary and heavy laden to him with a promise of rest,” Matthew 11:28.

‘I found my soul was extremely burdened with sin; it appeared more exceeding sinful than ever before; sins of thought as well as words and actions were then observed with sorrow, and lamented before him. Yea, even the sins of my most holy things, those swarms of vain thoughts and wanderings of heart and affections of which I was conscious in my secret retirements, and most solemn, close dealings with God. In short, my own soul was my intolerable burden, which made me often question whether there were not more provoking sins in me than God usually pardons. Oh, I found every power and faculty were depraved, and that I could not do the good I would!

‘It would be tedious to relate the many particular discouragements and temptations I laboured under, sometimes pouring forth my soul with some hope in his free mercy, sometimes only bewailing my condition without hope, till it pleased him whose power and grace no impenitent heart can resist and prevail, to put a stop to my unbelieving reasonings, from the unlikelihood of such sins being pardoned, sins so aggravated and so provoking as mine, by giving me an awful sense of his absolute sovereignty from those words, Exodus 33:19, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.” Also Isaiah 55:1, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.” These considerations were so impressed on my mind, and struck such an awe upon my spirits, that I durst not any longer give way to my carnal reasonings; I thought I could commit myself to his sovereign pleasure, let him do with me as seemed him good.

‘After some time my mother, perceiving my concern, conversed very freely with me, and asked if I was not willing to accept of Christ to sanctify as well as to save me? I told her I desired this above all things. She then said he had certainly accepted me, adding, that it was Christ who had made me willing to close with him, and that he never made any soul thus willing, but he had first pardoned and accepted that soul. I shall never forget with what weight these words were impressed on my heart. I thought it was a pardon sent immediately to me. I could not but say, I

was above all things desirous to be entirely subject to Christ in every power and faculty of my soul, that every thought might be brought into subjection to Christ, and nothing might remain in me contrary to him, but that there might be a perfect conformity to his image and will in all things.

‘After this conversation I found great composure in my mind, believing that the Lord had created those desires in me, which nothing but himself, and the enjoyment of himself could satisfy, and that he would answer them with himself: “That he would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax,” Matthew 12:20. My delight now was in nothing else but meditating upon, and admiring of the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ, which distinguished me from many others who had not so highly provoked him, having called me out of such gross darkness which I had been long in, and given me any glimmerings of the light, of the knowledge, of the glory, of his grace. My desires greatly increased after further discoveries, and clearer light into the deep mysteries of the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus; and all diversions from these meditations were a burden.

‘Oh, I then thought, “all old things were passed away, and everything was become new!” I experienced a universal change in my mind, will, and affections; the bent of them was turned another way. The ordinances, which were once irksome, were above all things pleasant, and the return of Sabbaths continually longed for. I was very thankful it was my duty as well as privilege to set apart the whole day for the worship and glory of my Lord. I bewailed much that I could love him no more, that there was so much sin remaining in me, and which I found mixed with all that I did, and that I was not wholly taken up in those blessed and delightful employments without the least interruption. Oh I longed for that state wherein all these fetters should be knocked off, and my soul set at liberty in the worship and praise of my God, being freed from corruptions within or temptations without!

‘My soul was thus delightfully carried out for some time, in which I heard a discourse from these words: John 21:17, “Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” The scope of this sermon was for a trial, whether our appeal could be made to him who knows all things, that we loved him? Under this discourse I found my heart greatly carried out in love to Christ in all his ordinances, and the discoveries made of his will therein. These subjects concerning the love of Christ, and his people’s love to him, being long continued, one sermon after another, I found I sat under the word with great pleasure and enlarged affections.

‘At this time my mother was persuading me to join in communion with some church, which greatly startled me at the first. I could by no means think of that, not apprehending myself to have come so far yet. I thought there must be something more in me, or I should eat and drink damnation to myself. But being better informed both as to the nature and end of the ordinance, and that it was intended for the increase of grace and strength, and that it was a positive command of my Lord, with whose will in all things I was very desirous to comply, I was at last prevailed with to venture on that great ordinance, and was much refreshed and satisfied in my renewed resignation and enlarged expectations of receiving all needful supplies from him who is the head of the church. Oh the condescending love and grace of my Redeemer, represented to me in these transactions, how greatly did they delight and affect my soul! I wished I might have been always thus exercised, expecting with great pleasure the return of those seasons wherein I might hope for further manifestations and larger communications of grace and love.

‘But after some time my affections began to cool. I had not such sweetness and enlargement in my approaches to God in public as I used to find. I thought the preaching more empty, and came short of what I found I wanted. This deadness continuing, filled me with no small concern, fearing I should fall off. I was very far from charging the ministry I sat under, but my own wicked wavering heart. I have often gone to the house of God with raised expectations of receiving those quickenings I used to be blessed with, but found sad disappointments. This frame of spirit as to public worship was matter of continual mourning and bewailing in secret. I was often examining my heart as to its aims and ends in my public approaches, and could not but conclude my desires were above all things to glorify my Lord in all his appointments, and to receive those blessings from him which might enable me so to do.

‘The missing of the Lord’s presence under the means, in the use of which he had commanded me to expect it, and which he had heretofore in some measure vouchsafed, was very grievous. I earnestly begged a discovery of every sin that might be hid from me, which might be the cause of this withdrawing. But the decay of my affections still remaining, it caused great misgivings of my heart, that things were not right with me. Yet still I had supports in my secret applications to God, that his grace would be sufficient for me, and that I should be kept by his almighty power, through faith unto salvation, which encouragements kept me still waiting with hope, that he would yet return and bless me.

‘After some time, being providentially brought to this place, I found the preaching of your pastor so suited to my case, that I was greatly enlarged in thankfulness to God, who had so directed me. Those sermons upon Galatians 6:3, “For if a man thinketh himself something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself,” though I had heard your minister before with great satisfaction, brought me to a resolution of sitting under his ministry. I do not question but you remember what unusual and deep-searching discourses they were to me. They razed me again to the very foundation, and discovered the many secret holds Satan had in my heart, which before I thought not of, and how many ways I was taken up in something which was nothing. I wish I could express what they were.

‘These discourses caused deep humblings of spirit, and enlarged desires after further enlightenings. Oh I found these things reach me! I needed to be led into the depths of my own deceitful heart, and thereby observe that secret proneness there was in me, to be laying hold on something in self to rest upon and expect from. In short, I now saw that utter insufficiency and weakness in myself, and everything done by myself to satisfy the cravings of my immortal soul, which I had not so much as once thought of before.

‘I have been also led more to that fulness from whence only I can receive what may render me acceptable to the Father, and have never found so much sweetness and solid satisfaction in my access to God as when most sensible of my own unworthiness, and entire emptiness of anything agreeable to him in myself, and all my performances, and when most apprehensive of that infinite fulness and suitableness of grace laid up in Christ Jesus, from whence I am commanded and encouraged to be continually receiving fresh supplies. Oh those infinite, inexhaustible treasures! Nothing, nothing less can satisfy the restless cravings and pantings of my soul! By this preaching I have been continually led to this fresh spring that never fails, and have experienced great quickenings in my applications to Christ, and comfortable rejoicings in him. Notwithstanding all those miserable defects and failures in my poor performances, this gives me comfort, that there is

perfect righteousness wrought out of me, which I may receive freely by faith, and therein stand complete before God for ever.

‘The insisting on such truths as these, which have a direct tendency to lead from self to Christ, by opening and unfolding the mysteries of grace laid up in him, so admirably suited to answer all the necessities of poor, helpless, guilty creatures, I find above all things encourages me to, and enlivens me in, duty. My low improvements under these suitable instructive helps fill me with mourning to think there should be no greater establishment upon the sure foundation of a Redeemer’s righteousness, on which I hope I have been enabled to build.

‘At times I can apprehend with some clearness that this righteousness was wrought out for me, and can apply to him with confidence and joy as the “Lord my righteousness and strength,” and gladly hope that through that strength I shall be more than a conqueror over every disturbing corruption and temptation; yea, that I shall see him shortly as he is, in the full displays of the glory of that grace and love which I cannot now comprehend, and by the transforming sight be made like him. But oh how short, how seldom are these interviews! my unbelieving heart still returns to its former darkness and distrust, and gives me frequent occasions to bewail the fluctuations of my weak faith. Oh that it was stronger, that it was more stedfast! But blessed be his name in whom I put my entire trust, there is grace in him to help me under all decays and failings, through weakness. It is from hence I receive strength to elevate and excite the acts of faith and love when sunk so low that I cannot raise them. Yea, it is from the same fulness I receive grace to regulate the actings of grace, and to set my soul from time to time in a right way of improving the grace I received, and for obtaining pardon for all my defects, as well as for the removing all my defilements.

‘These are truths that feed and support my faith, and without these were set home with power on my soul I must give up under the great aboundings of indwelling corruptions. I desired a submissive waiting for further manifestations of his love in his own time and way. And although I have not those constant shines of the light of God’s countenance, with which some of his people are blessed, yet I humbly adore him for the little light he hath afforded me, and beg your prayers that I may be kept close to him, and have such constant discoveries as may strengthen my faith, by a close adherence to him, and firm reliance on him without wavering. But I am sensible that I am too apt to be looking off from the only support and foundation of my faith and hope, and to be depending on, and expecting from, the frame of my own spirit, and workings of my affections towards spiritual things.

‘Oh the unsearchable deceitfulness of my heart, which is so many ways betraying me into an unbelieving temper of spirit! I find I need greater helps than those may who are more established, and I dare not neglect those helps which my Lord has provided for his church. I need to be watched over, and excited and encouraged under difficulties from those experiences which others have of the dealings of the Lord with them. I have been wishing for these advantages for a considerable time, being fully convinced that those who are members of his church should be building up one another. I bless the Lord that he has discovered his will to me in this point, and that he hath provided greater helps than what I had been before acquainted with for my furtherance in my progress to heaven. Accordingly, I would cheerfully and thankfully fall in with his will herein, and so take hold of his covenant in this church, expecting the blessing promised to those that are

planted in his house.

‘Gertrude Clarkson.

SERMONS, &C. OF ORIGINAL SIN Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.—Psalms 51:5. The end of the ministry of the gospel is to bring sinners unto Christ. Their way to this end lies through the sense of their misery without Christ. The ingredients of this misery, are our sinfulness, original and actual; the wrath of God, whereto sin has exposed us; and our impotency to free ourselves either from sin or wrath. That we may therefore promote this great end, we shall endeavour, as the Lord will assist, to lead you in this way, by the sense of misery, to him who alone can deliver from it.

Now the original of our misery being the corruption of our natures, or original sin, we thought fit to begin here, and therefore have pitched upon these words as very proper for our purpose.

They are part of the psalm which is styled ‘a Psalm of Repentance.’ In the beginning whereof you may observe the expressions and the grounds of David’s repentance. The expressions are, petition and confession; that in the Psalms 51:1-2, this in Psalms 51:3 verse. The grounds of it are, 1, the object of this sin; 2, the fountain.

1. The object against which his sin was directed, ver. 4: that is, God.

2. The fountain from whence his sin sprung; i. e., his natural corruption. He follows the stream up to the spring head, and there lays the ground of his humiliation, Psalms 51:5.

Obs. The ground of a sinner’s humiliation should be the corruption of his nature. Original sin should be the rise of our sorrow. I shall not attempt a full and accurate tractation of original sin, but confine myself to the text, and the scope I aimed at in the choice of it. And that I may open and confirm it more clearly and distinctly, I shall take the observation into parcels, and present it to you in these three propositions: 1, The corruption of nature is a sin; 2, We are guilty of this sin as soon as we are born, as soon as we are conceived; 3, This sin, thus early contracted, must be the ground of our humiliation. This we shall confirm, and then add what is practical, so representing this natural corruption in some particulars, as may humble us, render us vile in our own eyes, and drive us to Christ, who can deliver you from the guilt and power of this pestilent evil.

I. Natural corruption is a sin; so it is styled twice in the text, both ■■■ perverseness, iniquity; and ■■■, sin. That is sin which the Lord peremptorily forbids. The apostle’s definition of it is unquestionable, 1 John 3:4. No greater transgression than this, since it transgresses all at once.

We are commanded to be holy; so the want of holiness is forbidden, which is the privative part of this sin. We are commanded to love the Lord with all our hearts; so the heart’s inclination to hate God is forbidden, which is the positive part of this sin. A nonconformity to the whole law of God is a transgression of the whole law; and this being such, it is not only a sin, but all sins in one. The apostle Paul was more able to judge what is sin than any papist, Socinian, &c., and he calls it sin five times, Romans 6:1-23; six times, Romans 7:1-25; three times, Romans 8:1-39. The apostle’s description of it, Romans 7:1-25, is very observable; for therein you may find near twenty aggravations of this sin. I will point at them, and leave the enlargement to your own thoughts.

(1.) It is that which is not good, Romans 7:18. Why did no good thing dwell there, but because nothing dwelt there but this corruption, which is wholly evil.

(2.) And that we may not mistake it for an evil of suffering, he calls it sin, as elsewhere, so ver. 20, sin, and so the greatest evil.

(3.) And that it may not pass for a sin of an ordinary size, he styles it, Romans 7:13, ■μαρτ■α ■μαρτωλ■ς, nay, καθ■ ■περβολ■ν, excessively hyperbolically sinful. Here is a real, not a verbal hyperbole: for as in a verbal hyperbole the expression exceeds the reality, so in this real hyperbole, the reality exceeds the expression; it is so sinful, as scarce any expression can reach it.

(4.) It is a condemned, a forbidden evil, Romans 7:7, that we may not question, but that it has the formality of a sin.

(5.) It is a positive evil: Romans 7:17, 'No more I that do it, but sin.'

(6.) A perverse evil; grows worse by that which should make it better, Romans 7:8.

(7.) A debasing evil; made and denominates him carnal, Romans 7:14.

(8.) An intimate inherent evil, Romans 7:17, sin in him, in his members.

(9.) It is a permanent evil, ■ικο■σα ■ν ■μο■; a fruitful evil, Romans 7:8, all manner of lust; a deceitful evil, Romans 7:11, ■ξηπ■τησ■; an imperious evil; a law, Romans 7:23, gives law; a tyrannical evil, α■χμαλωτ■ζοντ■, Romans 7:23, a rebellious, conflicting warlike evil, ■ντιστρατευ■μενον, Romans 7:23, an importunate and unreasonable evil, Romans 7:15, forces to do that which he hates; a watchful evil, Romans 7:21, is present, παρ■κειται; a powerful evil, Romans 7:24. Who shall deliver me? A complete evil, Romans 7:24, a body furnished with all members of unrighteousness; a deadly evil, Romans 7:24, the body of death; a miserable evil, Romans 7:24, above all things made him wretched.

Obj. If it be objected, this can be no sin, because it is not voluntary,

Ans. 1. That rule, whatever is not voluntary is not sinful, is not universally true, nor is it admitted by our divines, without limitation; no, not when it is applied to actual sin, much less in this case.

Ans. 2. But admit this rule. Natural corruption is voluntary, both à parte ante, in respect of Adam, and à parte post, in respect of us; or, as Augustine, sive in opere, sive in origine.

(1.) In respect of Adam, he contracted this evil voluntarily, and we in him. He is not to be considered as one man, but as the root or representative of all men. Omnes eramus ille unus homo: we all were that one man, and therefore his will was the will of all men. All being included virtually in him, what he voluntarily consented to, that was voluntarily consented to by all.

(2.) A parte post, in respect of us. It is voluntary, in respect of after-consent. All who are capable of humiliation have actually consented to their natural corruption, have been pleased with it, have cherished it by occasions of sin, have strengthened it by acts of sin, have resisted the means whereby it should be mortified and subdued, which all are infallible evidences of actual consent. That which was only natural is thus become voluntary, and so, by consent of all, sinful.

II. Proposition. We are tainted with this sin from our birth, from our conception, while we are formed, while we are warmed in the womb, as the word is. Natural corruption is not contracted only by imitation, nor becomes it habitual by custom or repetition of acts, but it is rooted in the soul before the subject be capable either of imitation or acting. It is diffused through the soul as soon as the soul is united to the body. And if we take conception in such a latitude as to reach this union, there will be no difficulty to conceive how we are capable of this sin in our conception. The prophet upbraids Israel with this, Isaiah 48:8, 'And wast called a transgressor from the womb,' and so may we all be called, though the expression be inclusively, not only from the time of our coming out of the womb, but from the time of our being formed in it.

If I would step out of the way, I might here inquire how this sin is conveyed unto us in the womb. But the curiosity of this inquiry is handsomely taxed by that known passage of Augustine. A man being fallen into a pit, one spies him, and admires how he came there. Oh, says the fallen man to him, Tu cogita quomodo hinc me liberes: Be careful, cries he, to get me out; trouble not thyself to inquire how I fell in.

Thus should we be disposed as to our natural corruption, not so curious to inquire how we came by it, as careful to know how we may be rid of it. And one way is pointed at in the next particular, the third proposition, which is this:

III. Proposition. This sin should be the ground of our humiliation. I might confirm this with many arguments, but I shall content myself with one, which, with the branches of it, will be sufficiently demonstrative it should be ground of our humiliation, because it is the foundation of our misery. Our misery consists in the depravedness of our natures, our obnoxiousness to the wrath of God, and our inability to free ourselves from either. But this is what has depraved our natures, or rather is the depravation of them; this makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, &c.

1. The depravedness of our natures consists in a privation of all good, an antipathy to God, and a propensity to all evil. And these three are not so much the effects, as the formality of this sin.

(1.) It is a privation of all that is good. In that soul where this is predominant, there is neither seed nor fruit, neither root nor branch neither inclination nor motion, neither habit nor act, that is spiritually good. No spark of holiness; no relics of man's primitive righteousness; no lineament of that image of God, which was at first fair drawn upon the soul of man: Romans 7:18, 'In my flesh,' i. e., in my nature considered as corrupted. Man's soul is left like a ruined castle; the bare ragged walls, the remaining faculties, may help you to guess what it has been; but all the ornaments and precious furniture is gone. Is not this ground of humiliation? Thy ruined soul can never be repaired, but by him who brought heaven and earth out of nothing.

(2.) There is an antipathy to God, and the things of God; to his ways and image. 'The carnal mind,' Romans 8:7, the mind overspread with natural corruption, usually called flesh, is not only an enemy, but 'enmity.' In enmity there is hatred, malice, despite, mischievous thoughts and contrivances. This is the temper of thy soul till thou art born again; thy heart is full of enmity, malice, &c. Oh, is not this ground of humiliation, that a poor worm should swell big with malice and enmity against the great God, should be an utter enemy to him, in whom alone are his hopes and happiness! A natural man will not believe this. But here is a demonstration of it from another fruit of this corruption; and that is an antipathy to the holy ways, spirit and heavenly employments, to the

image of God, to holiness itself. Naturalists write of a beast that will tear and rend the picture of a man if it come in his way; and this is taken as an argument that he has a stronger antipathy to man than is in any other beast. And does it not argue as strong an antipathy to God, when men will tear his image, vent their malice in jeers and reproaches against holiness? Does it not argue an antipathy to holiness, when holy employments and exercises are most tedious and burdensome? Oh the sad issue of our depravedness, when it possesses with enmity against God! Is it not a ground of humiliation?

(3.) There is a propensity to all evil. I say not, an equal propensity in all to every sin, but a propensity more or less in every one to all sin. ‘Folly is bound up,’ Proverbs 22:15. This folly is the sin of our natures; all sin whatsoever is wrapped up in this natural corruption; actual sins are but the unfolding of it. As all men are said to be in the first virtually, in primo cuncti fuimus patre, so may all sins, in respect of this propensity to all, be said [to be] in this first sin, the sin of our births and natures. The Seventy render sin and iniquity in the text plurally, ■ν ■νομ■αις, ■ν ■μαρτ■αις. There is a plurality of sins in our natural corruption. It is all sin virtually, because it disposes and inclines the soul to all. And is not here ground of humiliation, when, by reason of this corruption, we are not only destitute of all that is good, but disposed to all that is evil?

2. Another part of our misery is our obnoxiousness to the wrath of God. And natural corruption is the foundation of this also, Ephesians 2:3. Why by nature, but because there is that in our natures which is the proper object of God’s wrath? ‘Children of wrath;’ born to it, because born in sin. Children, this is your portion, wrath is your inheritance; the writings and evidences for it are the curses and threatenings of the law. These make it sure, by these wrath is entailed on you and yours. From the word in the text, which we read conceived, and in the margin, warmed, comes the word which we render indignation; ■■■ As soon as we are warmed in the womb, the Lord’s indignation is kindled against us. The corruption of our natures is its fuel. Oh what ground is here of humiliation, that by reason of this sin of our natures we are exposed in our conception, birth, life, to the wrath of God!

3. Another part of this misery is your inability to free yourselves from this sin and wrath. This is evident from hence: those that are born in sins and trespasses are ‘dead in sins and trespasses,’ Ephesians 2:1. Till ye be born again, ye are dead. There must be a second birth, else there will be no spiritual life. Every one, since death entered into the world by this sin, is born dead; comes into the world, and so continues, destitute of spiritual life. And what more impotent than a dead man? You can no more repair the image of God in your souls, than a dead man can reunite his soul to his body; no more free yourselves from that antipathy to God, and inclination to wickedness, than a dead carcase can free itself from those worms and vermin that feed upon it; no more free yourselves from the wrath of God, than a dead man can raise himself out of the grave.

Into such a low condition has this corruption of nature sunk the sons of men, as nothing can raise them but an infinite power, an almighty arm.

Nay, so far are men, in this estate, from power to free themselves from this misery, as they are without sense of their misery. Tell them they are dead; it is a paradox. They will not believe the report of Christ; they will not hear, till a voice armed with an almighty power, such a voice as Lazarus heard, do awake them. Till then, they are without life, and so without sense. Here is the depth of misery: to be so miserable, and yet insensible of it. Yet thus low has this sin brought every

sinner.

Nay, if they were sensible of their misery, and of their own inability to avoid it, yet can they not, yet will they not move towards him, who only can deliver them. They are without life, and so without motion. ‘No man comes to me except the Father draw him,’ John 6:1-71.

They lie dead, putrefying under this corruption, under the wrath of an incensed God, without motion or inclination toward him who is the resurrection and the life. This is the condition into which this sin has brought you; and can there be a condition more miserable? Is there not cause to be humbled for that which has brought you so low, which has made you so wretched? Should not this be the chief ground of your humiliation? I need say no more to demonstrate this truth.

IV. Let me now proceed, in the fourth place, to make this truth more practical. And this I shall endeavour, by representing this sin to you in some particulars, which tend to humble you, to make you vile in your own eyes, and drive you to Christ, who only can save you from this sin, and the woeful effects of it.

1. Its unnaturalness. This corruption is incorporated into our natures. It has a real being in us, before we have a visible being in the world. It is conceived in us at our first conception, Psalms 51:1-19, ‘in sin.’ The old man is furnished with all its members, before we are formed, shapen; quickened, before we are alive; and is born before we come into the world. This makes us evil in God’s eye, before we have done good or evil; and by virtue of it, we are born heirs apparent to eternal wrath: Ephesians 2:3, ‘By nature children of wrath;’ we are born to it; this is our title. Though men use this to excuse their sin, It is my nature; yet this is the greatest aggravation of it. We can better endure a mischief, when it comes accidentally, than one who is naturally mischievous. Would this be a good plea for one who has plotted treason, to say, I am naturally a traitor; it is my nature to be treacherous, murderous? This would make him more odious: such a man would not be counted fit to live a moment.

Why do we hate toads, but because they are naturally a poisonous vermin? That which is so accidentally, we rather pity than hate it. The Lord has a stronger antipathy against natural corruption, than we against the most poisonous vermin. A toad is good physically, sub ratione entis, as a creature; all the works of his hands are good; but this corruption is both physically, morally, and spiritually evil; and the worse, because it is natural.

2. The sinfulness of it. It is more sinful than the most grievous actual sin that ever hath, or ever can be committed. It is in some sense more sinful than all actual sins put together.

(1.) An actual sin does but directly violate one command of God; but this is a violation of all God’s commands at once, a transgression of the whole law, a contrariety to every part of God’s revealed will. For this corruption is forbidden in every commandment; because cum prohibetur effectus, prohibetur causa, when any sin is forbidden, that which is the cause it cannot be avoided, is forbidden. Cum prohibetur actus, prohibetur inclinatio ad actum, when any sin is forbidden, all degrees of it are prohibited. Now this is the cause of the inclination to all sin; and so it is forbidden in every precept; and therefore this is a breach of every precept.

(2.) Sin cannot be always actual, and therefore the law is but sometimes broken by actual sins; but this is a violation of the law at all times. We are not actually sinners before we are born; but in

respect of this, we are sinners in our mother's womb. Infants, before all use of reason, do not actually sin; but even when we are infants, we are sinners, transgressors of the law, by natural corruption, Romans 5:14. Death reigned over infants; therefore infants were sinners, though not actually, as Adam. Acts are transient, this is settled, continuing against God.

(3.) Actual sin does but break the law in being, the time it is in acting. But this is a continued violation of the law without any interruption, without the least intermission, from the instant of the soul's conjunction with the body to the hour of our dissolution. There is no lucida intervalla, no good fits, no cessation; well may the apostle call it καθ■ ■περβολ■ν ■μαρτωλ■ς.

3. Its causality. It is the cause of all actual sin. Every sinful act in us derives its descent from this. This is that loathsome spawn to which all this abhorred vermin owe their original, James 1:15, ■πιθυμ■α συλλαβο■σα, &c., i. e., original concupiscence, as it is ordinarily called by the ancients, or natural corruption; having conceived, τ■κτει, brings forth actual sin, is its mother in both. This is actual sin as it were in the egg, worse than those of the cockatrice, which by Satan's incubation is hatched, and brings forth the serpent's cursed and poisonous issue.

There was a tree of life in the garden of Eden; and so there will be in the paradise of God, Revelation 22:2, whose leaves will be for the healing of the nations. But since man was cast out of paradise, a tree of death, a root of bitterness, has grown in every soul, bearing all manner of cursed fruits; and every leaf, every bud, tends to the death of mankind. It is a vine, as Deuteronomy 32:32, worse than the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah. Its grapes are grapes of gall, its clusters are bitter; its wine is the poison of dragons, &c. By these allusions the Lord declares the cursed nature both of tree and fruit: Matthew 15:19, 'Out of the heart,' i. e., corrupt heart, or natural corruption in the heart. If you pursue these filthy streams to their first rise, you will find the spring head to be this corruption. Actual sins are nothing but this native corruption multiplied, as an hundred is but one multiplied so many times, an hundred units. It is the cause of all. If we must repent of the effects, much more of the cause.

4. Its habitualness. It is not a transient act, nor a moveable disposition, nor a dull slow-paced faculty, as all faculties are till they be habituated; but an habitual evil, both in respect of permanency and facility in acting.

(1.) Its permanency. A habit is χρονι■τερον and μονιμ■τερον, more permanent, more durable than any other quality. So is this; it will continue while the union betwixt soul and body continues. It is ■μαρτ■α ■ικο■σα, an inhabitant which will never be removed till the house be pulled down where it dwells. The power of grace may cast it down, but it will never be cast out. Some streams may be dried up, but we can never in this life dry up the spring; we may lop off some branches, but it will sprout again; we cannot root out this root of bitterness. It is like such a fretting leprosy in our earthly tabernacles as is described to be in the Israelites' houses, Leviticus 14:1-57. Though some infected stones be removed, and the house scraped, and the walls plastered, Leviticus 14:41-42, yet the plague will break out again. No perfect freedom from this spreading incurable plague till the house be quite pulled down. It will reign in those that continue unsanctified, till eternity; it will dwell in the best, till this earthly tabernacle be dissolved; a constant occasion, do the best they can, of repentance.

(2.) Facility in acting. It is the property of habits, facile operari; it makes the faculty nimble, quick, and freely active. All habits do so; but above all natural habits, because the faculty hereby has a double advantage. Such is natural corruption. Hence it is that we sin so freely, find no such backwardness, reluctancy to evil, as to good: 'Evil is present,' Romans 7:21, παρ■κειται, it is at hand, ready to further and facilitate sinful acts. Hence where this is predominant, sinful acts proceed as freely from it as water runs down a precipice from an overflowing spring. This being born with man, he is born not only to sorrow, but to sin, as freely as the sparks fly upward; as freely, as heavy bodies move downwards towards their centre; they need no outward impulse to enforce their motion; their natural gravity is sufficient, if nothing interpose to stop its course. If God should withdraw restraining grace, this corruption would carry men on to act all wickedness with greediness. Every man would turn to the most desperate wicked courses, even as freely, as eagerly, as the horse rusheth into the battle, Jeremiah 8:6, need no other spur but his native wickedness, which is secretly bent to all evil, without external enforcements. Here is great cause of repentance.

5. Its pregnancy. It is all sin virtually; all sin in gross, which is retailed out in sinful acts. All in one; as he of Cæsar, in uno Cæsare multi proditores. All treasons, is obedience, rebellions against the sovereign Majesty of heaven, are to be found in this. It is the nursery, the spawn, the seed, the womb; every sin, that is possible to be committed is in this womb; so conceived, formed, animated, brought to the birth, as there needs nothing but a temptation, occasion, opportunity, to bring it forth. Those several crooked lines, sinful acts, which are scattered in any man's life, as in the circumference, do all meet in this as in the centre. The guilt of all abominations whatsoever are complicated, wrapped up in this one. And in respect of this we are guilty of all sin, how great so ever, even of those that we were never actually guilty of.

It may be thou never embruedst thy hands in thy brother's blood, as Cain did. Thou art not actually guilty of that horrid murder, but thou art habitually guilty. In respect of thy corrupt inclination, thou art as apt to do such a bloody act as he. All the difference is, and all the reason why thou doest it not, is because the Lord restrains thee; like temptations and occasions are not offered thee. No difference, but from without; corrupt inclination is equal, thy nature as bloody.

It may be thou didst never commit adultery, incest, or such abominable uncleanness; thou art not guilty of this actually, but thou art guilty of this in respect of thy inclination; these sins are in thy heart.

It may be thou didst not set cities on fire, dash out children's brains, rip up women with child; thou art not actually guilty, but these sins are in thy heart, though they were never acted by thy hands. Hazael was angry that the prophet should tell him thus much, 2 Kings 8:12-13. But he acted that afterward, when king, which he seems here to detest, so far as though he should never be guilty of them, except transformed into a dog. He was not acquainted with the desperate corruption of man's heart, which habitually inclines him to the most barbarous and bloody acts.

It may be you detest Herod, Pilate, and the Jews as bloody monsters for swearing, wounding, crucifying our meek and innocent Saviour. Ay, but this very sin, though the most horrid act that ever the sun beheld, is in your hearts. And he is a stranger to the corruption of his nature, who will presume he would not have done as they did if he had had the same temptations, and no more restraint from God.

There was no sin ever was, nor ever can be committed by evil men on earth, but it is in every man's heart, and every one, in respect of habitual inclination, is guilty of it. If men believe this, sure there would need no arguments to shew the necessity of repentance for this corruption. But no wonder if it be not believed, since the heart, as it is 'desperately wicked,' so it is deceitful;' the prophet joins them: Jeremiah 17:9, 'Deceitful above all things,' and will not be known; 'desperately wicked,' so wicked as it cannot be known; natural corruption is so great, so pregnant, there is so much wickedness, so many sins in the heart, as we may despair of knowing them. But what we are able to know we should be willing to bewail. They are deceived who think they are not cruel, unclean, because not actually so; they are inclined to all, though not equally to all.

6. Its extent. This contagion has overspread the whole man, and seized upon every part. Therefore, Hebrews 12:1, ε■περ■στατον, it is the old man, and some member of it is stretched forth in every faculty. It is a world of wickedness, and this little world man is full of it: 'from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot,' Isaiah 1:6, man wholly corrupt, both in body, and soul, and spirit. There is an ocean of corruption in every natural man. And as the sea receives several names from several coasts, so does this from the several parts and faculties. In the mind it is enmity, Romans 8:7; in the thoughts, vanity, Psalms 91:7; in the apprehension, blindness, Ephesians 4:18; in the judgment, evil good, darkness light, error truth; in the will, rebellion, 'we will not,' &c.; in the consience, searedness; in the heart, hardness, Ezekiel 2:3-4; in the affections, carnalness; in the memory, unfaithfulness, Jeremiah 2:32; in the fancy, folly; in the appetite, inordinancy; in the whole body, vileness. Every part, faculty, is naturally corrupted, and wholly corrupted in all acts. The mind, in its apprehensions, blind; in its judgments, erroneous; in its reasonings, foolish; in its designs, evil; in its thoughts, vain. The will, as to its elections, perverse, chooses evil, less good, seeming; in its consent, servile, overruled by corrupt judgment, base appetite; in its commands tyrannical, without, against all sanctified reason; in its inclination, wicked; in its intentions, obstinate; in its fruitions, furious. The memory, apt to receive what is evil, to exclude what is good; to retain that which should be excluded, to let slip that which should be retained; to suggest that which is wicked, to smother what is good. The conscience, corrupt in its rules and principles, in its injunctions and prescripts, in its accusations, in its absolutions, in its instigations, &c. So the affections. The enlargement of these particulars would require many hours' discourse. I am forced to do as geographers, give a view of this world of wickedness in a small map; but, if you will seriously study it, you will see cause enough of repentance, if there were no actual sin in the world. As it is extended over the whole man, our whole life, so should the extent of our repentance be.

7. Its monstrousness—the monstrous deformity it has brought upon the soul. The mind of man was the candle of the Lord, but hereby it is become a stinking snuff. The soul, as it proceeded from God, was a clear, lightsome beam, brighter than any ray of the sun, but hereby it is become a noisome dunghill. It was one of the most excellent pieces of the creation, next unto the angelical nature, but hereby it is transformed into an ugly monster. Why do we judge anything a monster, but for want, defect, or uselessness; impotency, dislocation, or misplacing of integral parts? And, by virtue of this corruption, there is a concurrence of all this in the soul, answerable, and in some proportion to what we judge monstrous in a body. A child born without eyes, mouth, hands, legs, we judge a monster. There is a defect of such powers in the soul as are analogical to these parts in the body: there is no eye to see God naturally, corruption has put it out, born blind; there is no

arms to embrace Christ, though he offer himself to our embraces; there is no mouth to receive spiritual nourishment, no stomach to digest it; there is no feet to move towards God, he must renew these organs before any spiritual motion.

All those parts are impotent which are in the soul. Though there be something instead of eyes (an understanding), yet it sees not, perceives not the things of God; though there be something in the room of hands (the will), yet it inclines not to, it acts not for God; something in place of feet (the affections), yet they walk not in God's ways; if they move, it is backward, either like the idol, without motion, eyes and see not, &c., Psalms 135:16, or monstrous motion; if look, it is downward, grovelling; if walk, it is backward from God, &c. The soul, ever since the fall, is halt, maimed; all its parts broken or unjoined. Cecidit è manu figuli. Man's soul, framed by God according to his likeness, fell out of the hands of the potter, and so is all broken and shattered. Man's soul, wherein the Lord had exquisitely engraven his own image, and writ his own will and law with his own hand in divine characters, did cast itself out of God's hands, and fell, as the tables of stone, God's own workmanship, fell out of the hands of Moses, and so is broken into shivers; nothing is left but some broken, scattered relics, some obscure sculptures covered with the mud of natural corruption, so as it is scarce visible. That which appears is woeful ruins, such as shew what a glorious creature man was, though he be now, to his spiritual constitution, a monster.

There is a dislocation. What remains in man's soul is monstrously misplaced. We count that birth monstrous where parts have not their due place, when the head is where the feet should be, or the legs in the place of the arms, &c. The soul's faculties are thus monstrously dislocated; that which should be highest is lowest; that which should rule is in subjection; that which should obey does tyrannise. Passion over-rules reason, and the will receives law from the fancy and appetite. The will was sovereign, reason its counsellor, the appetite subject to both; but now it is got above them, and often hurries both to a compliance with the dictates of sense. A spot, a blemish in the face of a beautiful child, when it comes but accidentally, does grieve the parents. How much cause then have we to bewail that natural, universal, monstrous deformity which has seized upon our souls!

8. Its irresistibleness and strength. Nothing but an infinite power can conquer it; none but the almighty arm of God can restrain it. Not the power of nature in men, for that it has wholly subdued; not the power of grace in the saints, for then Paul had never been captivated by it. He was, in all outward opposition he met with in the world, more than conqueror; but by this he was led captive. He triumphs over them, but he sighs and complains of this.

All the cords of love, all the bonds of afflictions, cannot restrain this. It is Satan's strongest champion; it breaks them all, as Samson did the new ropes, Judges 16:1-31, it breaks them off like a thread. All mortifying exercises, moral persuasions, spiritual restraints, can never utterly quell this. See how the Lord describes leviathan, behemoth, and the warlike horse, Job 39:1-30, Job 40:1-24; Job 41:1-34, and by analogy you may collect a description of the strength and fury of untamed lust. Nor judgments, nor mercies, nor threatenings, nor promises, nor precepts, nor examples, nor resolutions, nor experiences, are, without a higher concurrence, sufficient to restrain it. What then? Nothing but that which sets bounds to the raging sea. None but he who shuts up the sea with doors; he only, who says, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,' Job 38:8-11; Isaiah 57:20, 'The wicked is like the troubled sea;' and no wonder, since this is a raging sea of wickedness in them, which he can only bound and rule

who gives decrees to the sea, and lays his commands on the waters, Proverbs 8:29; he only, whom the winds and seas obey. No limits to the rage of lust but almighty power, this bound it cannot pass, Jeremiah 5:22.

9. Its devilishness. There is nothing in the world that has so much of the devil in it; nothing more like him, nothing better liked by him. It is his issue, the first-born of the devil, πρωτ■τοκος το■ διαβ■λου; he hatched it. It is the seed of the serpent, that which he begot and nourishes. It is his work, his master-piece, that wherein he applauds himself and glories, John 8:44. Why is he the father of natural men, but because he begot corrupt nature? It owes its original to him.

It is his strumpet, is prostituted to him; if any succubus in the world, this is it. There is a carnal, though invisible conjunction betwixt it and Satan; the issue of it is all the sins in the world; numerous and deformed issue.

It is his image. The image of Satan succeeded the image of God. Those black, hellish characters, which are legible in the soul, are of his own impression. As face answers to face, so does man's corrupt nature answer the nature of the devil. It has all the essential parts of it. The divine image is razed out in it, so it is in him. In it there is an averseness to all spiritual good, so in him. In it a propensity to all evil, so in him. If any ask whose image and superscription is that which is now imprinted on the soul? he does not answer truly, who does not say it is Satan's.

It is his throne. By this he rules in the children of disobedience; and here is the palace, the place where Satan dwells. This keeps him up, this advances him. By this he keeps possession of the soul; so long as any of this remains, he will have some footing.

It is Satan's correspondent. It maintains secret, constant intercourse with man's mortal enemy; it is a treacherous inmate, ready upon all occasions to betray the soul to him who seeks to devour it. This encourages him to invade, make inroads into the soul; knowing he has a strong party within that will not fail him. His fiery darts would not be so dangerous, but that there is this matter to kindle on. He would in time be weary of assaulting, but that this innate domestic enemy is so ready to open to him, John 14:30. There was no natural corruption in Christ for Satan to work upon, no such inbred traitor to open, no secret friend of his to give entertainment; and therefore, after three or four attempts, he quite leaves Christ, desists from his enterprise, despairing of success; but he will never want encouragement to assault us so long as natural corruption continues in us. This should be a great occasion of sorrow, that we are so near akin to hell, have such intimate correspondence with the devil; that we have so much of him within us; that which makes us so unlike him, affords him so great advantage against us.

10. Its brutishness. It hurries the soul on, in a blind fury, to such acts and motions as right reason would highly condemn, and an apprehensive soul would tremble at; and in respect hereof man is compared to irrational creatures, brute beasts—to the horse and mule, Psalms 32:9; to the wild ass, Jeremiah 2:23-24; to an untamed heifer, Hosea 4:16; nay, worse, Isaiah 1:3, Jeremiah 8:7, the brute beasts will know, will own and take some notice of their benefactors. But this makes men kick against God, wound Christ, expel the Spirit in its motions, bellow out reproaches against his servants, those whom he sends to feed and nourish their souls, Proverbs 12:1. They have an inclination to that which is good, which tends to preservation and continuance of health, strength, life. But this makes men averse even to their own happiness, and all the spiritual means that tend

to it; a strong antipathy to holiness, the way to life, and the most opposite to those ways that are most strictly holy. They are, Jeremiah 10:21, afraid of what is destructive to their life and being; but this pushes men on in the ways of death, the paths that lead to destruction, makes them love death, and make haste to ruin their souls. An appetite to drink in sin, more deadly to the soul than any poison to the body, as greedily as the fish, &c., Job [Job 40:23]; delight to wound, mangle their souls unto death, Ezekiel 21:31, the reason of this desperate fury Job gives: Job 11:12, 'Man is born as a wild ass's colt,' brings into the world a nature more wild, fierce, untamed, than any beast of the field.

11. Incorrigibleness, perverseness. It becomes worse by that which should amend it. It takes occasion to grow more wicked from that which God has appointed to restrain its wickedness, Romans 7:8; the more sin is forbidden, the more exceeding sinful will it be; because wickedness is threatened, therefore it will be more wicked, Romans 7:13; even as a dunghill, the more the sun shines upon it, it sends forth greater plenty of filthy vapours, and infests the air with a more noisome smell. There is such a malignant humour in it, as when the holy law of God is applied to it, its rage and fury breaks forth with more violence. It is exasperated by that which should tame it. When the law would restrain it, it rages like a wild bull in a net, Jer.* The heathen could observe this rebellious inclination, nititur in vetitum. That is a desperate evil which grows worse by that which should cure it, but such an evil is this.

12. Its vileness. Take a survey of heaven and earth, and your eyes can fix upon nothing so vile as this. There is not anything so vile, base, contemptible in the world but has some degree of worth in it, as being the work of the great God; only natural corruption, and its corrupt issue, has not the least scruple of worth in it in any sense. It is purely vile, without any mixture of worth, vileness in the abstract. The Scripture holds forth its vileness under many notions, no one being sufficient to express it. At present take notice of one, that which is its common name. It is ordinarily called flesh, Galatians 5:16-17, Galatians 5:19. Hereby is held forth the vile degeneracy of man's soul since this corruption seized on it. By creation it was pure, heavenly, spiritual, akin to the angels, as like to the nature of God as a creature could be; is now as it were transformed into flesh, mind carnal, &c.; as great a debasement as if heaven should be turned into earth, an angel into a beast, or the sun into a cloud. Nor is it flesh only, there is too much worth in that to be made a resemblance of our vile natures; it is dead flesh: Romans 7:1-25, a 'body of death;' so vile as it is ghastly. Nay, it is deformed, leprous flesh. Leprosy was but an emblem of it, it is so vile as it is loathsome. Nay, it is putrified flesh. The old man is corrupt, Ephesians 4:24, full of putrefied sores, full of loath some vermin; that which is more loathsome to God, exhaling filthy vapours, noisome, more offensive to God than what is most to us. Therefore man, who in integrity was admitted to intimate communion and converse with God, as soon as ever he had corrupted himself, the Lord could no longer endure him: Genesis 3:24, 'He drove out the man.' Corrupted flesh is not fit to have so near converse with God, a Spirit.

It is both formaliter and effectivè vile. As it is so in itself, so it has made man vile. No creature so debased as man, being in this respect become viler than any creature. There is no such depravation in the nature of any creature, except in the diabolical nature. No creature ever razed God's image out of its nature, but only man. There is no aversions to the will of God, no inclination to what offends him, in any creature on earth but man. Man, then, who was once the glory of the creation, is become the vilest of all creatures, for that is vilest which is most contrary to the infinite

glory, but so is our nature—Psalms 49:12, ‘Man being in honour, abideth not’—is now like the beasts that perish; nay, worse than they, if the greatest evil can make him worse. Man was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory, advanced to be lord and governor of all the works of his hands; and all creatures in this world were put under his feet, Psalms 8:5-6. But by this natural corruption he that was but a little lower than angels is now something below the beasts. He was to have dominion, but is made baser than those over whom he rules. They were put under his feet, but now he is as low as they. This is the sad issue of natural corruption. It is a lamentation, &c.

13. Its propagation. All parents do propagate their natural corruption to their children. A woeful necessity is hereby brought upon mankind, so as none can be born without it. It is a sad consideration that parents should convey such a deadly evil to their children, but so it is. If man had continued uncorrupted, he had begot children after the image of God, and with his own similitude had conveyed lovely representations of the divine nature; but being corrupted, he begets children after his own image, which is now little better than a draught of Satan’s, John 3:6, Job 14:4: Job 25:4, ‘How can he be clean that is born of a woman?’ An unclean nature can have no other than unclean issue. Your cursed natures makes your children cursed. You convey spiritual death to all the children that have life from you; convey to that you most love that which makes them hateful to God. They have from you lovely bodies, but monstrous souls. Even those who are renewed cannot convey renewed natures to their children.

It is a most sad consideration that this evil is so communicative, as it does not only abide in us, but will pass to all that proceed from us; that we should convey an evil so sinful, so permanent, irresistible, deadly, devilish, to children. Take a view of natural corruption as spread before you in these considerations, and it will appear as Ezekiel’s roll, ‘writ within and without, lamentation, mourning, and woe,’ Ezekiel 2:10. OF REPENTANCE Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.—Luke 13:3. In the former verses you have the occasion and cause of what is said in this.

Luke 13:1, The occasion, Pilate’s cruelty.

Luke 13:2, The impulsive cause, ‘Suppose ye;’ to correct, &c., a false and injurious supposition.

Jesus answering. He answered, though not to their intention;—that might be to ensnare him, whether approve or reprove,—but for their advantage. If his answer was not for their purpose, yet for their profit. If not what was expected, yet what was most expedient. He makes excellent use of that relation, and directs them how to improve that sad accident.

Obs. We should labour to make good use to ourselves of God’s judgments on others. Why? God expects it; this is the way to prevent the execution on ourselves. How?

1. ‘Learning righteousness,’ Isaiah 26:9; faith, seeing him execute threatenings; fear, beholding his severity; obedience, sure want of that is the cause; love, whilst we escape.

2. Forsaking sin: ‘Sin no more,’ John 5:14. All sin, because every sin is pregnant with judgment; therefore it summons to search and try, &c., especially those sins which brought wrath on others. Observe providences; use means to discover what is the Achan, &c.

Use. We have great occasion to practise this. Wrath is kindled and burns, &c.; the cup of indignation goes round; the sword has had a commission, &c.; the scars and smarting impressions

continue in bodies, estates, liberties. Let us learn to believe, to tremble, to love. Let us forsake sin, our own; the sins that have unsheathed the sword, mixed this bitter cup. What is that? In all probability contempt of, disobedience to, unfruitfulness under, the gospel. This ruined the Jews, John 5:6-7, John 5:34-35, captivated before for it, 2 Chronicles 36:15-17 with Jeremiah 25:7-9, &c. Probably it is the greatest sin, that brings the severest judgment. But what greater than this, more heinous than the sins of Sodom, therefore more tolerable for them, &c., Mark 6:11, and if this be not it, what is the reason those parts who enjoy not the gospel escape better, Turkey, Tartary, Persia, &c.? Oh take heed, sure this is the Achan! Bewail it, avoid it! Make not this warning ineffectual with the Jews' supposition. Rather hear, believe, apply what Christ says, Except I repent, &c. The words are monitory. In them we have, I., the admonisher, I; II., the admonition. In which, 1, an ■πανρθωσις, nay; and, 2, a δι■ρθωσις, except ye repent. Ye must repent if ye would not perish.

I. From the admonisher, Christ, in that he teaches repentance.

Obs. Repentance is an evangelical duty; a gospel, a new-covenant duty. This should not be questioned by those who either believe what the gospel delivers, or understand what it is to be evangelical; but since it is denied, let us prove it. And first from this ground.

1. Christ taught repentance. But he taught nothing but what was evangelical. Is he who was the sweet subject, the blessed end, the great mediator, the glorious preacher of the covenant of grace and gospel, a legal teacher? He begins with this, it was his first sermon, Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:16; and he ends with this, it was his last sermon, Luke 24:47; leaves this to his disciples as their directory for preaching. Christ indeed answers the young man asking what good things he should do, &c., legally, according to his question, If thou wilt go to heaven by doing, no better rule than the commandments, Matthew 19:17; but his intent was evangelical. He endeavours to convince him this was not the way to life, shewing the impossibility of fulfilling the law by enjoying* that which he would not, could not do, Matthew 19:21, and so makes use of the law to serve the gospel. All his teachings were evangelical, but he taught repentance.

2. It is excluded by the covenant of works. There is no place for repentance there. Nothing but death after sin; no tabula secunda post naufragium. That enjoins not repentance; nothing but perfect obedience. Nor does it admit repentance; it promises nothing but to perfect obedience. It prescribes no means, leaves no hopes for sinners. They understand not the law, what the covenant of works is, who make repentance legal. There is nothing in it, but the mandate and the sanction. But the law neither commands it, nor does it reward the presence or practice; nor does it threaten the absence of repentance. It admits not of pardon; that comes in by virtue of another covenant. And where there is no pardon, there is no place for repentance. It requires only perfect obedience directly and expressly, and offers life to no other condition; but Adam hereby being obliged to obey God in all things, was by consequence and implicitly engaged to obey whatever God should require in any other way or covenant and upon any other terms, and so to repentance, which the gospel commands. These are the privileges of the covenant of grace.

3. It is required in the gospel, Acts 17:30. Now, in the times of the gospel, after the Messiah is come; now, when the covenant of grace comes forth in its last and best edition; now, when free grace appears in fairest and largest character; now, when the covenant commences new; even 'now he commands all,' all that will be saved, have any benefit by the Messiah, enjoy any

blessings of the new covenant, to repent.

4. It was preached by the apostles. Christ makes it one of their instructions, puts it in their commission, Luke 24:47. And they who found grace to be faithful, observed their instruction. It is the principal point in Peter's first sermon recorded after the ascension, Acts 2:28, and of his second too, by which we may conclude of the rest, Acts 3:19. John gives sweet encouragements to it, 1 John 1:9. If ever there was an evangelical preacher in the world, sure Paul was one; and he solemnly professeth it was his constant practice, Acts 20:20-21, and Acts 26:20. It is express of all, Mark 6:12.

5. It was the end of Christ's coming, Matthew 9:13, to call sinners. He had no end in coming, but purely evangelical. He came to confirm the covenant of grace, which was established in the room of the covenant of works, by which no sinner could get any benefit. He came not to establish, to require anything legal; therefore, repentance is not legal.

6. It was purchased by Christ's death. But the privileges that he purchased were evangelical: Acts 5:31, 'Him has God exalted,' &c. What he bestows in his exaltation, he purchased by his humiliation. We owe the purchase of evangelical mercies to his satisfaction, the application to his intercession. If he had procured anything legal, he would have purchased life for us upon personal performance of perfect obedience; for this is the sum of the covenant of works. But this he procured not. That which he merited, was the blessings of the new covenant, whereof repentance is one, therefore evangelical.

7. It has evangelical promises. And these are not made to any legal duty: Proverbs 28:13, 'Whoso confesseth.' Confession is the sign, and forsaking an essential part of repentance. This is an evangelical promise, though in the Old Testament. As there is something legal in the New Testament, so much that is evangelical in the Old Testament. And these are sure characters, whereby we may distinguish gospel from law. Wherever we meet faith, repentance, confession, forsaking of sin, pardon, or mercy, those are gospel strains. The covenant of works disowns them, Matthew 5:4. Blessedness and comfort entailed upon mourning, a principal part of repentance.

8. It is urged upon evangelical grounds. It would be incongruous so to urge it, if it were legal; this would be to put new wine into old bottles, &c. So John Baptist, Matthew 3:2, so Christ, Mark 1:14-15, where is a definition of evangelical preaching. 'Kingdom of heaven,' that is, the heavenly and spiritual kingdom of Christ to be erected, with all the honours, privileges, duties of its subjects, are to be purchased by his satisfaction, and offered and declared in the gospel. The infinite goodness and love of God in sending Christ; and the wonderful love of Christ in undertaking the redemption of forlorn sinners; and the precious fruits of that undertaking, should be grounds of and motives to repentance; but these are evangelical, ergo, it is.

9. It is the condition of the prime evangelical mercy. God offers, gives remission of sins, upon condition of repentance. What Christ commands us, himself does practise, Luke 17:3. If he repent, forgive him. So Acts 3:19, and Acts 2:38. The way Peter prescribes to Simon, Acts 8:22, hence they are frequently joined, Luke 24:47, Acts 5:31. A condition, not quoad rigorem, in point of exact performance, as though he required to repent by our own strength, and would not pardon till the condition were so performed. For such are legal conditions, and proper to the covenant of works; whereas, though he command, requires repentance, yet he promises it, Ezekiel 11:19, and gives

it. But largely, and in respect of the necessity of its presence, he does not, he will not, pardon till we repent. No remission without it. In this sense repentance is propounded as the condition of forgiveness, 1 John 1:9; confession is an appendix, if not a formal part of repentance.

10. It is confirmed by the seal of the covenant of grace. Baptism is the seal of repentance. Hereby God engages himself to begin, or increase and continue it in his elect; and the baptized engage themselves to practise it. Hence it is called ‘the baptism of repentance,’ Acts 13:24; John baptized to repentance, Matthew 3:11. But baptism being the seal of the new covenant, confirms, signifies, exhibits, nothing but what is evangelical.

11. It is a fundamental of Christianity, Hebrews 6:1. But nothing legal can be such a fundamental. The covenant of works is so far from being the foundation of Christianity, as it is inconsistent with it. True Christians are quite freed from it. ‘Ye are not under the law,’ Romans 6:14, Galatians 5:18.

12. It is the way to life, Acts 11:18. But there is no other way but that of the gospel. The way by the law, or covenant of works, was shut up by sin. Justice, like the angel, guards the passage in paradise; none can enter, that are sinners, by that old way, nor ever any enter. If the Lord had not found out a new way by the covenant of grace, no flesh had been saved. Repentance is part of this way. The convinced Jews ask the way, Acts 2:37, he shews this. This is the way not to perish, 2 Peter 3:9, so in the text. Nor should this seem a duty of too sour and unpleasing a complexion, to be evangelical. There is more joy in godly sorrow, than in the choicest worldly pleasures. The heart, if not seared and void of sense, even in laughter is sorrowful, Proverbs 14:13. But in the midst of this sorrow the heart rejoiceth. Those that have had experience will bear witness to this. And what heart so sad and mournful, into which that promise will not convey a stream of joy? Blessed, &c., Matthew 5:4. Godly sorrow not only rejoices the heart on earth, but causeth joy in heaven, Luke 15:7.

Use 1. It reproves those who reject this duty as legal. Certainly those who find not this in the gospel, have found another gospel besides that which Christ and his disciples preached. But let them take heed, lest, whilst they will go to heaven in a way of their own, that way prove a by-path, and lead to the gates of death, instead of the place of joy. No way but Christ will bring to heaven, and that has three stages, faith, repentance, and obedience. He that will sit down at the end of the first, and never enter upon the other, will never reach heaven. Indeed, he that walks not in all, walks not in any, he is deluded, misled by an ignis fatuus, a false fire; and if the Lord do not undeceive him, will fall into the bottomless pit.

Use 2. Exhort. To practise this duty evangelically, that is most congruous. Directions:

(1.) Undertake it for evangelical ends. The end gives nature and name to the action. If your aims be legal, mercenary, the act will be so. Go not about it only to escape hell, avoid wrath, satisfy justice, remove judgments, pacify conscience. Ahab and Pharaoh can repent thus, those who are strangers to the covenant of grace. How then? Endeavour that you may give God honour, that ye may please him, that you may comply with his will, that you may never more return to folly. Confess, to give honour, as Joshua 7:19, get hearts broken, that you may offer sacrifice well pleasing.

(2.) Let evangelical motives lead you to the practice of it. Act as drawn by the cords of love. The goodness of God should lead you to it, Romans 2:1-29. Horror, despair, terror of conscience will

drive Cain and Judas to strange fits of legal repentance. The remembrance of sins against electing, distinguishing love, against redeeming, pardoning mercy, against the free grace of the gospel and offers of it, should lead you to it. So should your dealing unfaithfully in the covenant of grace, sinning against the blood of Christ, wounding him, grieving him, who became a man of sorrows. Piercing, Zechariah 12:10, that you have hated him who loved you; grieved him who would have comforted you with unspeakable comforts; dishonoured him who thought not his own glory too much for you; provoked him who would see his own Son die, rather than you should perish; undervalued him who thought not his life too dear for you.

(3.) In an evangelical manner, freely, cheerfully, with joy and delight; not as constrained, but willingly. As those that are amici legis, in love with the duty—for so are pardoned repenting sinners, justificati amici legis efficiuntur.* Christ's people in covenant with him are 'a willing people,' Psalms 110:3, as ready to mourn for sin as for worldly crosses, sufferings; to hate it as to hate a mortal enemy, forsake it as freely as forsake an infectious disease, go against their lusts as David against Goliah: 1 Samuel 17:32, 'Thy servant will go fight with this Philistine.'

(4.) Repent that ye can repent no more. This is an evangelical temper, to be sensible of the defects and failings of spiritual duties; be grieved that you can grieve no more for sin; abhor yourselves that you cannot hate it with a more perfect hatred; count it your great affliction that sin and you are not quite divorced; count the relics of sin which you cannot drive out, what the Canaanites were to the children of Israel, Numbers 33:55, as pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, continual vexation. It is a repentance to be repented of, as it is defective, though not as it is our duty.

(5.) Think not your repentance is the cause of any blessing: it is neither the meritorious nor impulsive cause; it neither deserves any mercy, nor moves the Lord to bestow any. To think it moves him to give any mercy is an impious conceit, because it makes him changeable, who is without variableness. To think it deserves anything at God's hands is a legal conceit. Perfect obedience performed by Adam in the state of innocency had not been meritorious, could not deserve eternal life, suâ naturâ, in its own nature, for it was but his duty; nor was eternal happiness due to it in justice, as the nature of merit requires, but only by virtue of the promise, vi pacti; much less can our imperfect repentance. It does not procure blessings one way or other casually. The Lord pardons sin, loves us, blesses us when we repent, not because we repent; it is via, not causa; a duty, not desert; a means, no merit; a qualification, necessary ratione præsentiæ, not efficientiæ.

(6.) Think not that your repentance can satisfy God, or make any amends for the wrong sin has done him; do not imagine that it is any recompence for the injury sin has done him, or any reparation of that honour which is violated and defaced by sin. Every old corrupt heart is so far legal as it would have a righteousness, a satisfaction of its own, and not rely upon another for it; so proud is corrupt nature, as it is loth to deny its own, to depend only upon another's satisfaction. And therefore we are apt to think that our acts of repentance do satisfy God and appease him, and thereupon, after the exercise of them, will speak peace to ourselves, and stop the mouth of an accusing conscience with such performances, resting on them as though thereby, we had satisfied the Lord. But we must consider that no satisfaction is sufficient to make amends for sin but that which is of infinite value, since the injury sin has done is infinite, having disobeyed, displeased,

dishonoured, an infinite majesty. And such a satisfaction no finite creature can make, not the most perfect saint, not the most glorious angels; much less can such vile, weak, sinful creatures as we, by such imperfect acts of repentance.

(7.) Ye must depend upon Christ for strength, ability to repent; all evangelical works are done in his strength. Repentance is an act above the power of nature, and therefore we cannot practise it without power from above. Ye must depend on, seek to Christ for this power. Adam's condition in innocency required not so much dependence, for he was empowered with sufficient grace to perform all that was required; but his not improving that sufficiency has left all his posterity destitute of all ability to do anything supernaturally good. We want both habits and acts before we can repent; Christ must both give us soft hearts, hearts that can repent, and must teach them by his Spirit before they will repent. Except he smite those rocks, they will yield no water, no tears for sin; except he break these hearts, they will not bleed. Repentance is his gift, his work, Acts 11:18, 2 Timothy 2:25. We may as well melt a flint, or turn a stone into flesh, or draw water out of a rock, as repent in our own strength. It is far above the power of nature, nay, most contrary to it. How can we hate sin, which naturally we love above all? mourn for that wherein we most delight? forsake that which is as dear as ourselves, right hand, eye? It is the almighty power of Christ which only can do this; we must rely on, seek to him for it, Jeremiah 31:18, Lamentations 5:21; that which ye do in your own strength you do legally, and so ineffectually, to no purpose. The gospel beats us quite out of self; live by another life, Galatians 2:20; act by another strength, and satisfy by another's righteousness, Php 3:9; and do all that we do graciously, by the grace of Christ. I laboured, 1 Corinthians 15:10. Therefore Bernard prays quid efficiamus, operare. And Augustine, Da domine, &c., according to his principle, which is truly evangelical, Certum est nos facere quod facimus, &c. In nobis, et nobiscum, ut operemur, operatur. He works our works in us and for us.* Go into your closet, and pour out your requests: Lord, thou commandest me to repent, and I see the necessity; but I have a hard heart, opposite; and Satan and the world, &c.

(8.) Ye must expect the acceptance of your repentance from Christ. No evangelical service whatsoever, or by whomsoever performed, can be well pleasing to God, either in itself or as it comes from us, but only in Christ. Not as it comes from us, for our persons must be accepted before our services can be capable thereof. But how can sinful persons please a holy God? We must either be righteous in ourselves or in another, or else the righteous God will loathe, must punish us. No flesh can be justified in his sight, Psalms 143:2, till Christ cover its deformities, and clothe it with a robe of his righteousness; nor in themselves, for so the best are sinful, in regard of many defects, &c., not fit to be looked upon by him who is 'of purer eyes,' &c., Hebrews 4:13; only acceptable through Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 2:5, Ephesians 1:6.

Adam indeed, under the covenant of works, might have been accepted without a mediator; the purity of his person and perfection of his services would have found acceptance immediately; but for us so to expect it, is both legal and irrational. We sinful persons, with sinful services, having no speckless righteousness to present to God but that of Christ, must either appear in that, or hide ourselves from the presence of him who sits on the throne. No appearing for us but in and by our advocate. God will take nothing well from us unless we take our surety with us. No blessing can be obtained except we come to God in the garments of our elder brother: Isaiah 64:6, De se, non de impiis, all our righteousness, &c.; de bonis operibus, non solum de lapsibus, till they be cleansed in the blood of the Lamb, Revelation 7:14, Job 29:14. If we put on any other robe but that of

Christ's, it is vestis belli, magis quam pacis, ubi adhuc expugnatur, &c.*

(9.) Think not your repentance obliges God to the performance of any promise, as though he were thereby bound, and could not justly refuse to bestow what he has promised to the penitent; for he is not obliged to fulfil it till the condition be perfectly performed. Imperfect repentance is not the condition; God requires nothing imperfect. If he accomplishes his promise upon our weak defective endeavours, it is not because he is by them engaged, but from some other engaging consideration. No man is obliged to perform a promise but when the condition is perfectly fulfilled. If it be defective in quantity or quality, not so much nor so good as the agreement required, he is not engaged, he may refuse; e. g., Ephron promises Abraham a field for four hundred shekels of silver, current money, Genesis 23:15. Now if Abraham had but brought him three hundred, and that not current, wanting weight, or mixed with dross, none will say Ephron had been obliged to give him the field, or unjust for refusing. The Lord promises such and such mercies upon condition of repentance, but it is perfect repentance, for he promises nothing to that which is defective, else he should promise to that which is sinful. But this rather brings us within the compass of threatenings, Galatians 3:1-29. Perfect performances are still required. The gospel remitteth no part, no tittle of the substance of the law, which commands perfect obedience in duties, whether expressly or implicitly, and by consequence contained in it, as repentance is. If it were not still required, why should we strive after perfection, and bewail the want of it? The obligation is eternal, founded in our natures, due from us as we are creatures, &c. The condition therefore of the promises is perfect repentance.

Now our repentance is defective, both in quantity and quality, measure and manner, neither so great nor so good as is required. Our sorrow not so hearty, constant, ingenuous, &c., and so does not engage.

Why then does God perform? How is he obliged? Why, it is Christ that has obliged him; he makes good the condition. When we cannot bring so much as is required, he makes up the sum; he adds grains to that which wants weight. He has satisfied for our defects, and they are for his sake pardoned, and therefore are accepted, as though they were not defective; omnia mandata Dei facta deputantur, quando quicquid non sit ignoscitur. Christ's undertaking makes good the condition, and so the promise is obliging. Hence, 2 Corinthians 1:20, he is so obliged by Christ's undertaking as, except he will be changeable or unfaithful, he must accomplish. Hence he is called the Mediator, Hebrews 9:15, and surety, Hebrews 7:22. God had promised an eternal inheritance upon conditions, but we broke the conditions, and were not able to make satisfaction, are all bankrupts. God therefore lays hold on our surety, and gets satisfaction of him, and hereby the agreement is made good, and God obliged. God abates nothing of his first proposal; perfect conditions are still required, only he dispenses with personal performance. That which we could not do, Christ has done; his satisfaction is accepted, Romans 10:4, the end, the accomplishment. His fulfilling is the believer's righteousness. Perfectionem legis habet, qui credit in Christum.* Christ has procured pardon for all defects. And in this sense our repentance is as it were perfect, because the defect thereof shall not be imputed. Hence it obliges the Lord, not by virtue of our performance, but of Christ's satisfaction. It is not we, but Christ for us; not what we do, but what he did, suffered, that engages the Lord to perform any promise. Even as when one engaged to conditions, fails in performance, if his surety make other satisfaction, it is the surety that obliges to the accomplishment. It is not our defective, imperfect repentance that engages God to perform

promise; for he never promised to imperfect performances, but Christ making the Lord satisfaction for our defects and imperfections. And so they being not imputed, are not in themselves, but by virtue of this satisfaction, no less obliging than if they were perfect.

(10.) Expect a reward, not from justice, but mercy. The Lord rewards repentance, and other evangelical services, under the covenant of grace. That the reward is not of debt, but of grace; not merces debita, but gratuita; not κατ■ ■φε■λημα, but κατ■ τ■ν χ■ριν. It is a recompence, but a gracious recompence. He is not obliged ex debito justitæ, but bestows it freely, of mere bounty and mercy.

It is true Adam, under the covenant of works, whilst he kept his integrity, might have expected something in justice; for the eternal life was not due to him ex dignitate operis, but vi pacti; and so is debitum improprie, and not ex ordine justitiæ, because there was no proportion betwixt it and his services; and so far as the reward exceeds the value of the service, so far it is of grace and favour. He deserved not eternal life. Yet perfect obedience, if performed, would have deserved justification. It had been but just, that he who was perfectly righteous, should have been pronounced and declared so, if there had been occasion. This was due, Romans 4:4. But to think that any blessing is due to us for our best services, that our repentance makes God in our debt, is a legal apprehension.

It is much is due in justice to the obedience of Christ, for he is worthy. But nothing due to us. It is mere mercy, that what Christ has merited should be bestowed on us. It is mere mercy that we are not consumed. Oh what mercy is it that we are pardoned, reconciled, saved! It is mercy that our repentance is not punished, much more that it is rewarded. It is mercy that we escape the greatest suffering, much more that the Lord vouchsafes to pardon, bless, enhappy us. All is grace, from the foundation to the topstone.

II. Thus much for the admonisher, ‘I tell you.’ Proceed we to the admonition. And in it, 1, the correction, ‘nay.’ Hereby he corrects two mistakes of the Jews: (1.) Concerning their innocency. They thought themselves innocent, compared with the Galileans, not so great sinners, Romans 4:2. (2.) Concerning their impunity, grounded on the former. Because not so great sinners, they should not be so great sufferers, nor perish as they in the text. From the first.

1. (1.) Obs. Impenitent sinners are apt to think themselves not so great sinners as others; to justify themselves, as Pharisees in reference to others; like crows, fly over flowers and fruit, to pitch upon carrion; say as Isaiah 65:5, ‘Stand by thyself,’ &c.

[1.] Because never illuminated to see the number, nature, aggravations of their own sins, how many, how sinful; examine not their hearts and lives; judge of sins according to outward appearance, not secret heinousness.

[2.] Self-love. They cover, extenuate, excuse their own; multiply, magnify others. A κ■λυμμα for their own, a glass for others.

[3.] Ignorance of their natural sinfulness. In which respect they are equally sinful as others. Seed-plots of sin; have a root of bitterness, an evil treasure of heart; a disposition to the most abominable sins that ever were committed, such as they never thought of, nor will ever believe they should yield to, 2 Kings 8:11-12; want nothing but temptation, a fit occasion. Their heart as

tinder; if the Lord permit Satan to cast but a spark in, they will be set on fire of hell, break forth into the most hellish wickedness, &c. Apt to think natural sinfulness an excuse, whereas it is that which makes us most sinful, odious to God, &c. Would you take it for a good excuse if a servant that has robbed you should tell you he has a thievish nature? This will make you hate him far more.

Use. Take heed of this. It is a sign of impenitency. Paul counts himself the chief of sinners: 'If you judge yourselves,' &c., 1 Corinthians 11:31.

(2.) From their conceit of impunity.

Obs. Sinners are apt to flatter themselves with the hopes they shall escape judgments. If they can believe they are not so great sinners, they are apt to conclude they shall not perish: 'Put far from them the evil day,' Amos 6:3, threatened, Amos 6:7; cry Peace, &c. Satan has blinded them. He seeks their ruin, and would have them perish in such a way as there should be no avoiding, and therefore would not suffer them to entertain the least thoughts of their danger lest they should think of preventing, Proverbs 22:3. Lest they should do so, he puts out their eyes, lulls them asleep, that they may perish unavoidably before they be aware; uses them as Jael did Sisera, lays them asleep that justice may strike through their souls while they slumber, that they may go down quick into pit, and not awake till in hell.

Use. Beware of this. It has been the ruin of millions. Those perish soonest who think they shall longest escape, Amos 6:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 'be not deceived, God is not mocked,' &c. Believe the Lord threatening rather than Satan promising. Delude not yourselves with conceits of mercy. There is no mercy for impenitent sinners. To imagine the contrary is a great dishonour to God, an high affront to Christ, makes the gospel a nullity. Satan says, Though thou sin, yet God is merciful, he may save thee. Christ says, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' Now, whether will you believe? Satan says, Though ye do continue to sin, &c., ye may have peace; but the Lord says, Deuteronomy 29:19-20, he will not spare him, &c. Think not to say within yourselves, We are not so great sinners; the least sin, not repented of, is enough to destroy you for ever, to bring the curse of God upon soul and body, Galatians 3:10. He says not, he that continues in some, or in the greatest, but all. If ye so keep all the precepts of the law, as to fail but in one, that one failing will cause all the curses of the law to fall on you. This is the sad condition of every sinner, whatever his sins be. And there is no relief for any, but by the covenant of grace; and you can be assured of no relief thereby without repentance; for Christ, who is truth, has said it, 'Except ye repent, ye shall perish.'

2. So we come to the other part of the admonition, viz., the direction.

Obs. Those that will not repent shall perish. Whosoever. Though as many privileges as these Jews had, and as few sins as they thought they had, yet without repentance they must perish. No salvation without it. It needs no confirmation, since Christ himself does twice affirm it.

It is implied, 2 Peter 3:9, they must needs perish that never recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, 2 Timothy 2:25-26, and never are weary of treasuring up wrath, Romans 2:5.

Repentance has such a relation to, such a connection with, life and salvation, as this cannot be expected without that; for though it be neither merit nor motive, yet consider it as it is, an antecedent and sign, qualification, condition, or means of life and salvation, and the truth will

appear. An antecedent. So there must be no salvation till first there be repentance. Sown in tears before reap in joy.

Sign. A symptom of one being an heir to salvation. And so life belongs as to all, π■ντι, so only to him, μ■ν■, that repents.

Qualification. To fit for life. He that is in love with sin, is not fit for heaven. No unclean thing enters there. Neither will God himself endure him to be there.

Condition. For that is ■ιτιον ο■ ■νε■ ο■κ, without it, never see God: 'Except ye,' &c. This is the condition, without which ye shall not escape.

Means and way to life: via regni, Christ's highway. 'Repentance to life,' Acts 11:18. Peter directs them to this, Acts 2:38.

1. What is it to repent? 2. Why must they perish that do not? For the

1. To repent, is to turn; to return from former evil ways; Ezekiel 14:6, 'Repent, and turn yourselves.' One explains the other: Acts 26:20, 'should repent and turn to God.' Μετ■νοια in the New Testament is ■■■■■■ in the Old Testament, à ■■■■■.

Now in turning, as in every motion, there are two terms, à quo and ad quem, ■ποστροφ■ and ■πιστροφ■: something from which, that is sin; something to which, that is God or righteousness. Hence Athanasius gives this account of the word, quæst. id., δι■ το■το γαρ λ■γεται μετ■νοια, ■τι μετατ■θησι τ■ν νο■ν ■πο το■ κακο■ πρ■ς τ■ ■γαθ■ν. Because hereby the mind is turned from evil to good.

I suppose it principally consists in turning from evil, sin; though he be never truly turned from sin, that turns not to God, &c. Yet that belongs properly to another grace. Repentance especially is turning from; and therefore I shall insist on this. In this turning, there are three acts, as it were so many steps: sorrow for sin, hatred of it, resolution to forsake it. He that does not mourn, &c., shall perish. This is Christ's meaning: 'Except,' &c.

1. Sorrow for sin. To repent, is to mourn for sin, 2 Corinthians 7:9, 2 Corinthians 7:10. The Lord exhorting Zion to repentance, expresses it thus, Joel 2:12; and Peter's repentance is expressed by this, Matthew 26:75. Though there may be sorrow without repentance, yet no repentance without sorrow. It is not every sorrow, for there is a sorrow unto death; nor every sorrow for sin, for Judas was sorry he had sinned, Matthew 27:3-4. What sorrow then? how qualified? It must be hearty and godly sorrow.

(1.) Hearty, such as greatly affects the heart. Not that of the tongue, which is usual, I am sorry, &c.; nor that of the eyes neither, if tears spring not from a broken heart; not verbal, slight, outward, superficial, but great, bitter, cordial humbling; such sorrow as will afflict the soul. The Israelites, in their solemn day of repentance and humiliation, were commanded to afflict their souls, Leviticus 16:29; and the want of it is threatened, Leviticus 23:29. Such a sense of sin, such sorrow for it as will be a soul affliction. When the heart is truly sorrowful for sin, sin is a burden to it; such penitents they are whom Christ invites, Matthew 11:28, there will be such pain and anguish in the heart as when it is pricked, wounded. So were Peter's penitents, Acts 2:1-47, as if it were rent and torn; so Joel 2:13, as if it were broken and crushed. A penitent heart is a broken heart, as David calls it in

his penitent Psalms 51:17. He regards no sorrow but this which issues from a contrite heart, Isaiah 66:2.

It must be a great, a bitter mourning, and therefore is compared to that which is caused by the greatest outward afflictions. So is the sorrow of the Jews at their conversion prophetically described, Zechariah 12:10-11; such sorrow as Sarah would have made for the loss of her first-born, her only son Isaac; or Hannah for Samuel, the son of many tears, of so strong desires.

Sorrow is proportionable to the cause. Now what more bitter affliction than the loss of a child, especially to the Jews, who counted children a greater blessing, &c.? To lose a child, a son, an only son, first begotten son, Oh what sorrow, what bitter lamentation would this have occasioned! Even such should be the sorrow for sin; a bitter mourning, a great mourning, Zechariah 12:11, like that for the untimely death of that blessed prince Josiah; as the inhabitants of Hadadrimmon for Josiah, slain in the valley of Megiddo. A hearty sorrow, not confined to the heart, but if the natural temper afford them, breaking forth in tears, sighs, and sad complaints, the ordinary companions of a sorrowful heart. Such must be sorrow in some degree of sincerity, or else perish.

(2.) Godly sorrow, 2 Corinthians 7:9, 2 Corinthians 7:10, sorrow for sin, as it is against God; not as it is against yourselves, prejudicial to you; as it brings judgments, exposes to wrath, makes you obnoxious to justice, brings within the compass of curses, and in danger of hell. Not as it withholds temporal blessings, so Esau; nor brings temporal judgments, so Ahab; nor as it excludes from mercy, so Cain; nor as it brings hell into the conscience, so Judas. This sorrow is carnal, worldly, unto death. But as it is against God, his authority, mercy, glory, blessedness, holiness, power, sovereignty, truth, justice, being. His authority: as a disobedience of his command, violation of his righteous law, as opposite to his blessed will. His mercy: against him who is unwilling to destroy, willing to pardon, ready to be reconciled, gave his Son, sends his Spirit. His glory: that which dishonours him, casts unworthy reflections on him, crosses his design, and robs him of the glory due to him. His blessedness: displeases, grieves, wearies, burdens; causes him to complain, repent. His holiness: contrary to his pure nature, the greatest deformity, that which he cannot endure to look upon. His power and truth: as that which questions whether he is able to execute his threatenings, or whether he will be as good as his word in executing; sin is an implicit denial of these. His sovereignty: as open rebellion against him, ‘Who is the Lord?’ &c., and as it makes us unserviceable to him; treason. His being: as that which denies him, would depose, dethrone him, cause the holy one to cease; ‘This is the heir,’ &c., Matthew 21:38. His excellencies: prefers self, vanity, Satan, sin, before him.

2. Hatred of sin. This is an act of repentance, and that indeed which is principally essential to it. It is described by this 2 Corinthians 7:1-16, ■γαν■κτησις. Where no indignation, no hatred, there is no repentance. And Job joins these, Job 42:6, so Ezekiel 6:9, Ezekiel 20:43, and Ezekiel 36:31, loathe themselves as sinful, for sin; therefore loathe sin more than themselves. They would not be loathsome but for sin.

It is not enough to dislike it, be displeased at it, angry with it, no nor sorry for it. He that repents will hate it. Be so affected to sin as we use to be towards that which we most hate. We may make use of that sinful hatred amongst men to discover the nature of this gracious affection. When you hate one you wish his ruin, rejoice when any evils befall him, and be ready to do him a mischief when occasion is offered, join with any that would undo him. He that repents will so hate sin as to seek

its death, to crucify, mortify it, rejoice when it is wounded, love that word which smites it, have his heart rise at the approach of it, manifest an antipathy against it.

(1.) This hatred is well grounded. He will hate it, because it is hateful, loathsome in the eye of God, and every eye that is opened. It stinks in his nostrils, therefore would destroy it. So Jacob, Genesis 34:10, 'Ye have made me to stink,' I shall be destroyed. Hate it, because he looks upon it as a mortal enemy to God, to his soul, to all that is good. David gives this account of his hatred: Psalms 139:21, 'I count them mine enemies.'

(2.) An universal hatred. All sin. He that hates not all does truly hate none at all. He that hates sin, as it is sin, will hate all, and he that does not hate it as sin, does not repent of it. It is not enough to hate some sins, in the sense of others, or those that are commonly hated amongst men, as perjury, murder, nor to hate those sins that you have no great occasion to love, those that are not pleasing, profitable, but even that which ye have most loved, had most delight and advantage in, secret as well as open, spiritual sins as well as carnal, small and great. Repentance is inconsistent with love to any sin, Psalms 119:104.

(3.) Irreconcileable. He doth hate it so, as never to be at peace, amity with it; not fall out with it by fits, in some good mood, but return again to folly, be friends again with sin, and use it as kindly, act it as freely as ever. This is not to repent, but to mock God, and delude your own souls, and make your condition worse than before, Matthew 12:43-45. When the soul returns to sin, the devil returns to the soul, and brings with him seven worse than himself. Relapses give the devil more possession. He never truly hated sin who hates it not always. It must be perfect hatred, as extensive, and intensive, so persevering.

3. Forsaking sin. In resolution never to sin more. To repent is to turn; and how turn from sin if not forsake it? It is impossible; as to leave a way, and walk in it; a contradiction. All the characters of repentance, 2 Corinthians 7:11, include this carefulness. Fear, vehement desire, zeal, imply strong resolution. Every resolution is not sufficient; not future, weak, partial; it must be de præsenti, forsake sin presently. Not enough to say, I will do it hereafter, when I have had a little more pleasure, reaped a little more profit by my sins. He that will not forsake it presently, to-day, while it is called to-day, has no true resolution, is far from truly repenting.

Effectual, strong. Such as will put you upon the use of all means to perform it, and make good your resolution to avoid all occasions, company, place, &c.; make you watchful against temptation, stand guarded, careful to remove the cause, original corruption; stopping up the puddle, the spring; not only lop the branches, but strike at the root; diligent in the use of mortifying duties, &c. Where repentance is, there is ■κδ■κησις, a resolution to be revenged for the wrong sin has done to God, to the soul, &c.

Impartial. Forsake all. He that repents, must not say, I will forsake my former ways, so many, so great; I will forsake all but one; the Lord be merciful to me in this. This is but a little one, let me escape with it, and let my soul live in it. All these things I will do, all these sins I will leave, only let me be spared in this. I know not how to live, how to subsist without this. I shall have no comfort of my life, no credit with my neighbours, if I leave this. This is not the voice of a penitent, but of a hypocrite. The best of the sheep and oxen Saul spared, and destroyed the rest, the vile and refuse, when God had enjoined him to destroy all; and then he comes to Samuel with a

justification of himself: 1 Samuel 15:1-35., ‘I have performed the commandment,’ &c. But what says the Lord? how does he resent his partial obedience? See 1 Samuel 15:23. So will the Lord deal with those who, pretending repentance, yet will destroy, forsake none but the vile and refuse, unprofitable, unpleasing sins, &c. He that forsakes not all, forsakes none at all, James 2:10: Eâdem pœna afficietur, atque si omnia violasset. If the rest of the body be cured, yet leave but a gangrene in the least part, it will be the destruction of the whole: Per hujus solius peremptionem, etiam illa integra trahi ad mortem.* Sin is the snare of the devil; by repentance we escape it. Quomodo passer, etsi non toto teneatur corpore, sed uno solo pede, est in potestate aucupis, &c., 2 Timothy 2:25-26. One leak neglected may sink a ship as well as a thousand. Herod did many things, so he avoided many sins; but Herodias he would not part with, and so he perished. It is not enough to forsake almost all; Agrippa was almost persuaded, &c. They are but almost resolved who are not resolute to part with all, Psalms 119:6. He that has ‘respect to all commands’ must respect no sin. That repentance which makes not resolute to forsake all sin is a repentance to be repented of, you must be ashamed of; notwithstanding it, you may, you shall perish.

Reas. 1. Christ has said it. There is reason enough in his word. That is the best ground we have, or can have, for any truth in the world. He has said it, and lest we doubt, he speaks it twice, ver. 3. and 5. He speaks it to the Jews. If any people in the world might think to escape without repentance it was they, having received such great privileges, such special favours; yet these he tells, ‘Except ye repent, ye shall perish.’ He speaks universally, admits no exception, no limitation. Ye shall all, whether your sins be small or great, whether greater sinners than the Galileans or not, ‘except ye repent,’ &c. He says it, who is truth itself, and so speaks undoubted truths; who is God himself, and therefore cannot lie; who is judge of quick and dead, and therefore cannot err in the sentence; who is the great prophet, of whom it was prophesied many thousand years since, that whoever would not hear, that is, believe him, should be cut off; he whose word is more firm than the foundations of heaven and earth: ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this word shall not pass away.’ They shall be dissolved, turned into nothing, sooner than this saying of Christ shall be convinced of the least falsehood. No firmer truth in the world than this, ‘Except ye repent, ye shall perish.’

Reas. 2. Christ never died for impenitent sinners. They must needs perish for whom Christ never died; but he never died for such. Those sins must be punished in hell to eternity which are not expiated by Christ’s blood, but it was not shed for final impenitency. Christ gives repentance to all for whom he died, Acts 5:31. Those who do not will, ask, seek, receive it; those who put it off, defer, have no ground to believe that Christ died for them. And till there be some ground to believe this, there is no hope to escape, no way for such, but they perish. Christ only died for those whom his Father gave to him, John 6:37. But impenitent sinners were not given to Christ; for those who are given to him do come to him, return; those who continue impenitent, run from him.

Reas. 3. Unpardoned sinners must perish. For whom the Lord does not pardon he will punish eternally, but impenitent sinners are unpardoned. Repentance and remission of sins are usually joined in Scripture, and the Lord will never suffer them to be separated. No repentance, no pardon. It is not the cause, but it is the condition, without which no remission. Solomon would not ask pardon but upon this condition, 2 Chronicles 6:26--27, nor does the Lord answer him but on the same terms, 2 Chronicles 7:14, conditionalis nihil ponit in esse. Those who turn not from sin while they live, must die in their sins when they die; and who so die, die eternally. The Lord, who is of

purer eyes than to behold iniquity on earth, will not endure it in heaven. Ye shall sooner see the most holy of the saints cast into hell than an unpardoned sinner admitted into heaven.

Reas. 4. Those whom the Lord hates must perish. But he hates impenitent sinners, Psalms 5:5, ‘Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.’ Now, who are so properly workers of iniquity as those who are so eager at it as they will not leave this work though they be in danger to perish for it? Christ puts it out of doubt. The workers of iniquity must perish, Luke 13:27. Those whom the Lord will tear in his wrath must perish with a witness; but those whom he hates, he tears, &c., Job 16:8. What more due to such impenitent sinners than hatred! what more proper than wrath, since they treasure up wrath! Romans 2:1-29. Will he entertain those in the bosom of love whom his soul hates? No; destruction is their portion, Proverbs 21:15. If all the curses of the law, all the threatenings of the gospel, all judgments in earth or in hell, will be the ruin of him, he must perish. If the Lord’s arm be strong enough to wound him dead, he must die: Psalms 68:21, ‘He will wound,’ &c.

Reas. 5. He that is not, cannot be in the way of life, must perish. But can he escape death and ruin who will never leave the paths that lead thereto? Can he come to life who never sets foot in the way? There never were but two ways to life, the covenant of grace, and the covenant of works; and impenitent sinners are out of both. The way by works is quite blocked up to all; for there are three things in that covenant: all, as creatures, are under the precept; all, by nature, are under the penalty; but none of all are under the promise. None can enter into life by virtue of that, because none can perform the condition. No sinner can come to life this way. Lest, therefore, no flesh should be saved, the Lord was pleased to open another way to life; that is, the covenant of grace. Jesus Christ, by virtue of his satisfaction, is become a new and living way; but to whom? To those only who believe and repent: John 8:24, ‘If ye believe not,’ &c.; Acts 11:18, no life now without satisfaction for transgressing the former way. Christ has made satisfaction; but none shall ever have benefit thereby but those that repent; till then, the threatening of the first covenant is in force, nothing but death.

Resolution of some cases:

Case 1. Whether does this belong to those that have already repented? Whether may this truly be applied to them? Except ye repent, &c.

Ans. In some respects it may; in some it may not. In respect of those sins for which they have repented it belongs not to them. But in respect of future sins, such as they may commit, or have committed, and not repented of them, to them it must be applied, ‘Except ye repent, ye shall perish.’ For though those sins be pardoned at first repentance, yet but pardoned conditionally, so that the sentence shall be revoked if the condition be not performed. Now the condition is repentance; and therefore, in this respect, this is applicable to them, Except ye repent, ye shall perish. For the understanding of this, observe three proportions:

1. All sins are pardoned upon the first act of faith and repentance. All past, present, to come, are actually pardoned, Romans 8:1. If any sin were not forgiven, there would be some place for condemnation; for the least unpardoned makes liable to condemnation. Hence divines say, Justificatio est simul et semel: a sinner is justified, pardoned, but once, and all at once. But though all be then pardoned, yet not all alike. Therefore, observe,

2. Sins past and repented of are pardoned absolutely, because the condition is present; and where the condition is present, that which was conditional becomes absolute. A thing is only conditional when the condition is not present but future. The guilt of those sins would not return, no, not upon supposition of an impossibility, if the conditions which give or shew his right to pardon should be lost. If a man could lose the grace of repentance he should perish, not for his sins formerly repented of, but for his after-impenitency, which would not be true if former sins were not pardoned absolutely.

3. Future sins, or sins unrepented of, are but pardoned to a believer conditionally. Because the condition of pardon is not in being, is future; he has not yet repented for those sins; and if he utterly fail in performing the condition (though the Lord's engaging for performance, by honour and promise, makes this impossible), yet if he should not repent, the former sentence of absolution and general pardon would be revoked, would be a nullity, of no force as to these sins, and consequently he should perish; so that, in respect of these sins, it may be said to those that formerly have been the greatest penitents under heaven, Except ye repent, ye shall perish. From hence we see how dangerous it is to conceive that, after we are assured of pardon, there is no need of repentance. They must perish that are not absolutely pardoned; but these are not absolutely pardoned till they repent; therefore except they repent, they shall perish.

Case 2. Since we must repent of all sins, then it is necessary for sins of ignorance; but how can we repent of these? It seems hard we must perish for not repenting of those acts which we know not to be sins.

Resolution of this will be to shew what sins of ignorance must be necessarily repented of, so as except we repent we shall perish; and also how we may so repent of them as we may not perish. To this end observe, 1, some distinctions; and, 2, some propositions resolving the use.* 1. Ignorance is either voluntary or involuntary.

[1.] Involuntary; when one is ignorant, because not able, or not obliged to know. Either negative, when one is not bound; or invincible, when one cannot know such an act is unlawful.

[2.] Voluntary ignorance is either affected, or out of negligence: affected, when one will not know what is sin, because he has a mind to continue in it, unwilling to leave it: libenter ignorant, ut liberius peccent; out of negligence, when one does not know his sins, because he neglects the means of knowledge, when not diligent to find out whether such an act be sinful.

[3.] Repentance is in act or in purpose: actual, when repentance is presently practised, and the acts of it put forth upon present occasion; in purpose, when there is a disposition, intention, and resolution to exercise repentance, whenever just occasion shall be made known and offered.

[4.] Repentance is implicit and general, or express and particular: particular, when sins in particular are confessed, bewailed, forsaken, every sin punctually and singly by itself; general, when sin is bewailed, not expressly in particulars, but implicitly and in the gross.

2. This premised, for understanding of what follows, take the resolution in six propositions:

(1.) No man shall perish for not repenting of such ignorances as are altogether involuntary. The Lord expects not repentance for such. For sin only is the object of repentance. But such ignorances as are purely unwilling, that is, such as we neither can nor ought to know, are not sins.

It is possible an act may be unlawful in itself, and yet no sin to the actor; v. g., it is unlawful in itself for a man to know one who is not his wife; but Jacob knew Leah, who was not his wife, yet sinned not, because he knew not, nor could in an ordinary way discover that she was not his wife. Jacob might be sorry for this as his affliction, but was not bound to repent for it as his sin; but such ignorances are rare.

(2.) Every man must perish that does not repent of those sins whereof he is affectedly ignorant. He is bound to repent of both; for the ignorance is a sin no less than the act; it argues love to sin, unwillingness to leave it, which is a sign of an impenitent heart, of one that gives himself up to live in sin. There can be no true repentance, where such ignorances are not repented of. He that does not repent, both of that ignorance, and of those sins whereof he is so ignorant, must perish.

(3.) He is deservedly in danger to perish who repents not of those sins which he is ignorant of, through carelessness, negligence. For though there may be true repentance, where there is some degrees of negligence, where all possible diligence is not used, for getting the knowledge of those sins which are to be repented of, yet such repentance is dangerously defective, and in that respect must be repented of, except ye will perish.

Therefore, when ye go about this great work of repentance, you must use all diligence in surveying your lives, and searching your hearts, and viewing both in the glass of the law, and desiring the Lord to make clear and full discoveries of sin, that so, if your repentance be defective, it may not willingly be so.

(4.) Because, after all diligence we can use, multitudes of sins will not be discovered, since they are so many as they pass knowledge, Psalms 19:12; though it be required under penalty of perishing, that we repent in particular of every known sin; though we must confess and bewail particularly, and singly by itself, every sin that we do or may know; yet for sins that we cannot know, a general repentance will be accepted; we may wrap up such unknown sins in gross, as David, Psalms 19:12. But this consideration that your sins are so infinitely many, that you cannot repent of them in particular, as you should do, must increase your sorrow for, and add to your hatred of, this fruitful monster, and beget resolutions of more watchfulness, &c.

(5.) Though no more he expected for present, than such a general repentance for unknown sins, yet withal there must be a particular repentance in purpose: i. e., there must be an intention, a disposition, a resolution, to repent of every of those now unknown sins, particularly and punctually, when discovered; and where this is, the general implicit repentance will be accepted, as though it were particular; for in this case the Lord accepts the will for the deed, according to that 2 Corinthians 8:12. Where there is this purpose of particular repentance, there is a willing mind to repent particularly.

(6.) A man shall not perish that repents of sins altogether unknown, though he do not reform them. Some acts of repentance will be sufficient for these, though all be necessary for known sins. One may truly mourn for these, though he do not usually forsake them; for a man may bewail unknown sins in general, though he have not a distinct knowledge of them; but he cannot reform them, except he know particularly that they are sins. Sorrow for all sin, known and unknown, is necessary; but there cannot be actual reformation of sins altogether unknown; therefore, instead of actual reformation, a resolution to forsake whatever the Lord shall make known to be a sin, is in

this case sufficient. So it was with the holy men before Christ, in reference to polygamy; they repented for all sin in general, and so for this: but they did not reform this, because they did not know it was a sin.

There must be actual reformation of every known sin, else ye perish; but for those which ye cannot know, repenting in general, mourning, confessing, prayer for pardon of all in general, with a stedfast purpose to forsake, reform, whatever shall be discovered to be a sin, will be sufficient.

Quest. Is repentance necessary after first conversion? And how?

Ans. It is necessary in respect of sins before conversion, of sins after, and of that sin which is both before and after, natural corruption.

1. In respect of sins before conversion. That is not denied by any. You may as well deny there is any such thing as repentance, as deny these are to be repented of. Those grant it necessary for these, which deny it for the other.

2. In respect of sin both before and after, natural depravation. I have suggested many grounds why this is to be repented of, and they equally concern all. An abiding sin, so superlatively sinful, is a constant ground of sorrow, hatred, self-abhorrency, and endeavours to be rid of it.

3. In respect of sins after conversion. From the ground formerly expressed, repentance for these is the condition of pardon of these sins; they are not absolutely pardoned till the condition be fulfilled, and so, not till they be repented of. That it is the condition of pardon as to these sins is evident, because it has all the ingredients that are in any evangelical condition—all that is to be found in anything which the gospel calls a condition. And therefore, if anything in the gospel be a condition, repentance is so in reference to the remission of these sins. It is,

(1.) Promissioni annexa, added to the promise of pardon, as a condition, which civilians call res addita negotio. Promise of remission runs conditionally, 2 Chronicles 7:14; here is a promise to pardon the sins of God's people (therefore sins after conversion) upon condition of repentance, 'if they humble themselves and turn.'

(2.) A promittente postulata. It is required, commanded by God to his people, after conversion; so a condition, for that is res postulata, &c. To waive instances in the Old Testament, as those against which the opposites, though most vainly, except, see how often Christ himself requires it of his people in the Asian churches; of Ephesus, after much commendation of her graces, manifested both in doing and suffering for him, Revelation 2:4-5; of Pergamos, for tolerating heretics amongst them, Revelation 2:16; of Sardis, for her imperfections, Revelation 3:3; of Laodicea, for lukewarmness, Revelation 3:19; yet there he intimates his will that they should repent. Paul required this of the Corinthians, and rejoiceth in their compliance therewith, 2 Corinthians 7:8-9. All commands of repentance concern such sins; non est distinguendum ubi lex non distinguit.

(3.) Necessaria ad impletionem, necessary to performance. Conditio est res sine quâ non. This appears from the premises. If the Lord would pardon absolutely without it, why does he peremptorily command it to converts? Why adds he this, in form of a condition, to the promises of pardon? Proverbs 28:13. This must be extended to sins after conversion, because there is no reason to restrain it. That it is necessary, appears further thus:

It is a part of regeneration, an infused grace: therefore it does not vanish after its first acts; that is contrary to the promise: nor does it continue idle, unexercised in the habit, till death; for that is contrary to the nature of grace: it will be active, fruitful—active, when there is occasion. Sin, when committed, is an occasion to exercise repentance, or else there can be no occasion for it. Can an instance be given of any other grace, whose exercise is never required, but immediately after its first infusion? Must all graces else be exercised all our lives, repentance only excepted? Who can imagine this without evident ground from Scripture? That which is not fruitful, active, is not from the Spirit. There may be some intermission, but no total cessation. It may be sometimes winter, but not all the year, all a man's life. That is no tree of righteousness which brings not forth fruit in its season; no plant of our heavenly Father's planting, but that which must be cut down. Is it not absurd to make this rod of God blossom upon our first implantation into Christ; and then immediately wither, and continue in the soul as a dead stick, without leaf or fruit, without act or exercise? Does the Lord give a soft heart to continue always, to shew itself only at first conversion? It is too absurd for any rational mind to close with.

Besides, the acts of repentance are necessary, in respect of sins after conversion; therefore repentance itself. It is necessary we should hate, forsake, bewail sins, after conversion; ergo, necessary to repent of them.

1. Hatred of those sins is necessary: for if continuance in the state of grace be necessarily required to the continuance of pardon, then hatred of these sins is required to the pardon of them. But the former all grant, and the consequence is clear, because want of hatred to sin, or, which is all one, love to sin, is inconsistent with the state of grace, Psalms 79:10. He that hates not evil, those evils, loves not the Lord; and he that loves not the Lord is not in the state of grace, 1 John 3:14. with 1 John 5:2.

2. Forsaking of those sins is necessary to pardon, for the same reason. Pardon is not continued, but to those that continue in the state of regeneration; and those that live in sin are not in that state, 1 John 3:9 and 1 John 5:18. As he commits not sin like others, so he continues not committing it as others. Where no forsaking of these sins, no regeneration; and where this is not, there is no pardon; ergo, without forsaking these, no pardon.

3. Sorrow for these sins is necessary to pardon: for he that is not sorry for these sins, takes pleasure in them; and he that takes pleasure in sin is in a state of condemnation, therefore not pardoned, 2 Thessalonians 2:12. Besides, if it were not necessary, why should the saints afflict themselves with it? Why did Peter weep bitterly? Why David? If they were not necessary, they were works of supererogation.

Quest. Whether must sorrow, required to true repentance, be as great as our sorrow for outward afflictions, loss of relations, estate, liberty, credit, hopes, &c.? If thus much be necessary, I fear I am in an impenitent state, &c. I never felt my heart so sensibly affected, so heavily affected with sin, as with these.

Ans. 1. Not only as much, but more sorrow for sin, is necessary to repentance, than for outward afflictions. He never truly repented, who has not been more grieved for his sins than for his sufferings, Matthew 10:13; Luke 14:26, hatred, a less degree of love; he that loves not these less than me, &c. Now sorrow is a sign of love, proportionable to it. He that mourns more for the loss of

these than losing, dishonouring Christ, loves these more than Christ. And such are unworthy of Christ, are in a state incapable of any benefit by Christ, an impenitent state. Thus no true repentance, where is not more sorrow for sin, than for any affliction has befallen, or you can imagine may befall. But lest you may mistake it for less, or but equal, when more, observe,

2. There may be a greater sorrow in a soul truly penitent, than sorrow for sin when it is there alone, viz., when sense of affliction and sense of sin both lie upon the soul at once, and the heart is sorrowful for both. This double sorrow may exceed sorrow for sin, when single. When these two streams meet, the tide of sorrow will be higher. Therefore it is no ground to conclude against the truth of repentance, because there has been greater sorrow than sorrow for sin alone; except when both these have seized upon the soul together, sorrow for the affliction has exceeded the sorrow for sin. David mourned both for his sin and the loss of his child at once; there was more sorrow in his soul than if there had been but one occasion of grief: yet his repentance was true, because his sorrow was more for his sin than for the loss of the child. There may be greater sorrow in the soul than sorrow for sin alone; yet sorrow for sin may be the greatest.

3. Sorrow and grief for afflictions may seem greater than sorrow for sin, when it is not really so. It may seem greater, because many times it is more sensible, more passionate, makes greater noise, vents itself more in outward expressions, tears, &c. That sorrow which is most passionate, is not always greatest in God's account. How passionately does David bewail his loss of Absalom! Yet was his sorrow for sin greater, upon a just account, else he had never been approved as a sincere penitent. There may be true repentance, not where grief for sin is less, but where less outward, less sensible, passionate, &c. It may be greater in other respects, more necessary to repentance, more acceptable to God, though less in these respects. Therefore observe, 4. Sorrow for sin may be greater than sorrow for outward sufferings, though it seem not so in many respects.

(1.) Objectivè. Because this sorrow for sin has more objects. He mourns for more sins than afflictions; therefore this sorrow is more for sin than for sufferings. He is grieved, sorrowful for all known sins, but these infinitely exceed sensible afflictions in number, and therefore his sorrow for these is greater. If his grief for some particular sin should be exceeded by grief for some special afflictions, yet sorrow for all sins, being so many, will exceed sorrow for sufferings, being so few. But supposing that it is not sufficient to true repentance, that sorrow is in this sense greater for sin, &c., because indeed we should be more grieved for any one sin than for all afflictions; yet with others it will be sufficient to it.

(2.) Subjectivè, in respect of the subject. Sorrow for sin takes up more of the soul than sorrow for afflictions, &c. This is a passion, and is principally in the sensitive appetite; but the will and understanding have more influence upon sorrow for sin.

[1.] There is more of the will in grief for sin, &c. Quoad voluntatem more; for this is voluntary, that is natural. This is of choice, that seizes upon the heart unavoidably. This is comfortable, that is an affliction, part of the curse. A true penitent would choose this sorrow, rather than freedom from outward affliction.

[2.] Every affection, every act of the will, contributes something to this sorrow for sin, and so makes it more. A penitent desires he could mourn more; wishes his head were waters, and his eyes fountains of tears, &c.; that all sorrow were turned into sorrow for sin; loves a broken heart,

and that word which melts it; hates the relics of hardness, counts it the greatest judgment; is ashamed he mourns so little for that which deserves so much; and so is more afraid of a hard insensible heart than of outward affliction; delights in tenderness, when his heart will melt, bleed, &c.; and is sorrowful because sorrow is so small. So it is quoad affectum more.

[3.] The understanding makes sorrow for sin more, by several acts.

First, A man judges sin the greatest cause of sorrow; the least sin a better ground, a juster occasion for the greatest sorrow than the sharpest affliction of the least; thinks afflictions a slender ground in comparison of sin.

Secondly, He judges he can never sorrow enough for sin, though too much for afflictions: thinks tears of blood would not be too great an expression of grief for sin; rivers of tears not sufficient.

Thirdly, He judges and censures himself for the defects of this, for the excess of that. Counts it his sin, his misery that he mourns so little for sins, so much for afflictions: so more appropriative. Though sorrow for outward crosses be more passionate, yet if he can find grief for sin greater than it, in respect of will, affections, judgment, according to the tenor of the particulars expressed, no reason to conclude against the truth of repentance, especially if greater.

(3.) Interpretativè, in respect of endeavours. He that labours to grieve more in God's gracious interpretation, does grieve more. A true penitent will aggravate his sins to the utmost; will entertain such thoughts and considerations as may humble him, and increase his sorrow for sin; will be importunate with the Lord to take away the heart of stone; will be often looking upon Christ crucified; will be diligent in the use of all means which are appointed to break, humble, affect his heart with sin; endeavour to mitigate his sorrow for afflictions, as that which is unprofitable, dangerous; but to increase sorrow for sin. So it is quoad conatum more.

(4.) Terminativè, in respect of the termination of his sorrow. When he mourns for afflictions, his sorrow is terminated in sin. He grieves for them, because they are the issues of sin; would not think them worthy of his sorrow, but only because they are the effects of sin. If the effects be so grievous, Oh, what is the cause? If I had never sinned, I had never suffered, therefore I have more reason to grieve for sin. This is the spring, they are but the streams that flow from it. This is that root of bitterness, they but branches. This pulls down God's hand to scourge me, they are but rods. Oh let me not be so foolish as to grieve at the rod, but at that which procured it! He that grieves for afflictions, principally because they come from sin, grieves more for sin than them. The papists say they do not worship an image so much as God, because they do not terminate their worship in the image; but though this evasion will not excuse them from idolatry, because they should not worship an image at all, yet it is true in this case; he that grieves for afflictions, but terminates his sorrow in sin, grieves more for sin; so that, if when you mourn for crosses, if principally because for sin, and for sin the cause, no reason to conclude against the truth of your repentance.

(5.) Effectivè, in respect of the effects. Sorrow for sin in a penitent has this issue, he had rather suffer any affliction than commit the least sin. And this is a sign, an evidence, that sin is more grievous, that his sorrow for it has been greater. He looks upon it as an object more full of sorrow and misery than any suffering. Where sorrow for sin has this effect, there is no reason to conclude that sorrow for affliction has been greater. He that would suffer anything rather than sin in the

least, may be assured that he is grieved more for sin than afflictions. Yet this is its effect in true mourners, sincere penitents.

(6.) Ratione oppositionis, in respect of the opposition. We find it true in other things, that which seems a little, because much opposed, is really more than what seems much when no opposition. Sorrow for sin is strongly opposed by Satan, the world, sinful nature; it inclines naturally to happiness, and thinks sorrow contrary to it; it loves sin, and will not be brought to mourn for it. But sorrow for affliction has no such opposition. Satan is a friend to it, nature resists it not, for it is natural; and therefore that which may seem no great degree of sorrow for sin, yet if it be sincere, may be accounted greater than passionate grief for afflictions.

(7.) Habitualiter, and in respect of continuance. That is the greatest sorrow, which is of longest continuance. What it wants in height of passion and sensibleness is made up in duration, it is permanent. A land-flood fills the banks on a sudden, and more water is visible at that time than all the year; and yet there is more water conveyed there in an ordinary stream, because the current is constant. So sorrow for some unexpected, grievous affliction may make his sorrow rise and swell like a land-flood; yet sorrow for sin, continued in a constant exercise of repentance, is greater than it, though it make not so much noise, because it is of longer continuance, more durable.

Sorrow for affliction is worn out with time, and often quickly over; but sorrow for sin in a true penitent doth never cease, always manifests itself upon occasion.

He that truly mourns for sin will never be comforted in respect of the offence of sin, though is always comforted in respect of the guilt of sin. He is always grieved when he remembers how his sins have offended, dishonoured God, and so he refuses to be comforted. He need not be sad for the guilt, for the danger of his sin, to which it exposed him, because it is removed; no condemnation in reference to the guilt. The Lord says he sees no iniquity, &c., Numbers 23:21. Nor need a penitent any more to see it so as to be afraid, dejected, grieved for the punishment deserved by sin; for he is as safe from that as though he had never sinned, and so may rejoice and be glad in this respect in the midst of his sorrow, be comforted in the midst of his mournings. But in reference to the offence it is with true penitents as it was with David, Psalms 51:3, his sin ever before him; and whenever it was in his eye, grief was in his heart. Can never consider what injury sin has done to God, but the soul will mourn, the heart grieve. When the Lord has once opened a spring of sorrow in the heart, it is never quite dried up till he come to heaven, if there. So it is more, because it continues longer.

If your sorrow for sin be in these respects greater than for afflictions, it is greater upon all accounts that are necessary, and so no reason to conclude against the truth of repentance.

Quest. Whether may we mourn for sin in reference to those effects of it which concern ourselves? Whether may sin be the object of our sorrow, as it exposes to wrath, makes us miserable, excludes from mercy, brings in danger of hell? Whether do they repent who mourn for sin because of these effects?

Ans. That this may be resolved, we must distinguish the effects of sin that concern us. Some of them concern us only, seem alone prejudicial to us; as that it brings judgments on us, deprives us of outward mercies, exposes us to eternal miseries. Some of them concern both God and us, and so it is injurious to both. Such are its defilement, it makes the soul deformed so as it cannot please

God. Impotency makes it unserviceable, so as it cannot obey God; contrariety sets the soul in opposition to God, contrary to his nature, will, designs, so as it cannot honour him; nothing but dishonour, displease, and disobey him. This premised, take the resolution in four propositions.

1. We may mourn for sin in respect of those effects that concern us only. That sorrow is not unlawful in itself which has these for its objects. It is lawful to mourn for things less grievous, for outward temporal afflictions, such as are common to all. The Scripture forbids not this sorrow, but only limits it; bids us mourn moderately, as not without hope, &c. The Lord requires not we should be stocks, without sense of sufferings, 'without natural affections.' No; ■στ■ργοι are reckoned amongst the greatest of sinners, Romans 1:31. Now, if we may mourn for smaller evils, much more for greater; if for those of this life, then for those that concern eternity; if for bodily afflictions, then for soul judgments; if for loss of estate, friends, then for loss of God, of happiness. It is not unlawful.

2. This kind of sorrow, if only or principally for these effects, is no act of saving repentance. It is rather, if alone, 'the sorrow of the world, which worketh death.' It is not that which worketh repentance unto salvation. The cause of such sorrow may be, and is, self-love, not love to God; the issue may be death, the companion despair; the subject may be a reprobate. Such was the sorrow of Cain, Judas, Ahab, Esau. It is true the Lord often works such sorrow in vessels of mercy before he bestows grace, and therefore it is called by many a preparation for grace; and so it may be called in some sense; but so understand it as that it has no necessary connection with grace. He that goes no further, as divers do not, shall never arrive at grace. He who sorrows no otherwise for sin, does not 'sorrow after a godly sort,' does not 'sorrow unto repentance,' 2 Corinthians 7:1-16.

3. Sorrow for sin, in reference to those effects which concern both God and us, is not only lawful, but necessary. It is an act of true repentance to mourn for those sad issues of sin; to bewail sin, because it has made us deformed, impotent, contrary to God. David, when he repented, was affected with the defilement of sin; he was humbled, mourned for sin, in this respect. Hence it is his prayer: Psalms 51:7, 'Purge me,' &c., 'wash me.' Paul bewails his impotency, Romans 7:18-19; and ascribes it to sin dwelling in him, Romans 7:20; and in sense of both cries out, Romans 7:24. Such sorrow, since it is for sin, not only as it is prejudicial to the sinner, but principally and ultimately as it is injurious to God, is, and should be, accounted godly sorrow.

4. Sorrow for sin, the more it is for sin as it is against God, the more ingenuous, the more evangelical, the more genuine act of saving repentance. The more it is for sin, as sin is prejudicial to us, the less ingenuous, &c.; and a less evident, a less comfortable, sign of repentance unto life. There are two sure characters of ingenuous, gospel sorrow: when it proceeds from sense of God's love to us, non potest agere pænitentiam, qui non sperat indulgentiam; and when it proceeds from our love to God, when we mourn for offending him, because we love him. Now, these are not, or not so visible, in any sorrow for sin as that which mourns for sin as it is against God. The other springs rather from self-love, when we bewail sin because it is against us, hurtful, dangerous, damnable, Ezekiel 6:9. This was not the temper of David's sorrow, it was of a more evangelical strain: Psalms 51:4, 'Against thee,' &c. Why, David had sinned against himself, not only against God. He had sinned against his friend, against his own body, soul, estate, family, and involved all these in great dangers, exposed all to grievous sufferings. It is true David knew it, but he takes no

notice of that. That which grieved, affected him was, that his sin was against God; and his sorrow so much respects this, as though he had sinned against God alone, as though his sin had been only injurious to him. This is the genuine temper of godly sorrow.

Therefore, though sorrow for the effects of sin may have its place elsewhere, yet when we would sorrow to repentance, we should look at the nature of sin, not at its effects (except such as concern God only, or him principally, him more than us); sin, in its nature, is more against God than in its effects. For the effects of sin are not directly against God, but when one sin is the effect of another. That is most properly godly sorrow, which is for sin as it is against God. But sin in its nature is most against God, a violation of his law, disobeying his will, contempt of his authority, &c. That sorrow which arises from the consideration of the nature of sin, is most ingenuous, and the most certain evidence of sincere repentance.

Quest. Whether the hatred of sin, which is required to true repentance, may consist with any love to sin?

Ans. 1. All hatred of sin is here imperfect. No perfection in this life, but sense of imperfection. Both graces, and gracious affections, want many degrees of perfection. Grace is but of a child's stature, it has perfection of parts, but not of degrees. A child has all the parts of a perfect man, but wants many degrees of man's perfection. And as with grace, so with this affection; it is not perfect, either ratione objecti; sin is not hated as it should be according to its hatefulness; nor ratione facultatis, so much as it is possible for the heart to hate it; not raised to such high degrees of hatred, as it may be will be.

Ans. 2. A less degree of hatred may be called love. He that hates sin less than he should do, may be said in some sense to love it. A less degree of love is called hatred, Luke 14:26. And so a less degree of hatred may be called love, though not properly and strictly. For that imperfect hatred should be called love, as it is not according to the ordinary rules of art, so it is not according to the constant tenor of Scripture expressions. I remember no place but this to ground it, and this but by consequence.

Ans. 3. He that truly hates sin, though but imperfectly, cannot be properly said to love it. He that hates all sin, and hates it above all that the world counts hateful, and abhors himself that he can hate it no more, and mourns for the imperfection of his hatred, and strives in the use of appointed means to perfect it, does truly hate it. In the same subject there cannot be contrary affections to the same object. We count it impossible to love and hate the same thing or person. In immediate contraries, positio unius is sublatio alterius. He that hates does not love, &c. It is as impossible, as for the same thing to be both black and white; the same water to be at once both hot and cold. It may be neither, but it cannot be both; if one, not the other. So here, and though hatred be but in us in a remiss degree, imperfectly, and it may be supposed the imperfection arises from the mixture of the contrary affection, yet that which is predominant gives the denomination. He that hates sin more than he loves it, may be said simply absolutely to hate it. We say not water is cold if it be hot above lukewarmness, though it be not hot in the utmost extremity. We say not that he loves sin who hates it truly, though not perfectly. If he be overpowered to act it, surprised with some pleasure in it, this argues not love. For he abhors himself acting, mourns bitterly for delight in it, as Paul, Romans 7:1-25.

Ans. 4. He that truly repents, does truly hate sin; so hate it, as he gives no occasion, upon any just ground, to say he loves it. And by consequence true repentance is inconsistent with love to sin, it may be without perfect hatred, but it cannot be with any degree of that which may be properly called love, &c.

Quest. Whether must we repent of original sin? That this may be more clearly propounded and resolved, observe a distinction, the non-observance of which occasions much darkness, both in men's apprehensions and discourses of this subject.

Original sin is, 1. Imputed, 2. Inherent.

1. Imputed, is Adam's sin, that which he actually committed in eating the forbidden fruit. Called original, because it was the first sin, and committed at the beginning of the world, when the first foundations of man's original were laid. Imputed, because Adam representing us and all mankind, what he did, we did in God's account, he looks upon us as sinning by him, Romans 5:19-20.

2. Inherent, is that natural corruption which cleaves to us, dwells in us, consisting in the privation of original righteousness, and propensity to all unrighteousness; the sad issue and effect of the former sin. Adam receiving this original holiness for himself and his posterity, lost it for himself and them; and holiness being gone, a proneness to all sin necessarily followed. It is called sin, because it is a state opposite to the will and law of God; the absence of that which it requires, the presence of that which it forbids. Original, because we have it from our birth, from our original. Inherent, because it is not only accounted ours, but is really in us. Of this Genesis 6:5, and Genesis 8:21, Job 4:5, Psalms 51:7.

Quest. Whether must we repent of Adam's sin, that which is but imputed to us, that which was committed so many years before we were born?

Ans. This must be repented of with such acts of repentance as it is capable of, confessed, bewailed, hated. As to avoiding, forsaking of it, we need not be solicitous, because there is no danger it should be recommitted. But we must acknowledge, aggravate, mourn for it, abhor it, hate the memory of it. So I conceive (though I meet not with any that determine this), on this ground.

1. We are bound to repent and mourn for the sins of others, much more for those that are any ways our own. This à fortiori. This has been the practice of holy men formerly: David, Psalms 119:158, so Jeremiah 13:17. Sins of fathers, Jeremiah 14:10, many hundred years committed before. It is prophesied of the Jews, that when the Lord shall convert them, they shall mourn for the sin of their forefathers who pierced him; so Daniel 9:1-27; and Moses's ordinary practice. If repentance prevent judgment, then it might prevent those that are inflicted for sins of others, progenitors. The Lord often punishes for their sins; if we would not suffer for them, we should repent of them. And if of others' sins, then of that which is ours; and this is ours by imputation. And justly is it imputed to us. For by all human laws, children are charged with their fathers' debts, the father's treason taints his posterity.

2. We are bound to rejoice in imputed righteousness, and therefore to mourn for imputed sin. Adam's sin is ours, the same way as Christ's righteousness, viz., by imputation, Romans 5:19, and contrariorum contraria sunt consequentia. If we must rejoice in Christ's righteousness, we should bewail Adam's sin. And indeed great cause of joy in that it is the marrow, the quintessence of the

gospel; the most gladsome part of those ■υαγγ■λια, those glad tidings which are published in the gospel; the sweetest strain of that message, which, the angel says, was ‘good tidings of great joy to all people,’ Luke 2:10. Imputed righteousness is that blessed design which the Father from eternity contrived, which Christ published and performed, into which the angels desire to pry, that lost man, who could not be saved without righteousness, who had no righteousness of his own to save him, should have a righteousness provided for him, whereby he is freed from wrath, and entitled to heaven. Sure this is, this will be, an occasion of eternal joy; and if so, imputed sin is a just ground of sorrow.

3. As long as the Lord manifests his displeasure against any sin, so long we are called to mourn for it The Lord is highly provoked, if, when his hand is stretched out against any place or person for sin, they will not see it, so as to repent of it, and be humbled under it. He interprets this to be a contempt, and this highly exasperates. It has been the practice of holy men, when wrath was either executed, or threatened, to mourn for the sins that occasioned it, though committed by others, and long before. See it in Josiah, 2 Chronicles 34:31. There he takes notice of forefathers’ sins; and see how he is affected therewith: 2 Chronicles 34:27, ‘his heart was tender, he humbled himself.’

We are called to mourn for sin, whenever wrath is manifested against it; but the wrath of God is still revealed from heaven against that first unrighteousness; his displeasure is still legible in the effects of this sin, the dreadfullest effects that ever any act produced, no less than all sin, and all misery. That threatening, Genesis 2:17, is still in execution, and the execution is terrible; every stroke is death, spiritual, personal, temporal, eternal, take it in the most extensive sense. Adam’s soul was struck dead immediately; and by virtue of that sentence, all his posterity are dead men, born dead in trespasses and sins. Personal death, death of afflictions; all the sorrows and sufferings of this woeful life, they flow from this cursed spring. Temporal, in Adam all died; it he had not sinned, all had been immortal. Eternal, all must die for ever that repent not. Great cause then to repent of this sin.

Quest. Whether must we repent of that original sin, which is inherent; that natural corruption, the loss of original holiness; and that innate propensity to evil? It may seem not to be any just occasion of sorrow, because it is not voluntary, but natural; having, without our consent, seized upon us unavoidably.

Ans. This is principally to be repented of, as that which is the mother sin, the cause of all actual sins. Nor should the supposed involuntariness of it hinder us from making it the object of our sorrow.

For, 1, every sin is to be repented of. But this is a sin exceeding sinful, indeed, all sins in one. For, what is sin, who can better determine than the Lord himself? And he in Scripture determines, that whatever is a transgression of the law is sin, whether it be voluntary or no; not only that which we actually consent to, but that which he peremptorily forbids. The apostle’s definition of sin is unquestionable, 1 John 3:4, ■μαρτ■α ■στιν ■ ■νομ■α; but no greater transgression than this, since it transgresses all at once. We are commanded to be holy; so the want of holiness is forbidden, which is the privative part of this sin. We are commanded to love the Lord with all our hearts; so the heart’s inclination to hate God is forbidden, which is the positive part. Was not the apostle Paul more able to judge what is sin, than any papist, Socinian, &c.? He calls it sin five

times, Romans 6:1-23, six times, Romans 7:1-25, three times, Romans 8:1-39, yea and his sin, though he then consented not to it.

2. Suppose (that which is false) no evil is to be repented of, but what is consented to, this should not hinder any from repenting of this sin; for all that are capable of repentance have actually consented to their natural corruption, have been pleased with it, have cherished it by occasions of sin, have strengthened it by acts of sin, have resisted the means whereby it should be mortified and subdued, which are all infallible evidences of actual consent. That which was only natural, is to us become voluntary; and so, by consent of all, sinful; and therefore necessarily to be repented of.

3. The necessity of it is grounded upon unquestionable examples of saints, both in the Old and New Testament. Instance in two of the holiest men that the Scripture mentions. David, in that psalm, which is left as a public testimony of his repentance, to the world, he bewails, acknowledges this, Psalms 51:5. Paul does acknowledge, aggravate, bewail it, as one heavily afflicted with it, Romans 7:1-25. His description of it is very observable: as that which is not good, Romans 7:18; in me, i. e., in the unregenerate part, that which is not good, that which is evil, Romans 7:20, sin, six times; the greatest evil, a condemned forbidden evil, Romans 7:7; a sinful evil, ver. 13, καθ■ ■περβολ■ν ■μαρτωλ■ς; a private evil, Romans 7:20, hinders him from doing good; a positive evil, Romans 7:17, no more I that do it, but sin; perverse evil, grows worse by that which should make it better, Romans 7:8; debasing evil, made and denominates him carnal, Romans 7:14; intimate, inherent evil, sin in him, Romans 7:17, in his members; a permanent evil, ο■κο■σα ■ν ■μο■, Romans 7:17; a fruitful evil, Romans 7:8, all manner of lust; a deceitful evil, Romans 7:11, ■ξηπ■τησ■; an imperious evil, a law, Romans 7:23, gives law, commands as by authority; a tyrannical evil, α■χμαλωτ■ζοντ■, Romans 7:23; sold, Romans 7:14.; a rebellious conflicting, war-like evil, ■ντιστρατευ■μενον, Romans 7:23; an importunate, unreasonable evil, Romans 7:15, forces him to do that which he hates; a watchful evil, Romans 7:21, is present, παρ■κειται; a powerful evil, Romans 7:24, 'who shall deliver?' &c.; a complete evil, Romans 7:24, a body furnished with all members of unrighteousness; a deadly evil, Romans 7:24, body of death, θανατ■δες, Romans 7:11; slew me, Romans 7:9, I died; a miserable evil, Romans 7:24, above all things made him wretched.

Paul suffered as many calamities in the world, as any we read of in it; see a catalogue, 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. But all these sufferings could never extort such a passonate complaint from him, as this corruption. He could glory in those; but sighs, complains, exclaims, in the sense of this. You see how large he is in aggravating this. Here is above twenty aggravations of this. His sorrow was proportionable. No sin, no suffering, for which he expressed so much soul-affliction. And if he saw so much reason to bewail it, it is our blindness if we see it not. The more holy any man is, the more sensible of natural corruption. The more they get out of this corrupt element, the more heavy it is. Those who feel it not, are drowned in it. Elementum non gravitat in proprio loco. Sin is their proper element, who are not burdened with natural sinfulness.

If it was such an intolerable evil in him who was regenerate, how much more in the unregenerate! If it made him account himself wretched who was so happy, how much more miserable does it make those who have no title to happiness! If it was such an impetuous evil in him who had extraordinary powers of grace to weaken it, how prevailing in us, in whom grace is so weak! If he

had cause to complain, bewail, repent of it, much more we!

Quest. Who are impenitent sinners? How shall we know them? How may I discern whether I be in that number, in that danger?

Ans. I shall propound several things whereby ye may know this.

1. He is an impenitent sinner, who does not leave sin at all. Repentance is a turning from sin; he that doth not turn from it at all, does not repent at all. He who lives in sin, does so act it, as he makes it evident that he is a worker of iniquity; does not only ■μαρτ■νειν, as a true penitent may do, sin sometimes by surprisal, without deliberation, full consent, unwillingly, &c., but πο■ειν ■μαρτ■αν, sins constantly, when he has occasion, as though sin were his trade; is constant in sinning; not that he is always acting it visibly, but that he always acts it, seldom forbears when he is tempted; will swear when provoked, be drunk when he meets with company, profane the Sabbath when he has business, though not necessary, disobey the word when it doth not please, revenge injuries when he has opportunity, lie when advantage, deceive when unperceived. When the chief reason why he sins not is because he wants occasion, temptation, opportunity, he is impenitent. He who acts sin in every scene of his life,—in his particular calling, is covetous or careless, negligent of God, to think of, depend on him; in his general calling, frequent omissions, or heartless performances; in his family, ignorance or profaneness, not instruct, not pray for and with them; to neighbours, envious, contentious; in discourse, profane or graceless; in dealings, deceitful, disingenuous; when some sin reigns in every part of his conversation,—if thus, it is clear as the day, if there be any light in the Scripture, he is impenitent.

2. He that leaves not all sin. Repentance is a turning from all sin. He that turns not from all does not at all repent. Where true repentance is, there is an equal respect to all commands. Leaving off sin must be like the Israelites' departure from Egypt, there must not a hoof be left behind, Exodus 10:26, the least sin must not be retained, reserved. That is hypocritical repentance, which, like Saul's obedience, kills only the vile and refuse. It is not enough to reform one part of your conversation, to make clean one corner; the whole will be reformed where true repentance is. If carriage to others be reformed, it is well, but not sufficient, except thou amend thy deportment to God. It may be thou wilt not be drunk, but if thou swear, that is enough to shew thee impenitent. It may be not swear, but profane the Sabbath, &c., it may be attend the ordinances; well, but if not obey, if not pray with heart; if conform to public worship, it is well; but if serve him not in family; it may be left many sins that formerly reigned; but if there be any thou thinkest too pleasing, too profitable to part with, thou art not a true penitent. Turn from all, Ezekiel 18:21.

3. He that leaves sin only outwardly, excludes it out of his conversation, not out of his heart. Repentance is a turning with all the heart, Joel 2:12; it is not only a turning from all sin, but a turning of all the man, the whole man, inward and outward, from all sin. He that abstains from all sin outwardly and visibly may pass for a penitent with men, but it is not so in God's account, unless sin be turned out of the heart as well as out of the life. Man judgeth according to outward appearance, but the Lord judgeth of repentance by the heart. There is no true repentance where the life is not reformed; but there may be an unblameable conversation, a life outwardly reformed, where there is no true repentance. Paul professes that he had lived in all good conscience, &c., until that day, Acts 23:1; and therefore, since he lived so all his life till that day, he lived so before he repented, unblameably, in good conscience outwardly before God, in the account of others,

and in his own account; he lived so before he had truly repented, as neither others nor his own conscience could accuse him for outward sinful acts, Php 3:1-21. Therefore abstinence from sin outwardly is not sufficient. If sin be regarded in the heart, there is no true repentance though the life be freed from it. Men judge of the heart by the life, but God judges of the life by the heart. He hears every prayer of a penitent soul, Isaiah 57:15; yet David says, Psalms 66:18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' Whatever his life was, God would not respect, regard him as a penitent, if he did regard it in his heart. If ye do not break out into gross acts of sin, yet if your hearts entertain them, if you act uncleanness, revenge, covetousness in your thoughts, you are in a state of impenitency.

4. He that leaves sin because he cannot commit it. Repentance is a voluntary forsaking of sin; but sin rather forsakes him than he it. He that is not unclean, because his strength is spent; is not contentious, because he wants means to prosecute suits; wrongs not his neighbours, because he sees them wise to prevent, or able to hinder him; gives not himself to drunkenness, voluptuousness, because not rich enough to maintain himself in such intemperate courses. The heart may be most desperately hard and impenitent, and yet may these abstain from sin; nay, there is such a forsaking of, and abstinence from sin in the devil himself, he can forbear when he cannot help, when there is necessity.

He that sins not because he cannot would sin if he could; and because he would sin, it argues him as much impenitent as if he did. He that rewards the will for the deed in that which is good, condemns and will punish the will for the deed in that which is evil.

5. He that leaves sin only out of sinister respects, by-ends, because it would deprive him of some advantage, or expose him to some loss, if committed, of friends, credit, profit, in respect of God or men; gives not himself to intemperance, because it is expensive; to uncleanness, because it is a sin shameful in the account of the world; avoids oppression, revenge, because civil laws lay penalties; wholly omits not ordinances, lest he should be accounted an atheist; he that leaves sin only thus does not repent; for true repentance is 'repentance toward God,' Acts 20:21. It makes a man forsake sin out of respect to God, because it offends, dishonours him, as Joseph, Genesis 39:9; but this is to abstain from sin out of respect to himself.

6. He that leaves one sin for another; divorces one and engages himself to another; puts away one, and entertains another in the room of it; will not be prodigal as formerly, but grows more covetous; will not be superstitious, but grows profane; not omit duties, but is hypocritical in performance; runs away from one extreme to another; such a reformation is no act of repentance. It is but like Jehu's, 2 Kings 10:1-36, who destroyed Ahab's Baal, but set up Jeroboam's calves, 2 Kings 10:29; this is not a turning from, but unto sin; as the Pharisees, casting out devils by Beelzebub, one cast out another.

7. He that leaves sin but for a time; leaves sin, and resolves to leave it while some judgment lies upon him, whilst under affliction, when upon a bed of languishing, in fear of death, apprehensive of hell and the last judgment. This, in discourse, could make Felix tremble, and almost persuade Agrippa. Many at such times will resolve to abandon such and such sins, and to reform their lives if God will prolong them; but when God's hand is removed, they prove the same men, by following their former courses. When life is restored, hopes of life revive, they return with the dog to their vomit, &c. This is not to repent, but to mock God, and delude your souls; this is not to escape out

of the snare of the devil, but to ensnare your soul ten times more. Ephraim' in affliction would seek God, but after-revolts made their case desperate, Hosea 6:4.

True repentance is never repented of. But those that return to sin hereby shew they are sorry, repent of their shows of repentance, Hosea 7:16. This is returning, but not to the most High. Such are like a deceitful bow, break, or return to their unbent posture before they have delivered the arrow; unbend their resolutions before they come effectual. God looks upon such as guilty of impenitency in a high degree; such as are so far from repenting of sin heartily, as they are sorry they entertained any thoughts of it; for this is the language of after-returns. This was Pharaoh's repentance; while the judgment of locusts was on Egypt, he confesses his sin and desires pardon, Exodus 10:16-17, but the locusts and his repentance vanish both together.

8. He that leaves sin, but does not endeavour to subdue it, will be content it should be confined, but not crucified; restrained, but not put to death; will have the fury and rage of it curbed, that it do not break out so openly, but will not starve it; kept under, not rooted out. He that will not avoid the occasions of sin, those that nourish it, have drawn him on to act sin formerly. He that truly repents of drunkenness will avoid that company which has tempted him to it. He that repents of uncleanness, will, as Job, make a covenant with his eyes. He that repents of profaneness in words, will set a watch before his mouth. He that repents of Sabbath breaking, will so dispose of his affairs before, as he may have no occasion to profane it, to absent himself from the public worship. He that repents of wanderings in prayer, will be watchful against distractions, drive them away. He that turns not from occasions turns not from sin, and so is no true penitent. He that is not diligent in the use of mortifying duties to weaken sin, will not apply that word to his conscience which wounds his sin; casts off searching words, words of reproof and terror, as too sharp, painful corroding plasters for his sore; rather be exasperated against him that speaks them, as one that rails, is too strict.

He, the strength of whose prayers is not against the strength of sin, can pray affectionately for worldly blessings, removal of afflictions, and it may be for pardon of sin, but wants heart, feels an ebb, a coolness in his affectionateness, when he should pray against the strength of sin, either leaves this out of his prayer, or his heart leaves his prayer when he should desire this; can be content to set apart days for private fasts, when some judgment is near or upon him, but never looks upon the power of sin within him as a sufficient, a necessary occasion to humble himself before God by extraordinary mourning and fasting. When such means are not used constantly, as are appointed by God in ordinary for subduing of sin, and extraordinary too, when there is occasion,—a dangerous sign of impenitency. The heathens, many of them, went far in a way of outward reformation, but came short of repentance, because they endeavoured not the destruction of the inward power of sin.

Without this there is no true repentance; for that is a turning from sin wholly, with the whole heart, not only in respect of sin in its guilt and outward acts, but power and dominion. There is an ■κδ■κησις, which is the companion of repentance, 2 Corinthians 7:1-16.

9. He that so turns from sin as he does not turn to God. This motion cannot be perfect without its terminus ad quem. If it be not essential to, it is inseparable from repentance, Isaiah 55:7. So forsake sin, as embrace Christ; so hate sin, as love holiness; so grieve for it as delight in God's ways; steer the conversation to a quite contrary point. Not only cease to do evil, but learn to do

good, Isaiah 1:16-17. It is not sufficient not to profane God's name; he that repents will glorify it; not only not omit holy duties, but perform them in a holy manner; not only not pollute the Sabbath, but sanctify it; not only not dishonour profession, but adorn it; not only abstain from sin, but exercise grace. There are fruits of repentance which John requires, Matthew 3:8, and Luke 3:8. That repentance which brings not forth fruit is not sound, no plant of God's planting; the doom of it you may see, Luke 3:9. Would you think it a sufficient evidence of a good vine, that it brings forth no wild grapes? No; if it be an empty vine, though it have no bad, if it bring not forth good grapes, it is good for nothing. Negative righteousness will never evidence true repentance. It is not enough to say with the Pharisee, Luke 18:11, 'I am not as other men,' &c. The apostle joins these, repent, turn to God, do works, &c., Acts 26:20. Those that would approve themselves clear in this matter, who would give clear evidences to the world and their own consciences that their repentance is to salvation, and that they sorrow after a godly sort, must produce all the effects of repentance which he inquires after, 2 Corinthians 7:11; not only indignation against sin, clearing themselves from vice, but carefulness to express the contrary virtues; not only fear of offending God, but vehement desire to please and honour him; not only revenge for dishonouring God by wicked courses, but zeal for his glory in all the ways of holiness. A fruitless repentance is rejected.

10. He that never had a full, clear discovery of sin. Repentance begins here. The first step is illumination; the Lord causes a light to shine in the soul to discover the hidden things of darkness, sends the Spirit to convince of sin, makes him believe those acts, &c., to be sins which he accounted innocent.

Discovers sin in its number, multitude of abominations; carries him, as the Spirit carried Ezekiel, from one part of his life, from one corner of his soul to another, and still shews him greater and greater abominations, brings those sins to his remembrance which it may be he never thought of since they were committed. Though the work begin at some master sin, and the heart may be affected with one more than the rest, yet it is sensible of all, each adds something to increase sorrow. In weight. Makes him feel the burden of sin, shews how they are gone over his head, Psalms 38:4. In the aggravations. Such a sin against mercy, under affliction, after conviction, reproof, when conscience checked, &c. In the effects, what it has done, and what exposed to. In the evil of it. The sinfulness of it. More evil in it than ever he imagined, than ever he thought he could have believed; more evil in it than in anything he ever acted or suffered.

There must be first knowledge of it before repentance. How can ye repent of that ye never knew? When God gives repentance he first 'opens the eyes,' Acts 26:18, 'turns from darkness to light.' As a man who has walked through a way in the dark, full of serpents, snares, pits, when he passes through it again with a light, and sees his danger, he wonders that every step was not his death. He that wondered before that any should make so much ado about sin, that so much sorrow, so much mourning should be pressed; he that was apt to think that they were hypocrites, who talked of their humiliation, tears, and secret mourning for sin, to imagine that whatever was pretended, there was no such thing in reality, will now change his opinions; sees so much evil in sin as he can never sufficiently bewail; wishes he could command back all that sorrow which he has misspent upon his sufferings in the world, that he might spend it upon sin as that which most deserves it; thinks all his time little enough, his constitution cannot afford tears enough to bewail it; so many, so sinful enormities, he wonders that any sin should be counted small, πο■ον ■μ■ρτημα, &c.

11. He that has not some sense of the corruption of his nature. He that repents, bewails actual sins, and he that sees and feels the evil of the members, will have some sense of the body. He that tastes bitterness in the fruits, will disrelish the root of bitterness. Those who are persuaded their natures are good, will be angry at any that shall tell them they have wicked, perverse, naughty natures; never saw cause to complain, as David, of their birth-sin; nor to cry out with Paul, 'O wretched man!' Those that think themselves innocent enough, but for some outward gross acts, find no other reason why God should be displeased with them, why they should be excluded from heaven or communion with God; take no notice of inward averseness to God, proneness to evil, so as to make it an occasion of sorrow, humiliation, self-abhorrency; are apt to excuse sinful acts from their natures. Where there is not in some degree a sense of inbred corruption, there the heart is hard, impenitent.

12. He that is loath his sin should be discovered. A penitent is thankful to those that will convince him of any sinful practice. He desires the Lord to search him if any way of wickedness. It is his petition to God: Job 34:32, 'That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity,' &c. He would not hide his sins from God; he knows this is opposed to repentance, Proverbs 28:13; nor would have the Lord hide his sins from him. As he would have the Lord discover them, so he is not unwilling men should manifest them. He that repents looks upon sin as a close traitor; and who would not be glad to have a close traitor discovered? If an enemy lance the imposthume of his heart, whatever be the intention of the actor, he will be glad at the event of the act. He that would have sin hid, is in love with it. He that is unwilling to have sin detected in any practice, delights in it. None hide wickedness under their tongue, but those in whose mouth it is sweet, Job 20:12-13, he would spare it. He counts them his best friends who will discover such a dangerous enemy. How thankful was Saul to the Ziphites for a discovery of a supposed enemy? 1 Samuel 23:21. He will be as thankful for discovering sin, as David was to Abigail for preventing sin, 1 Samuel 25:32. He will be so far from taking this for an occasion of enmity, as he will make this a motive to friendship, and consult with the discoverer how he may destroy that which is discovered.

It is a sign he has no mind to turn to God, who will not endure to be told when he is out of the way.

13. He that will not endure a reproof. Those that cannot abide their sins should be reproved, either by public ministry or private, will be ready to 'lay a snare for him that reproveth,' Isaiah 29:21, and count him their enemy who tells them of sin, though he tell the truth, as Paul complains. Be ready to do him a mischief, as wicked Ahab did Micaiah, 2 Chronicles 18:25. Whatsoever Joash was, the Holy Ghost leaves an eternal brand upon him for his severity against Zechariah reproving his sin, 2 Chronicles 24:22. Those who break out into reproaches against those that reprove them, say as those against Jeremiah, Jeremiah 18:18: or if they break not out into acts, words, yet boil inwardly with rancour and malice. Those who, instead of reforming the sin reproved, fall upon an inquiry after the failings of the reprover, that they may retaliate. Hatred of reproof is a sign of a scorner, Proverbs 9:7-8; and scorners are placed in the highest rank of sinners, Psalms 1:1-6. Those are furthest from repentance. Hatred of reproof and repentance are two such contraries as can never meet in the same subject; quite contrary things are ascribed to them. Repentance leads to life, this to death, Proverbs 15:10. That is to salvation, this to destruction, Proverbs 29:1. You may as well say the same man shall both go to heaven and hell, as say that man is a penitent who hates reproof. You may know the temper of a humbled soul in David, Psalms 141:5. He is in love with sin who will not endure reproof, says to ministers, as David to Joab concerning Absalom, 2 Samuel

18:5, ‘Deal gently for my sake,’ &c. He that hates it will have it roughly handled, will penitently bear all the evil that can be spoke against it; and not only against sin in general, but against his sin. That word pleases him best which represents it most hateful, most dangerous. He desires not the ministers should speak soft and pleasing things, to flatter him in his evil ways, but welcomes reproof for sin, though they be like the words of David’s enemies, sharp as swords; the sharper the better, the more healthful. He would not have this dangerous sore skinned over, before it be thoroughly searched. He knows reproofs for sin, how sharp soever, are ‘the reproofs of life,’ Proverbs 15:31-32.

Use 1. Terror to impenitent sinners. Hear the doom in the text: ‘Except ye repent,’ &c. Those that do not, will not repent, must perish, shall perish. There is no way without repentance to avoid perishing, and these will not repent, mourn, hate, forsake sin. What will become of them? Christ, the righteous judge, gives sentence, they shall perish, certainly, universally, eternally.

1. Certainly. For Christ has said it. He speaks peremptorily; not they may, but they shall. Here is as much assurance that they shall perish, as any saint ever had that he should be saved—the word of Christ. It is as certain as if one from the dead should affirm it; and Dives desired, though an unbeliever, no more certainty. It is more certain than if an angel from heaven should speak it; for, behold, one greater than the angels, higher than the heavens, has said it. As sure as Christ is true, as sure as Christ is God, if there be any truth in truth itself, then this is certainly true, those that repent not shall perish. Si Christus loquatur, &c.

2. Universally. All, and every one, without exception, whatever he be, have, do, or can do, ‘Except,’ &c. Christ speaks to the Jews, and to all without exception—all perish. If any people in the world had any ground to plead exemption, sure it was the Jews; no people ever in greater favour, none ever had greater privileges. Whatever you can plead why this should not concern you, they had as much ground to plead. Are you outwardly in covenant with God? So were they; to them belonged the promises: Romans 9:4, ‘To whom pertain the covenants and promises.’ Do ye profess yourselves to be the children of God? So might they; to them pertained ‘the adoption,’ a peculiar people. Do ye enjoy those inestimable pledges of his favour, the gospel and ordinances? So did they; ‘to them were committed the oracles of God,’ Romans 3:2. Are you baptized, sealed to be his? So were they circumcised, received circumcision, &c., Romans 4:1-25. Has the Lord vouchsafed you such privileges as no people under heaven enjoy besides; so did he to them, Psalms 147:19-20; but all these would not secure them from perishing without repentance. Even them Christ tells, ‘Except ye repent,’ &c. No more will they secure you; except you repent, you shall perish; all, every of you.

Nay, these are so far from exempting you from repentance, as these should lead you to it. The impenitent heathen, that never knew God, shall more easily escape than you. ‘Except you repent, you shall perish.’

3. Eternally. Soul and body, here and hereafter, now and for ever, must perish without redemption: For who shall redeem from it but Christ? and Christ cannot do it except he will act against his own word, except he will deny himself. The sentence is passed, and none in heaven will, none in earth can, recall it. Men and devils cannot; angels and saints dare not; God himself will not. This sentence is like the decrees of the Medes and Persians, that can never be recalled. Christ has pronounced it, and he will not fail to be as good as his word, except his power fail. Nothing shall

save impenitent sinners from perishing eternally, if Christ have power to punish them with everlasting destruction. And is not Christ able to destroy you? Why, all power is given to him, Matthew 28:18; power to save and power to destroy. And how he will exercise this power he here tells us; viz., by saving eternally those that repent, and by the eternal destruction of the impenitent: 'He that has the keys of hell and death,' Revelation 1:8; Revelation 3:7, 'shutteth, and no man openeth.' That which Christ has here spoke with his mouth, he will at the last day execute with his hand; he will thrust impenitent sinners into hell, and lock them there for ever: for when he shuts, no man, no angel, no, God himself will not open. What his hand doth, none will undo for ever, and he will do what he has spoken; and that which he speaks is plainly this, impenitents shall perish eternally. It cannot be meant of temporal ruin only (though that also be included) for divers of the Jews to whom he spoke (as we may presume) did not perish, like those Galileans, temporally; therefore either eternally, or else not at all, which cannot be if Christ be true. Perish eternally; eternal torments is the proper portion of such, it is only theirs. Who are those that must 'suffer the vengeance of eternal fire,' but those who have been 'treasuring up wrath'? &c., Romans 2:1-29. And who are they but impenitent sinners? Who is he that must be 'cast into outer darkness,' &c., but the 'unprofitable servant'? Matthew 25:30. And who more unprofitable than he who will neither do his Master's will, nor shew himself truly sorry for not doing it? And who is this but an impenitent sinner? Who are they that must 'depart into everlasting fire'? &c. Christ tells, Matthew 25:41, 'ye cursed;' and who are these but impenitent sinners? Other sinners are cursed by the law, but these are cursed both by law and gospel; and this is it which makes their misery eternal. He whom the gospel curses can never be blessed. If the law only cursed, if God only, there might be hopes in the gospel, in Christ; but he whom Christ curses shall be eternally cursed. But Christ curses the impenitent, therefore they shall perish eternally.

Use 2. Exhortation 1. To the practice of this duty.

Christ urges it, and under such a penalty. These should be sufficient enforcements. But there are many more considerations to stir up to this duty. I shall reduce them to three heads: some concerning, 1. Sin to be repented of; 2. Christ that urges repentance; 3. Repentance itself, the duty urged. 1. Concerning sin.

(1.) No creature ever got, nor can get, any advantage by sin. Whatever gain seems to be in sin, is but an imagination; and that conceit is put upon men by a cheat, viz., by the deceitfulness of sin, the deceitfulness of their hearts, and the cunning device of Satan. There is neither pleasure, profit, nor credit to be got by sin, nor ever was. Satan, when he presents sin, makes a show of these; but he merely cozens poor sinners, that he may ruin them. There is no sinner in the world that can pass a right judgment, take a true estimate of his incomes by sin, but must say his losses are real, great, many; his gains a mere show, an empty delusion.

Men seem to gain by sin, when they get or increase their estates by lying, oppression, immoderate cares, with neglect of their souls; but let such consider, the curse of God accompanies whatever is so gotten. And while they gather some heaps of earth, they treasure up wrath, and lose their souls; and then let them tell me what they gain. 'What will it profit,' &c.?

Men fancy pleasures in uncleanness, drunkenness, &c. But this will be bitterness in the end, and such bitterness as will raze out the memory of all former imaginary delight. Such pleasure in sin ends in the bitterness of death, when it brings hell into the conscience, or brings the soul into hell;

it is like poison taken in a sweet potion, pleases the palate, but conveys death into the inward parts; it inflames, swells, tortures, and destroys the soul.

Ask Daniel* what advantage he got by sin. He might fancy delights in those unclean, unfaithful enjoyments; so he might think, while Satan's witchcraft prevailed. But when he is come to himself, then ask him, and he will tell you it was an act as full of bitterness as ever man acted; it broke the bones of his comfort, and made him go with sorrow to his grave.

Ask Saul what he gained by disobedience. He imagined no small advantage in reserving the best spoils of Amalek; but really what did he gain? Why, for a few sheep and oxen, he lost a kingdom, 1 Samuel 15:1-35. Indeed, this is all the gain in sin: lose a kingdom for some cattle.

Ask Ananias and Sapphira what advantage they got by sinning. They thought to have gained a part of their estate by a lie; but did they gain by it? No; they lost their estate, and their lives, and their souls too. Oh woeful gain!

Nay, ask the devil himself what he got by it. If he would tell the truth, he must say he is the greatest loser in the world by sin. It tumbled him down from the height of glory into the nethermost hell. Sin cast him out of the glorious enhappying presence of God into everlasting burnings, where he is reserved in chains of darkness. This is confirmed by a general suffrage of all creatures: none ever was a gainer by sin. And this consideration may be a sufficient motive to repent.

(2.) The least sin is infinitely evil. When I say infinite, I say there is more evil in it than the tongue of men or angels can express, than their largest apprehensions can conceive. When I say infinite evil, I understand it is a greater evil than the greatest in the world besides it. A greater evil than any poverty, greatest torment, loathsome sickness, dreadfullest death, nay, than hell itself. Gather up in your thoughts whatever on earth or in hell you count evil, and put them all together, and the evil that is in the least sin will far outweigh them all. It is inconceivably more evil than all in the world together. To be infinitely evil, is to be evil above all we can speak or think. Infiniteness is not ascribed usually to any but two: God, the greatest good, and sin, the greatest evil. God is infinite essentially; sin is infinite objectively: infinitely evil, because against him who is infinitely good, because injurious to an infinite God; an offence of infinite majesty, a contempt of infinite authority, an affront to infinite sovereignty, an abuse of infinite mercy, a dishonour to infinite excellency, a provocation of infinite justice, a contrariety to infinite holiness, a reproacher of infinite glory, an enemy to infinite love.

Oh consider what ye do by continuing impenitent. You harbour an evil in your souls that is unspeakably worse than hell; and act that frequently which it was better ye should die ten thousand times than act once. What greater occasion of sorrow, than sin the greatest evil! What fitter object of hatred, than that which is infinitely hateful! Eternity is little enough to bewail such an infinite evil. Oh think not much to employ some of your time in bewailing it.

(3.) The least sin deserves infinite punishment, i. e., greater than any can endure, express, or imagine. The Lord has engaged himself never to let any sin go unpunished, Exodus 34:7, and his justice requires that the punishment should be equal to the offence: render to every one according to his deserts. But the offence is infinite; and therefore God's justice is obliged to punish every sin infinitely, to inflict as much as is consistent with the creature's being; and what wants in degrees, to make it up in duration. Eternal punishment is the wages of every sin, Romans 6:23; eternal

death (as the opposition betwixt death and eternal life does evidence) is as due to every sin as wages to a hireling, as a penny to those who wrought all day in the vineyard.

Oh then, what do ye, while ye continue impenitent? By every word, thought, act, draw down eternal vengeance on your heads, and treasure up infinite wrath; such wrath as, though it will be expending to eternity, will never be quite spent, nay, will never be diminished. After a thousand millions of years' expenses of wrath upon sinners that are impenitent, this treasury will be as full as when first opened.

Oh then, make haste to repent, that your sins may be blotted out; for if the Lord come to reckon with you, and find any one sin on the score unblotted out, your payment must be eternal torments.

(4.) The least sin cannot be expiated without infinite satisfaction. Nothing can satisfy God for the injury of the least sin, but that which is infinite, i. e., such as no creature, no man, no angel, can tender to him; no, nor all the creatures together, by all that they can do or suffer while the world endures. God is not satisfied till sufficient amends be made. No amends is sufficient, but that which is equal to the injury. The injury is infinite; therefore, nothing can satisfy for it, but that which is infinite.

He that will satisfy the Lord for the least sin, must bring him that which is of more value than heaven and earth, than men and angels, than all the creatures.

'Without blood there is no remission,' Hebrews 9:22. No remission without blood of an infinite value. If all the creatures on earth, if all the glorious saints in heaven, if all the glorious angels in the presence of God, should offer to sacrifice their lives for the expiation of one sin, it would not be accepted, it could not be sufficient; for their lives, being finite creatures, are but of a finite value. Only the blood of him who, being God, derives an infinite value upon his blood.

(5.) It is the cause of all the evils that we count miseries in the world. Whatsoever is fearful, or grievous, or hateful, owes its birth to sin. Were it not for sin, either no evil would be in the world, or that which is now evil would be good. Is poverty a burden? Sin should be much more burdensome; for there had been no poverty but for sin. Is the cruelty of men, the crossness of friends, the contention of neighbours, the unkindness of children, an affliction? We should be much more afflicted with sin; for there had been no such grievance, no self-seeking, revengefulness, jars, &c., were it not for sin. Is there vanity and vexation of spirit in all outward employments? Oh how then should you be vexed at sin, which has embittered all! Do ye complain of pains, languish under bodily distempers, sicknesses, &c.? Oh rather complain of sin, for this breeds all such miseries; it is the sting and anguish of pain; sickness had never seized on the body, but that sin seized on the soul. Is the wrath of God a terror to you? Oh let sin be more terrible; for we had never known any such thing as wrath in God had it not been for sin, nothing but smiles, promises, mercies. Are you afraid of death, that the king of terrors should apprehend you? Be more afraid of sin; the sons of men had never known, had never feared death had it not been for sin. Do ye tremble at the apprehension of hell, those everlasting torments? Tremble more at the approach of sin; for there had been no hell, no devil, but for sin. It was sin that prepared both tormentors and torments; it was sin that digged that bottomless pit, and overshadowed it with darkness, and filled it with tortures; it was sin that kindled the wrath of God, which, like a river of brimstone, nourishes, continues those torments to eternity. There had been no poverty, crossness, vexation, sickness,

&c., but for sin. We hate, we avoid, we mourn for these; much more should we hate, avoid, and mourn for sin, which is the cause of them.

(6.) It is the soul's greatest misery. Those evils which sin has brought into the world are lamentable, but the miseries wherein it has involved the soul are much more grievous.

[1.] It consumes the soul, weakens it, eats away its strength insensibly; a dangerous consumption, leaves no power to act, suffer, bear, resist, move, help. So the state of sin is described to be a state of impotency, Romans 5:6.

[2.] It impoverishes the soul, steals away its riches, its ornaments, those riches which are more valuable than all the treasures of the earth, those which make the soul rich toward God. When sin broke into the soul it robbed, spoiled, ransacked it, left it poor, empty, naked. The state of sin is a state of poverty, nothing to cover it, nothing to feed it, nothing to lay out for its own necessities. No such beggar on earth as one poor in soul; nay, after the Lord has in part repaired these losses by communicating the riches of grace, yet even then the more sin the more poverty, Revelation 3:17.

[3.] It defiles the soul, deprives it of its beauty, lustre, comeliness, deforms it with ugly spots, besmears it with loathsome pollutions, such as make it hateful in the eye of God, angels, &c.: 'Ezekiel 16:6, 'polluted in blood.' Hence sin is called 'uncleanness,' Zechariah 13:1; and 'filthiness,' 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ezekiel 36:25, compared to things most filthy in the world. Hence, before the Lord will suffer sinners to come near him, he bids them 'wash,' &c., Isaiah 1:16. Corruptio optimi est pessima.

[4.] It enslaves the soul to the body, to Satan, to itself, a worse, a viler tyrant than either; no galley-slave in the world so miserable as a soul enthralled to sin, led captive by Satan, &c. No thraldom so woeful as spiritual soul slavery.

[5.] It confines the soul to itself, to the dungeon of the world, gives no liberty to have any converse with God, Psalms 119:32; it loads it with chains of darkness; those invisible irons enter into the soul, the weight of them presses it down to the earth, yea, towards hell. It is bowed down under the pressure of them, so as it cannot lift up itself to God; and thus it lives till Christ set it free; and even then sin is ready to entangle it with new yokes of bondage, to encompass it with new fetters, Heb.*

[6.] It straitens the soul, contracts it. As it deprives it of what it had, so it makes it uncapable of receiving what it wants, blocks up the passages whereby grace, comfort, &c. should be conveyed; so that nothing but infinite mercy will relieve a sinful soul; so nothing but infinite power can make it capable of relief, Acts 16:14.

[7.] It blinds the soul, deals with it as the Philistines with Samson; not only fetters it, and makes it grind in the prison-house, but puts out its eyes, Judges 16:21.

[8.] It wounds it, makes wide gashes, deep and bloody furrows in it, and in every part of it, the pain whereof, when felt, is intolerable, Proverbs 18:14, and when not felt is most dangerous; leaves it as the thieves left the man, Luke 10:30.

[9.] It murders the soul: it was so from the beginning, has murdered all mankind; all are 'dead in trespasses,' &c., Ephesians 2:1-22, i. e., dead of this. This is that mortal disease which never seized upon any soul but it deprived it of spiritual life. What the pestilence is to the body, that sin is

to the soul, a deadly plague.

Oh look into your souls, see what a lamentable spectacle sin has made them, and you will need no other motive to mourn! If you would avoid misery, and hate that which makes you miserable, sin above all things is to be hated, to be avoided, as that which involves in greatest, i. e., in soul miseries. Every sinner may cry out, Have you no regard, &c.? ‘See if there be any misery like my misery,’ wherewith sin has afflicted me. And the sorrow for sin should be answerable to the miseries of sin; no misery like that, no sorrow like this.

(7.) It is God’s greatest adversary; it has done much against the world, more against man’s soul; ay, but that which it does against God is most considerable, as that which should move us to hate, bewail, abandon it, above all considerations. It has filled the world with fearful evils, the soul with woeful miseries; but the injuries it does to God are most horrible. The injury of one sin is equal to the ruin of heaven and earth. Christ says it is better these should pass away than that his law should not remain inviolable; but sin violates it, and would have it quite abrogated.

It is so injurious as the Lord complains of it. We never find he complains of anything but sin; but of this he complains as a burden to him, an oppressing burden, that which wearies him, Isaiah 43:24, Amos 2:13; and shall not that be a burden to us?

It provokes, angers, highly offends, kindles his wrath, &c. And why, but because it is unspeakably injurious to him? In sin there is some contempt of God, low unworthy thoughts. No man durst sin if he did apprehend God to be what he is.

Some sacrilege. Sin robs God, and robs him of that which is dearest to him, as precious as the apple of his eye, more dear to him than our lives to us, his honour.

Some idolatry. The heart gives more respect to something else than God.

Something like witchcraft; an implicit compact, an agreement with Satan, for some pleasure or profit, &c., and to do that which is most injurious to God, 1 Samuel 15:23.

Some treason. Sin is high treason against the most high God, a conspiracy with the Lord’s greatest enemies against him.

Some rebellion; making use of members and faculties as weapons of unrighteousness to fight against God.

Some blasphemy. Sin has a secret language which the Lord hears, though we take no notice of it. It speaks proud and blasphemous things against God; denies him to be what he is, so holy, just, severe, true; makes him to be what he is not, ignorant, careless; ascribes that to others which is only his, goodness, happiness, pleasures, &c. And is sin thus injurious? &c. How should this consideration make us tremble, that we deferred repentance so long! and ashamed, that our sorrow for, hatred of sin, is no more. A wonder the Lord will grant any time for repentance after the commission of such a provoking act as sin is! Great reason to make haste to break it off by repentance.

(8.) Consider the multitude of your sins. If any one sin be so infinitely evil in itself and in its effects, oh how evil is he, what need to repent, who is guilty of a multitude of sins! And indeed so many, so

numerous are our sins, as it will be hard to find an expression which may help you to conceive how many they are. I cannot better shew how numerable they are, than by shewing they are innumerable. And this will be evident, if ye consider that before repentance, every act, word, thought, is a sin; you can do, speak, think, nothing but sin. A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit. A soul, till implanted into Christ, can bring forth nothing that is good, nothing but sin. And one of the first-fruits after this implantation is repentance; till then nothing but wild grapes. Now if every act you did since you were born be sin, put all those acts together, and into what a multitude will they swell! They are without number, beyond knowledge. He that takes the strictest survey of his life and actions that is possible, cannot give an account of 'one of a thousand,' Job 9:3. Let him be as diligent as can be, yet where he takes notice of one, a thousand will escape his observation. Those that we know are not the thousand part of those we know not. The stars in the heavens, the hairs of our head, are far more easily numbered than our sinful acts. They are like the sands on the sea-shore, which cannot be numbered. And if sinful acts be innumerable, what account can we take of our words! They are more than innumerable, as being innumerably more than our actions; ay, and our thoughts more than both. What then? How many are all put together? Ask man, ask angels; both will be nonplussed: Psalms 19:1-14, 'Who knows the errors,' &c., Psalms 40:12.

We lose ourselves when we speak of the sins of our lives. It may astonish any considering man to take notice how many sins he is guilty of any one day; how many sins accompany any one single act; nay, how many bewray themselves in any one religious duty. Whensoever ye do any thing forbidden, you omit the duty at that time commanded; and whenever you neglect that which is enjoined, the omission is joined with the acting of something forbidden; so that the sin, whether omission or commission, is always double: nay, the apostle makes every sin tenfold, James 2:10. That which seems one to us, according to the sense of the law, and the account of God, is multiplied by ten. He breaks every command by sinning directly against one, and so sins ten times at once; besides that swarm of sinful circumstances and aggravations which surround every act in such numbers, as atoms use to surround your body in a dusty room; you may more easily number these than those. And though some count these but fractions, incomplete sins, yet even from hence it is more difficult to take an account of their number.

And, which is more for astonishment, pick out the best religious duty that ever you performed, and even in that performance you may find such a swarm of sins as cannot be numbered. In the best prayer that ever you put up to God, irreverence, lukewarmness, unbelief, spiritual pride, self-seeking, hypocrisy, distractions, &c., and many more, that an enlightened soul grieves and bewails; and yet there are many more that the pure eye of God discerns, than any man does take notice of. And besides, every one of these many sins manifest themselves in every duty many several ways, and every way sinful.

Now if so many sins be discernible in the best duty, and many more in every unlawful act, and the acts themselves be innumerable that have such a numberless multitude of sinful attendants, what do ye think will the total arise to? Even such a sum, as all the arithmetic of men and angels cannot give an account of. If one sin, being so infinitely evil, deserve infinite punishment, being so horridly injurious to God, being so dangerously mischievous to the soul, call for shame, sorrow, indignation, hatred, &c., oh what then does such a multitude of sins, numberless even to astonishment, call for!

2. Considerations from Christ, who enjoins repentance.

If our sins were occasion of sorrow to him, great reason have we to mourn for them. But so it is; our sins made him a man of sorrows. The cup which he gives to us, he drank himself; he drank out the dregs and bitterness, the wormwood and gall, wherewith this sorrow was mixed. That which he left to us is pleasant. The cup which Christ gives us, shall we not drink it? Nay, the cup which Christ drank, shall we refuse to taste? Our sins made him weep and sigh, and cry out in the anguish of his spirit; and shall we make a sport of sin?

Made him weep, express his grief in tears, Hebrews 5:7; disfigured by sorrows, and made him a reproach, Isaiah 53:2-4; shall not we grieve?

Made him sigh. The weight of our sins made his soul heavy, heavy unto death, Matthew 26:37-38. Why? Isaiah 53:6, 1 Peter 2:24, our sins were that deadly weight, &c.

Made him cry out to heaven, ‘My God,’ &c., Matthew 27:48. To earth, ‘Have ye no regard, all ye,’ &c. He was afflicted by our sins, and shall not our souls be afflicted? ‘He was wounded for our transgressions,’ and wept not only tears, but blood; Oh, shall neither our eyes nor hearts shew sorrow?

3. Considerations from repentance, the duty enjoined. That is the time when all happiness begins, when misery ends, the period of evils; the time from whence ye must date all mercies. Till then, never expect to receive the least mercy, or have the least judgment, evil, removed without repentance. Till then,

(1.) Whatever ye do is sinful. ‘Without faith it is impossible to please God;’ and where no repentance, no faith. Whatever ye think, speak, act, is a provocation. Every thought; for what is said of the old world is true of every unrenewed man, not renewed by repentance, Genesis 6:5. Every inward act, every word; for ‘out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks,’ Luke 6:45. Now there is nothing in the heart but wickedness; therefore the words must be so; good words cannot be brought out of the evil treasure. Every action: as soon gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles, as good actions from an impenitent: Luke 6:44, ‘He that is born of God, sinneth not’; but till then, he does nothing but sin. Till repentance, no man is born of God; for that is one of the first vital acts.

(2.) All your enjoyments are cursed. All the curses of the law are the portion of an impenitent sinner; and there are curses for himself, and every thing that belongs to him, Deuteronomy 8:16-17, &c.; Deuteronomy 29:19-20. A penitent has an undoubted title to all the promises; but to an impenitent sinner the curses belong. He that repents not is not within the covenant of grace, and therefore under the law; which, since it was broken, speaks nothing but curses to all under it. The penitent hear nothing but from mount Gerizim, the impenitent nothing but from mount Ebal, Deuteronomy 11:29.

(3.) All sin is unpardoned. The handwriting of ordinances, which is against sinners, is not cancelled till then, Acts 3:19. They remain in God’s sight, as writ with a pen of iron, Jeremiah 17:1. The Lord will never speak of pardoning till then; and then, though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, &c., Isaiah 1:18. Sin remains, John 9:41. Impenitence makes other sins unpardonable; that which is small, shall never be pardoned.

(4.) All ordinances ineffectual, uncomfortable, hurtful, damnable. The word, the savour of death: till the heart be broken, the seed is rejected in stony ground. The sacraments, seals of damnation, 1 Corinthians 11:26. Death in the pot, poison. Prayer an abomination, Proverbs 28:9. No sacrifice acceptable without a broken heart, Isaiah 1:15.

(5.) God is an enemy. No communion with God till agreed; no agreement without repentance. Will God count them friends who fight against him, will not lay down their arms, their weapons of unrighteousness? He dwells in a penitent heart, Isaiah 66:1-24, Isaiah 57:15. But he is so far from dwelling in an impenitent heart, as he will not endure his word should be in their mouth, Psalms 50:16, 17. 'He will wound the head of his enemies,' &c., Psalms 68:21. Never expect smile, promise, mercy, till you repent.

(6.) Justice is unsatisfied. No satisfaction without compensation; none can make that but Christ: nothing will be accepted but his λ■τρον, that which he paid as the price of redemption. But to whom is he a redeemer? Isaiah 59:20, to them that turn from transgression. Justice is your adversary; no agreement without repentance; nothing but such a dreadful process, Matthew 5:25, to be cast into prison.

(7.) Wrath is unavoidable. That is the attendant of unsatisfied justice. No way to escape without this. Who has warned? Mark 3:7-8; Revelation 16:11, vials are poured out on those that repented not. Jeremiah 15:7, destroy, because they returned not.

(8.) Death is terrible. Better to die than live impenitent; but better never live than die impenitent. Death comes to them like the king of terrors, not as a messenger of peace; armed with a sting, repentance only charms it; comes as an officer of justice, to drag the soul to execution; Christ's pursuivant, to bring before the dreadful tribunal of an incensed judge, before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive the sentence of eternal condemnation. The penitent long for his appearance; these will call to mountains to fall on them, &c.

(9.) Hell is certain. It was prepared of old for these. Every tree that brings not forth the fruits of repentance shall be cut down, &c. They cumber the ground, are unfruitful, and hinder others: Romans 8:13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.' It is, as was said of Judas, ■διος τ■πος; none but they, and all they, have that place for their portion.

(10.) Hopes of heaven are delusions, expectations of happiness dreams, vain groundless fancies, which Satan begets and nourishes, that he may more securely ruin impenitent sinners. The apostle asserts it peremptorily, Galatians 5:21. Though it be long since you did these, yet till repentance, you are still doing, still continue in them. There is not only the word of an apostle, but the oath of God; he swears, hardened sinners shall not enter into his rest, Hebrews 4:3.

Obj. God is merciful, infinitely so; will not be so strict as many make him. He may save me though I be not so penitent, though sorrow be not so great, &c.

Ans. This is an ordinary conceit, suggested by Satan; and the matter of it is unreasonable, false, blasphemous, perverse.

1. It is infinite mercy that God will save any sinner that repents, that he will vouchsafe life upon such terms. It is infinite mercy that any one is saved, that all are not cut off in the height of sin. It would be infinite mercy that sinners might be admitted to life upon terms more harsh, chargeable,

difficult. Oh what mercy to have life upon terms so easy, equal! Would not that traitor think himself graciously dealt with, who, having acted treason a great part of his life, should be admitted to favour, honour, if but sorry and reform? Who would expect such easy terms for rebellious sinners? Oh, what would the damned do and suffer to have such an offer! It is unreasonable to think God will save without repentance because merciful, whenas it is mercy we may be saved upon our repentance.

2. Infinite mercy will not save an impenitent sinner; it is a false conceit, and very dangerous to entertain it. It has been the ruin of millions to presume on mercy without ground. The Lord does plainly exclude all such from all hopes of mercy, Deuteronomy 29:20.

3. To think mercy will save impenitents is a blasphemous conceit, that which makes God unjust, untrue, unfaithful. He has said, and sworn; he has engaged justice, truth, faithfulness for the ruin of impenitent sinners. To think he will be so merciful as to save them, is to make God a liar, think he will deny himself to save you, trample upon his own glory to advance you, and so make an idol of God.

4. Mercies should lead to repentance, and not be turned into perverse disputes.

Obj. I will repent hereafter, it is time enough; I am so full of business, I cannot attend it now.

Ans. The matter of this objection is groundless, false, and desperately dangerous; for,

1. This is the devil's suggestion, which he proposes with a cruel intention to destroy your soul. He would have you defer repentance that you may perish. It is the great design which he now drives on amongst you; by yielding thereto you join with your greatest, most deadly enemy, against God, Christ, the Spirit, your own souls. He is loath you should escape out of his snare.

2. You presume without ground that you have time enough. You know not how soon death may seize on you, how soon Christ may summon, what watch the Master will come. You have no security for one hour, for the time is uncertain, and comes upon most when they expect it not; and why not so to you? And if so, if death come before repentance, oh it will be a sad hour, a day of blackness and thick darkness! You would be loath to leave anything you value in the world at such uncertainty, and will you leave your souls so? Will you leave that in continual danger every moment to drop into hell?

3. If your lives should be prolonged, yet you will have time little enough to repent though you should begin presently. Man's life, if longer, affords not time sufficient to bewail sin, if sorrow should be proportionable to what sin calls for. No pardoned sinner can ever think he bestows too much time in mourning for sin. Besides, there are daily occasions for continual exercise of repentance. The work is long, and life is short; no room therefore or reason for delay.

4. Business and designs in the world should not hinder; for if they be worth following, repentance will not hinder them. No man ever lost anything by obeying God in this. This is the way to make the business succeed, your designs prosper. Repent, and all things shall be well, those which seem worst; but till then, never expect but all will be either crossed or cursed. You should rather argue thus: I have much business in the world, therefore I will make haste to repent, because I have so little time. It is a perverse inference, and savours of hell, where all such are forged, I am too busy to repent.

5. When you say you will repent hereafter, you imagine you may repent when you will; but herein you delude your souls; it is not in your power to repent. It is the gift of God; 'If so be,' &c., Acts 5:31. He gives it when and to whom he pleases. You can never hope to have it till he give; and when have you any ground to hope he will give it, but when he calls for it? But now he calls for it, 'now he commands all men to repent,' Acts 17:30. 'This is the accepted time,' &c., 'To-day, if ye will hear his voice,' &c., Hebrews 3:15. To-day is the Lord's time, to-day is your time; who knows what to-morrow may bring forth? To-morrow the door of mercy may be shut, the Lord's hand may be closed, the Lord's patience may be terminated. To-morrow it may be too late, and then, alas! where are you? You may defer it till it be too late; for there is a time when the Lord will not be found, when repentance will not be found, though ye seek it with tears, Hebrews 12:17; and if you now neglect to learn to obey the Lord's voice, you may swear that hereafter will be too late. God will not hear them hereafter, that will not hear him now, Proverbs 1:1-33.

6. The longer ye defer repentance, the harder it will be to repent. You will be every day the less able; the longer you neglect to get your hearts softened, the more will ye be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, Hebrews 3:13; the longer ye live in sin, the more ye will be in love with it; the longer ye continue in the snare, the faster you will be entangled. Oh, make haste while there is hope to escape. It must be done, it is necessary; either repent, or perish. Resolve to do it then, while ye may do it with most ease, before it become too difficult, impossible.

7. Ye judge such delays madness in outward things, much more is it here; nothing of greater consequence, of more present necessity. You apprehend a present need of rain, and would censure him as void of sense or reason, that would say rain will come time enough a month, a year hence. But, oh, is there not more need of relenting hearts! You may lose a year's fruits by the intemperate drought of the season; ay, but you may lose your soul's happiness, not for a year, but for eternity, by hardness of heart. If your house should be on fire, would any but a madman say, it will be time enough to quench it to-morrow? For why? It may be consumed to ashes before to-morrow. The least delay may undo you: Why, so it is here; your souls are on fire though you feel it not, the wrath of God has kindled on them, and it will burn to the bottom of hell, burn and not be quenched till repentance be. Oh, make haste, while there is hope, before it be too late, before your souls be quite consumed. The Lord, to impenitent sinners, is a consuming fire.

If one be stung with a serpent, will he say it will be time enough to mind the cure hereafter? None but a mad, a desperate man will say so. The poison is diffusive, will spread, and, if not prevented, seize upon the vitals, and so become incurable. No poison like the poison of sin; it is like the cruel venom of asps. This serpent has bit the soul; if it be not prevented, it will be mortal to the soul; no cure for it but the balm of Gilead, the blood of Christ; and this is never applied without repentance. Oh, defer it not, delay is dangerous, it may cost the life of your souls.

8. This has been the ruin of thousands. Ask those wretched souls that are cast into outer darkness, what is the reason they are now in that place of torment? They will tell you, because they deferred repentance. It is this that shipwrecked so many souls in that lake that burns with fire and brimstone; and will you run your souls upon the same rock? You have a whole world of warnings in one. Ask the old world why the Lord brought the flood upon them? why, by a deluge of waters he swept them into a deluge of fire, and destroyed them in such a terrible manner, twice at once? They will tell you, it was because they repented not at the preaching of Noah. If the men of

Nineveh had no more regarded the preaching of Jonah, calling them to present repentance, they also had been certainly destroyed here and hereafter.

Use. Exhort. Does the Lord command it, and presently? Take heed of deferring repentance. Disobedience will be like the sin of witchcraft. You have had warning for some years together; you have had sin discovered, and the danger of it; ignorance, drunkenness, profaneness, Sabbath-breaking, neglect of worship, resisting holiness, contemning the gospel; sins of place and persons. If you will still continue in these sins, when the Lord commands now to repent; take heed he who now commands do not the next moment threaten, do not next moment execute.

Take heed, if there be any regard of your souls; take heed of continuing in any sin, of hardening your hearts in any evil way; take heed of it, it infinitely, it eternally concerns you. It is matter of life and death, and that of your souls, and that eternal. This is it I have been doing, and which the Lord employs his messengers to do. Take it in Moses's words, and mind it, as if it were the last thing ye should hear: Deuteronomy 30:19, If ye repent, turn now when the Lord requires, you choose life; but if you will live in sin, scorn holiness: I call heaven and earth to record this day, and the God of heaven and earth will call me to witness against you at the last day.

Obj. The thief on the cross repented when he was dying; and so may I. Why should I then trouble myself with repentance, while I have health, strength, &c.?

Ans. His repentance at death, is no ground to defer repentance till death. It is dangerous to rest upon it. For,

1. It is but an example, and that is no ground of hope, that you either shall or may find place for repentance then. If you had either permission or precept to defer it till then, or promise that the Lord would then give or accept it, you might defer, in hopes you might then repent. But it is quite contrary. He is so far from tolerating such delay, as he declares against it, commands it now; so far from promising, &c., as he threatens, Luke 21:34-35, and 1Luke 12:19-20, and Luke 17:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; Matthew 24:38. An example added to these would be an encouragement; but without these, is no ground at all. Your hopes, without other ground, are delusions; and this example will prove a broken reed, break under those that lean upon it, pierce their souls, and suffer soul and body to sink. It is desperate madness, to leave your souls without any hopes for eternity, but what this will afford.

2. It is but one example. The Bible, a history of near four thousand years, affords but one instance of one saved by repentance at death. Whereas, if we could search the records of eternity, we might find many thousands instead of those, who have eternally ruined their souls, by deferring repentance till death.

All that can be argued from this one example is, that it is possible to repent when dying. Nay, if there were a multitude of examples, they would but make it probable. A probability might satisfy in matters of small concernment; but in that which concerns the eternal state of your souls, nothing less than certainty is sufficient. But here is no certainty, here is no probability! If you defer repentance till then, it is ten thousand to one you will never repent. And what then? It is ten thousand to one you will perish. It is deperate madness to be satisfied with a possibility; whenas, if for anything in the world, certainty is here necessary.

It is astonishing, to have your souls in such a state, which will not afford so much as a probability of being saved. You should make your salvation sure; but, relying upon one example, you make it not probable.

Roman history affords us one instance of Horatius Cocles, who maintained a pass against a whole army; but will any state therefore trust their safety with one man? Will any, invaded by a numerous army, employ none but one man to resist it? Would not all that hear of such madness, judge such a people besotted, that they might be ruined? Yet there is as good ground to do this, and expect victory, as for any to defer repentance, and expect salvation. Here is but one example for this, and no less for that.

Mithridates affords an instance of one that could take poison without danger; will any therefore eat deadly poison, and hope for life, because he did? You may as well hope for long life, though ye eat poison, as hope to be saved by repenting at death; there is as good ground for the one as the other; one example.

Jonah was cast into the sea, and was preserved by a whale; but will any cast himself overboard, in hopes of such an escape? You may as well cast yourselves into the sea, with hopes of such a preservation, from the example of Jonah, as defer repentance, in hopes of repenting on your deathbed, from the example of the thief.

3. It is an extraordinary example. Now there is no reason to draw a rule from an extraordinary instance. This was little less than miraculous, we see it placed in a crowd of miracles; would you have the Lord work miracles to save you? It is high presumption, to expect the Lord should save you at your death, if you wilfully neglect the ordinary means of salvation all your lives. Would not you think it strange madness for one to expose himself to death, in hopes to be raised again to life by the wonder-working power of Christ, because Lazarus was so raised. And why? But because that was extraordinary. It is no less madness to defer repentance till death, in hopes you shall then repent, because the thief did then repent and was accepted. For this was extraordinary. The Lord will rather shew extraordinary severity in punishing such mad presumption.

4. It is an impertinent example. It was not intended it should, and it cannot in reason be used to that purpose for which you apply it. It may be he never heard of Christ before. It may be he did not enjoy the ordinary means of repentance in his life. It is probable he never deferred it, in hopes to repent at his death. The case is not alike. However, it is certain the Lord never intended it to be an encouragement for any to live impenitently. He left such an example, that no penitent should despair; not that any impenitent should presume. They may fear, the Lord never intends them mercy, who abuse this to that purpose that he never intended it.

Obj. But repentance is harsh and unpleasing; if I should take notice of sin, to mourn for it, crucify it, I should make my life sad and uncomfortable.

Ans. 1. Suppose there be something unpleasing in repentance, as there is to corrupt nature; yet there is infinitely more bitterness in impenitency.

What is there in repentance so grievous as slavery to sin and Satan; so burdensome as Satan’s yoke and tyrrany? But while you continue impenitent, you are his slaves.

What evil so lamentable as madness? But impenitents are, in Scripture phrase, in God's account, madmen. The prodigal, when he returned to his father, i. e., repented, it is said, he 'came to himself.' He was besides himself before, and so are all impenitent sinners. Μετ■νοια comes from ■νοια, amentia; he that turns not from sin is a madman.

What so terrible as death? What bitterness in repentance comparable to the bitterness of death? But impenitents are dead in sins and trespasses.

What in repentance like the curse of God! What like the guilt of sin, so much, of so many! What like to the wounds of a terrified conscience! What like the lashes of vengeance, revenging justice! What like the scorchings of incensed wrath! What like to hell, everlasting fire, the gnawing worm that never dies, weeping and gnashing of teeth to eternity!

He that will expose himself to these miseries, rather than displease his corrupt nature by the practice of repentance, is like one who had rather continue all his life in a burning fever, than endure a chirurgeon to breathe a vein. Or like one who, having drunk poison, will rather die a painful death, than take an unpleasing potion to prevent it. If there were any bitterness in repentance, there is incomparably more in impenitency.

Ans. 2. It is false that repentance is unpleasing. It is not so in itself; it is not so to any but those whose palates are distempered; to those whose minds the god of this world has blinded, so as they cannot judge; call bitter sweet, and sweet bitter. It is not so to those who have had experience of it, and none else are competent judges. Oh if ye would but practise it, if ye would but taste and see what joys, what comforts, what delights are in repentance, you would soon change your judgment, and cry out upon Satan as an impostor, and your hearts as deceitful, for representing it unpleasing. How can that be but comfortable upon which the Lord has entailed so much comfort, to which he has made so many sweet promises: 'Blessed are they that mourn,' Matthew 5:1-48; 'Those that sow in tears shall reap in joy,' Psalms 126:6, and Psalms 97:11. No great distance between seed-time and harvest. Who can think that unpleasing on earth which occasions joy in heaven? Luke 15:7. While your hearts mourn, bleed for sin, bemoan it, Jeremiah 31:18, the Lord's bowels yearn toward you. While your spirit is sad in the remembrance of sin, the Spirit of joy and glory rests on you. When you are confessing sin, Christ is speaking peace: John 16:20, 'Sorrow shall be turned into joy.' While you are returning, nay, but resolving to return, to repent, the Father is running to embrace you. And oh what joy will there be in such embraces! What joy to see the Father falling upon your neck and kissing, giving such sweet intimations of his love, as men use to do by such affectionate expressions! Oh, let the world judge what they will, let Satan suggest what he will of repentance, those that have had experience of it will count it pleasing, comfortable, delightful.

Ans. 3. It is not so only positively, but comparatively. There is more sweetness in repentance than in all the pleasures of sin. All the ways of Christ are 'ways of pleasantness,' Proverbs 3:17; i. e., most pleasing, superlatively so, beyond comparison. And this is one reason why Moses chose rather affliction, Hebrews 11:25. And why but because more desirable, and really more delightful, whatever they seem? The pleasures of sin are short, like the light of a candle, quickly spent if it burn till consumed, but often put out, Job 21:17. The pleasures of repentance are like the sun that shines more and more, Proverbs 4:18. Those are mixed; the heart is sad in the midst of laughter, Proverbs 14:13; like John's little book, Revelation 10:9, 'sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly;'

like Belshazzar's feast, Jael's entertainment. These are ure, pspring* in heaven.

Those are brutish, sensual, have little pre-eminence above the pleasures of a beast; these are spiritual, heavenly, glorious, 1 Peter 1:8.

Those are groundless; in fancy, when there is real cause of sorrow; like joy in a frantic man, or a malefactor led to execution; lamentable joys, such as deserve pity; joy when most cause of sorrow. The end in sorrow, will be bitterness in the end; for a moment's joy, eternal sorrows; for a few pleasures, many sorrows, Psalms 32:10. This sorrow ends in joy; a moment's sorrow, endless joy, everlasting joy; it is a well of water springing up to eternal life; a small stream, but leads to the ocean.

Now, judge what ground for this objection, what reason to be hindered by a conceit of unpleasantness, since the hardest part of repentance has such comfort attending it here, and such joys rewarding it hereafter. OF FAITH He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.—Mark 16:16.

These words require as serious attention as any that ever were spoken to the sons of men; for they are the words of Christ, the words of one from the dead. The last words of Christ, of our departing Saviour. The last instructions of a departing friend, whom never like to see more in the world, they make deep impression.

Why here is the last words of Christ upon earth, the last will of Christ, our husband, our friend, our elder brother. When he had said this, he said no more that the evangelist relates; for, Mark 16:19, 'after he had spoken these words, he was received up into heaven.'

They are of greatest consequence, the sum of the gospel, the whole epitomised in two sentences; the whole covenant of grace. As much in this verse virtually, as in the whole gospel. Life and death, and the conditions of both; the terms of eternal happiness or misery. If a malefactor at the bar should see the judge going about to declare to him upon what he might expect life or death, how diligently would he attend! All sinners are malefactors. The Judge of heaven and earth declares here, upon what terms we may live, though we be cast, found guilty, and condemned. It is not a matter of credit or estate, but a matter of life and death, of the life of our souls. It is no less than eternal life or eternal death, that these words concern. And therefore, The condition of life is double: 1, principal, faith; 2, accessory, baptism. Accessory, I call it, because it is not absolutely necessary to life, as faith is. Non privatio, sed contemptus damnat. And therefore it is left out in the latter part. It is not, he that is [not] baptized shall be damned, but he that believes not. Faith is so necessary, as he that believes not, though he be baptized, shall be damned.

Doct. Salvation or damnation depend upon faith and unbelief. No salvation but by faith. Nothing but damnation by unbelief.

Faith is the principal saving grace, and unbelief the chief damning sin. No sin can damn without this, and this will damn without any other sin: John 3:18, 'is condemned.' The law, which threatens death for every sin, has already passed sentence of condemnation upon all, because all are sinners. This sentence is so peremptory as it admits but of one exception, which the gospel brings in. All are condemned, and shall be executed, except they believe. So that where there is not faith, the sentence of condemnation is in full force. An unbeliever so continuing is as sure to be damned,

as if in hell already; as sure to be cast into outer darkness, as if he were tormented in everlasting burnings; as sure to bear the eternal, insupportable wrath of God, as if he had now fellowship with the devil and his angels.

We say of a man that has the symptoms of death, he is a dead man. Unbelief is the symptom of eternal death. There is nothing but death to be expected where this continues; no hopes of eternal life if he persevere in unbelief. He is dead while he lives; in hell while he is on earth. The great physician of souls gives him over. He that healed all manner of diseases cannot cure him, cannot prevent his eternal death who continues in unbelief. When the plague-sore appears in a person, we conclude him dead, shut him up, debar him of society with living men, write Lord have mercy upon his door. Unbelief is the sore of an eternal plague, of that plague which is incurable. While unbelief continues, he is shut up amongst the dead, but in this more miserable, as there is no hopes of life, so no hopes of mercy; he must die without mercy. There is neither life nor mercy for an unbeliever. When we see a condemned malefactor upon the scaffold, with his neck upon the block, and none to plead for his pardon, nor hopes of prevailing if there were any to plead, we may conclude he is a dead man. In such a condition is an unbeliever, he is condemned already, the instruments of death are ready. There is none in heaven or earth will plead for his pardon; nor would the Lord pardon him, so continuing, if all in heaven and earth should become intercessors. No hopes for him, except he believe, he must die the death, he is condemned already, the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

Now if faith be so necessary, and unbelief so dangerous, it concerns us to know what it is to believe.

It comprises, 1, knowledge; 2, assent; 3, dependence, or relying on the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Knowledge. Faith is expressed by knowledge, Isaiah 53:11. If knowledge be not faith, yet there can be no faith without knowledge. That blind faith of the papists is good for nothing but to lead them into the ditch. That ignorance is the mother of devotion, is one of the principles of the father of lies. Sure it is the nurse of unbelief. It is Satan's muffler, which he makes use of to lead sinners blindfold into hell; it brings them there before they know where they are. Ignorant persons are like the Syrians, struck with blindness, 2 Kings 6:20. They thought they were going on a hopeful design, but when their eyes were opened, they found themselves in the midst of Samaria, in the midst of their enemies. The first step to conversion is to open the eyes, to scatter darkness, Acts 26:18. He begins the new creation as he did the creation of the world: 'Let there be light,' Genesis 1:1-31. The first thing he produces is light. There is a dawning of the day before the day-star arise; some light goes before the sun rising. Such a dawning of knowledge there is before the Sun of righteousness arise, before Christ dwell in the heart by faith; some light from the law discovering sin and misery; some light from the gospel discovering Christ's excellency and all-sufficiency. There is a competent knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, a knowledge more distinct, more convincing, more affecting, than that which he had in the state of unbelief.

2. Assent. As to the principles of the doctrine of Christ, so especially to these two truths: 1, that he has a necessity of a Saviour; 2, that Christ is the only all-sufficient Saviour.

(1.) There is an absolute necessity of a Saviour, which the Scripture declares upon three grounds: 1, the sinfulness of a natural man; 2, his misery; 3, his inability to free himself from it.

There must be a full and effectual assent to, and belief of, what the Lord declares concerning his sinful, miserable, impotent state.

3. Recumbence, relying upon Christ. To rely upon Christ alone for salvation is saving faith.

It is not to believe him, but to believe on him; which the New Testament expresses by a peculiar phrase, not used by heathen authors: πιστε■ειν ε■ς τ■ν Χριστ■ν, Acts 19:4; ■ις ■μ■, Matthew 9:2; ■π■ τ■ν, or, ■π■ τ■, Acts 16:31, ■π■ τ■ν Κ■ριον; Romans 9:33, πιστε■ων ■π■ α■τ■; Mark 1:15, ■ν τ■ ε■αγγελ■■; Romans 3:25, ■ν τ■ α■ματι; Galatians 3:24, ε■ς Χριστ■ν; Ephesians 1:15; ε■ς τ■ ■νομα, John 1:12, &c.

It is not to give credit to him, but to rely on him; it is to trust in him. To trust in him is more than to believe him, to assent to his word as true. It is, as Lombard explains it, lib. 3, dist. 23, credendo in eum ire, credendo ei adhærere, to adhere, depend, rely on him; not credere, but fidere, fiduciam ponere. This is the essence, the formality of saving faith. There cannot be justifying faith without knowledge and assent, but there may be knowledge and assent without it; these are as the body to faith, this relying is the soul; without this, knowledge and assent are but a carcase. The devils and hypocrites may have more knowledge, and they may have as firm an assent, but this act is above their reach, and they never attain it.

Now because there is some difference amongst divines about the nature and essence of faith, some placing it in assent, some in assurance, &c.; And because there are mistakes amongst ordinary Christians, many concluding they rely on Christ when indeed they do not; And because mistakes are here dangerous, it being a matter of life and death eternal, of salvation or damnation,—faith being the first stone on which the structure of salvation is raised, and an error in the foundation threatens ruin to the whole;

It behoves to be diligent in inquiring what this faith is, what the nature of this dependence and relying on Christ.

Now, the best way to find this out will be to discuss those words and phrases whereby the Holy Ghost in Scripture expresses faith. From these we may get light sufficient to discover the nature of this act; and these are various.

1. To believe is to come to Christ, so it is expressed in the New Testament; to betake ourselves to him, so in the Old Testament. And both express this dependence, this relying on Christ; for to betake ourselves wholly unto one is to rely on him. To say, I betake myself to you alone, is as much as I rely only on you. So ■■■■, used in the Old Testament for trust, relying, &c., signifies also to approach, to draw near, Ezra 4:2,* answerably the apostle, Hebrews 10:22, Προσερχ■μεθα ■ν πληροφορ■α π■στεως, let us come with full sail, with all haste, as a ship when it makes all its sail; or if we take it as it is rendered, full assurance of faith, such a confidence as faith is in its full growth and strength; yet there is also a beginning of our confidence, Hebrews 3:14. The first intent motion of the soul to Christ is ■ρχ■ τ■ς ■ποστ■σεως, faith in its infancy. But to come to the words whereby it is ordinarily expressed under this notion: To believe is to come to Christ, John 6:35; here, to come is to believe. The same may be evidently collected from John 6:64-65. We see this in the prodigal; he is an emblem of a sinner both in his fall and in recovery by faith: Luke 15:1-32, ‘He went into a far country,’ Luke 15:13. A sinner in unbelief is a stranger to Christ, lives at a great distance from him, without God in the world. His employment base, Luke

15:15; baser is the employment of a sinner; he is sin's drudge, he is Satan's slave, serves them in a cruel bondage; though he gratify Satan, and provide for his lusts, yet he starves his soul, Luke 15:16. The lusts of the flesh, the vanities of the world, are the husks that a sinner feeds on; no wonder if his soul pine and languish at the gates of death. All this while he is in a swoon, sin has stupified him, he has lost his senses. Though he be ready to perish, he apprehends it not; he comes not to himself till he think of coming to Christ, Luke 15:17. Till the Lord awaken the stupified conscience by the ministry of the law, till he prick the heart, drop wrath into the soul, make some impressions of terror on it, he remains senseless as to the condition of his soul; but then he comes to himself, he comes to his senses, feels the burden of sin, sees hell ready to swallow him, apprehends himself ready to perish. And then, not till then, he resolves, Luke 15:18, 'I will arise,' &c., and he pursues his resolution, Luke 15:20, he came; i. e., he believed. The word in the Old Testament is ■■■; Psalms 64:10, 'The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and' ■■■ ■■ 'shall trust in him.' It signifies to fly, to betake one's self to a place of safety; as the chickens, in danger to be seized on, fly under the wings of the hen: Ruth 2:12, 'Under whose wings thou art come to trust,' ■■■■■. The helpless bird pursued by the kite, in danger to be devoured, runs under the wing of the dam. Thus it is with a sinner at the first working of faith, he apprehends himself pursued by wrath and judgment; he knows if they seize on him he must perish without remedy. Oh the sad condition of such a soul! Oh, but he sees Christ spreading his wings ready to secure perishing sinners; he hears him inviting in the gospel to come under his shadow. Oh, how sweet is that voice to him (however, while senseless he neglected)! He hears, obeys, and runs to Christ for shelter, and so he is safe: Psalms 36:7, 'How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.' To believe in Christ is to fly to him as to a stronghold, a refuge, a sanctuary, Nahum 1:7. The Lord is good, a stronghold, he knoweth them ■■■, that trust in him. And hence it is that from this root come some words, ■■■■ and ■■■■, which signifies a refuge, a place of security, a hiding place: Psalms 91:2, 'I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and fortress: my God; in him will I trust;' Isaiah 30:3, 'They trust in the shadow of Egypt;' Psalms 14:6, 'The Lord is his refuge.'

It is with the sensible sinner as it was with the man-slayer under the law; if the avenger of blood overtook him before he recovered the city of refuge, he was to kill him. The awakened sinner perceives that he is pursued by revenging justice, it follows him as Asahel did Joab, pursues him close, he turns not to the right hand nor to the left, and if he overtake him, the sinner dies without mercy, he dies eternally. Now there is no city of refuge for the sinner but Christ only; he is discovered, he is set open in the gospel, and he that gets into him is safe, revenging justice cannot touch him. And therefore the poor sinner makes haste, he flies as for his life, the life of his soul, he knows he is but a dead man if justice reach him; he casts off sin, which clogs him in his flight, he looks not aside to the world, he puts forth the whole strength of his soul, and makes out to Christ with all his might, and never rests till he get into him. This vigorous motion of the soul towards Christ is faith. Those dull and sluggish souls, who have no motion to Christ but some wishes, some faint inclinations, know not what faith is. So eager was the apostle in his tendency to Christ, as he cast off all things as dung, how precious soever they had been to him before; he threw away all as loss and dung that might hinder him in his way to Christ, Php 3:1-21. Be found in him as in the city of refuge. Joab knew that he was obnoxious to justice; he heard Adonijah was put to death for a crime that he was guilty of, he expected nothing but death except some extraordinary course were taken to prevent it. Now what course he takes you may see; 1 Kings 2:28, 'he caught hold on

the horns of the altar.' Answerably, a sensible sinner, he apprehends his guilt, his provocation, he has received the sentence of death within himself, he knows there are thousands in hell for those very sins whereof he is guilty, and he concludes his soul will be in hell ere long, it may be the next hour, if he take not some course to secure himself from justice. Now there is no sanctuary for a guilty soul but Christ only; therefore he flies to the tabernacle of the Lord, and so takes hold on the horns of the altar; he flies to Christ, lays hold on him, resolves if he die he will die there. There he is safer than Joab in his sanctuary; for Christ is that strong tower to which the righteous fly and are safe, Proverbs 18:10. This making out to Christ with all the strength of the soul for refuge is faith. To believe is to come, fly, Hebrews 6:18.

2. To believe in Christ is to lean upon him, to stay and rest on him. The word is ■■■, and it is used when Saul is said to lean upon his spear, 2 Samuel 1:6. Hence comes ■■■■, which signifies a stay, a staff whereon we lean to support ourselves. So the Lord is called: Psalms 18:18, 'The Lord was my stay.' Thus, to lean upon Christ is to trust in him, when we stay on him as the only staff and support of our souls. So the word is rendered, Isaiah 10:20, when we rest on him. So we have it, 2 Chronicles 14:11, 'Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest,' &c. More especially, Proverbs 3:5, 'Trust in the Lord,' &c.; Isaiah 50:10, 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself,' &c.; where to trust and to stay, ■■■ and ■■■■ are all one, one is explained by the other.

Now this leaning does most significantly express this act of faith we call relying; and so the word is rendered 2 Chronicles 13:18, 2 Chronicles 16:7-8.

There is another word of the same signification, by which the Holy Ghost expresses faith in the Old Testament, and that is ■■■, which signifies to lean or stay upon: Isaiah 48:2, 'Stay themselves upon the God of Israel,' ■■■■■, which is explained to be trusting, Isaiah 26:3; ■■■■, whose mind is stayed, because he trusteth ■■■■. So 2 Kings 18:21, 'Thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, on which if a man lean' (■■■■■), &c.

Now these words give us great light to discern what this act of saving faith is. A sinner, before the Lord stir him up to believe, is in a dead sleep; and there he dreams of heaven, and who surer of it than he? But when the Lord awakens him, he finds that he has been all this while sleeping on the battlements of hell; all his former hopes and persuasions prove but fancies and delusions. He thought himself safe enough, but he finds that he stands upon the very brink of the bottomless pit; has no sure footing neither; he stands in a slippery place; and the very weight of his sins is enough to carry him down headlong into that place of torment. Sin is a fall, παρ■πτωμα; and it is a wonder that every sin is not a fall into hell. One sin was heavy enough to cast many hundreds of angels from the height of glory into the lower hell. And alas, then, says the sinner, what shall become of me, who have the weight of so many thousand sins upon my soul! How shall I stand under so many, when they were sunk by the weight of one! Oh what sad thoughts will assail the soul of a sinner, when he is fully apprehensive of his danger! Ay, but this is not all; he not only stands on the ridge of destruction, in such a tottering condition, but Satan is pushing at him, and incensed justice is ready to tumble him down. And what if a tempest of wrath should arise, if the Lord, in just indignation, should come upon him as a whirlwind? what would then become of him? Had he not need to look out for some support, for something to stay his soul on, which otherwise is every moment in danger to tumble into hell? He has nothing at present that keeps him standing but the patience of God. Oh but this is abused, provoked; this is no sure support, he is not sure of it an

hour; it may withdraw the next moment, and then where is he? What then can stay the soul from falling into everlasting burnings? Why, none but Christ. Unless he stay his soul upon him, he falls, he sinks, he perishes without remedy. This he hears and believes, and makes out to Christ for support. Not being able to stand under the weight of sin, under the pressures of wrath and justice, he leans upon Christ. The burdened sinking soul rests upon Christ, and so is established, Psalms 112:7-8.

3. To believe in Christ is to adhere to him, to cleave to him, cling about him. The two words last instanced in, rendered to trust, do also signify a close adhering: Numbers 21:25, 'Lieth upon the border of Moab,' runs close to it. We may get some sparks from this word to light us in this search. A man that has suffered shipwreck is left to the mercy of the waves; has nothing in his reach to secure him but some planks or mast. How will he cling to it! how fast will he clasp! He will hold it as if it were his life, 2 Kings 18:5, Deuteronomy 4:4. He knows he is a dead man if he leave it; and therefore if any wave drive him off, he makes to it again with all his might, and clasps it faster. He knows there is no way but sink and perish if he part with it. A sinner, when the Lord begins to work faith in him, apprehends himself in a gulf of wrath; all the billows and waves go over him, and the depths are ready to swallow him up. Now in this case he sees no other security but Christ; he is the only tabula post naufragium, the only plank that is left (after our miserable wreck in Adam) to bring a sinner to shore; and therefore he cleaves to him; his soul clasps about him; he holds him as he would hold his soul ready to leave him, if it could come into his embraces. He knows, if he part, he sinks for ever; and therefore if any apprehension of wrath, of sin, of unworthiness, would drive him off, he clings closer to him, or he sinks eternally.

4. To believe in Christ is to roll, to cast ourselves upon him. The word is ■■■, rendered by trust: Psalms 22:8, 'He trusted in the Lord,' ■■ ■■ ■■■■, he rolled himself upon the Lord; so Psalms 37:5, Commit thy way,' ■■■ ■■ ■■■■, roll thy way upon the Lord; and what that is, the next words shew, ■■■, it is to trust in him; so Proverbs 16:3, 'Commit thy works unto the Lord,' ■■, the same word, roll thy works upon, &c. The expression is explained by another word, ■■■: Psalms 55:23, 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord,' &c., a metaphor taken from one ready to fall down under a heavy burden; he casts it upon one more able to bear it.

Now sin is a heavy, a most grievous burden; the Lord himself complains of the weight of it, Amos 2:13. The weight of sin, though Christ had none of his own, made him sweat, and sweat blood; made his soul heavy. It is burdened with the wrath and heavy indignation of God; it is clogged with the curses and threatenings of the law, so called frequently. No wonder if one sin be as a millstone about the neck of the soul, able to sink it into the bottom of hell. But though it be so burdensome, yet the sinner, till conversion, finds no weight in it. No wonder, since he is dead in trespasses. Cast rocks and mountains upon a dead man, he feels them not.

Ay, but when the Lord begins to work faith, and brings the sinner to himself, then he feels it burdensome indeed; he wonders at his former stupidness, he groans under the weight, he apprehends himself even sinking under the burden; and if he be not eased of this burden, he feels it will press him into hell. He lies grovelling under the weight, and cries, Help, help, or else I sink, I perish; and who is there that can help the soul in this sad condition?

If he should call to the angels, they know it is too heavy, they dare not come near it; they can remember since the weight of one sin sunk some thousands of their companions into the

bottomless pit.

If he should call to the saints, they have enough of their own burden, Psalms 38:4.

If he should call to the inferior creatures, they need help as well as he. It is the weight of sin that makes the whole creation groan and travail in pain, Romans 8:22. Let the oppressed sinner cry out to whom he will, they will all answer, as the king to the woman, ‘If the Lord do not help,’ &c.

Why, then, must the burdened sinner perish? Is there no remedy? Yes, the Lord has laid help on one that is mighty. Christ is willing, and he is only able to ease the burdened soul. He invites him to come; he will take the burden on himself, rather than the soul shall sink under it. Now, the sinner hearing this, it is glad tidings indeed to him: he closes with Christ, rolls himself, casts his burdened soul upon him, and so believes. For a sinner thus burdened, thus sensible of the weight of sin, to roll himself upon Christ, is to believe in him.

5. To believe in Christ, is to apply him. It is an intimate application, such as that of meat and drink by one pinched with hunger, and fainting with thirst. Hence faith is expressed by eating, John 6:51, John 6:53-54, John 6:56. To eat there, is to believe. It is not sacramental eating, as some mistake it; for then all that partake not of that ordinance should be damned (no infants should be saved), and all that partake of it should be saved; whereas this is against experience, that against charity, both against truth. But it is a spiritual eating, that is, believing, as we are led by the coherence to expound it, John 6:35. That which is eating here, is there coming (fiducial coming); and that which is drinking here, is there believing. So in the Old Testament, ■■■, ordinarily rendered to trust, rely, or stay on one, does also signify to nourish, to refresh and comfort, as one fainting is refreshed with wine: Song of Solomon 2:5, ■■■■■■, ‘Stay me with flaggons;’ and the only other word untouched, which the Old Testament uses for faith, ■■■, signifies in Kal nutrire, in Hiphil fidere. This is enough to evince that faith is an application, such an application of Christ as that of nourishment to one that is hungry. And this tends something to discover the nature of this act, which we shall make evident by a Scripture allusion, Genesis 21:1-34. The state of Hagar and her son in the desert resembles the state of a sinner in unbelief. They are for their insolency cast out of Abraham’s family; they wander, and lose themselves in the wilderness; and, which is worse, their provision is quite spent, and nothing is to be looked for but a miserable death. Nay, death is already seizing on Ishmael; he faints, and she not enduring to see him die in this extremity, withdraws herself, lifts up her voice, and weeps, verse 16. Now the Lord, pitying them in this forlorn condition, shews her a well of water. Oh with what great eagerness, do ye think, with what greediness, does she apply this water, to save the life of her dying child! Thus it is with a sinner; he is cast out from the presence of God for his rebellion; he wanders, and loses God, and then loses himself. In this sad condition his provisions are spent, he has nothing to support his soul, nothing to feed on but wind. His soul faints and languishes, and lies gasping even at the gates of eternal death. This is his sad condition, and this he apprehends when the Lord begins to work faith; and oh with what anguish does the apprehension thereof afflict him! Nothing can save his soul from death but a draught of the water of life, a taste of Christ. The Lord in this extremity discovers Christ, opens his eyes to see the fountain of life opened in the gospel. And when the sinner, in sense of his dying condition, applies Christ for life, then he believes. When the soul takes in this water of life as greedily as the hunted hart, who in danger of death, both from burning thirst within, and the eager pursuers without, pants after, and plunges himself in the water-brooks: when the

soul, in sense of such extremities from the indignation of God on all sides, takes in this water of life as he would take in life itself, then he believes, Psalms 42:1-2.

6. To believe in Christ is to receive him, John 1:12. Receiving is explained by believing; so that to receive is to believe on him, Colossians 2:6-7. As faith has taken root by this first act of receiving, so let it grow strong and fruitful. Sometimes the object of it is otherwise expressed; so that to believe in Christ is to receive his righteousness, and to receive remission of sins. And these expressions give light to discover the nature of this act, as we shall improve them by a similitude or two. A poor man over head and ears in debt, who owes more than he can pay, if himself and all that he has were sold for payment. The serjeants arrest him, and hale him to prison, and there he is like to spend all his days miserably in a dungeon; while he is afflicted with the sad apprehension of his misery, and even at the prison door, and one offers him a sum that will discharge all that he owes, oh how will the poor man be transported with such an offer! how joyfully will he receive it, though it were upon condition that he should be his benefactor's servant all his life! The case is parallel. Sinners are debtors to the great God. Sins are called ■φειλ■ματα, Matthew 6:12. The least sin is such a debt, as the sinner's body and soul is not of sufficient value to discharge it. But justice must be satisfied, and in default hereof, the sinner is every moment in danger to be cast into hell, and must not come out till he have paid that which he can never pay, the utmost farthing.

Now while the sensible soul is dejected with these apprehensions, Christ in the gospel offers him his righteousness, of such value that it will satisfy the utmost demand of justice.

Now when the sinner receives this with such an open heart, such a transported soul, as a debtor dragged to prison would receive a jewel able to satisfy all his creditors, when he thus receives it, he believes, Romans 5:17. This gift of righteousness is that which is elsewhere called our λ■τρον, the price of our redemption. To receive this, is to believe. For that which is receiving the gift of righteousness, Romans 5:17, and receiving the atonement, Romans 5:11, is styled, being justified by faith, Romans 5:1. To believe, is to receive remission of sins, Acts 26:18. And this affords another simile, to illustrate the matter in hand. A condemned person upon the scaffold, all the instruments of death ready, and nothing wanting but one blow to separate soul and body, while he is possessed with sad apprehensions of death, one unexpectedly comes, and brings him a pardon. Oh how will his heart welcome it! How will his hands receive it, as though his soul were in his hands! So here. A sinner, while in unbelief, is condemned already, he has received the sentence of death in himself; and there remains nothing but a fearful expectation of judgment, and the fiery indignation, nothing but an expectation of execution, but a step betwixt him and the eternal death. He hears the gospel in this condition offering mercy, and proclaiming a pardon through the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now for the dying soul to revive at these glad tidings, to welcome Christ, to receive him for the remission of sins, as the condemned person with his neck upon the block would receive a pardon, is to believe, Acts 10:43.

7. To believe in Christ, is to apprehend him, to lay hold of him, to embrace him: Romans 9:30, 'have attained to righteousness.' The best Latin translators render κατ■λαβε, by apprehenderunt, have apprehended, have laid hold on the righteousness of faith, i. e., the righteousness of Christ, who is the Lord our righteousness, the proper object of justifying faith. Now what it is to apprehend the righteousness of Christ, or Christ who is our righteousness, we are taught, Romans 9:33. So

that to believe on him, and to apprehend his righteousness, is all one.

It is to embrace Christ, Hebrews 11:13; ■σπασ■μενοι; they had not yet received the promises, i. e., the things promised. Christ was not yet exhibited, he was afar off; but he was offered in the promise, there they embraced him, i. e., believed on him. For there the apostle is giving an account of the several acts of faith, whereof this is the principal, to embrace Christ in the promise. And this we may improve to discover the nature of this saving act, Matthew 14:29-31. There Peter was so bold, as to come out of the ship and walk upon the waters. But when the tempest grew strong, then his heart fails him, and then he begins to sink, and sinking he cries out, Lord, save me! Christ, seeing him ready to perish, stretches out his hand, or, as some render it, takes him by the hand, and so cures him. Answerably here. To walk in the ways of sin, is to walk as it were upon the waters; there is no sure footing, how bold soever sinners are to venture. If patience were not infinite, we should sink every moment. The sensible sinner, he begins to see his danger, patience will long ere withdraw, it will not be always abused; a tempest of wrath will arise; nay, he finds it grow boisterous, it does already ruffle his conscience, he is as sure to sink, as if he were walking upon the waves. Nay, he feels his soul already sinking; no wonder if he cry out as a lost man, as one ready to be swallowed up in a sea of wrath. But now Christ stretches out his hand in the gospel. Now for the soul in sense of its sinking state, to stretch out itself to lay hold on that everlasting arm, that only can save him from going down into the bottomless pit, this is to believe, Song of Solomon 3:4, apprehendi eum;* to hold him, as one falling from a steep place, in danger to be dashed in pieces, holds a branch, a bough that he meets with, that he catches at in his fall; to hold Christ, as that only which can stay him, when he finds himself falling into hell and eternal destruction; to embrace, as he would embrace life, glory, happiness. This may be sufficient to discover the nature of faith. But for further evidence, observe what is included in it, as appears by the former.

1. Sense of misery. It is a sensible dependence. Faith presupposes sense of misery. When the Lord brings a sinner to believe, he makes him thoroughly apprehensive of his miserable condition by reason of sin and wrath; he not only assents to it, but is sensible of it. A man that has read or heard much of the sad effects of war, he may assent, believe that it is a great misery to be infected with war. Ay, but when the enemy is at his door, when they are driving his cattle, and plundering his goods, and firing his houses, he not only assents to it, but he sees, he feels the miseries of it; he has more sensible, more affecting apprehensions of it than ever. A sinner that continues in unbelief, hearing the threatenings, the wrath denounced against unbelievers, he may assent to this, that unbelievers are in a miserable condition; but when the Lord is working faith, he brings this home to himself; he sees justice ready to seize on him, he feels wrath kindling upon him. He now not only believes it, but has a quick sense of it. He has often heard of the misery of such a condition by the hearing of the ear, but now his eye sees it, and he sees it so as his eye affects his heart. He has often heard of the burden and danger of sin, but now he feels it. He apprehends himself at the point of sinking under it. He has often heard how terrible the wrath of God is, but looking on it at a distance, it did no more affect him than a painted fire; ay, but now he feels the heat of it, it begins to kindle in his soul, and scorch his conscience. He has heard of dreadful threatenings and curses denounced against such and such sins, but he looked upon them as at a distance, as discharged at random; ay, but now he sees them levelled at himself, his soul in the butt, the mark to which those arrows aim and are directed, and the poison thereof drinks up his

spirits. He reads and hears the terrible things denounced against sin, as though he were another man, and is affected with them as though they were not the same things. He wonders at his former stupidness. This thunder is not afar off, but it startles him, as though he were even in the thunder-cloud. Till it be thus in some degree, he will not believe, will not come to Christ, till they not only enter his fancy and understanding, but prick his heart. The physician is neglected, while the patient thinks himself in health. The whole, i. e., those that think themselves whole, see no need of the great physician. Till the sinner apprehend himself, his soul sick unto death, Christ is not looked after. The malefactor will never sue for a pardon to purpose, till he be (or apprehend himself in danger to be) condemned. No flying to this stronghold, till there be some fear of pursuers. There will be no flying to Christ, no believing in him, without some sense of misery. Lot would never have fled to the mountain, but that the country was all in a flame, Genesis 10:28.

2. A rejecting of other dependences, other supports. It is a sole depending, a relying upon Christ alone. While the sinner depends upon anything else, in himself, or without himself, for safety, he believes not on Christ, he stands no longer upon* his own legs. While the sinner stands upon his own bottom, his own righteousness, his good meaning, good nature, good deeds, his charitableness or religiousness, his being better than others, or not so bad as most, and upon this raises hopes of pardon, he is far from faith, he is but in the condition of the unjustified Pharisee. But when he looks upon these as no greater securities than tow or stubble would be, to shroud him from a consuming fire, then he will look out for a better screen to interpose betwixt his soul and that fiery indignation that his sins have kindled. When the soul, feeling the flame of wrath kindling on her, cries out as one that is already perishing, None but Christ, none but Christ, then he is in the highway to faith.

If the dove which Noah sent out could have found rest for the sole of her feet elsewhere, she would not have returned unto the ark, Genesis 8:12. Such an averseness there is in our natures to Christ, as he is the last thing a sinner looks after. If he can rest in anything else, if he can find rest in his friends, in his boon companions, in his accommodations, in his worldly employments, in his religious duties, in his good accomplishments; if he find rest to the sole of his foot here, the ark is forgotten, he returns not to Christ. But when he sees a deluge of wrath overwhelm him, when the waters of God's wrath rise so high as nothing appears but the ark, nothing to rest on but Christ, nothing but drowning and perishing in the common deluge, except he get into the ark, then he rests not till he gets into Christ, then he flies to him as for his life. See faith thus working in Ephraim, Hosea 14:4. They reject all foreign dependences: 'Asshur shall not save us;' they reject all dependence on themselves: 'we will not ride,' &c. they reject all that they had formerly idolised, and that by relying on them, they knew that this was the high way to mercy. None but the fatherless, τ■ ■ρφαν■ν. Till the sinner apprehend himself as an orphan, without strength, without counsel, all his supports dead which were a father to him, he will not betake himself to Christ as his only guardian; till he thus betake himself to Christ, he believes not.

3. Submission. Faith is a very submissive grace. Sin and wrath lie so heavy, as the soul is bended to what the Lord will. If he will but pardon me, says the humbled sinner, if he will but forgive me, let him deal with me otherwise as seems good in his eyes. If he will but shew mercy, let the Lord do it when and how he pleases. Psalms 37:7, 'Rest,' that is, trust; but the word is ■■■, 'be silent to the Lord.' That is the temper of faith, whatever the Lord says or does, the believing soul is silent. He is sensible of so much sinfulness and wretchedness, as worse cannot be said of him than he is,

worse cannot be inflicted on him than he deserves; and therefore let the Lord say of him, and do with him what he pleases, he puts his mouth in the dust, and is silent. Only let his life be given him, the life of his soul, and however otherwise the Lord proceeds, he will not reply. If the Lord say, he shall continue upon the rack of terror, he submits; only, says he, Lord, save my life, let me have that for a prey. If the Lord say, though he pardon him, yet he will make him exemplary by sharp afflictions, that the contagion of his example may not spread, O Lord, says he, only spare my life; whatever is not hell is mercy to such a wretch as I am. The sinner has been battered by the law, justice does besiege him, wrath is ready to assault, he sees himself reduced to extremity, he stands not upon terms, indents not with the besieger, but yields at discretion, will be at the mercy of the conqueror, cautious for nothing but his life, stands upon nothing but his soul, that this may not perish for ever. Whatever is not death, whatever is not eternal wrath, is infinite mercy to such a rebel as I have been. If the shipwrecked man can get to shore, can save himself from drowning, he regards not the wetting of his clothes, the spoiling of his goods; a greater matter is in danger; so it is with a sinner, in whom faith is working. His soul is in a sea of wrath, he is ready to sink; if he can but reach Christ, get to shore, he is content, though he come there naked, stripped of all that was otherwise dear to him. For why? His soul is in danger; if the Lord let that escape, come what will come else, he submits, he is silent.

4. Resolution to persist in his dependence. It is a resolute dependence, he is resolved to keep his hold whatever the event be. He knows justice is incensed, and the wrath of God is kindled against him, and whether or no the Lord may proceed to destroy him, he knows not; but he apprehends withal that there is no other way to pacify the Lord, no other way to escape wrath, but by casting himself on Christ, and therefore he resolves to persist in it.

It is with him as with Esther in her undertaking for the Jews, Esther 4:16. If she should go, and the king not hold forth the golden sceptre to her, she was but a dead woman; but then if she did not go there was no other way to save her and her nation from ruin, and therefore she resolves, ‘I will go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish.’ So here, if I go to Christ (thinks the trembling sinner), and take sanctuary in him, it may be justice may pursue me thither; Oh, but if I go not, then there is nothing for me but certain destruction; thereupon he resolves, I will go to Christ, I will lay hold on him, and if I perish I will perish there; if wrath seize on me, it shall find me in the arms of Christ; if I die, I will die at his feet. When Joab had fled for refuge to the tabernacle, and caught hold of the horns of the altar, Benaiah, sent to execute him, bids him leave his sanctuary: 1 Kings 2:30, ‘Thus says the king, Come forth.’ ‘Nay,’ says Joab, ‘but I will die here;’ if there be no mercy for me, no remedy but I must die, I will die here.

Thus the humbled sinner when he has taken sanctuary in Christ, and laid hold of Christ; when Satan or his own guilty soul tell him that he must come forth, there is no mercy for such a traitor, such a heinous offender; nay, says the believing soul, but if I must die, I will die here; if justice smite me, it shall smite me with Christ in my arms; though he kill me, yet will I rely on him; here will I live, or here will I die; I will not quit my hold, though I die for it. This his resolution as to his former evil way. He will not quit his hold of Christ, to return to his former courses, though he die here. As the three children, Daniel 3:17-18, ‘The Lord on whom I rely is able to deliver me; but if not,’ I will never serve my lusts any more.

5. Support. It is an establishing dependence. The heart that trusts, that relies on Christ, is in some degree or other fixed, more or less established: Psalms 112:7-8, ‘His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.’ His heart is established, ■■■■, rendered to trust, to lean; transitive signifies to underprop: Psalms 71:6, ‘By thee have I been holden up from the womb.’ A man cast into the sea scrambles up to a rock to secure him; the rock is firm enough, able to support; ay, but the apprehension of his late danger has left impressions of fear on him; he is still timorous; though he be above the water, he knows not but a storm may blow him off, or a wave may wash him again into the deep.

Christ is the rock of ages; he that stays on him stands firm; he cannot but have some support for the present, though he has little confidence, no assurance. He cannot yet say, The Lord will shew me mercy, I shall have pardon, he will be reconciled, I shall be saved; he cannot conclude this certain. Though there be certitudo objecti, yet not certitudo subjecti; though it be sure he shall not perish, yet he is not sure, he is not fully persuaded of it. Only this he has to support him, it may be the Lord will pity me, will shew mercy. He has that which was Benhadad’s support in his great extremity, 1 Kings 20:31. The Lord is a merciful king, and this is the only way to find mercy, peradventure he will save my life. Who knows but the Lord may be reconciled? Who can tell? Jonah 3:9. This bears up the heart at present, and by degrees he finds more and more support. It is with him as with the lepers, 2 Kings 7:3, 2 Kings 4:1, he may; 2, he will; 3, he has.

6. A consent to accept Christ on his own terms. This is included in the phrase of coming to Christ, and receiving him, whereby faith is ordinarily expressed. For we must not understand by coming, any corporal motion, but a motion of the soul. Now the will is animæ locomotiva facultas, the soul’s moving faculty, the organ whereby it performs this motion; it moves to an object by consent, and from an object by dissent. When it consents to take Christ, it comes to him; it is included in the phrase of receiving Christ; for this is an act of the soul too; and the will is the soul’s receptive power; it is as the hand of the soul, which closes when it dissents, and opens when it consents. The will is naturally closed against Christ, but consent opens it; and when the will is open to receive him, it always receives him; when it opens, it consents; when it consents, it receives, i. e., believes.

II. Of the object. Having largely opened the act of saving faith, it remains that I declare what the object of it is; for virtues, as other habits, being defined by their acts and objects, as being their prime essentials, the essence and nature of this saving faith will be apparent when to the explication of its acts I have added a declaration of its object.

Now, this I shall endeavour, 1, in general; 2, more distinctly in some particular propositions.

1. In general. The object of justifying or saving faith is Christ; it is he by and in whom faith seeks pardon and salvation. For this purpose to him a believer flies, on him he leans and rolls himself, to him he cleaves and clings. It is Christ he applies, receives, apprehends, and embraces when he would obtain pardon and life. I should rehearse to you a great part of the gospel if I should allege all those testimonies which the Scripture gives to this truth, Galatians 2:16, Acts 16:31, Romans 9:33, Galatians 3:26, 1 Peter 2:6, John 3:16, John 3:18, John 3:36.

2. More particularly.

(1.) The whole word of God is the adequate and general object of faith, when faith is taken for assent. Saving faith believes the histories, the precepts, the threatenings; but as it believes these,

it is not saving; for those that shall not be saved, viz., the devils and reprobates, may believe as much. Justifying faith assents to the whole, but it does not justify as it assents to the whole, but as it rests on Christ; even as the hand which feeds the body hath many offices, to work, to receive, to defend; but it feeds not, but as it conveys nourishment to the mouth. As the rational soul has many powers and acts besides the power to understand,—it remembers, and wills, and fancies, but it understands not but as it apprehends the truth of its object,—so justifying faith has many acts besides that whereby it justifies: it believes the threatenings, yields to the commands, assents to the historical relations of the word, but it justifies only as it respects Christ. So that the whole word of God is not the proper and specifical object of saving faith.

(2.) The mercy of God is but a partial object of faith. A partial, I say, because this alone is not enough to give faith any hold. Faith can find no mercy to pitch on but in and through Christ, nor is there any mercy for a sinner out of him. Therefore Christ must be added before mercy can be an ample object for faith to fix on. Christ is the only mercy-seat of faith. Would it find mercy? it must seek it where it is to be found, where it is seated: Romans 3:25, ■ν προ■θετο ■ Θε■ς ■λαστ■ριον, whom God has placed as a mercy-seat; the same word, Hebrews 9:5, κατασκι■ζοντα τ■ ■λαστ■ριον. The mercy-seat in the tabernacle was a type of Christ; and the posture of it is no more mysterious than comfortable, Exodus 25:1-40. It was the covering of the ark, above it were the cherubims of glory, the seat of the divine Majesty; and therefore he is said to sit betwixt the cherubims, Psalms 80:1. Under it were the tables of the covenant, or of the testimony, as it is called, Exodus 25:1-40; i.e., of the law, which bears testimony against sinners, which accuses, curses, condemns. Christ the mercy-seat is interposed betwixt the judge and the condemning law. Take away Christ, and nothing can be expected from the Judge but the law in its rigour, law without mercy. As the law will shew no mercy, that is all for justice, so the Lord will shew no mercy but on the mercy-seat, none but through Christ. Christ must be added to make mercy a complete, a fit object for faith. Without him it is but a partial object, if any at all. Mercy through Christ is faith's object. If faith pitch on mercy without him, it will pitch upon that which will not support it.

(3.) The promises of the gospel, they are the less principal, the subservient objects of faith. The promise is as the dish wherein Christ, the bread of life, the manna from heaven, is set before faith, and presented to it. Both are served up together; but faith feeds not on the dish, but on the manna, the bread of life in it. The promise is as a glass, a prospective, wherein the Day-star, the Sun of Righteousness is discerned. When we make use of a glass to discover a star, we look upon both; but our sight is not terminated in the glass, the use of it is to be subservient to a farther discovery, to be helpful to our sight to discover the star, which is the principal object. So faith, 'with open face,' does, in the promise, 'as in a glass behold the glory of God,' take a view of Christ who is the brightness of his Father's glory. The promise is but subservient to that happy, that delightful sight of Christ. And therefore I call it a subservient object, a mediate, less principal object.

(4.) The proper and principal object of faith is the person of Christ; not the promise of Christ, not the benefits of Christ, but the person of Christ; not the promise, as we shewed before. Faith is not an assent to a proposition affirmed, but affiance in a Saviour offered; not the benefits firstly and principally. Faith unites the soul to Christ; it is the bond of our conjugal union. Now, we marry not the dowry, but the person. That faith respects Christ himself in the first place, appears by the notions of faith, which we may collect from Scripture.

Faith is the hand of the soul; so it receives Christ himself, who is the gift of God, John 4:10.

It is the arm of the soul; so it embraces Christ, Song of Solomon 3:4.

It is the eye of the soul; so it looks upon Christ, as the stung Israelites upon the brazen serpent, John 3:14-15.

It is the mouth of the soul; so it feeds on Christ the bread from heaven, John 6:32-34.

It is the foot of the soul; so it comes to Christ, Matthew 11:1-30, John 6:1-71.

It is the lips of the soul; so it kisses Christ, Psalms 2:1-12. In all it has an immediate respect to Christ, to his person.

(5.) The person of Christ, as invested with his righteousness, is the formal object. Not the person of Christ barely considered, but as clothed with a righteousness qualifying him to a Mediator, a Saviour; as one that has fulfilled the law and satisfied justice in whatever it could demand on our behalf. As Christ without this would not be a Saviour, so without this he cannot be the object of saving faith: Romans 3:25, 'Through faith in his blood;' where blood, being the most signal part of his satisfaction, is put for his whole righteousness. Here is in this verse whatever is assigned as a special object of faith. Here is Christ and his righteousness expressly the formal object; faith in his blood, called ■πολ■τρωσις, Romans 3:24, through the redemption, i. e., through the satisfaction of Christ, who paid a satisfactory price (a λ■τρον) that captive sinners might be delivered. And that price was his righteousness, here called his blood: ut significetur fidem non aliò quam ad Christi sacrificium ferri. The person of Christ, the principal object, in the particle ■ν, Jesus Christ, whom, &c. The gospel, the subservient object, intimated in προ■θετο, whom God has set forth; as in the decree and in his understanding, so in the gospel, now seen, Revelation 11:19. The mercy of God the partial object, to be a propitiation, a mercy-seat, and this by his blood: ut per hostiam corporis sui hominibus propitium faceret Deum.* Faith does, in the business of our justification, embrace whole Christ; but it is properly terminated in his blood.† That is the proper (as I take it), the formal object of saving faith, that righteousness by virtue of which Christ is a Saviour.

(6.) The benefits of Christ are but the secondary objects of faith, Romans 8:32; they seem more properly to be the end of faith. We depend not upon pardon or salvation, but upon Christ for pardon and salvation; and that not as having obtained, but that we may obtain them.

Faith at first relies on Christ, not as one that has pardoned sin, but as one through whom alone pardon is to be obtained. The persuasion that sin is pardoned is a consequent of justifying faith, it is not the justifying act.

III. How does the Lord work faith? That is the next thing we undertook to shew, in what manner, by what steps and degrees, the Lord ordinarily proceeds when he brings a sinner to believe. Having giving an account of the act and object, let us see how the Lord brings the act and object together.

But, 1, we shall not attempt to shew how this is wrought in infancy or those of unriper years, for that is a secret; the Scripture seems reserved in this case, and secret things belong not to us.

And, 2, there are some extraordinary cases wherein the Lord proceeds not in the ordinary method. He ties not himself to one track. He is a most free agent, and works as when, so how, he pleases.

We shall only follow him in the ordinary, the beaten road, where his footsteps are visible by Scripture and experience.

And, 3, in ordinary cases there is great variety in respect of circumstantials; it may be as much variety as there is in faces. Now, as no limner will undertake to draw a piece that shall exactly resemble every face in every feature and lineament, though, without any curious inspection of particulars, he may draw one that will easily distingnish a man from any other creature, so we will not undertake to give such a discovery as will exactly answer every one's experience in circumstantials, but such as may be sufficient to distinguish a saving work from that which is but common to those that are not sound believers. And this will be very useful, both for discovering faith where it is, and for direction where it is not, to shew what way they must walk in who would attain it. To proceed then. The Lord, when he works faith in those that enjoy the gospel, and are capable of improving it, doth ordinarily proceed by these steps, and brings them to believe by these degrees.

1. A discovery of sin, which the Lord makes by the law and by the Spirit, Romans 7:7. The law of God is a light. A sinner, while he continues in unbelief, he shuts it out as an unwelcome guest; hates the light, John 3:20; but now the Lord brings it into the soul and conscience, and this discovers sin to purpose. In the dark great things seem small, and small things are not discerned; while in security, great sins are extenuated, neglected, and small sins are not at all taken notice of, but this makes a discovery of great and small. The Spirit of God concurs with the law. It is his office, and one of the first he performs to the unbelieving world, John 16:8, ■λ■γξει. Before he convince of righteousness, he shall make evident their sin, give them a demonstration of it, make their sin manifest. That is the import of the word, ■λεγχος γ■ρ ■στ■ λ■αν δηλ■ν,* a clear manifestation. This is the first thing he works by the ministry of the word, when it is effectual, Acts 26:18, to open their eyes, before he turn them to God, before they receive forgiveness of sin, before they have faith to receive it: He opens their eyes, &c. They were as blind men before, but now they see sin in its colours. Their apprehensions of sin now differ as much from those they had of it formerly, as the conceits which a blind man has of colours differ from his apprehensions of them when his eyes are opened. He apprehends his sins in their number and danger, guilt and stain, weight and heinousness, in their dishonouring and incensing quality as to God, in their defiling and damning power as to himself. The Spirit of God removes all excuses which he made use of to extenuate sin, make it seem light, and keep the weight of it from his conscience; now he looks on it as aggravated, as exceeding sinful, exceeding damnable. And though this discovery begin with some one particular sin, which the Lord sets home to the conscience, as the apostle first convinced the Jews of their sin in crucifying Christ, Acts 2:1-47, yet usually it rests not in one, but proceeds to more. As a man run much in debt is first arrested for one sum, but when he is clapped up, then one action is laid on him after another, till he be charged with the whole debt; so after the sinner is under this arrest of the law, when one sin has seized effectually on the conscience, the rest (as David said of his enemies) like bees, &c., he can say with a sad heart, 'Lord, how are they increased that trouble me.' As the Lord led Ezekiel from one place to another, and the further he went the greater abominations he discerned, Ezekiel 8:6, from the door of the court, Ezekiel 8:7, to the door of the gate of the Lord's house, Ezekiel 8:14, and from thence to the inner court, Ezekiel 8:16; so the Spirit of the Lord leads the sinner from one part of his house to another, from one room, one faculty of his soul to another, and still discovers greater, more and

more abominations; leads him from the profaneness of his ordinary conversation to the sins of his religious duties, and from the sins of his life to the sins of his heart, from the streams of sin in his actions to the spring of sin which bubbles up continually in every part of his soul, Job 13:26. He brings to mind the sins that he has forgotten, makes him possess the sins of his youth, of his youngest years; though he had let them slip out of his mind, yet the Lord takes a course to retain them, he seals them up in a bag, Job 14:17. And now the bag is opened, and the sinner sees what he is to reckon for, he cries out as the prophet's servant: 2 Kings 6:15, 'How shall we do?' and as David, Psalms 38:4, 'Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.'

2. Application of the desert of sin. The Lord convinces him that all those dreadful things which are denounced against sin belong to him, so that he applies them in particular to himself. He not only apprehends in general what is due to sin, the curses and threatenings of the law, the sentence of condemnation, the wrath of God, &c., but he applies these in particular: I have sinned thus and thus, and these are due to my sins, and therefore these are my portion.

Heretofore he looked upon these in general without any personal application; or if he applied them it was to others: Such and such a notorious sinner, these will fall heavy upon him, but I am not so wicked, mercy will keep off these from me. Oh, but now these are laid at his own door; his conscience tells him (as Nathan did David), 'Thou art the man.' So he takes it to himself: I am the man whom the Lord threatens, whom the law condemns, whom justice pursues, whose portion is the wrath of God, who am sentenced to death. He looks not upon the tempest of wrath as afar off, as that which may spend itself before it reach him, but he feels it beat upon his own vessel, ready to sink it; the sea of wrath works and is tempestuous about him, and his conscience speaks, as Jonah 1:12, 'I know that for my sake this great tempest is come,' it is I, that vengeance follows; it is I, that in justice and sentence of law stand condemned to eternal death.

He comes not to the assizes as formerly, to be a spectator, to see others tried and condemned. He sees himself now at the bar, himself arraigned and indicted, he cannot but plead guilty. He is clearly cast in law, and he hears the sentence of condemnation as though his name were writ in the Scripture, as though the Lord did by name pronounce sentence against him. This is the work of the spirit of bondage, of which, Romans 8:15, where observe the order and opposition. The order. The spirit of bondage goes before the spirit of adoption; again, intimating plainly, they had received the spirit of bondage formerly, viz., before they had received the spirit of adoption. They had fearful apprehensions of wrath, before they had the assurances of a Father's love. The opposition. These two spirits are opposed in their works. The work of the spirit of adoption is to witness together without our spirits, the spirit of believers, that they are the children [of God]; and, therefore, the work of the spirit of bondage is to witness together with the spirits, the consciences of unbelievers that they are the children of wrath. And as the spirit of adoption works this comfortable assurance by way of a practical reasoning, in like manner does the spirit of bondage give in the contrary testimony by way of a syllogism. 'Cursed is every one that continues,' &c. But I have continued in practices quite against the law, ergo, I am cursed. 'The wages of sin is death;' but thousands of sins lie upon my charge, ergo, eternal death is due to me. 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven,' &c. But I am guilty of so much ungodliness, so much unrighteous; therefore what remains but that the wrath of God should be revealed from heaven against me? The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not

the gospel of our Lord, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, but I have disobeyed the gospel, and, therefore (unless salvation come by the Lord Jesus Christ), I shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of God, verse 9. ‘He that believes not is condemned already,’ John 3:1-36. ‘The wrath of God abides on him;’ but I have continued in unbelief, ergo, I am condemned, the wrath of God abides on me, and (unless some gracious provision be made for my perishing soul) I shall be damned. This application, &c., is another step to faith. And though the condition of a sinner under these convictions seem sad, yet is far more hopeful than the state of those who continue secure and senseless, because they are in the way, they are upon the anvil; and though the law be a hammer to them (as the word is called, Jeremiah 23:29), and the strokes thereof be terrible, yet this is the way to be polished, to be made fit stones for Christ’s temple, for the New Jerusalem; whereas secure sinners are as stones in the quarry, far off from that which is but a preparative to faith and salvation.

3. Compunction. The soul is wounded with the apprehensions of sin and wrath; the weight of them lie heavy upon his conscience, they enter as iron into his soul: Acts 2:37, ‘When they heard this,’ when their sin was applied particularly, ye have crucified, Acts 2:36 and Acts 2:23, and apprehended what was due in particular for such a horrid act, ‘they were pricked at the heart,’ κατεν■γησαν, it pierced their hearts as though they had been run through with a sword or a spear. So the word is used ΙΛ. Ο. ν■σσοντες ξ■φεσιν τ■ κα■ ■γχεσιν. Such acute anguish, such piercing grief, did wound their souls, as though a sword had lanced their very hearts, Jeremiah 6:4. It is a rending of the heart elsewhere, Joel 2:13, a ploughing up of the heart. The law armed with wrath makes deep furrows in the heart. Now what anguish will follow such a rending, a wounding of the heart, we may imagine; but our thoughts and our words will come short of the sinner’s sense. The issue of such a particular application of wrath must needs be fear, horror, anguish, and fearful expectations of judgment. The very discourse of this made Felix to tremble, Acts 24:25, much more might the gaoler tremble, who had the sense of it, Acts 16:29. The Lord sometimes makes use of outward providences, the sight or report of some fearful judgment, or the quick apprehensions of death, to startle the sinner, and likewise to bring him to the sense of his misery. These may be subservient to the word, to begin or increase this consternation of the soul, as we see the earthquake was to the gaoler, Acts 16:28. And the Lord, when he makes his word effectual, he fixes the eye of the soul upon these sad things, holds it to them. This is grievous to nature, the sinner will be inclined to shake off these sad thoughts, and Satan will be ready to offer him diversions enough, to draw him to his jovial companions, that he may drown or sing away these cares, or to engage him in deep worldly business, that the noise of the world may drown the cries of his conscience. He will tempt him to shake them off, as Felix did when he began to tremble at Paul’s preaching of judgment, ‘Go thy way for this time; when I have convenient season I will call for thee,’ ver. 25. Or carnal friends, &c. Ay, but when the Lord intends hereby to fit the soul for Christ, he prevents this diversion, he holds the iron in the furnace until it be malleable; he fixes the eye upon sin and wrath, so that whithersoever he turns, his sin is with him, and hell before him; the cry of sin, and the curse of the law, is ever in his ears, Psalms 51:3. The pillar of fire leaves him not till he be on the borders of Canaan, till it leads him to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He continues him under the spirit of bondage, where work is fear, Romans 8:1-39; he abides under these fears, this anguish, hanging as it were by a thread over the bottomless pit, till he be fit for the glad tidings of the gospel. But hence observe, the Lord is very various in this dispensation,

both as to the continuance of those fears and terrors, as also to the measure and degree of them. Some lie long upon the rack of terror; to others he does but as it were shew the torture. Some lie long under the pangs of the new birth, their throes are strong, and many others have a more quick and easy delivery. The apprehensions of wrath seize upon some as an earthquake, which makes the foundations of the soul to shake, and with violence breaks or unhinges the door of the heart; in others, the door is unlocked, the bolts knocked off with a blow or two, and the heart opened to Christ in a gentler way. Some are led through these dreadful visions of wrath, even to the pit of despair; others have a door opened, when they are newly come into this valley of the shadow of death.

It is the Lord's design in all upon whom he thus works, to make them sick of sin; but in some it is a burning, a raging fever; in others it is but as a stomach sickness, which makes them loathe sin, and vomit it up as bitter and nauseous. But though this humiliation be in some more, in some less, both as to time and degree, yet in all, when the Lord draws to believe, there is so much as to drive them utterly out of themselves unto the Lord Jesus.

4. Inquiry, how he shall avoid this misery, what he shall do to be freed from that burden of sin and wrath, which is ready to sink him; what he shall do to pacify that wrath that burns like fire, and is ready to devour; how he shall satisfy that justice which pursues, and is every moment ready to smite him dead; what course he shall take to escape those everlasting burnings, into which he is in danger to fall every hour? When Peter's sermon had wounded the Jews with sense of their sin, this is the immediate issue of it, Acts 2:37, 'What shall we do?' So in the gaoler; when the apprehension of his misery shaked his soul, even as the earthquake shaked the prison, Acts 16:30, it puts him upon this inquiry, 'What shall I do to be saved?' Nor does the sinner in this case inquire as upon the bye, carelessly, indifferently; but his whole soul puts itself forth in this inquiry. As a man run through with a sword has present death before his eyes, would inquire for a chirurgeon,—Oh for a chirurgeon, or else I die! or as one whose house is on fire, and the flames all about his ears, would inquire how he may quench it; or as a man upon the sea, when the waves and storms beat the ship upon the rock, when he apprehends the vessel broke, and the waters breaking in upon him, would inquire what he should do to escape death and drowning,—he inquires as for his life. He is not as one that comes to a shop to cheapen a commodity, indifferent whether he have it or no, unless he can get an extraordinary pennyworth; but he inquires as one that resolves to have it, whatever it costs him. He inquires of the way, as a soldier after a route inquires after a stronghold: he is pursued by the enemy, death is at his heels; he resolves to press in, if he can find the way, whatever danger or difficulty encounter him, Luke 16:16. John was the messenger of the Lord, sent before Christ to prepare the way for him, 'to prepare the way of the Lord,' &c. And this he does by declaring their sins, and the wrath of God coming upon them for sin, Matthew 3:7, Matthew 3:10. Now when they were effectually possessed with the sense thereof, they press. The straitness of the gate, the crowd of impediments wherewith Satan, the world, their lusts stop up the way, shall not hinder them; they resolve to press through, to put their whole strength and might, as a man that would break through a thick crowd. An inquiry thus resolved is another step to faith.

5. A renunciation, a renouncing of all unsafe ways, all indirect courses, to procure peace. When the sinner comes to inquire what course he shall take, he may meet with many counsellors, and he does not always at first pitch upon the best. Satan and his carnal acquaintance will advise him to

return to his former sinful courses, those that have been so delightful to him formerly, that in them he may find ease. If he follow this counsel, he is lost; but if this seem too gross, too dangerous, if the flame already kindled be so terrible as he dares not add fuel to it; if he be convinced that this is not the way to quench the fire, but to make it flame higher: it may be one more specious may be suggested; he will betake himself to hear and pray, to wait upon the ordinances, to reform some things amiss, and think hereby to pacify God, who seems so angry, to satisfy justice, which is so incensed, and so to get ease to his afflicted conscience. Ay, but if he rest here, he will never come to faith; and therefore when the Lord intends a saving work, he will not suffer him to rest in these. These are good in themselves, and necessary; but, if rested in, they are pernicious. The Lord will convince him that these are the way, not the end. To rest in them upon these terms is to make them saviours, not the way to a Saviour. He will shew him that these amount not to the least mite, whereas he owes ten thousand talents. He will shew him the sinfulness of them, that they are so far from satisfying, as that thereby he runs further upon the score; that these are so far from saving him, as that he needs a Saviour when he has done his best, lest the sins of his best deeds should condemn him. He knocks down these rotten pillars, on which the soul would find an unsafe support; so that he falls flat down under the sense of his sinfulness and impotency. He sees, for all that he has, or all that he can do, he must perish, unless help be laid upon one that is more mighty. He empties him of all opinion of his own righteousness, of his own sufficiency. He spreads his net in the gospel to catch this lost sinner, that will else be a prey to Satan. Now, as fishermen, when they would be sure of a good draught, they beat the sides of the river; they know if the fish can lie secure in any hole, they will never come into the net; thus the Lord drives the sinner out of conceit of himself, out of every lurking-place, that he may run straight to Christ.

Faith is a flying to Christ. Now in this motion there is something from which, a terminus à quo; this is not only his own wickedness, but his own righteousness. This is the stronger hold of the two, and usually holds out longer. To drive him out of it, the Lord shews him the vanity and weakness of it, that it is but like those, Nahum 3:12. The least blast of the Lord's displeasure will make them fall, as ripe figs in a storm of wind; that they are but as broken reeds, if he lean on them they will break under, pierce him rather than support, and let him fall into hell besides. He says to him, as Rabshakeh to Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:21, 'If a man lean on it, it will go into his hand and pierce it.' And so he brings him to the apostle's opinion, who, Php 3:8, counted his own privileges, righteousness, but as loss and dung. And now he is in the highway to Christ; there is but a step betwixt him and faith. A soul in this distress, like a drowning man, will catch at every twig to save his life; but if the Lord intend to bring him to shore, he will not suffer him to trust to that, that will let him sink and sink with him; not trust to his own righteousness, performances, &c. He takes him not off from performing these, but from resting in them. Oh! alas! says the humbled soul, if I have nothing else to save me, I perish for ever. He sees these are but a refuge of lies: Isaiah 28:17, 'The hail shall sweep away,' &c. It is a deceitful refuge; I shall have nothing of what I expect from it. It is such a shelter, as a storm will beat down about my ears and sweep it away. If I take sanctuary in my duties, righteousness, these will not secure me. Justice will pluck me from the horns of these altars, and slay me. And therefore he looks further.

6. Revelation of Christ. When the Lord has brought him out of these by-ways wherein he would lose himself, he shews him the true way, the only way to pardon and life. When he has diverted him from his deceitful refuges, he shews the distressed sinner a city of refuge opened in Christ.

He shews him the glory and excellency of Christ, represents him as ‘fairer than the children of men, the chiefest in ten thousand, and infinitely loving and lovely.’

He shews the sufficiency of Christ; that there is nothing can be required to deliver and enhappy a humbled sinner, but it is to be found in him; that he is able to save to the utmost, Hebrews 7:25.

He shews his necessity of Christ, that there is ‘no other name,’ &c. Acts 4:12. No other sanctuary will secure, no other price will discharge him, and no other surety will be accepted.

He shews him a possibility that Christ may save and pardon him; he has pardoned such and such, whose sins were so great and so many; he came to save what was lost, and why not him?

He shews him a certainty of it in case he will believe, that he will cast off none that come to him; that he will lose none, suffer none to miscarry, that cast themselves on him. The sinner has heard these things, it may be, often before, but he heard them as though he heard them not. He was like the Jews when the veil was upon them; seeing, he saw, but perceived not; hearing, he heard, but understood not. Not because they were not clearly revealed, but because of his blindness, unbelief, carelessness; his carnal heart was not moved with spiritual discoveries, looked on them as not so much concerning him. He heard of this as a man with a full stomach hears of a feast; or as one that thinks himself above the fear of justice hears of a pardon; he finds no need of it, and so little regards it. Thus he heard of Christ before. Oh but now he hears these things as though he were another man, as though he had another soul. The report of Christ is glad tidings indeed. He hears of Christ as one in the executioner’s hand, ready to die, hears of a pardon. He looks on Christ as one that has been all his days in a dungeon would look on the sun: 2 Corinthians 4:6, the discovery of Christ is to him as a glorious light shining on a sudden upon one in darkness. He was before in Satan’s dungeon, as the apostle was before the revelation of Jesus Christ, verse 4; his eyes was put out. And besides, the object was veiled; he saw no more beauty in Christ than the Israelites saw glory in Moses’s face when the veil was upon it, verse 3. But now his eye is opened, the veil is removed (for to that the apostle alludes), and he sees a glorious light, a glorious beauty in the face of Christ.

7. Hope. Though he despair as to himself, yet the Lord keeps him from despairing as to Christ. Though he have no hope in himself, yet ‘there is hope in Israel,’ there is hope in the gospel ‘concerning this thing.’ Though he be ready to sink under the pressure of sin and wrath, yet the discoveries of the gospel keep his head above water. He continues trembling under the apprehensions of wrath and misery, yet the Lord keeps him from falling quite down. The discoveries of Christ afford so much hope as somewhat strengthens the feeble knees, and yields some support to the trembling soul. He continues in a fluctuating condition, sometimes up, sometimes down, according as the impressions of law or gospel prevail, sometimes more, sometimes less. His feet are sometimes quite gone, his hold is lost, and he is ready to say, My hope is perished from me. Yet the Lord has made such provision in the gospel that though he fall, yet shall he rise; though he sink, yet will the Lord bring him up again. Some twig or other the Lord helps him to in the gospel, and holds him by it till he bring him to shore. He apprehends justice pursuing him, he hears it crying out to an incensed God, Shall I smite him? shall I smite? and he is in dreadful expectations of the fatal blow. Oh but he hears withal there is a sanctuary, there is a city of refuge set open in the gospel if he could but reach it; if he could but get into it, there is hopes for him, there he might be safe, there he might be secure from revenging justice. It never

seized on any sinner that was fled thither for refuge.

He feels that sin has stung his soul; the sting of that fiery serpent is deadly, the poison thereof drinks up his spirits, he feels it even seizing upon his vitals; it has brought him even to the gates of death, all the art of men and angels cannot cure the wound. Oh but he hears withal there is a brazen serpent lifted up in the gospel, there is a healing, a sovereign virtue in Christ, there is balm in Gilead, there is a physician there, one that can heal a dying soul with a word, with a touch, nay, with a look. If he might have but a sight of him, might be admitted but to touch him, though it were but the hem of his garment, there is hopes. Though I were dead, yet should I live; no poison too deadly, too strong for that sovereign virtue that is in Christ.

He apprehends the waves and billows of God's indignation ready to go over him, ready to sweep him out of the land of the living; he knows not how soon he may be buried under those waves, under that wrath; he lives in a fearful expectation of it, and here the waves grow higher and higher. Oh but he hears withal there is an ark able to save him from that deluge, if he could but reach it; if he could but get into it, he might be safe; if Christ would but put forth his hand and take him in, he should be above that dreadful flood.

Wrath is due to thee, says the law, it is coming, thy damnation sleeps not; it is swift destruction, wrath will come upon thee speedily. Oh but, says the gospel, there is a Jesus, a Jesus that delivers from the wrath to come. Oh how sweet is that sentence to the sensible sinner, Jesus who delivers!

Alas, says the sensible sinner, I am but a dead man, the sentence of death is passed upon me, I am condemned already; I am now in the hands of justice, ready for execution. Oh but does not the gospel speak of a pardon? There is a pardon out for some that are condemned, here is some hope for me; though the sentence of condemnation be passed, yet it is not absolute; though I be cast in law, and judgment passed against me, yet if I could but believe, execution might be stopped. There is life to be had for some who have received sentence of death. My condition is not hopeless, unless my unbelief make it so, 1 John 5:11-12. There is life for condemned wretches if they believe. Though wrath has so far seized on me as to proceed to sentence, yet wrath will not abide on me unless I abide in unbelief; there is some hopes if I could but believe. Thus the sensible sinner is helped up from sinking; hope keeps his head above the waves, or brings him up again when he is already overwhelmed and seems quite gone. When he is even oppressed by the powers of darkness, and the dismal apprehensions of wrath and misery, the Lord opens some crevice, lets in some glimpse of hope. The discoveries of Christ in the gospel are as 'a door of hope opened to him in this valley of Achor,' Zechariah 9:11. Here is the state of a lost sinner represented by the state of the Jews captivated in Babylon: where you may see the misery of it, 'in a pit'; the helplessness of it, 'no water'; the hopes of it, though prisoners, yet 'prisoners of hope'; the grounds of those hopes, wholly out of themselves, in the blood of the covenant, and this stronghold. Their misery, which sinners in the way to faith are sensible of, they are in a pit, a dark pit; the state of nature is a state of darkness, it is Satan's dungeon, not a spark of saving light; and therefore when brought out of it they are said to be 'turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God,' Acts 26:1-32. They are bound, fettered in this dungeon; and therefore the Dutch render it 'thy bounden ones;' they are loaden with fetters, with that which is worse than fetters and iron, the bonds of iniquity. They are in no capacity of themselves to scramble out of this

dismal condition; nay, the mouth of the pit is closed, the Lord has shut it up, and shut them up in it, Romans 11:32, συν■κλεισε. And as of themselves they cannot get out of it, so they cannot live in it, they have not so much as water to live upon; a pit wherein there is no water, no succour, no comfort, no refreshment, nothing to refresh or sustain their souls for a moment. He apprehends the misery of it, a pit wherein there is no succour, destitute of all remedy. So he now finds it, he must look out if he mean to live. But as it is helpless, is it hopeless too? No; a sensible sinner, though a prisoner, yet a prisoner of hope, he hears there is a refuge, a stronghold for him; though he be now sunk into this pit, though there be no water to keep him alive in it, yet there is the blood of the covenant to bring him out of it. This is it which makes him a prisoner of hope; an eye of hope, in this forlorn state, upon this stronghold, upon this blood of the covenant, is one step out of the pit, one step towards faith.

8. Self-abhorrence. This springs from the former. Hopes that he may find mercy with God, and probability that he may have pardon through Christ, fill him with indignation against sin, and himself for sin; makes him condemn himself and justify God, though he should proceed against him with the greatest severity. When the soul is cast down low, under dreadful apprehensions of wrath and misery, and then raised up, though but a little, to some hopes of deliverance, it makes a great impression upon the heart. And is there hopes for me, says the sinner, who have so much, so long, so highly offended God? for me, who have so shamefully abused mercy, so vilely contemned Christ? Is there hopes for me, who might have been now in hell, in a hopeless condition? for me, when so many less sinners than I are without hope? for me, who have done all I could to make my condition desperate? Can the Lord be inclinable to shew me mercy? Can Christ entertain any thoughts of peace concerning me? Is this possible? Is there hopes after all? Oh then what a wretch am I, that have so dishonoured such a God! that have so affronted, so wounded such a Saviour! Oh there is no hell too grievous for such a wretch as I am, no wrath too heavy for such a rebel as I have been, no vengeance too severe for such injuries, such sins as mine. How few are there in hell, who have more deserved hell than I! I am, I hear, in a way to mercy, in a way of hope, when so many better than I are in that place of torment, shut up in a despairing state for ever. And is it that God whom I have so provoked, so dishonoured, that has made this difference? Has all those millions of provocations been levelled against that God, against that God that gives me hopes of mercy? Oh what a monster am I! Oh how exceeding monstrous are my sins! Nothing in earth or hell so vile as I! No sins so abominable as these of mine! The provocations of devils and damned souls are not worse than mine. They sin not against a God that gives hopes, as I have done. The sinner thus affected, apprehends he cannot speak bad enough of himself and of his sins. This makes him abhor himself, this makes him sick of sin. That which was before as a sweet morsel, it is now nauseous to his soul, it lies heavy on his stomach, he is sick of it, Matthew 9:12. The sinner will not come to the physician, nor will the great physician undertake his cure, till he be, more or less, in some degree or other, thus sick of sin. This nauseating of sin, this loathing of it, and himself for it, is another step to faith.

9. Valuing of Christ. He has far other thoughts of Christ than heretofore. When he is brought so low in the sense of his own vileness, sinfulness, misery, impotency, and sees the excellency, the all-sufficiency of Christ discovered in the gospel, his thoughts of Christ are raised. He that heard before of the blood and righteousness, of the satisfaction and intercession, of the love and bounty of Christ, as common things, words of course, of which he had but common thoughts, he finds a

strong, a strange alteration as to his apprehensions of the value, worth, and necessity of them. Discourses of Christ are not tedious now; he thinks he can never hear enough of them; they do not pass out as they come in; they do not glide through his mind, without leaving any impression. He finds his thoughts of Christ raised by every word. He was before in a soul lethargy, as, alas! the most are. Tell him of cure, he minds it not, he is insensible. Ay, but now he has such thoughts of Christ, as one tortured with the stone has of that which he hears may give him ease and cure. He prizes Christ, as one ready to die with thirst and heat would prize a well of waters, as Samson, Judges 15:18, or Hagar. He prizes Christ now, as one in cruel, miserable bondage in Turkish slavery would prize a ransom. So does he value this λ■τρον. He looks on Christ now, as one that has been long in a dark dungeon would look upon the light, if a beam of it should break in on a sudden upon him in that dismal place, Malachi 4:1-6. Suppose a man born blind should have his eyes opened on a sudden, and see the sun rising in its glory, what thoughts would he have of it! Such thoughts has the sensible sinner now of Christ, when, his eyes being opened, he sees him revealed in the gospel.

He wonders at his former blindness and stupidness, that his apprehensions of Christ should be so low, when he has been so clearly revealed in the word. Where Christ is truly preferred before all things, there are the seeds of faith. But I suppose this high esteem of Christ is in order of nature, though not in order of time, before actual faith. For till Christ be thus valued, the sinner is not willing to accept of Christ on his own terms; till he be the pearl of great price, he is not willing to sell all for him, to renounce all, that he may cleave only to Christ for pardon.

10. Strong desires after Christ. It is the goodness of a thing which makes it the object of our desires; and the more excellent that goodness is apprehended to be, the more ardent are our desires. The more necessary it is apprehended, the more restless, and importunate, and insatiable are our desires, and the more easily will we yield to any terms upon which it may be obtained.

Now the discovery of the sinner's misery and impotency, makes him apprehend an absolute necessity of Christ. The discovery of Christ's all-sufficiency, as able to save and relieve him to the utmost, makes him apprehend a transcendent excellency in Christ. Hence his desires after Christ are ardent, importunate, such as make him ready to stoop to anything, so as he may have Christ. His desires are ardent. He longs for Christ as Rachel for children, Genesis 30:1. Oh give me Christ, or else I die. Wrath will overwhelm me, justice will seize on me, hell will swallow me up; there is no way but I must perish, without Christ. Give me Christ, or else I die. His heart is carried after Christ, as David's was to that which he calls the law, the word, the testimony of God; he longed, he breathed, he panted after them: Psalms 119:40, 'I have longed after,' &c.; Psalms 119:20, 'My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath,' &c. His heart was so far stretched out in longing desires, as it was ready to break. Now indeed that which he thus intensely desired was Christ, veiled under the expressions, law, &c., for we cannot by the law here understand the covenant of works (for what is to be desired in that?) but life. Now life, upon the terms of that law or covenant, is become impossible; and that which is impossible, is not desirable. The object of desire is a possible good. It is not the doctrine of the covenant of works. What then can it be, but the doctrine of the covenant of grace, since the whole doctrine of the Scripture is referred to one of these covenants? That law, &c., which he longed for, was that which is contained in the covenant of grace. And what is the sum of that but Christ? This is it which he longed for. And indeed Christ was as fully and sufficiently held forth in the Old Testament as in the New, though not so clearly

and perspicuously. They had the gospel under that administration, which we call the law or Old Testament, sufficiently, though not so evidently as we. And therefore Paul, who preached the gospel as purely and fully as ever it was preached in the world, professeth that he preached nothing but what was contained in the law and the prophets, nothing in the New but what was in the Old Testament, Acts 26:22.

David had the doctrine of the gospel of Christ, of salvation by Christ then. And this was it his heart was so drawn out after; and so he expresses it, Psalms 119:81, Psalms 119:174. The law wherein he delighted was the doctrine of salvation, and so the doctrine of Christ, in whom alone salvation is to be found; and Christ is called salvation, Luke 2:28. That which Simeon saw David longed for; he longed for it ardently. And so does the sensible sinner long for Christ as for salvation, when he finds himself in such danger to be damned; longs for Christ as for life, when he sees death and hell before him, and no hopes of life without Christ. This makes his desires importunate. Nothing else will satisfy him; he will not be put off with any else. If the Lord would offer him a world in this case, it would not satisfy. Alas, says he, what would a thousand worlds avail me, if, after a momentary enjoyment of them, I must go to hell for ever! What will these profit me, so long as the Lord's wrath burns against me! What will all the pleasures and riches of the world avail me, so long as I am but a condemned person, and in danger every hour to be led forth to execution! Oh no; let me have Christ, whatever I want. Let me have him who can procure a pardon for a condemned soul; let me have him who can make my peace with an incensed God; let me have him who can save me from the wrath to come. Oh Christ, or nothing. Alas! whatever else I have or the world can afford, they are woeful comforts, miserable comforts to a perishing soul. A Jesus, a Saviour for a lost soul; none but Christ.

Effectual desires. Such as make them stoop to any terms, submit to any conditions, so he may have Christ. He will not now capitulate with Christ; but so as he may have himself, he may make his own terms. He is ready to do anything, to suffer anything, to part with anything, so he may gain Christ. So it was with the apostle, Php 3:1-21; those things which were gain to him, of which he thought to make the greatest advantage, he would part with them as loss, as freely as a man would part with that which he were like to lose by, as that which is like to undo him. And those things which he counted his glory before, he would part with them as σκ■βαλα, as dung, as freely as one would cast dung out of his lodging. And why? That he might gain Christ; that he might be found in him. Ask the soul now (who was resolved before to keep such and such a sin, notwithstanding all that Christ could do or say in the ministry of the gospel), Wilt thou part with such a lust, that which has been so gainful, brought in such a revenue of pleasure, profit, or applause? Oh, says he, it is loss now; it would undo me if I should not quit it; I should lose Christ, I should lose my soul, if I live in it; I'll part with it as freely as I would part with a mortal disease, as with that which would ruin me.

He desires Christ, as Esau longed for meat when he was ready to faint and die for hunger; if Jacob would but give him meat, he might make his own terms for it, Genesis 25:30–32: 'Sell me thy birthright,' says he. Here was hard terms; for the birthright concerned the office of the priesthood, a pre-eminence over the brethren, and a double portion of the father's estate. But though this might seem hard, yet Esau's necessity is so great, his appetite so strong, that he sticks not at it, ver. 32. So the sinner hears what he must part with, if he will have Christ; and when Satan or his corrupt heart would persuade him it is a hard bargain, yet he finds his extremity so great, death so near

him, he will not stand on it. Behold, I am at the point to die; there is but a step between me and eternal death; my soul is ready to drop into hell; and what will these riches, these pleasures, these lusts do to me? I shall die, if I had ten thousand times more of the best of these, if I have not the bread of life, if I have not Christ. And therefore he resolves as firmly as if he were tied by Jacob's oath, that he will quit all, if he may but have life, if Christ will be life to him. He longs for Christ, as Shechem did for Dinah, Genesis 24:8. He would give anything, if he might but obtain his desires, Genesis 24:11-12. Oh but they stand not upon dowry; they propound terms of another nature, Genesis 25:15. He and his people must be circumcised, if he meant to have Dinah; and to be circumcised was painful, it was perilous too, and it is like at that time reproachful to the heathen. But yet so was his heart drawn out after her, as even these hard terms pleased him, Genesis 24:18-19. It pleased him so as, how grievous soever it might seem, he deferred not to do it.

Thus it is with a sinner in this case; he is so taken with Christ, he does so long for him, that if the match may be but made up, whatever terms Christ will propound shall please him, even the reproach of Christ, even dangers and sufferings for Christ shall please him, so he may but enjoy him. Whatever stands in the way shall be cut off, though it be as dear to him as his own flesh, as a right hand or right eye. Even his heart shall be circumcised, since Christ would have it so; how painful soever it seem, yet it does please him, he will not defer to do it, so as Christ may be given him. And when it is come to this, the seeds of faith (which are in the heart when Christ is so highly valued, as I shewed in the former head) begin to sprout forth. Such an ardent, importunate, effectual desire after Christ is a sprig of faith; but yet he is not come to cast himself on Christ, to that actual dependence on him, whereby the Holy Ghost seems most frequently to represent faith unto us, one step further he must go before he come to this.

11. A persuasion that the Lord would have them to believe that Christ is willing they should rest on him for pardon and life. Not only that he will receive those that come to him, but that he is willing they should come; not only that he will not fail those who rely on him, but that he is willing they should rely on him. He convinces the sensible sinner not only of the necessity of faith, that unless he believe, there is nothing for him but wrath and condemnation, no way but this to avoid hell and eternal death. Not only of the excellency of faith, and of the certain advantage which may be got by believing, that if he could believe, the storm would be over, justice would be satisfied, wrath would be appeased, pardon, and reconciliation, and life would be his portion, but also that it is a duty, yea, his duty to believe, and to believe now. Many times the sensible sinner sticks at this, he finds a difficulty here not easily mastered. Though he be satisfied it is a duty to some to rest on Christ, and apply the promise, those who are deeply humbled, and fitly qualified, yet he questions whether it be his duty, at least whether it be yet his duty. He doubts whether Christ's invitations and commands be directed to him for this purpose. He eyes not the authority of Christ so much as his mercy in such injunctions, and doubts that he is not yet a fit subject for such mercy. He looks upon believing as a privilege rather than a duty, a privilege that he is altogether unfit for, unworthy of. He is not yet sufficiently prepared, not humbled enough; he is too sinful, too unworthy, to have anything to do with Christ and the promise. It may be a duty to others, but it would be presumption in him to lay hold on Christ in the promise. That is bread for children, he cannot presume that a crumb of it belongs to him. Will the Lord invite such a woeful prodigal as I have been to return to his house? May such a rebel as I have been have access to the King of glory? Will the golden sceptre be holden out to me? Does Christ stretch out his arms to such a sinful piece of deformity?

May I come into his embraces? Oh, it is no easy matter to persuade a humbled soul of this. But yet he waits upon the Lord in the use of appointed means, and in the use of them the Lord lifts him above this difficulty, and satisfies his doubts, removes his scruples, persuades him that it is his will, even that he should believe. And indeed, as faith of assurance comes ordinarily by the application in particular of a promise, so the soul comes not ordinarily to this faith of dependence but by the particular application of Christ's commands and invitations, till he be persuaded that the general command to believe concerns him, and is, as it were, directed to him in particular. When he hears these gracious invitations, 'Come unto me, all ye,' &c., 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come,' &c., and 'let whosoever will, come,' Why, says he, it seems Christ would have me come to him; I am the person, how unworthy soever, whom he invites, importunes, beseeches. When he hears the command, 1 John 3:23, he takes it to himself, as though he were named in it: It is the will and pleasure of Christ that I should believe; he directs his command unto, and lays it to me. When he hears that to believe is to give glory to God, Romans 4:20, Why, says he, though I have so much dishonoured Christ, he will count himself glorified by my believing in him. When he hears that he that believes not makes God a liar, 1 John 5:10, If I should not believe, says he, I should cast this dishonour on him; my keeping off from Christ puts this affront on him; either I must believe him or give him the lie. Oh, I have dishonoured, affronted him too much already, shall I add this to all the rest?

12. He resolves to comply with the Lord's invitation, to obey his command, and so casts himself upon Christ, cleaves to him, rests on him, embraces him, and holds him fast.

Though I be the unworthiest sinner that ever had access to Christ, yet since he delights to glorify the freeness and riches of his grace in admitting those that are most unworthy, and since he expresses it by inviting me, shall I not hearken to him? shall not I comply with his gracious invitations?

Though I be unworthy to come, yet is not he worthy to be obeyed? I am cast away for ever if I cast not myself on Christ; and now he stretches out his arms to receive me, what can I desire more? I perish if I come not; and now when he invites me to come, shall I refuse? shall I defer? shall I destroy myself and dishonour him both at once, by forbearing to do what he commands me, when I am damned if I do it not? The invitation of Christ encourages him, but his own extremity forces him to roll himself on Christ; it forces him, &c.

It is with the sinner in this case as it was with those four lepers, 2 Kings 7:3-4. Thus says the sensible sinner within himself, Why stay I in this state of unbelief till I die? What course soever offer itself, there is but one way to escape death, and that is by running to Christ. If I say, I will enter into the city, if I return back to my former evil ways, whether of profaneness or formality, the wrath of God beleaguers that state, a famine is there, no relief can come into it, my soul will certainly perish there; but if I sit still here in the state where I am, without venturing on Christ, why, here I shall surely die, I am every moment in danger of eternal death. Now therefore, come, let me fall into the hands of Christ; if he save me alive, I shall live, and if he kill me, I shall but die. There is hopes I may live by coming to him, but if I go not, there is nothing but certain death. Nay, the humbled soul has more encouragement here than the lepers. There is not only provisions for life enough in Christ's all-sufficiency, he has his invitation to come to him for life; nay, he has his promise, that if he will come, he shall live.

Upon this, the soul resolves, and ventures, renouncing all other ways and supports, resolving to submit to Christ's terms, whatever they be; he casts his perishing soul into the arms of Christ, and there he rests.

Now, when the Lord has brought the sinner thus far, he is actually arrived at that faith which is saving and justifying. I have explained this act at large before. I need add no more, only a brief account of some of the consequences of this act.

13. The Lord discovers his faith to him, possesses him with an apprehension that he does truly believe. The former is the direct act of faith, this is a reflex act; when he has acted faith, to know that it is faith which he acts. And sometimes it is a good while before the believer knows that he believes indeed. As a man fallen into the water, in danger of being drowned, yet drawn out to land with much ado, through the fear and amazement that is on him, though he be safe, yet for a while knows not where he is, &c. As it is the power of the Spirit that works faith, so it is the light of the Spirit that discovers faith when it is wrought, 1 Corinthians 2:12.

14. This makes way for assurance, that assurance which we call discursive; wherein the Spirit of God witnesses together with the spirit of a convert, that he is a believer; by consequence brings him in this testimony, that he has everlasting life. He that believes has everlasting life; but I believe, ergo, I have, &c.

There is another kind of assurance, from an immediate testimony of the Spirit, without such an application of Scripture grounds. But whether this assurance be intuitive or discursive, if it be an act of faith, it is not the justifying act; indeed, it seems rather an effect than an act of that faith, and that which follows after it, and sometimes at a great distance, Ephesians 1:1-23.

15. From this assurance proceeds sometimes peace, sometimes comfort, sometimes a joy, triumph, and glorying in God. Peace, freedom from fears and terrors; comfort, a degree above peace; joy, which is comfort in its exaltation; peace, which is the hushing of the storm; comfort, which is as the breaking out of the sun; triumph, joy, which is as the sun shining in its full strength, Romans 5:1–3.

Use 1. Information. See here the misery of unbelievers. Here is a dreadful representation of this in these words, we need go no further. Here is the handwriting of God in the text, as terrible to unbelievers as that handwriting on the wall was to Belshazzar, Daniel 5:5-6. Methinks the countenance of every unbeliever, that sees or hears these words, should be changed. 'He that believes not shall not see,' &c. Particularly here is misery negative: 'He shall not see life;' positive, 'the wrath of God,' &c. We have here an epitome of hell as the portion of an unbeliever. The miseries of hell are no more than pœna damni, and pœna sensus, and both these are entailed upon unbelievers: 'He shall not see life;' here is the pain of loss; the pain of sense: 'The wrath of God abides on him.' An unbeliever is so far in hell upon earth as hell can be upon earth. He is without life; he is dead spiritually; he has not the least degree of spiritual life, no breathing, no motion truly vital and spiritual; he is dead legally; the law has passed sentence of death on him, he 'is condemned already,' ver. 18, and the sentence is so far executed, as that the wrath of God does now actually abide. He is without God, the author of life; without Christ, the purchaser of life; without the covenant, the promise of life, and without hopes of heaven, the seat of everlasting life; without grace, the beginnings of life; without hopes of this; so far he is from it, that it is out of sight;

nor shall he ever see it, or hopes of it, till he believe. Distinctly,

(1.) He is without Christ, the fountain of life. It is faith by which the soul is contracted to Christ. An unbeliever is a stranger, an enemy to Christ, whatever friendship he pretend. And so is Christ a stranger, an enemy to him. It is faith by which the soul is united to Christ. An unbeliever is as far from Christ as earth is from heaven; you may as well mingle and join heaven and earth together as join an unbeliever to Christ, Ephesians 2:12.

It is faith by which Christ dwells in the heart, Ephesians 3:17. Christ dwells in the heart by faith. Satan dwells in the heart by unbelief. The heart of an unbeliever is the place where Satan has his throne. The heart of a believer is the habitation of Christ. The heart of an unbeliever is the habitation of the devil, Revelation 8:2. Christ has possession of a believing soul, but the soul of an unbeliever is possessed by the devil. The strong man armed keeps that house, there he dwells, there he rules, Ephesians 2:2, υ■ο■ς τ■ς ■πειθε■ας, the children of unbelief, so rendered, Romans 11:32. He rules there, not only in hell, but on earth; not only then, but now, ν■ν ■νεργο■ντος, now, and will do for ever, till Christ come by faith to put him out of possession. An unbeliever has nothing to do with the person of Christ; that I have shewed; nor has he any rights to the purchase or benefits of Christ. Instance in two, which comprise the rest: the blood of Christ, or the righteousness performed on earth; the intercession of Christ, continued in heaven. An unbeliever has nothing to do with the righteousness of Christ; for this is the righteousness of faith, Romans 3:22. Nor with the intercession of Christ, John 17:9, John 17:20.

Now, being without Christ, it follows necessarily they are without life, 1 John 5:11-12. And who is he that has the Son? Ver. 10, he that believeth.

(2.) He is without the covenant, the evidence of life. An unbeliever is not at all specified in the covenant of grace; it no more belongs to him than the writings, the evidences of another man's lands belong to you, who were never thought of, never mentioned in the drawing of them up. Believing is our first entering into covenant with God; how can he that never entered into covenant be in it?

Unbelievers are strangers to the covenant, Ephesians 2:12. The covenant of grace is called the law of faith, Romans 3:27, as the covenant of works is called there the law of works.

Now as Adam, not performing perfect obedience, which was the condition of the covenant of works, could have no benefit by that covenant, no more can he who believes not have any benefit by the covenant of grace.

Unbelievers are not in covenant with Christ; their league is with hell, their covenant is with death. Christ looks on them as confederates with Satan, that cursed league is inconsistent with any confederacy with Christ, and that league is never dissolved till ye believe. Your pretended renouncing of sin and Satan is but a deluding of your souls, a mocking of Christ; you never break your league with Satan, never enter into covenant with Christ till ye believe. An unbeliever has nothing to do with the promises; for the promises are but as so many articles of the covenant, and so it is called a covenant of promise, Ephesians 2:1-22. Now what has he to do with the articles of a covenant that never entered into it? Romans 4:13. The promise is through the righteousness of faith; and, ver. 16, it is of faith. It is of faith that we have a right to any promise. The promises of life and pardon are all to faith: 'If thou believest in the Lord Jesus, thou shalt be saved;' 'He that

believes has everlasting life.' The promises are a sealed fountain to an unbeliever, it is open to nothing but faith. It is children's bread, and we are the children of God through faith. An unbeliever has neither a hand, nor a mouth, either to gather or to eat any crumb of this manna. And as nothing to do with the covenant, so neither with the seals of it. What right has he to the seals of your writings or evidences, who has nothing to do with the writings and evidences themselves? The covenant is evidence for heaven, under the hand and seal of God; a deed of gift under the seal of heaven. How does the seal belong to him, who has nothing to do with the deed?

Indeed, the seals of the covenant are, as Augustine, verbum visibile, visibilis promissio, visible promises. Now he that has no right to the audible promise, that which offers pardon and life to the ear, has no right to the visible promise, which offers pardon and life to the eye, since the very same thing is tendered in both. As we must not apply the audible promise to an unbeliever, so must we not apply the visible promise; there is the very same reason for both. The promise belongs to believers and their seed, both visible and audible promises, for they should never be separated. Neither of them belongs to unbelievers, nor their seed, for they are not the heirs of promise. And to make over the inheritance, or the seals and evidences of it to them, would be to give the heir's inheritance, in its sealed evidences, to pretenders and intruders, to those to whom Christ in his will and testament never bequeathed it,—an injustice that we should use all our care to avoid. While a man is visibly in unbelief nothing can be sealed to him but condemnation, because he has no evidence for anything else. So the seal is either set to this, or nothing.

(3.) Without grace, the beginning of life. He that is an unbeliever, whatever fine show he make in the flesh, whatever he pretend, profess, or practise, how specious soever his deportment be, whatever outward conformity he shew, either to the rules of law or gospel, he is a graceless person. How finely soever the sepulchre is painted and beautified without, if faith be not within, there is nothing but dead bones and rottenness; nothing but what is as loathsome in the eye of God, as the rottenness of a dead carcase is to us. For it is faith that purifies the heart, Acts 15:9. Till the heart be purified by faith, nothing is pure, either within or without, Titus 1:15. There is not the least degree of holiness or sanctification, till faith; it is that by which we are sanctified, Acts 26:18. Faith is a root-grace; there is not, there cannot be, a spring of holiness, till faith be fastened in the heart. No degree of spiritual life without faith: Galatians 2:20, 'The life that I live is by faith in the Son of God;' by faith uniting Christ to the soul as the principle. Till then the soul is dead, even as the body is dead when not in conjunction with the soul. This is his state, he is dead in sins and trespasses, and so are his actings; all his works are dead works, till there be faith in Christ, as appears by that connection, 'repentance from dead works.' And,

(4.) He has no title to heaven, which is everlasting life. No title; for how should he come by it? The Lord never ordained heaven for unbelievers; 'he has chosen the poor, rich in faith.' He has prepared hell for unbelievers, Revelation 21:8. Christ never purchased that for them. He is 'become the author of eternal salvation to those (only) who believe.' Those that contend most for the extent of Christ's death, will never say that the blood of Christ ever brought any unbeliever, so persevering, into heaven. He was given, and gave himself only for this end.

He was never promised to them. Nay, all the threatenings, in law or gospel, are the portion of unbelievers. Take one for all, and that from the mouth of Christ, who speaks mercy and life when there is any to be had; and they are part of the last words he spoke in this world, Mark 16:16.

They have no right by adoption. They were never adopted. Unbelievers are not the sons of God, but the children of the devil. No sonship but by faith, Galatians 3:26; those that are not so by faith, are not so at all; for all that are sons, are so by faith.

(5.) They are far from life; so far, as they never come in sight of it, never see life. And if they can never come in sight of it, what hopes can they have to enjoy it? Hope of heaven without faith, is a castle in the air, a structure without a foundation. Alas! how can they hope to enjoy it, whom the Lord calls off from all hopes ever to see it! While ye are without faith, ye are without hopes, in that forlorn condition of the Ephesians, before they believed, Ephesians 2:12.

(6.) All this is certain, as sure as the Lord is true. For it is he that speaks it, and he speaks it peremptorily. He does not say, possibly he may never see life; or probably he may never see life; but he shall never see it. As sure as the Lord will not lie, as sure as he is able to make good that word, so sure is this, he that believes not shall not see life. This is the sentence of the gospel. If it had been a sentence of the law, that is not so peremptory, that admits of an exception, the gospel may relieve one against the sentence of the law. Ay, but this is the sentence of the gospel, the final decision of this case, which admits of no exception, against which there is no relief, neither here nor hereafter, the last declaration of God's will concerning a sinner, that if he believes not he shall certainly die, and that without any further hopes of mercy or remedy; he shall never see life.

Here is the negative misery of an unbeliever. Oh that this might stir you up to search your hearts, to examine seriously, as becomes you in a business of such consequence, &c.

Come we to his misery expressed positively. 'The wrath of God abides on him.' Every word is dreadful, and big with terror. It is wrath, and the wrath of God, and the wrath of God on him, and the wrath of God abiding on him.

(1.) Wrath. It is not anger or displeasure only, though that be dreadful; but wrath, sublimated anger, anger blown up into a terrible flame. This is it which kindles upon unbelievers, a consuming fire, the furnace made seven times hotter. This is the portion of unbelievers, their lines fall in this place; they are children of wrath, and this is their heritage. There is no quitting of this woeful relation, but only by faith. 'Who can stand before thee when thou art angry?' Is there no abiding of it then? Who then can stand before it, when it flames forth into wrath? Isaiah 33:14, 'Who can dwell,' &c.

(2.) It is the wrath of God. It is not the wrath of a king, though that be as the roaring of a lion, at which all the beasts of the field do tremble; it is not the wrath of all the kings of the earth; it is not the wrath of all the men on the earth, or all the angels in heaven put together. What then? It is a wrath infinitely more dreadful; it is the wrath of that God, in comparison of whom all the men on earth, all the angels in heaven, all the creatures on earth, are as nothing. All their wrath put together is as nothing compared with the wrath of God. Theirs would but be as the breath of one's nostrils; whereas the wrath of God is as a whirlwind, such a one as rends the rocks, and tears up the mountains, and shakes the foundations of the earth, and shrivels up the heavens like a scroll, and causes the whole fabric of heaven and earth to stagger like a drunken man. Oh, 'who knows the power of his wrath!' Their wrath is but like a spark; his wrath is like a river, a sea of kindled brimstone, Isaiah 30:33. This wrath, this wrath of God will be thy portion, if thou believe not.

(3.) It is the wrath of God on him. He says not, it is near him, or coming towards him, but it is on him. Not that all the wrath of God is on him already, for there are vials of wrath that will never be emptied, never emptier, though the Lord be pouring them forth to all eternity. It is compared to a river, and that is continually running; and when it has run some hundred years, there is as much to come as if there were none run by already; it will run on thee to eternity, unless by believing thou stop it, divert the course of it in time. But it is all on him as to the sentence. He is adjudged to all the wrath of God already, and execution is beginning, though the beginning be small in comparison of what it will proceed to hereafter. The first fruits of wrath are reaped now, but a full harvest is coming; and the longer thou continuest in unbelief, the riper thou art for that dreadful harvest. All that thou hast from God now, thou hast it in wrath; for as all the ways of God are mercy to the believer, so all his ways are wrath to the unbeliever. The execution is begun now, and the Lord is ready, if thou prevent it not, for a farther, a full execution. He does 'whet his sword,' Psalms 7:12-13. If you continue in unbelief, you are likely to be the butts of the Lord's indignation; his arm, his sword will fall upon you.

(4.) It is abiding wrath. If this wrath were but for a moment, it were more tolerable, but it is abiding wrath; it is not on and off, but always on him without intermission; and there, unless he believe, it will abide for ever, wherever he is, whatever he does, wherever he goes. The curse and the wrath of God are in effect the same thing; and what the Lord denounces against the Israelites concerning the curse, holds true against unbelievers as to this wrath of God: Deuteronomy 28:16-17, 'The wrath of God is on him in the city,' &c. The wrath of God is on him in every place, in every state, in every enjoyment, in every undertaking. This is the woeful, the miserable condition of every unbeliever.

Quest. But who are unbelievers? Are there any amongst us in this dreadful case?

Ans. 1. He that has no other faith than a bare assent to the truths of the gospel, a belief that all that is declared concerning Christ is true, all that is delivered in the Scripture is the truth; he that has no other faith than this is an unbeliever, for the devils have as much as this comes to, James 2:19. If he go no further, he shall no more see life than they.

Ans. 2. He that goes on in any known sin of omission or commission; whether it be an acting of what God forbids, uncleanness, intemperance, profaning of God's name or day or ordinances, worldliness, idleness, injustice, covetousness; or neglect of what God requires, neglect of hearing the word, prayer, meditation, self-examination, &c. When you hear this or that condemned as a sin in the word, and yet will continue in it, here is enough to evidence you are unbelievers. The apostle speaks of 'the obedience of faith;' they are inseparable, children of disobedience who are children of unbelief; the apostle uses one word for both, Ephesians 2:2; Romans 11:32. 'Faith purifies the heart,' Acts 15:9; when that is purified the conversation will be purified; where it is not, there is no faith. If you go on, allow yourselves in any unlawful thing, this is your portion.

Ans. 3. He that finds not an universal change in himself. He who finds he did love any sin, and does not now hate it, did delight in it, or make light of it, and does not now bewail it, count it his burden and affliction; he that did scorn purity, or at least slight holiness, and is not now in love with it, that durst once venture on sin, and does not now fear it; he that has had low thoughts of Christ, and does not now highly value him, so as to part with all for him, so as to prefer him before his chief joy; he that did neglect Christ, and does not now hunger and thirst after him; he that did

immoderately follow the world, and does not now contemn it; he that did gratify the flesh, and does not now strive to crucify it; he that did count the word and prayer a burden, and does not now count them his delight; that has been careless, heartless in holy duties, and does not now stir up his soul, and strive with his heart to get it raised to God in them,—he that does not find such a change is an unbeliever; for when the Lord works faith, he works such a change.

If this be thy case, all the dreadful things are thy portion. Apply them as you love your souls, put not off conviction; for you are never like to come to faith till convinced of unbelief.

Use 2. Exhortation. This should excite sinners to mind this duty, as that which is of greatest concernment. This I shall direct to sinners that are secure: these should never be at rest till they find their hearts willing to accept of Christ upon his own terms; sensible sinners, those who are willing thus to close with Christ, should never rest till they be brought to depend on Christ, to rest theirselves on him for pardon and life. Here are two sorts of sinners, and two acts of faith. I think this distinction necessary, the conditions of these persons being so different, they must be led to a different act of faith; for a secure sinner, not yet sensible of his sin and misery, not yet willing to leave all for Christ, not yet resolved to come under the government of Christ, &c., for such a one to depend on Christ for pardon and life, is not believing, but presumption. He must first be brought to this, to be willing to accept of Christ as he is offered; till then he has no ground to expect pardon and life from Christ; till then he has no encouragement to rely on Christ for it; till then we cannot press it on him as his duty. But for the sensible sinner, who is already brought thus far, who is burdened with his sin, abhors himself for it, who prefers Christ before all, who has such ardent, importunate, effectual desires after Christ (as I explained to you), it is his next duty to cast himself on Christ for life and salvation. This is that the gospel calls him to, to which, in this use, I shall encourage him, propounding some motives, removing impediments, answering objections, and giving some directions distinctly, in reference to these different states, as the case shall require. For motives I shall go no further than the text. Here is the weightiest duty propounded, with the weightiest motive in the world: believing the duty; everlasting life the motive. Every word contains the strongest attractive. Here is life for him that will believe; here is everlasting life, and here is this at present, ‘hath everlasting life.’ ‘He that believes hath everlasting life.’

1. Here is life for him that believes. And what more sweet, more necessary, more desirable, than life, especially to him who is in apparent danger of death! A man that is sentenced to death, that is condemned already, that is every moment in expectation to be led to execution, what would not he do that he might have life? Why this is the condition of every man by nature, not one in the world excepted; he is a child of wrath, a son of death; the great Judge of the heaven and earth has passed the sentence of death on him. It stands on record in his righteous law; you may find it everywhere in the Scripture. The mouth of the Lord does there pronounce it, Thou art condemned already, ver. 18; every moment in danger of eternal death. And in this condition thou remainest, till that almighty power, that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, work this great, this difficult work, which is beyond the power of men or angels, faith in thee. Now if there be any sense of thy condition, if sin and Satan have not quite stupified thee, wilt thou not cry out for life? Is not life desirable? Why, there is no way but one to save thy life. This is the only way, and this is a sure way. Believe, and thou shalt have life; otherwise thou art a dead man. All the world cannot save thy life: no way but this. Unless thou believe, thou art never like to see life, never like to feel any thing but the wrath of God.

2. Here is everlasting life to him that believes. A condemned man would be glad of a reprieve; he would do much for that. Ay, but here is not only a reprieve, but a pardon, if thou believest. Here is not only a respiting of the execution, but a revoking, a nulling of the sentence of death. Here is not only a reprieve, not only a pardon for a malefactor, a rebel; but the highest advancement and preferment. A son of death becomes an heir of life and glory; 'heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ.' He is not only brought from his dungeon and fetters unto light and liberty, but brought to a crown, to a kingdom; not only raised from the dunghill, but set amongst princes, those that are heirs apparent of the crown of life and glory; a kingdom that cannot be shaken, a crown that fadeth not away, that which he shall enjoy, that which he shall wear for ever, everlasting life.

Oh what a motive is this! Everlasting life is a big, pregnant word. There is more in it than the whole world will hold. There is more in it than in all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them put together. There is all in it that the eternal decree of love does grasp. There is all in it that the precious blood of Christ could purchase; that sum, that price, in comparison of which (so rich, so valuable is it), that all the treasures of the earth amount not to a mite. There is all in it that the covenant of grace and the everlasting gospel can hold. There is more in it than tongue can express, than heart can imagine, than angels can comprehend. All this is in it; and all this will be thine, if thou believest: nay, all this is thine.

3. Here is everlasting life at present for him that believes. 'He that believes,' ■χει. He does not say he may have it, as though it were only possible or probable; he does not say he shall have it, as though it were merely future; but he hath it, it is his own at present. Whatever is comprised in this pregnant word, he hath right to it all at present, and he hath something of it in possession; and he is as sure of the rest as if he now had it, and as if he were actually possessed of it. And here I shall come to open this more fully.

(1.) He hath it in the decree of God. The Lord purposed from eternity to bring his chosen to everlasting life by faith. Faith is an effect of that eternal purpose, such an effect as is an evident and infallible sign of its cause; a certain evidence of those that are comprised in that purpose of love, an infallible character of an elect soul, and therefore called 'the faith of God's elect,' Titus 1:1. The purpose of God is secret: it runs under ground till faith, and then it breaks forth, then this secret comes to light when the soul believes. Faith is the first saving appearance of it: he that believes may conclude that he is elected to life. He has eternal life by an unchangeable decree, a purpose as unchangeable as God himself, that can no more be changed than that God who is 'without variableness or shadow of changing.'

Upon this account the apostle speaks of those that believe, as having already obtained the inheritance of life, Ephesians 1:11-12, he speaks of himself and others then on earth as having obtained. And how had they obtained it? he adds, being predestinated; and who are these that had obtained it by this purpose? Why, those that trust in Christ. Believe then, and that great question, Am I elected? will be no more a question, there need be no more doubt of it. Believe, and you have everlasting life by the decree of heaven.

(2.) He hath it by the purchase of Christ. It is bought for a believer; it is bought and paid for; and what is more his own than that which is so purchased for him? Everlasting life is a purchased possession, Ephesians 1:14. The purchaser is Christ; the price was his blood; a price of such value as did fully satisfy him of whom the purchase was made. But for whom did he purchase it?

Why for all those, and only those, that believe. Christ had no need to purchase any thing for himself, he wanted nothing; he purchased for others; and who are they? Ephesians 1:16. Believe then, and eternal life is as much thine as that which is bought and paid for in thy name, and for thy use. The Lord is engaged, not only in point of mercy and favour, but as he is just and righteous, to let thee have it, it was purchased for thee.

(3.) He hath it by the sentence of the gospel. As an unbeliever has the sentence of death passed against him by the law, so a believer has the sentence of life passed for him by the gospel; both in chap. 3 the former, ver. 18, the latter in the text; so John 1:5; and this latter supersedes the former. If a man who has received sentence of death from the law, can appeal to the gospel, and there plead that he believes, the gospel will quit him, and declare him an heir of life, by virtue of the sentence of God himself, pronounced and recorded in the gospel. The sentence of death is of force no longer than the sinner continues in unbelief. As soon as he believes, from that time forth he hath everlasting life. If any question his right to it, he has the verdict of the gospel, the sentence and judgment of the Lord of life; that is sufficient to decide all controversy, and put it out of question that he has everlasting life.

(4.) He hath it in title. He is born to it, 1 Peter 1:3-5. Those who are kept through faith unto salvation, are begotten again to an inheritance incorruptible.

Faith is one of the first acts of a new-born soul, a sure evidence that he is born again, that he is born of God; and he that is born of God is a child of God, and all his children are heirs, Romans 8:16, 17. Believe, and you are sons of God, and then this is your portion. Everlasting life is as much yours as the portion bequeathed to you by your father. Believe, then you are heirs, and this is your inheritance; you have this life as your patrimony.

(5.) He hath it by covenant. The covenant of grace is a covenant of life; the Lord therein engages to give everlasting life to those that enter into covenant with him. Now faith is our first entrance into covenant with God. When the soul consents to accept of Christ upon his own terms, the match is made up. The day of believing is the day of espousals; Christ becomes his husband, and everlasting life is his dowry, it is made sure to him. Now a dowry is appointed and made sure to a woman; though she have not the full possession and disposal of it while her husband lives, yet none will deny but she has a jointure. So, though a believer have not the full possession of heaven now, yet there is no reason to deny but he hath eternal life; for it is a dowry made sure to every one that believes, 1 Corinthians 3:22-23. A believer has the word of Christ for it, his promise, Romans 4:16. He has it under the hand of Christ, a written evidence, John 20:31. He has it under the seal of Christ, sealed evidence, Romans 4:11. He has it under the oath of God, Isaiah 54:9-10, Hebrews 6:17-18.

(6.) He hath it in possession in some respect. He has possession of it in his head. Believe, and you are united unto Christ; united to him as really, as intimately, as inseparably, as head and members are united. Christ and believers make but one body. The union is so near, as both head and members have one name; both are called Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:12. The Lord Jesus and believers make but one Christ. Now, Christ is in possession of everlasting life; and therefore they are, because Christ and they are but one. The best, the principal part of a believer, his head, is in possession, and therefore he is said to be in possession. Hence it is that believers, as though they were in heaven already, are said to sit in heavenly places, even while they are on earth,

Ephesians 2:6. Christ and believers being so much one, what is ascribed to Christ is ascribed to them; what is suffered, done, enjoyed by him, is said to be done, suffered, enjoyed by them. Because Christ was crucified, they are said to be crucified, Galatians 2:20. Because Christ is risen, therefore they are said to be risen, Galatians 3:1. Because Christ is set at his right hand in heavenly places, Ephesians 1:3, and set down together there, Ephesians 2:6. But how can this be? They are still on earth. Why, it is true in respect of Christ, it is in Christ Jesus; he is their head, and he is in possession, and therefore the best part of them is in possession already. Christ is their husband; he is gone before to take possession of heaven in their name, on their behalf: 'I go to prepare,' &c. And what is in the husband's possession belongs to the wife. Believe but this, and thou art in some respect in heaven already.

(7.) He has the beginning of everlasting life now. That life which will last for ever, is begun as soon as ye believe, Ephesians 1:13-14. They have the earnest of this inheritance as soon as they believe; and it is such an earnest as does not only make sure the bargain, the contract, but is part of payment, part of the purchase. That light which they have now from the Spirit of truth, is the same in kind, though not in degree, with that which they shall have in that inheritance. That joy which they have now from the Comforter, is the same in kind, though not in degree, with the joys of heaven, John 14:16. That glory which they have now from the Spirit of glory resting in them, is part of that which heaven affords, though short in degree, 1 Peter 4:14. That holiness which they have now from the Spirit of holiness, is the same in kind, though in less degree than in heaven, John 4:14. The same water of life that overflows in heaven, is springing on earth in the heart of a believer. It springs not so fast now, nor does it rise so high; but it is the same well, and it is in him now, and all the powers of darkness cannot hinder it from springing up to everlasting life. He has everlasting life now as in a well, there he shall have it as in a river.

(8.) He has everlasting life for his use and advantage upon all occasions. He is not only a proprietor, and in part a possessor of it, as appears before, but an usufructuary. He may make use of heaven for whatever he needs, and whenever he has occasion.

He may have access to the throne of grace, the best place in heaven, whenever he will. Faith sets open the door; he may come with boldness and confidence, Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 4:16. And coming in faith, he may come with full assurance that he shall have whatever he asks, 1 John 5:13-14.

(9.) All this is sure. He is sure of all that is present. He is sure of all that is not yet in possession; as sure of it as if he had it already. This the expression imports, he hath. He is as sure of heaven as if he were in heaven. Nay, he is surer of heaven than his mere being in heaven could make him; for the fallen angels had a being once in heaven; but that was no assurance of everlasting life to them there; the event proves that a believer on earth is more sure of everlasting life in heaven, than those angels were when they were actually in heaven. But how come they to be thus sure? Why, it is partly through faith, 1 Peter 1:4-5. Through faith. Oh, but may not their faith fail? No, so long as Christ has any interest in heaven, so long as he has any power to prevail with his Father, who will easily be prevailed with for those whom he eternally loves. Now he has prayed to this purpose, Luke 22:32. But was not this peculiar to Peter, wherein others share not? No; for he adds, Strengthen thy brethren. When thou findest the benefit of this prayer, securing thy faith, strengthen thy brethren with this encouragement. Now what encouragement had this been to them, if Christ

did not pray for them as well as him? John 17:20.

2. Impediments that hinder men from believing, that keep them short of saving faith. These must be discovered, and removed. I shall endeavour both together. The impediments are many. Satan uses his utmost craft and power to multiply and enforce them. I shall insist on some, that I apprehend to be the principal, most common, and most dangerous.

(1.) A conceit they have faith already, when really they have it not. This is Satan's great engine, whereby he destroys heaps upon heaps (as it is said of Samson), ruins multitudes of those that live under the gospel. When the light of it discovers the necessity of faith so clearly as there can be no gainsaying, he comes up with his reserve to secure the hold, and make good the ground that he has in a sinner, when his forlorn of atheism is routed. What, says he, though there be no salvation, no life, without faith, yet trouble not thyself, thou hast faith already. Hereby he keeps off conviction, renders the word ineffectual, hardens the sinner in his unbelief, and makes his secure there, without looking out for faith in the use of those means whereby faith might be attained. This conceit is as a great stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre, to make the soul, who lies buried in a state of unbelief, sure from starting. It is such a mistake as if a physician should judge the disease of a man desperately sick to be quite contrary to what it is, and should prescribe him physic accordingly. The patient [is] in this case under a double mischief, both which are mortal. He not only wants that which is proper for the allaying of his distemper, but he has that applied which feeds and heightens it. So the sinner, under his mistake, avoids that which is proper to his distemper, rousing and convincing truths, threatenings, and representations of the misery of unbelief. He puts away these as belonging to others, and applies the promises and sweetnesses of the gospel as his portion, presuming he is a believer; whenas, considering the true state of his soul, these are as deadly to him as poison; Satan makes use of these to destroy him. These to a believer are the savour of life; but to him, being but a believer in conceit only, they are the savour of death.

Now this mistake arises from another. He mistakes the nature of true faith, and so takes himself to be a believer, when he is not. He takes an historical faith for a justifying faith, or a temporary faith for a saving faith, or a presumptuous credulity for sound believing. Satan, concurring with a deceitful heart, can put a counterfeit faith into the habit of that which is saving, as Rebekah dressed up Jacob like his elder brother; and so far delude a credulous soul, one that is willing to have it so, as he blesses himself, takes the blessing as his portion; whenas indeed he is under the curse, and the wrath of God abides on him.

Now to remove this, the counterfeit must be uncased, the imposter must be discovered; the vizard must be taken off, that the true face of that glorious faith or presumption may be discerned, which is most commonly mistaken for that which is saving and justifying. A sinner is thus deceived sometimes with an historical, a temporary faith, sometimes with a credulous presumption. For the former,

[1.] He believes the Scripture, that all is true, and orthodox and divine truths. He believes all the articles of the Christian faith; he does not doubt of or question any of them. He believes that all that is related in the Bible is true; that all the commands are just and good, and ought to be obeyed; that all the threatenings are true and righteous, and will be executed; that all the promises are true and gracious, and will be fulfilled. And he that believes all this, is not he a believer? Is not this

faith? He believes that Christ is the Saviour, a Saviour of sinners, those that believe; the only Saviour; that there is no salvation in any else. Hence he concludes that he has faith, and he is a believer, and shall be saved. And if any should tell him he has no faith at all, then he would wonder at it, and tell him he is very uncharitable; his faith is as good as the best. For the discovery and removing of this dangerous mistake, take notice, that this faith comes far short of that which is saving. Though it be necessary to believe thus much, yet to believe thus much is not sufficient to salvation. There is no saving faith without this; but all this may be, and much more, where yet there is no saving faith. This is a common faith, common both to elect and reprobates; it is not that special faith which is saving, called the faith of God's elect. And to convince you of this, take some testimonies of Scripture.

Hypocrites may have such a faith as this, and apostates too, such as shall never see life. Those hearers of the word, which are compared to the stony ground, those in whom the word had no saving effect, had yet such a faith as this, Luke 8:15. They received the word, and received it with joy, and believed too, and yet fell away, turned apostates, whereas saving faith never fails.

Reprobates may have this faith, even such as Simon Magus the sorcerer, Acts 8:13. He believed, and continued with Philip, attending on the word which he believed, and was so affected as he was filled with wonder and admiration; and yet Peter tells him he had neither part nor lot in the Holy Ghost, in that which was saving. If he had any faith at all in reality, it could amount to no less than this; and yet his heart was not right in the sight of God, though he seemed to be right in the sight of Philip and the rest, else they would never have baptized him. Yet it was not so in the sight of God; for all his faith, and for all the show that he made of more than this, yet he was in the gall of bitterness, Acts 8:23. Those that are in a damnable state may have this faith.

Nay, those that are in a state of damnation actually, even the devils, may have this faith, James 2:19. The devils know as much of the nature and attributes of God as men can know, and much more; and they know it so clearly, with evidence and conviction, as they cannot but believe it; they believe it so effectually, as it makes them tremble. Now, the truth of God is one of his attributes, so that knowing the Scripture to be the word of God, they cannot but believe that it is universally true; relations, assertions, promises, threatenings, they believe all; that which they would least believe, the threatenings, these they so believe as it makes them tremble. They believe not only natural truths, such as the light of nature can discover, but supernatural truths, such as depend upon divine revelation, the truths of Christ and the gospel. That Christ is the Son of the living and true God, is a truth not known but by revelation, Matthew 16:16. Here seems to be much in Peter's acknowledgement and belief of this; yet the devils do acknowledge and believe this, Matthew 8:28, Luke 8:26, Mark 5:7-8.

They believe the gospel to be the doctrine of salvation, the preaching of the gospel to be the way of salvation. This appears sufficiently by their opposing of it; but there is a plain testimony of it, Acts 16:16-17. It is well if some amongst us did not come short of the devil in this. If they believed it indeed to be the way of salvation, methinks they should be more in this way. The spirit of divination, which was a devil, believes and acknowledges that Paul and his companions were the servants of the Most High, and the gospel they preached the way of salvation.

Thus, you see, the devils believe the gospel; and there is no article of the Christian faith but they believe it, these being contained in the gospel. So that those who have no more faith than this,

have no more reason to conclude they have saving faith than that the devils have it. You must have another kind of faith than this, else you shall no more see life than those that are in hell already.

Oh, but, says another, I have more than this; I not only believe that Christ is a Saviour, but I trust he will be my Saviour. I have hopes of heaven and salvation, and I hope in Christ for salvation, and I hope in Christ alone for it. Now, this is it which the devils can never attain to, though they have some kind of faith; yet their faith has no confidence, they are without hope. For removal of mistakes in this, consider that all this may be no more than presumption. Though faith be not without some confidence, yet there may be great confidence where there is no true faith at all. Faith is not without hope; but hope there may be where there is no faith. Job speaks of the hypocrite's hope,—a hope that is not saving, that is in those who shall never be saved,—a hope like the spider's web, Job 8:13-14, which, together with those that rely on it, will be swept down into destruction. We have a clear instance of it in the parable of the virgins, Matthew 25:1-46. The foolish virgins, when the door was shut, yet they come to the door, which they would never have done but that they had some hopes to be let in. They had some confidence they should be admitted into the marriage chamber as well as the rest, and they hoped in Christ the bridegroom for it; and that makes them call upon him to open, Matthew 25:11 And it seems they hoped in him alone for it, for they apply themselves to him only; and yet this was but vain presumption, Christ shuts them out, and will not own them, Matthew 25:12. For a fuller discovery of this mistake, we shall lay down some grounds by which presumptuous hopes and confidence may be discovered from true faith, shewing the difference betwixt faith and presumption in some particulars which the Scripture affords us. They differ, [1.] In their rise; vide Sermon on James.

[2.] In their object. Faith pitches upon whole Christ, presumption will but have part of him. Christ is so precious in the eye of faith, it cannot endure he should be divided; he cannot spare, he cannot be without any of him. He will not have the Lord Jesus separated; he will have him as a Lord as well as a Jesus, as his Lawgiver no less than a Saviour. That is the voice of faith in Thomas, John 20:27–29, as a Lord to rule him as well as a Jesus to save him.

He embraces Christ coming by water as well as blood. He would have him for purity as much as for pardon, for sanctification as much as for satisfaction. Pardon will not satisfy him without purity; heaven will not please him without holiness; he sees something of it in holiness. He would have complete redemption. He would be redeemed not only from hell, and death, and the wrath to come, but from that which might give Christ any distaste at present, he would be redeemed from a carnal temper within, from a vain conversation without. He counts it but the one half of salvation to be saved from hell hereafter, and the powers of darkness. His lusts are an affliction, a torment to him, if he were freed from other tormentors. A carnal, worldly temper, corrupt temper of heart, is a misery something like hell to him. He would have Christ to save him, to save him from these, or else he cannot count himself happy. He would have Christ to be his King in all his royalties. He is welcome to him, not only with his crown for glory and happiness, but with his sword and sceptre. He would have Christ come with his sword to circumcise his heart, to cut him off from carnal, worldly interest, to wound his lusts, to put to death his dearest corruption. The sceptre of Christ is lovely and glorious in his eye. He would have him come into his soul with the government upon his shoulders. He desires nothing more than to be brought fully and unreservedly under the government of Christ. He would have Christ reign in him here in holiness and righteousness, as

much as he would reign with him hereafter in glory and happiness. Here is the proper genius and the true strain, the genuine character of saving faith; and he would have all Christ, and this above all. But now presumption would have Christ divided; it can be content with part of him. It shews itself to be presumption in that it will pick and choose something in Christ it likes, something in Christ it dislikes; it will take what it likes, and leaves the rest. A presumer, he would have Christ's righteousness to satisfy justice, procure him a pardon, and purchase him heaven; but he cares not for Christ's holiness. When he looks upon that, he sees no beauty in it, nor comeliness that he should desire it. Such strictness, such holiness, such purity, he hopes he may be saved without that; however, he will venture it. He has no mind to the strait and holy ways of Christ; that is a yoke too grievous, it is a burden too heavy; he hopes Christ will be so gracious as to dispense with him here: The Lord be merciful to me in this, I cannot digest it! As much of Jesus as you will, but as little of him as Lord; or if as Lord, yet not really, universally, or solely. Not really. He will call him Lord, profess and acknowledge him to be his Lord as well as the best. So the foolish virgins, Matthew 25:1-46; and those presumptuous hypocrites, Matthew 7:21-22. This was verbal, not real; but while his tongue confesses him, his heart does not stoop to him. Or if they yield to him in some things, yet not in all; if they admit him as their Lord, yet not as absolute Lord; they submit but in part, not universally. Some things they may do, yea, many things, in compliance with Christ, but not all; something or other seems too precise, too difficult, too hazardous; it entrenches too much upon their ease, or pleasures, or carnal humours, or worldly interest; the sceptre of Christ must waive that.

Some sins they will leave, yea, many sins; but some or other is too pleasant, and too gainful, and that is the reason they cannot part with it; the sword of Christ must not touch it.

Here is presumption indeed! If they entertain Christ, either he must come without his sceptre, or else his sceptre must be broken; they will not come under the entire government of Christ. Either he must lay aside his sword, or else it must be only unsheathed at their discretion. He must spare what they cannot part with, and do execution only where they will appoint him, and yet they will hope to be saved by him. Can presumption appear in more lively colours? Alas, how apparent is this in most of those who say they hope in Christ for salvation! And how many, in whom it is not so apparent, yet in their own consciences, if they would look there impartially, they might read this presumption put together with all their hopes, or indeed made up of nothing else, so that if this presumption were subtracted from them, the hopes remaining would be a cypher, and stand for nothing, except it be to delude them.

[3.] In the grounds. Presumption properly is a confidence without ground. Then he presumes, who is confident he shall be saved, when his confidence has no bottom; either no ground at all, or that which is as good as none. The grounds of presumption, such as they be, are either without or within him. Without him, such as these, God is merciful, he delights not in the death of sinners, he would have all men to be saved, &c. Christ is a Saviour, he died to save sinners, &c.

These indeed, when there is a special reason for a particular application, are grounds of hope, but to one who is yet in impenitency and unbelief, they afford no more hopes than to Cain or Judas; for why might not either of them draw this conclusion from the premises as well as such a one? Yet if Cain, or Judas, or the like, should conclude thus, God is merciful; Christ died for sinners, ergo I shall be saved, who would not say this is presumption? The grounds within them are ordinarily

their own righteousness, their good meaning, purposes, inclinations; they mean well, whatever fault be found with them. They do no man wrong, give every one his own, are not so bad as others, nay, much better than many about them. Upon such grounds did the presumptuous Pharisee raise his confidence, Luke 18:11-12; or their outward conformities and enjoyment of ordinances, such as theirs, Luke 13:35, &c.; or upon their performances, doing much in an outward formal way of religion. So theirs, Matthew 7:22-23. But now a true believer grounds his confidence and hopes of heaven upon something which the Scripture assigns as proper and peculiar to the heirs of heaven, which can be found in none but those that are in a saving state. He draws not his conclusion but from such premises as are confirmed by the Spirit of God. He concludes his interest in mercy and salvation, because he finds the first fruits of salvation, the effects of special mercy, in his soul, he has the earnest of the Spirit in his heart, this makes sure the contract for eternal life, Ephesians 1:1-23. He concludes Christ died for him, because he finds the saving effects of his death produced in his soul. He has lively hopes, because he is alive to God, he is born again, he is begotten to these hopes, 1 Peter 1:3. His hopes of glory arise from Christ within him, Colossians 1:27. He finds Christ dwelling in him, Ephesians 3:7, working in him, acting him by his Spirit, and thereby testifying to him that he is a son, and so an heir. He concludes that he is in Christ, because he is ‘a new creature,’ 2 Corinthians 5:17. He finds ‘old things passed away, and all things become new.’ His old vain, carnal, wanton imaginations are passed away. His old secure, benumbed, unfaithful conscience is passed away. His old perverse, stubborn, rebellious will, he has a new will. His old strong, sensual, corrupt, unbelieving, impenitent heart is gone; he has a new heart, a heart of flesh, bearing the image of Christ. His old disordered, misplaced, inordinate affections, &c., his old vain, sinful conversation is altered, he has a new life, all things are become new. He has new thoughts, new inclinations, new intentions, new designs, new resolutions, new desires, new delights, new employments, new conversation, all suitable to the state and hopes of a new creature, becoming one who is renewed in the spirit of his mind, which has put on that new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, as the apostle speaks, Ephesians 4:22-24. He can say, he was sometimes darkness, but now he is light in the Lord, Ephesians 5:8; sometimes carnal, but now in some measure spiritual; sometimes worldly, but now in some degree has his conversation in heaven; sometimes profane, but now in part holy. There is such a change, as in the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

[4.] In the effects. As faith and presumption do differ in their nature, so they produce different effects, and these effects may be referred to three heads. They respect Christ, or sin, or the persons themselves.

First. The effects of faith, in reference to Christ, are a high esteem of him, strong desires after him, unfeigned love to him.

Presumption does not transcendently value Christ so as to prefer him before his chief joy; nor effectually desire him, so as to part with all for him; nor sincerely love him, so as to cleave to him only. Something takes place of Christ in his mind and heart, though it may be self-love (which is very strong in a presumptuous confident) does so blind him as he does not perceive it, will not believe it. But of these effects of faith I have spoken sufficiently in the explication.

Secondly. The effects of faith in reference to sin are fear of it, hatred of it, sorrow for it. Faith sets the heart fully against sin, as that which is dreadful, hateful, and most grievous, whereas

presumption slights sin, at least some sins, makes no great matter of them, cleaves to some, and is indifferent as to others; presumes it shall go well with him though he go on in this or that evil way.

First. A true believer fears sin; faith makes him afraid of it as of a dreadful evil, Hebrews 11:7. Where faith is in the heart, the heart is moved with fear, this makes such an impression on him, all the scorns of the world will not prevail with him to neglect a duty. Though he see not the effects of sin, though they be future and at a great distance, as the flood seemed to be, yet being warned of God, he is moved with fear. His own experience is enough to render sin fearful to him. He has felt the burden of sin oppressing his soul, he is afraid to add more weight to a pressure that he has found too heavy for him. While the Lord was working faith in his heart, he found his iniquities going over his head, Psalms 38:4. He has felt sin straining his conscience. He remembers the anguish of a wounded spirit, he is now afraid of it as of a serpent. His soul has been scorched with sin, he remembers that it kindled wrath in his soul, and now he dreads the fire, is afraid of coming near the flame; whereas presumption is bold and venturous, will play with the flame, will be tampering with some evil or other, though it singe him, and at last he drops into hell, as the moth, making too bold with the candle, at last loses her wings, and falls down lame or dead before it. The voice of faith is that of Joseph, ‘How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!’ but the voice of presumption is like that of Lot concerning Zoar; he says of this or that sin, ‘Is it not a little one?’ my soul may live in it and be secure. That which seems to be a great sin to faith seems a little one to presumption; that which faith trembles at, this makes bold with it. He presumes that the Lord is not so strict and severe as to condemn him for not straining at such sins as he counts but like a gnat, presumes he may come to heaven though he be not so strict and precise as the word would have him. To be so precise, is to be over righteous in his conceit, he will make bold to gratify himself in one or other forbidden path, whatever come of it. Presumption is a bold, a venturous humour; he blesses himself, and says, I shall have peace, though he walk after the stubbornness of his own heart.

Secondly. A true believer hates sin. He is not only angry at it, displeased with it, but he hates it, pursues it to the death, seeks its ruin, would have it utterly destroyed, root and branch, the body of death and all its members, would have the whole crucified, and shews his hatred by diligence in use of all means to get it mortified. He hates all sin, every false way, even those that he has most loved, wherein he has most delighted. His hatred is universal and impartial. Faith in Christ is always accompanied with a dear love to Christ, and love to Christ always attended with hatred of sin: Psalms 97:10, ‘Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.’ Being so much in love with Christ, and knowing there is nothing so contrary, so injurious, so hateful to Christ as sin, he cannot but hate that which is so contrary to him whom his soul loves, Psalms 139:21. Every sin is hateful to Christ, and therefore he hates every sin. But self-love is predominant in the presumer; he hates sin no further than self-love leads him, no further than it is contrary to his own humours, inconsistent with his own interest, or disagreeing with his temper.

Hatred springs from some contrariety betwixt the person so affected and the object hated. Now a believer has a new nature, to which sin is as contrary as darkness is to light, John 1:11-12. Now as in the natural birth, so in this supernatural, there is a new form, a new nature; he is renewed after the image of God in holiness. Now sin and holiness are as contrary as hell and heaven, as filthiness and purity. Hence it is, that there is in every true believer an antipathy to sin, as being

contrary to that new nature. That divine nature which he partakes of, he comes to partake of it by the promises, and so consequently by faith, without which the promises afford us nothing, 2 Peter 1:4; and by this escapes the pollutions of the world through lust. This divine nature puts him upon this, by all means to flee to Christ, make an escape from the pollutions of sin, as that which is hateful and contrary to him. But there is no such principle in a presumer, and therefore no such act. He may be angry at sin, and so may avoid it, and put some restraint upon it, so as he may seem to have escaped the pollution, but he hates it not; he contents himself to restrain it, that it break not forth into outward acts, but he seeks not to ruin it. Or though he may hate some sin, as being contrary to his temper, or inconsistent with his credit, profit, safety, or other interests, but he does not hate all sin; there is one or other that he is always in love or league with; and if he would deal faithfully and impartially with his soul, he might discover it. But presumption is a blind, hood-winked boldness, which, as it will not see that which is hateful in a beloved sin, so it will not see, will not believe that he loves it. Or if this cannot be avoided, rather than his presumptuous heart will yield to conviction, he will presume that the sin which he loves and lives in, is no sin, or at least, no such sin as will keep him out of heaven, or argue a damnable state.

Thirdly. Sorrow for sin. A believing heart is a new heart, a heart of flesh, a heart that receives deep impressions from the love of Christ, a heart that will melt and bleed when he remembers the injuries, the unkindnesses that he has offered to Christ, Zechariah 12:10. When the soul looks upon Christ with the eye of faith, when he sees what he has done, and against whom he has done it; when he sees Christ pierced, and pierced by him, and willing to be wounded, that the soul that was thus unkind, thus cruel to him, might have life by him, oh this makes him mourn, and mourn greatly, and mourn bitterly, as they mourned for Josiah at Hadadrimmon, a place in the valley of Megiddon, where that peerless prince was slain. The soul looks upon Christ, represented in this posture in the gospel, set forth there, as if he were pierced and crucified before his eyes. His eye sees, and so sees this spectacle of love and wonder, as his eye affects his heart. Oh, says he, what have I done? what have I been doing all this while that I have lived in sin? Have I been all this while piercing Christ? Has every sin (when I am guilty of so many) wounded Christ? Have I been all this while crucifying him, and put him to an open shame? Have I been piercing him who loves me, who so loved me as to be willing to die for me? And does he now love one who has been so unkind, so cruel to him? Will he pardon me after such provocations? Will he think thoughts of love and peace to one that has thus used him? Will he embrace one who is covered with such bloody sins? Why, yes; behold he offers love to such a wretch; he stretches out his arms to embrace me who have pierced him; he will make no other use of those wounds that I have given him, but to heal me by them. Oh the wonders of Christ's love! Oh the bloody guilt of my sins! Oh these thoughts enter deep into a believing heart: it melts him, he is all dissolved into sorrow. The rod of Moses did not smite the rock more effectually when the waters gushed out of it, than this thought, this sight of a pierced Christ, strikes and pierces the heart. He now tastes in his sins the bitterness of death, the bitterness of Christ's death; no wonder if he mourn bitterly. But now a presumptuous heart is a hard heart; it is a heart of stone. It melts not, it bleeds not, when it sees Christ set forth bleeding and dying. The love of Christ makes no deep impressions on it; it glides off, as water from a stone. There is no such heart-meltings, no such passionate relentings, no such breaking reflections on Christ or upon sin, no such great or bitter mourning.

Presumption is impudent. He hardens his face, and will not blush in secret for all his unworthy dealings with Christ. His heart is hardened; it will not bleed, though he sees Christ pierced before him. Indeed, how can it be that his heart should break into sorrow for that which his heart loves and delights in?

Thirdly. The effects, in reference to these persons, are humility and watchfulness in the believer, pride and security in the presumer.

First. A believing heart is a humble heart. Faith lays the soul low, in sense of its own vileness, emptiness, impotency; in sense of former sinfulness, present unworthiness; in sense of its many wants, weaknesses, distempers, corruption. As nothing more exalteth Christ, so nothing more debaseth man. As it advances man high in the account of God, so it lays him low in his own eyes. The Lord, having a design to display the riches of his grace, made choice of faith as the fittest instrument, as that which gives all to God, and nothing to man. It is the soul's going out of himself, as having nothing but sin and misery, unto Christ for all. It has a double aspect: one to himself, there it sees nothing but guilt, weakness, emptiness; another to Christ, and there it sees righteousness, strength, all-sufficiency.

Faith empties a man of himself, self-conceit, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, makes him seem nothing, that Christ may be all in all. Where the strongest faith, the greatest humility, Matthew 8:7–10; judges himself unworthy of the least favour, counts himself the greatest of sinners, less than the least of all mercies, thinks better of others than of himself, patient of reproofs, and ready to stoop to the meanest service that Christ shall call him to; ascribes all he has to Christ and grace.

Whereas presumption is proud and haughty, swells a man full, and raises him high in his own conceit. It is attended with self-conceit and self-confidence; thinks well of himself, and stands upon his own bottom; counts himself fit for services above him, and is impatient of reproofs, contradictions, and what he judges undervaluings. Some strains hereof are visible in that presumptuous Pharisee, Luke 18:11-12.

Secondly. A holy jealousy and watchfulness over himself, Romans 11:20. Because he stands by faith, therefore he is not high-minded or self-confident, but wary and watchful; careful that he may not receive the grace of God in vain; fearful lest he should make unworthy returns; jealous over his heart, as knowing it to be treacherous and unfaithful; watchful over his spirit, that it do not start aside from Christ; careful that no mercy may slip his notice, that no rod or affliction may speak in vain; keeps a strict hand over his soul in all his ways, especially in ordinances of worship; trembles at the word; and in a word, works out his salvation with fear and trembling. Easy to be convinced of miscarriages, thankful for such discoveries, such smitings are acceptable to him, when he is himself; and ordinarily his own heart smites him first, and more than others. But presumption is careless and secure, gives the reins to his heart. The temper of his spirit is loose and negligent, even in acts of worship; bears up against conviction in miscarriage, staves it off, and is stubborn against the word when it crosses him.

We may see this in the deportment of the Jews, the presumptuous part of them, under the ministry of Christ himself.

[5.] In their properties. True faith being a form far differing from presumption, the properties that flow from it are far different.

First. It is a purifying faith. The confidence, which is either the act or attendant of it, is a lively hope, that will be working out all impurity of flesh and spirit. As a living spring will not long continue mudded, but is still working out the mud and impure mixtures which defile it, 1 John 3:3. Vide sermon on Matthew 7:21. 1. He makes it his work. 2. It is his beauty. Impurity is an eye-sore to faith; this looks upon sin as its deformity and defilement, as that which is nasty and loathsome. Now as one that affects beauty will not endure anything upon the face, the seat of beauty, which is nasty and loathsome, will use all means to wash off such a defilement, to remove that which is looked upon as an ugly defilement, so does he who has this hope labour to purify himself from the defilements of sin, to free himself from it, as that which he knows is most loathsome to Christ, in whose eye he would be lovely. And Christ is his pattern. ‘He that hath this hope in Christ, purifies himself as Christ is pure.’ He sets the holiness of Christ before him as his pattern; he would have that purity copied out in his soul; he would be holy, as he is holy; he would have ‘the same mind to be in him which was in Christ.’ And though he knows, when he has done his best, he shall come far short of this high example, yet since the Lord has set it before him, he will strive to come as near it as he can. He will be following of Christ, though it be haud passibus æquis, though it be at a great distance, through the weakness of the flesh. Though he come far short of him, yet he will strive to keep Christ in his sight, Hebrews 12:1-2. Though he cannot make so large steps as his glorious forerunner, yet he will be careful to make straight steps to his feet; he will not step out of that holy way wherein Christ is gone before him; he will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left, into by-paths of sin and vanity; but endeavours to follow Christ fully, fully, though weakly. Other examples, even the greatest, he will not follow further, or otherwise, than they follow Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 1 Peter 2:21. He will not encourage himself, by the sins and failings of the most eminent saints, to grow loose, or take liberty to do the least thing that may be offensive. They did thus and thus formerly, they do so and so now. Well, says he, be it so, but they are not my pattern. Would Christ do so and so? I must follow him.

Ay, but presumption writes not after this copy. This will make bold to waive Christ’s footsteps, where the way seems cross, or rugged, or deep, or difficult; especially if he see any, who have the repute of holiness, go before him herein. He copies out the blots of God’s saints, those characters in their lives which agree not with the original. He encourages himself by their sins and failings; his hopes feed upon their corruptions, and nourish themselves thereby. Noah, Lot, David, Peter, these and these sinned thus and thus, and yet were saved. My sins, says he, that I fall into now and then, are not worse, are not so bad as these. And therefore though I continue in this or that evil, why should I doubt of salvation? Here is the true face of presumption without any mask. A true believer abuses not his hopes, so as to grow more loose, to sin more freely, to make more liberty to himself in things doubtful or suspicious, to be negligent of more purity, careless of an increase in holiness, higher degrees of grace. He argues not thus: My condition is safe, I am sure of heaven, therefore I need care for no more; if I should take liberty in such and such things, to decline a little from the strictness of the rule, it would cut me off from salvation; and therefore why should I not gratify myself herein? He contents not himself with such a degree of purity, such a measure of holiness, as will be sufficient barely to bring him to heaven. No; but because he has this hope, therefore he is more careful to avoid sin, therefore he purifies himself more and more, therefore he would be more heavenly, therefore he strives after more holiness. Hope spurs him on in the way that is called holy; hope makes those ways pleasant and delightful to him; hope quickens his endeavours, makes him unwearied in the pursuit of holiness, engages him cheerfully against all

difficulties, incumbrances, opposition, that would hinder his growth and proficiency in holiness.

Those hopes that encourage a person to sin more freely, to walk more loosely, to count strictness and preciseness more than needs, to count purity and holiness in the strength, life, power, exercise, and daily increase of it needless, any degree of holiness or righteousness too much, they are no better than a damning and deluding presumption.

These hopes put a man upon an universal purity; purifies himself, all that is in himself, both inward and outward man, and that especially which is most himself, his heart and soul, Acts 15:9. Faith purifies both heart and life, but it exerts its purifying virtue first in the heart. That is the spring of impurity; and the streams will never run clear to purpose in the conversation, till the spring be cleansed. ‘A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good things,’ Matthew 12:33. Till the heart be good, nothing is good; till that be purified, all is defiled. Even that which makes the greatest show of purity, that holiness which is not minted in the heart, and brought out into the life from thence, as out of a good treasury, however it glister, it is but counterfeit coin, it is not current with Christ, however it may be with men. When he brings it to the touchstone, it will be found but dross, or gilded wickedness. It is not of the stamp of heaven, if it bear not the impression of that precious faith which purifies the heart. A true believer will not content himself with outward purity, with visible holiness, a refined conversation, though he has all care of that; but if he could converse in the world like an angel, as to outward purity, holiness, innocency, yet, so long as he find vain thoughts lodge in his mind, so long as he feels sinful, impure notions stirring in his heart, though they should never break forth into outward act, nay, though they should never procure full inward consent, yet this he accounts an impurity, a defilement not to be endured. Those secret motions of sin, which no eye sees but the eye of God, are his burden and affliction. Faith makes him restless, industrious to get his heart and mind purified from these. These buds of that root of bitterness, his natural corruption, he is cropping them off, casting them out as that which defiles him. He is daily striking at the root itself, that by degrees his heart may be cleansed from that mass of corruption. But now presumption rests in an external purity, satisfy themselves with an outside holiness, consisting in avoiding gross sins, and the outward acts of religion and righteousness, and presume upon this they shall get to heaven, whoever be excluded. In the mean time they trouble not themselves with inward purity, to get their minds and hearts purged; sinful thoughts, impure motions are tolerated. The body of sin is no burden. The stirrings and actings of natural corruption are winked at. All is well enough, if it break not forth into open acts. If the outside be clean, they look no further. This they take as a sufficient evidence for heaven. They will scarce believe that there are any who do more. This was the very temper of the presumptuous Pharisees, who were so confident of heaven, as though it had been reserved alone for them. Thus does Christ describe them, while he pricks their swelling confidence with those sharp menaces, Matthew 23:25–27.

I have insisted the longer on this head, because the particulars in it are very plain and distinguishing; so as, if you would deal faithfully with your souls, in applying them, and examining by them, you might be able to discern whether the hopes of heaven be the issues of a true faith, or of a vain presumption.

1. The presumer makes not holiness his work, it is not his great business to purify himself. He minds it not seriously. If he mind it at all, it is but upon the by. There is something else that is more

his design, which has not only more of his time and endeavours, but more of his heart.

2. Holiness is not purity to him. It is not an ornament, a beauty in his eye. He is not in love with it. The face of it is not so lovely, that he should be at so much pains to wipe off, to wash out the spots which are contrary to it. As the judgments or fancies of some persons are so depraved by custom or example, that they count a spotted, a patched, a painted face beautiful, so these confidents please themselves with their bespotted souls, yea, and presume that the Lord is pleased with them; so well pleased with them, as that he will admit them into heaven, though they be not cleansed, purged, purified. And, which heightens this presumption, they will believe this in contradiction to what the Lord has plainly and positively declared, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' and that the pure in heart are blessed by God, and shall alone be admitted to see him.

Secondly. True faith is working faith. Presumption is an idle fancy. Saving faith is operative, Galatians 5:6, ■νεργουμ■νη. It worketh, and it 'worketh by love.' It worketh, and therefore called effectual, Philemon 1:6, and 1 Thessalonians 2:13. There is an effectual working in those that believe. It is effectual to make them walk worthy of God, 1 Thessalonians 2:12. How that? Why, as the apostle, 1 Thessalonians 2:10. Where this is rooted in the heart, it grows up and spreads itself in all the branches of obedience, and is filled with the fruits of righteousness. It makes a man active for God, and thereby shews it is a living principle, a lively faith, a lively hope, 1 Peter 1:3; whereas the hope and faith of presumers is dead: no breathings after Christ, no vigorous motions towards him, no lively actings for him. No wonder, for it is dead, and hereby appears to be so, James 2:17; James 2:20, he says it again, it is as a carcase, a body without a soul. Not that good works are the soul of faith, but because they are the vital acts of it. Where there is no vital acts, there is no soul; because the soul where it is will be acting, will shew itself by acts of life. Even a new-born infant, though it cannot walk and work as a grown man, yet it cries, and breathes, and moves, and sucks; and hereby shews it is alive, that there is a soul, a principle of life in it. Whereas a child coming into the world, if it do not put forth some of these acts, if it do not cry, move, or breathe at least, we then conclude it is stillborn, it is already dead. Not because these acts are its life, but because they are the signs of life. So that the apostle makes good works to be the vital acts of faith, whereby a living faith may be distinguished from a dead. Presumption, if it do not cry after God, move towards him, breathe after him, cling to him, as the child to the breast, act for him in a lively manner, according to the proportion of strength received, it is but a mole, a lump of flesh, not informed with a living soul. Though there may seem to have been some conception, some tumour, yea, some travail too, some legal pangs like those of the new birth, yet that which is brought forth is but a dead thing, if it want these vital acts which the apostle calls works. It is but a picture of faith, how much soever it resemble it. Though it have the colour, the features, the lineaments, the proportions of a living child, yet these are no more than you may see in a picture. Without these acts it is but a painted faith. If you would make it appear to be alive indeed, you must do it by the acts of obedience, by good works.

Quest. But you will say, May not presumptuous hypocrites do good works? May not they abound in them? in good works of all sorts, works of charity, and works of righteousness, and works of piety and religion? Did not the Pharisees exceed in works of piety? Was not that a notable work of charity in Ananias and Sapphira, when they sold their estate, and brought the greatest part of it to be disposed of for the relief of those that were in want? Did not those presumptuous hypocrites,

Matthew 7:22, do many wonderful works? If good works be common to both, how can this be a distinguishing character to know the one from the other?

Ans. Presumption may be attended with good works, and a presumer may go as far in this respect as a true believer. He may do the same works, if you look only to the outside of them; but if you look in the inside of those works, there is a great difference; and such a one as a man, if he will faithfully and impartially examine, may discern in himself, though he cannot discern in another. This difference is intimated by the apostle James 2:23; he wrought for God as a friend, and so the Lord accounted him. His works were acts of friendship to God; they proceeded from love to him; not out of love, or fear of punishment, or hopes of reward only; but because he was a friend, and loved him. A true friend, though he have no fear to lose any thing, nor hopes to gain any thing by what he does, yet he will appear and act for his friend. Why? Because he loves him. Thus it was with Abraham, and thus it is with every true believer. If there were neither heaven nor hell, neither hopes of the one, nor fear of the other, yet he would do what is well pleasing to God; he would be acting for him because he is his friend, he loves him. Where there is love, there will be acts of love; and the acts of this love and friendship to God is obedience, John 14:15, and John 15:14. But this difference, which is but intimated by James, is plainly expressed by Paul, Galatians 5:6, ‘Faith works by love.’ Presumption works by something else; he has some other principle or motive that sets him a-work. The papist works that he may merit heaven. The Pharisee works that he may be applauded, that he may be seen of men, that he may have a good esteem, a good report with them. The slave works lest he should be beaten, lest he should be damned. The formalist works, that he may stop the mouth of conscience, that will be accusing, disquieting him, if he do nothing. The time-server works, because it is the custom, the fashion, the way to stand or to rise, to gain his own ends, or secure his own interest. The ordinary professor works, because it is a shame to do nothing, where so much is professed; the temporary, because he is in a good mood. These are all presumers in their kind, or as bad as presumers. But the true believer works because he loves. This is the principal, if not the only motive, that sets him a-work. If there were no other motive within or without him, yet would he be working for God, acting for Christ, because he loves him; it is like fire in his bones. But presumption works not by love. Either it is idle, or it is acted by some other principle. Some of the fore-mentioned motives, or some other of like nature, set him a-work, when he betakes himself to any work that is good. If he acted by love, it is not love to Christ, but self-love. Indeed, the presumer makes himself his centre: all the lines in the whole circumference of his life, all his acts and works that have a show of goodness, are drawn from hence; and here they all meet and are united. He loves himself so well, as he would be happy, he would not be damned, he would be applauded and esteemed, he would not be disquieted by a clamorous accusing conscience, he would avoid reproach and shame, he would compass his own ends. And these, or the like, are the weights that set all the wheels on motion when he seems to move for God; if these were taken off, all would stand still. Love does not sway him. Faith is active, and works for God, because he loves; and presumption is idle, or else works for himself, being acted by self-love.

Thirdly, True faith is precious; it is like gold, it will endure a trial. Presumption is but a counterfeit, cannot abide to be tried, 1 Peter 1:7. A true believer fears no trial. He is willing to be tried by God, Psalms 26:2, Psalms 139:23. He is willing to have his faith tried by others, he shuns not the touchstone. He is much in trying himself. He would not take anything upon trust, especially that

which is of such moment. He is willing to hear the worst as well as the best. That preaching pleases him best which is most searching and distinguishing, Hebrews 4:12. He is loath to be deluded with vain hopes. He would not be flattered into a good conceit of his spiritual state without ground. When trials are offered, he complies with the apostle's advice, 2 Corinthians 13:5. But presumption takes things upon trust, will not be at the trouble to try, and is loath to be troubled with searching truths. That teaching pleases him best, which keeps at a distance, comes not near his conscience, makes no scrutiny in his soul. Such a man as would convince him that his hopes are but delusions, his confidence presumption, he takes him for an enemy, though he do but tell him the truth, and that truth which is most necessary for him. When he is called to trial in the ministry of the word, and means offered whereby his heart might be searched, he keeps off, as a cheater would keep off from the touchstone with his counterfeit coin. Why, would you drive me to despair? says he; trouble not me with so many scruples; I trust my faith is as good as those who make a greater show: however, God is merciful, and I will trust him with my salvation without more ado. And thus he is willing to delude himself; ay, and will be deluded. Those that do pity him, and would undeceive him, are suspected, or scorned, or hated.

Fourthly, True faith is growing. It comes not to its full stature at once, but by degrees. There is a growing from faith to faith, Romans 1:17, a passing from weakness to strength, and from one degree of strength to another, and in the way a conflicting with doubts, weaknesses, discouragements, opposition. So it passes from acceptance to dependence, and from dependence on him for pardon and life, to a life of dependence, a resting on him for all things; and from dependence to assurance, and from a weak assurance to a full assurance. The beginnings of it are small and weak, and there is a sense of this weakness, and strivings after increase. 'I believe,' &c., Mark 9:24. A true believer is apprehensive of his weakness, and feeble as his faith is, finding unbelief strong, is struggling with it, complains of it, bewails it, diligent in the use of all means to get faith encouraged and strengthened, and grows up accordingly. But now presumption starts up on a sudden, and comes to its full growth and maturity in a moment. There is no such sense of weakness, meets with no such opposition, finds no such cause to complain of unbelief, no such wrestling with doubts, no such need of diligence for increase. His faith, i. e., his presumption, is as strong at the first, as it is after many years' standing; sensible of no increase in the use of means.

Fifthly, In the extent. True faith, in its actings, reaches both to the things of eternity and the things of this life. Presumption trusts God only as to his soul and salvation; things which he less minds than temporal things. A true believer trusts God with all. A presumer hopes, or, as he says, trusts that God will be gracious to his soul; but as to the things of the world he trusts himself; he will rely upon his own wit, or prudence, or industry, or friends, or parts, or interest. That which we mind not, value not, we can be more free to leave to the care and in the trust of others; but that which is above all dear to us, we are cautious in trusting any with it but ourselves. This is the truth of the business. Those that ordinarily presume so much of heaven, the things of this life are dearest to them, and most valued by them, therefore they will take care of these themselves; but the things of eternity they much mind not, and therefore they leave these, as they say, to God's mercy. So that their trusting God with their souls is no more than this in plain English, they do not much mind them. And this appears, in that they think no industry and pains too much, all care little enough for their estates or posterity, little fear lest their care should be immoderate, lest it should intrench too much upon that care and time that is due to their souls; little or no scruple lest the means they use,

the courses they take, should be irregular. Or if there be any scruple, yet if they see the same used ordinarily by others, that will be a sufficient salvo, a sufficient warrant to proceed therein.

They make haste to be rich or great, or get from under the cross, poverty, disrespect, &c. They will take nearer ways than God sets open to them; they will not stay to take God along with them, or to see him going before them (as those that trust him will do), they will not be hindered by busying themselves much about their souls, they are in haste: and hereby they shew plainly they believe not in God; for he that believes will not make haste, Isaiah 28:16. He that truly trusts in him, will stay God's time, and use God's means, and walk in God's way, though it seem about; they will not neglect their souls for haste; they know this would be to make more haste than good speed. Nor would they step out of the way, the way that is holy and righteous, though they may escape a loss, an affliction by it, though they might gain some desirable advantage by it. True faith goes leaning upon God, and therefore will keep his way, Psalms 37:34. He that will not be liberal for the promoting and honouring of the gospel; he that fears poverty or affliction more than he fears sin; he that is more careful for the things of the world than for his soul; he that takes indirect or suspected courses, to get, or increase, or secure his estate; he that is not jealous or watchful, lest his cares for the world (when he is much engaged therein) should be immoderate,—it is plain he does not trust God with his estate; and he that does not trust God for his estate, whatever he think or pretend, he does not trust God for his soul, for his salvation; his hopes of heaven and salvation are but presumption.

Thus I have given you an account of the differences betwixt faith and presumption; and hereby, if you deal faithfully with your souls, you may be able to discern whether you truly believe indeed, or whether you only presume. This may be sufficient through the Lord's concurrence to discover mistakes in this weighty business, and so to remove the first impediment which keeps men from faith, viz., a conceit they have faith, when in truth they have no such thing.

2. Impediment. A conceit that faith is a business of no great difficulty. Men wonder why any should make such ado about believing; they think it an easy thing to believe, and so trouble not themselves much about it, make it not their business to look after it. This conceit being so common, it is a plain evidence there are few who have it. Those who think it such an easy matter to believe, shew plainly they never did believe, nay, they do not so much as know what it is to believe indeed. And as it is a sign they want it, so it is an impediment that keeps them from it. To remove it, consider what the Scriptures declare concerning faith in opposition to this conceit.

(1.) It is the gift of God. It is not the work of man's hand, or of his head, or of his heart. It is something without him, not in him naturally; something above him, out of the reach of nature, though improved and raised to the height. It must be reached down by the hand of God, otherwise man can never come by it: Php 1:29, 'To you it is given,' &c. It is not a gift of nature, nor a gift acquired by the improvement of nature's abilities, but a gift supernatural, a gift of grace, Ephesians 2:8. Both salvation and faith are of grace; neither of them of ourselves, both the gift of God. What Christ said to Pilate in another case, is true here, John 19:11. There is no seeds of it, no propensity to it in nature, it must come from a foreign hand; nay, there is no power in nature to receive it when it is offered; the hand is full, and intus existens, &c.: 'How can ye believe?' John 5:44.

(2.) Man is naturally unwilling to receive it. Not only without it, unable to procure it, but unwilling to receive it, John 5:40. Coming is believing. Now, though Christ, who is truth itself, told them this was the only way to life, yet, though their life lay on it, they were not willing to come, they were resolved not to come at him, not to believe. Is not he unwilling to receive a thing who will die rather than receive it? Oh but though they were unwilling to come to Christ, yet suppose Christ should condescend to come and offer himself to them, could they be then unwilling? Sure then we should see them willing to receive him. No; not then: 'He came to his own, and his own received him not,' John 1:11. Those who challenged the Messias as peculiar to themselves, those to whom he was promised, those who had so long expected his coming, yet when he comes, they receive him not. So the Lord complains: 'Israel would none of me.' Christ takes up the complaint, Matthew 23:27. They would not be gathered by him, when he would have gathered them; they would not receive him, when he offered himself to them. They were so far from receiving him, as they hated the sight of him: 'Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light,' John 3:19. Here is not only a bare unwillingness, but an averseness rising up into hatred, Isaiah 65:2. Here is not only an unwillingness, but a rebellious opposition. And such an opposition to faith, to Christ, there is in the heart of every man till born again. Ye do but flatter and delude yourselves if you think you are better disposed than the Jews. It is thus with every man, all men, though no natural man will believe it. The Jews could think better of themselves than they were; this is not only the delusion of these days, Matthew 23:29. They would not believe they should have opposed the prophets, as their forefathers did, and yet even then were they opposing Christ himself, the prince of prophets. No wonder if men will not believe now they oppose Christ and faith, even when in the ministry of the word they do daily resist and oppose them. But however you delude yourselves, this is the truth of God; there is a desperate opposition in every unregenerate heart against faith, against Christ himself.

(3.) This opposition is so strong as it requires an exceeding mighty power to overcome it. The power of nature cannot master it. Indeed, this is wholly employed for the strengthening of unbelief, to enforce the opposition against faith. The stronger a man's parts are, wit, memory, judgment, reason, affections, the more vigorously does he oppose faith. That is evident in the scribes and Pharisees, men amongst the Jews of greatest parts; and those most heightened and improved, in them the opposition was strongest. The power of divine institutions alone cannot master this. What more powerful than the word? Yet this alone cannot prevail: 'The weapons of our warfare,' 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, 'mighty through God;' ay, but in themselves too weak for unbelief; too weak, though managed by an apostle, the greatest of the apostles. 'Paul may plant;' ay, but all this is labour in vain without a higher, a mightier power, 1 Corinthians 3:5–7; too weak, though managed by an angel, as you may see in the ministry of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, leading him to a particular faith, a business one would think of less difficulty, the circumstances considered, Luke 1:11, Luke 1:19-20.

Too weak, though managed by Christ himself. How little did his ministry prevail against the opposition of the unbelieving Jews! So little, as he complains: 'I have laboured in vain,' Isaiah 49:4. Oh the wonderful power of unbelief! the incredible strength of this opposition! that the power of the word in the ministry of Christ himself, yea, the power of miracles, wherewith his ministry was enforced, could not prevail against it, John 12:37-38.

Nay, the power of God does not master it when it is put forth only in a common way; for a common concurrence is always vouchsafed; without that we cannot move nor breathe, yet we see unbelief is seldom overcome, this opposition to faith seldom mastered. But the power of God, the almighty power of God, must be put forth in a special manner to prevail aguinst this opposition. That almighty arm must be made bare, and stretched out; it must be put forth in the infiniteness of its strength, that a sinner may be made able or willing to believe, Isaiah 53:1; that the report of Christ may be believed, the arm of the Lord must be revealed, it must be made bare, Isaiah 52:10; alluding to the gesture of men, who setting themselves to some special work in good earnest, that they may use the force of it with less encumbrance, strip the arm up to the elbow. Such a power is required to raise sinners out of the grave of unbelief as was requisite to raise Christ from the dead. Thus the apostle pregnantly expresses it, Ephesians 1:19-20.

3. Impediment. A conceit that the terms of Christ are hard. This keeps off a sinner from closing with Christ as he is offered. Satan, who seeks by all means to hinder the match betwixt Christ and a sinful soul, he represents the conditions hard; and the heart, which is under the power of Satan's suggestions, does easily believe him. Oh, says he, if I accept of Christ as he is offered, I must leave my sins, I must be deprived of my ease, my former stolen pleasures, my former sweet delights; I must abandon such a course that has been so gainful, so advantageous to me, that which has uphold my credit and repute, that which has been such a solace, a refreshment to me; I must relinquish such a practice to which I have been so long accustomed, which is so endeared to me; Christ declares it offensive to him, he will not tolerate it; I must enter into that way which is so strait and holy, that path which seems so sad and melancholy, which is jeered and derided by others, and which has been so distasteful to me. Oh, this seems a hard saying, this keeps him off from giving his consent to Christ. He sees something desirable in Christ, he sees some reason to close with him, he sees some necessity of him, there is no salvation without him. Oh, but if he yield to Christ, his beloved sin, his Benjamin must go. This seems hard, he cannot yield to it, and so when Christ has been long treating with him in the ministry of the word, the match is broken upon this account; Christ stands upon too hard terms, thus he apprehends. This is the true cause why the ambassadors of Christ prevail so little in their treaty with sinners; the main cause why Christ being offered to so many, is accepted by so few. The greatest part do not like Christ's terms, they seem too strict, too hard.

It much concerns us therefore to endeavour the removing of this, it being the great stumbling-block, the great rock of offence upon which so many fall and split ther souls. For this purpose consider,

(1.) The terms of Christ are easy, whatever Satan or a corrupt heart suggest to the contrary. They are as easy as possible can be, as easy as the nature of the matter can possibly admit of, as easy as can be desired with any reason. They could not be easier without the greatest absurdity and contradiction imaginable. They are such as those who object against them would in a like case count them easy enough in all reason. Satan knows them to be so; and those wretched souls who are now damned for not accepting, without doubt do now acknowledge them easy and reasonable, though they would not see it till it was too late. That this may not prove the sad case of any of you, I will make it plain to you; so plain, as if any will not close with them, as they will certainly perish, so they will perish without all excuse. Suppose a man should offer to restore sight to another upon condition he would not wilfully shut his eyes, is it possible he should have his sight upon any other

terms? Or could he desire his sight upon any easier terms? Would it not be absurd, unreasonable, impossible for him to desire to see, while he is resolved to shut his eyes? The case is like here; Christ offers to discover to a sinner the things that concern his peace, if he will not shut his eyes, if he will not give himself up to be blinded by Satan. He offers to discover himself to him, if he will not turn his back on Christ when he is presented to his view. Could he have this happy sight upon any other, upon any easier terms? Is it possible to have it upon other? Is it reasonable to desire it upon easier terms? A prince offers to adopt a man for his son, and to admit him to the state and privileges of a son, upon these terms, that he do not wilfully continue in the state of a slave. Could this be done upon other, upon easier, terms? The Lord offers to adopt a sinner for his son, to admit him into the state and privileges of that blessed sonship upon these terms, that he do not wilfully continue in the slavery of sin and the service of Satan. Now, can this be done upon any other easier terms? Are not these two states inconsistent? Is it not utterly impossible that a man should be in the state of a son and of a slave both at once? Is it not a plain contradiction? Would it not be absurd to desire it, to think of it? Christ offers to restore sinners to the glorious liberty of the sons of God, if they be but willing to leave their dungeon, to have their fetters knocked off. Is it possible they should have liberty while they are resolved to continue in their fetters? Your sins are your fetters; hence they are called the bonds of wickedness, the bond of iniquity. It is a most absurd contradiction, a most unreasonable thing, to desire to be at liberty and in fetters both at once. Can ye have liberty upon easier terms than to leave your fetters?

Christ offers to be reconciled to you, to delight in you, to make you beautiful and lovely, if you will but part with your leprosy, your deformity, sin, which makes you nasty and loathsome to him. Now, would you have Christ to be in love with deformity? Would you have him delight in that which is nasty and loathsome? Can any have beauty upon easier terms than to part with their leprosy, their deformity? Nay, is it possible to have it upon any other, upon any easier terms? Can Christ pardon you when you will not lay down your weapons? Or would you have him heal you while you will not part with your disease? Is not this a plain contradiction; to be cured, and not part with the disease?

If a physician should undertake to secure his patient’s life in case he will not drink poison, is it possible he should do it otherwise? Why, sin is the poison of the soul; sinful words are called the poison of asps, sinful practices are called the poison of dragons, Deuteronomy 32:33. Now, Christ will secure the life of the sinner if he will not drink in this poison, if he will not drink in iniquity, &c. Would you not think him a madman that would have life upon any other terms besides these terms? What, live and not leave this deadly poison!

Suppose a man having wandered from home and lost himself, should meet with one that would lead him home, but upon these terms, that he would leave that path which leads him directly further and further from it; would you not think him void of all sense and reason that would be brought home upon other terms, that would go backward and forward, north and south, at once? This is the case. The sinner has lost himself, lost his soul, lost heaven, lost the way to it. Christ meets the sinner, offers to bring him home, to bring him to heaven; but it is upon these terms, he must not still walk on in the path that leads directly to hell, for these lie quite contrary, as north and south. And are these terms hard? Or rather must not he bid defiance to all reason, that would think of coming to heaven upon any other terms? If a man were to make his own terms, would any be so ridiculous, so absurd, as to say, I will come to heaven in that way that leads directly to hell? Would you have Christ, by making other terms, to make himself more absurd, more ridiculous, than any

man that has the use of reason would be? Oh, the unreasonableness of sin! the absurdness of a deluded soul! May not the Lord say, ‘Are not my ways equal? O house of Israel, are not your ways unequal?’ Could I have stooped lower to sinners? Could I have condescended further? Could I have devised terms more easy, more equal, for a sinner’s happiness? Those whose hearts now quarrel with them, will hereafter be so confounded with the clear apprehensions of their equity, that they will be struck dumb and speechless when they shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, when he shall then demand why they refused him when offered upon terms so easy, so equal; the sense hereof will strike them dumb and silent. This is so clear as I doubt not but it is seen even in the darkness of hell. I question not but the apprehension does wound those damned souls with more anguish than any pang of death, when they remember that they refused Christ when he was offered upon such easy, such equal, terms. This is the first consideration, the terms of Christ are easy. Not as easy is opposed to difficult, for there is difficulty therein to corrupt nature, but as it is opposed to that which is harsh, rigid, or unequal. So they are most easy.

(2.) The grounds upon which thou thinkest the terms of Christ to be hard, are false and delusive. He is a cheater that suggests them to thee; there is a design therein to cheat thee of heaven, to cozen thee of thy soul. Examine them a little, and this will be plain. If thou closest with Christ, says that deluder, thou losest thy ease, thy pleasures, thy gains, thy friends and boon companions, &c. These are the grounds upon which Christ’s terms are judged to be hard. Well, but inquire a little further, what ease, pleasures? Christ will abridge thee of no ease but that which is unlawful, of no pleasures but those that are impure and sinful, of no gain but that which is unjust and unrighteous, of no friends but those that are unworthy of the name of friends, those that are indeed enemies to Christ and thy soul. When all is cast up, if thou close with Christ, thou losest no more than these by the bargain, and then thou losest nothing that is worth the keeping. To lose these is indeed the greatest gain. Thou art lost, undone if thou quit them not. Would any man be loath to part with that which will undo him? Shall the match betwixt Christ and thy soul be broke upon such terms? Wilt thou judge Christ’s terms hard because he would have thee part with that which shall certainly and eternally ruin thee? Wilt thou break with him upon this? Wilt thou suffer thy soul to be thus cheated? Consider of it a little better, and view those things more distinctly, and do it seriously. Be mindful that I am by the appointment of Christ in a treaty with thee about thy soul, the issue of it will be life or death to thee for ever.

[1.] Thou art at ease now, neglecting thy soul, and [not] troubling thyself much about thy eternal estate. But if thou accept of Christ, this spiritual sloth must be shaked off. Now, thou art loath to forego thy ease, and art ready to forego Christ rather than thy ease. And is Christ indeed so little set by? Is thy soul of so small value with thee that thou wilt not trouble thyself about it? Well, but this is not the way to avoid trouble, this is not the way to enjoy thy lasting ease. Believe it, for it is certain truth, this ease will end in endless torments. Oh, that is a woeful ease that has such a woeful issue! Woe to them that be at ease! So soon as that fool in the gospel had said, ‘Soul, take thy ease,’ the tormentors take his soul; this night, Luke 12:19. If thou break with Christ for thine ease, thou art no wiser than that fool, nor wilt thou fare any better. Torment for ease, intolerable torments for a little ease, eternal torments for a moment’s ease! O foolish, deluded soul, wilt thou make such a bargain? wilt thou break with Christ for a little ease? Well, take heed thou dost not find it a ‘little-ease’ indeed when it will be too late to repent.

[2.] For sinful pleasures. Thou now eatest, drinkest, and art merry; carnal mirth and jollity is that which makes thy life desirable to thee. Thou givest the reins to thy sinful appetite, usest no curb to thy receptions.* Thou singest away care, and drinkest away sorrow, and laughest at those that would restrain thee, or are so precise as not to follow thee in these excesses. Or if thy excesses be not open, yet there is some secret sin which thou hidest under thy tongue, and pleasest thyself with it as with a sweet morsel. There is some forbidden fruit or other on which thou feedest with much delight. Now if thou shouldst close with Christ, all the sport would be spoiled. And so it would indeed, so far as it is sinful, and in things unlawful, so far as it is immoderate and excessive in things lawful. And wilt thou break with Christ for this? Are sinful pleasures of more value with thee than Christ, than thy soul, than heaven, than life? It may be so, but then they are taken upon the devil's report. But will you behold them, and judge of them, as Christ represents them? Methinks those that profess themselves Christians should be as ready to believe the Spirit of Christ as the father of lies. Why, then, the pleasures of sin are worse than the bitterest affliction. The Spirit of God testifies that they were so to Moses, Hebrews 11:25. The bitterness of death is in the pleasures of sin, and they will prove such bitterness in the end. If Christ be put off for these, and the way of holiness declined as a sad, uncouth, melancholy path, that which is pleasant to the palate will be torture to the bowels, Revelation 10:9. Lazarus's sores and poverty is far better than a fulness of such delights; and so Christ propounds it in the parable, and so he found it who fared deliciously every day; being in torments, he could see it. 'And in hell,' says the text, 'he lift up his eyes.' He could see it then, though he would not see nor believe it before, Luke 16:23: 'Son, remember,' Luke 16:25. Oh that is a sharp memorandum; it cuts deep. Remember thou hadst thy pleasures. Thou hadst them; but now they are gone, they are vanished; nothing remains but the remembrance of them; and this does more torture him than ever the enjoyment delighted him. Thou hadst thy pleasures. Oh, but what has he now? Why, now thou art tormented. Ay, thou art, and thou wilt be. This will be true in every moment of an endless eternity, thou art tormented. And as sure as these are the words of Christ, this will be thy condition, who wilt not quit thy sinful pleasures to close with Christ. Oh that you would now remember it, before the time come, when it will be too late to remember it, before you be in that place where it will be a hell to remember it. Have you not seen a distracted man skip, and dance, and laugh, and sing, as though he were the merriest man alive? But have you not, withal, pitied that mirth, as being the issue of madness and distraction? Such is the mirth of those who will not quit their sinful pleasures to follow Christ. It is the mirth of madmen; their jollity and pleasures are the acts of spiritual frenzy and distraction. It is said the prodigal 'came to himself' when he resolved to come to his father, when he was upon his return to Christ. Before, while he run in his way of pleasures, he was beside himself, Luke 15:17. So is every sinner, till he leave all to return to Christ. He is beside himself, his mirth is but frenzy, his delights are the issues of distraction. Oh, lamentable mirth! If he knew his condition, it would soon damp all his joy; his laughter would be turned into mourning, and his joy into heaviness. But he is beside himself; and what clearer symptoms of madness than this? He will forego Christ rather than his pleasures.

[3.] Unlawful gain. Whether it be got in an ungodly way, by laying out those thoughts, that time, those endeavours, for the things of the world, which should be employed for the things of heaven; or whether it be got in an unrighteous way, by unjust or indirect courses in word or deed. Take the apostle's estimate of such gain, and then judge whether the relinquishing of this be any just ground for to count Christ's terms hard, James 5:1-3. To hoard up such gain is to hoard up

sorrows; it is for a man to make a bed of thorns for himself, which will make him weep and howl, and pierce him through with many sorrows, to heap up racks, to heap up miseries. It is not a heap of precious things, but a mass of corruption. It is not a treasure, but a canker, a consuming rust, which will not only consume the rest of his substance, but himself, and that in a grievous manner, as with fire. This is gain with a witness; but it is such as will bear witness against him, and cast him in the day of judgment. Ye have heaped up, ye think ye have heaped up treasure; true, but it is a treasure of wrath, and so you will find it at the last day. Now sum up this together, and then judge whether you will lose anything by quitting this for Christ. Such gain is a hoard of sorrows, a heap of miseries, a mass of corruption, a consuming rust and canker, a devouring fire, a condemning witness; and, if this be not enough, a treasure of wrath. And will any man count it a loss to be rid of such a horrible evil as this? And are they not miserably cheated who will be persuaded to quit Christ rather than to quit such a dreadful mischief? This may be sufficient to clear this second consideration.

(3.) Christ will make up what you seem to lose by accepting him with real gains, and that in abundant measure, in a transcendent manner. Though, by closing with the terms of Christ, you lose nothing that is worthy the keeping, you lose nothing but what it is a gain to lose, as appears by the former consideration. Yet he will make up that seeming loss with better things, such as are incomparably, unspeakably, inconceivably, infinitely better. For carnal ease, you shall have spiritual rest; rest from the intolerable and cruel slavery of sin and Satan; rest from the troubles of a disquieting conscience, ‘Come unto me,’ &c., Matthew 11:28; rest from the vexations of the world, ‘In the world,’ &c., John 16:33; eternal rest, ‘There remains a rest for the people of God,’ Hebrews 4:9; ‘Blessed are they that die in the Lord; for they rest,’ &c., Revelation 14:13. For sinful pleasures, the comforts of the Holy Spirit, ‘I will send the Comforter;’ for fading pleasures, everlasting joy, Isaiah 61:7; for unsatisfying pleasures, satisfying delights: Psalms 36:8, ‘abundantly satisfied;’ for pleasures that are not worthy the name of pleasures, unspeakable joys; for impure pleasures, glorious joy, 1 Peter 1:8; for embittered pleasures, fulness of joy; for the pleasures of mad men, the Master’s joy, Matthew 21:21, John 15:11; for the pleasures of sin, the joy of Christ.

Set these things together, and see if there be any comparison. For unlawful gain, the riches of Christ’s purchase; for uncertain riches, an inheritance immortal, undefiled, &c.; for riches on earth, treasures in heaven; for a little gain on earth, the unsearchable riches of Christ; for thorny pricking enjoyments, a rich crown of glory; for a little gain, that which is as good as nothing, that which amounts to no less than all things, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, ‘will I give to inherit all things.’ For carnal friends that ye may lose, the Lord will admit you into an inward friendship with himself, with his Son, with his Spirit, with the glorious angels, with the spirits of just men made perfect, with all that are excellent upon earth; such a friendship, as all together shall have one heart, and one spirit, and one interest, and one habitation; all these joined in one blessed league, to promote one interest, even that interest which is thine, and Christ the head of this league. Oh what is the league with death, the covenant with hell, the confederacy with the greatest carnal men on earth, to this league! Oh, if men be not wholly given over to the spirit of delusion, the terms of Christ will never be counted hard.

Compare the terms upon which you give up yourselves to sin and Satan, with the terms of Christ, and see then if they be hard. Till you accept of the terms of Christ, while you close with those of sin

and Satan, what is your state, your employment, your reward? By these you may judge of Satan's terms. As to your state, you are slaves, slaves and drudges to the vilest of creatures, to the most unmerciful tyrant in the world, 'led captive by Satan at his will,' at his lust. Your employment is to fight against God, and to wound and destroy your own souls. This you do continually; you are slaves upon no better terms. Your lusts are weapons of unrighteousness, and Satan continually sets you on work thus to use these weapons against God, against your own souls. And lest sinners should be unwilling to do this, if they should see what they are doing, he puts out the eyes of these wretched slaves. He deals with you as the Philistines did with Samson when they had taken him captive, Judges 16:21. And what reward, what encouragement, may they expect for this hard, intolerable service? Why, 'the wages of sin is death.' Here is all; when the poor sinner hath spent himself, soul and all, in their service, and comes to look for a reward, behold they put him to death. Here is no other reward for him but eternal death.

These are the terms upon which you serve sin and Satan. These are the terms which you count better than the terms of Christ. Christ's terms are hard, but these are easy to you. And is it so indeed? Or are not sinners blinded and bewitched, who call bitter sweet, and sweet bitter; darkness light, and light darkness; hard easy, and easy hard? If the Lord open your eyes, and undeceive you, this may be sufficient to remove the third impediment.

4. Impediment. Is a man's resting in his own righteousness. While a man rests in himself, he will never rest on Christ. While he stands upon anything in himself, he never rolls himself upon Christ. He will never rejoice alone, rely alone upon Christ Jesus, who has any confidence in the flesh. The apostle including his own righteousness in this word flesh, directly opposes these, Php 3:1-21. But are there any such? Alas! nothing more common amongst the Jews, who professed so much confidence in the Messias. Nothing is more ordinary now amongst those who profess that Christ is their only Saviour, than to neglect him, and rest on their own righteousness. How common is it for men to state their righteousness thus. They hear the word, desire the ordinances, pray in public and in private; they mean well, are charitable to those in want, deal honestly, do no man wrong, keep the commandments as well as ever they can, hope their hearts are as good as the best; fall into no great sins, or when they are overtaken with sin, they are sorry for it; and for this they trust that God will be merciful to them, and will save them, whatever become of outrageous sinners; for this they hope to find pardon, to procure acceptance with God; and here they rest, and ground their hopes of heaven.

Now this is one of Satan's strongest holds, whereby he keeps sinners safe and sure from coming to Christ. Against this did Christ and the apostles bend the force of their ministry. For you may see the apostle Paul in travail with this design, especially in his Epistle to the Romans and Galatians. He knew Christ would never be formed in them, till they were cured of this tympany, this false confidence and conceit of their own righteousness. Against this did Christ direct that parable of the Pharisee and Publican, Luke 18:9. This was the great stumbling-block of the Jews, upon which they fell and split their souls. Instead of resting on Christ, Romans 9:30-32, Romans 10:3, they placed and established their own righteousness in the outward conformity to the law; and because they did outwardly observe it, for this they concluded that God was pleased with them, would pardon, and bless, and save them. They thought this righteousness sufficient, stood upon it, and would not stoop to any other; submitted not to the righteousness of God, and so came short of the righteousness of faith, never attained it. Such a block was this in their way, as the Gentiles found

righteousness sooner than they. The Publicans, who had no such thing to rest on, were more easily persuaded to cast themselves on Christ, than the confident Pharisees. To remove this, let me shew how groundless and dangerous this is.

(1.) You have, as you suppose, some righteousnesss; but have you not withal some sin? You can recount several religious, charitable, righteous acts, but is there no one act of sin you are guilty of? I hope there is none so brutishly stupid, as to have such a thought. If this be acknowledged, then further ye may be assured, that all your supposed righteousness will not countervail one sin, and that either in reference to the honour of God, or to thy own salvation.

All thy righteousness does not so much honour God, as that one sin does dishonour him. He gets not so much by all thy righteousness, if it were far more than it is, as he loses by that sin. ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away,’ &c. So tender is the Lord of his law, as he had rather heaven and earth should pass away, than that this* part of the law should be abolished. Now every sin would abolish that part of the law, against which it is directed; every sin would do that, which the Lord had rather heaven and earth should perish, than it should be done. And the Lord knows the tendency of it, and accordingly resents it. The injury that is in sin, considering against whom it is directed, is infinite; but no finite creature, no finite righteousness, can infinitely honour him. One sin will do more to condemn thee, than all thy other righteousness can do to save thee. For the least sin is such a wrong, a dishonour to God, as he cannot in justice admit the sinner into heaven, or into his favour, till he be satisfied for it. Now all thy other righteousness cannot satisfy the Lord for that one sin; nay, all the righteousness of men and angels cannot make amends for that one sin. For when they are perfectly righteous, they are no more than they ought to be; they do no more than they owe, therefore they cannot thereby satisfy for that one sin. For the payment of one debt does not discharge another. So then, all thy righteousness vanishes at the appearance but of one sin. One sin renders all thy other righteous acts unavailable to salvation. What then will it do, when thou art guilty of many millions of sins? If one sin will dash all thy righteousness out of countenance, and quite deface it; where will it appear before so many swarms of sins, as the Lord may charge thee with? Alas, poor deluded sinner, thou leanest upon a shadow, a shadow already vanished, when thou restest on thy own righteousness.

(2.) The righteousness that you rest upon is no righteousness; and therefore when you rest upon it you rest upon nothing: you hang the weight of salvation and your souls upon nothing. This will appear if you grant but that one supposition, which every one but he that is stark blind will acknowledge. Grant but that you are guilty of one sin, and the apostle will thence infer that you are guilty of all, James 2:10. The parts of the law are so linked together, that he who transgresseth one part thereof, does in some way and degree or other transgress the whole law. Now, he that is a righteous man is an observer of the law; therefore, he that is a transgressor of it is not righteous, and consequently has no righteousness, except in his deluded fancy and imagination. What righteousness has he then, who continually transgresses the rule, who seldom or never observes it as far as he can, who, to be sure, never observes it as far as he ought? And is not this your case? And does not every one see it, whose mind the God of this world has not blinded? The church’s acknowledgment is observable, Isaiah 64:6. We have no more righteousness to rest in but what is indeed no righteousness at all, no more than filthy rags are clean.

Farther, that observance of the rule of righteousness which is not done in a due manner, and for sincere ends, is no part of that righteousness which is according to law. That which is not done in a due manner, wants the form, is but the carcase of a righteous act, wants that which is the soul of it, and therefore is no more a righteous act than that lump of flesh is a man, which wants a reasonable soul. And that which is done out of sinister respects is not a righteous act, but an act of hypocrisy. Now whosoever rests in his own righteousness, he never did anything in a due manner, never anything with a sincere aim; and therefore, how confident soever he is of his righteousness, the truth is, he never did any righteous act in his life; and so when he rests upon his righteousness, he rests upon that which he never had, upon nothing, upon that which is not, nor ever was in being.

Moreover, there is no righteousness but either that which is legal or evangelical; but this self-confident has neither. Legal righteousness he has none; indeed, there is none now in the world; for the law acknowledges no righteousness but that which is absolutely perfect. And he is not only without righteousness, but without sense and reason, that will arrogate to himself such a perfection. Nor has he any evangelical righteousness; for that is the righteousness of God, of Christ, of faith, as the Holy Ghost calls it. But he that rests in his own righteousness has none of these; for his own righteousness is not the righteousness of God, nor of Christ, nor of faith. Nay, by resting on his own, he makes himself altogether incapable of this righteousness; that must be renounced before this can be received, as the apostle shews by his own practice, Php 3:1-21; so that the righteousness which he rests on is no righteousness that the Scripture will acknowledge, and therefore none at all; so that trusting to this, thou trustest upon nothing, layest the stress of thy soul and salvation upon nothing.

(3.) Inquire a little farther, and we shall discover the righteousness which men rest on is indeed unrighteousness; that seeming righteousness which they rest on is really unrighteousness. That this may be evident, take notice that the righteousness of a self-confident is made up of acts which he conceives to be righteous. Now acts are specified by their end, a true rule in morality, which holds true in divinity. It is the end that gives both name and nature to the act. If the end be not good, the act, whatever the matter of it be, is stark naught. If the end be ungodly, the act is ungodly, though for the matter it be one of the highest acts of divine worship. If the end be unrighteous, the act is unrighteous, though for the matter it be one of the highest acts of justice. Now he that rests in his own righteousness is an unbeliever, and he that is an unbeliever has no good principles, his heart is not purified, his mind and conscience is defiled, Titus 1:15. Now he that has no good principle can have no good end in anything that he does. An unholy heart cannot have an holy end, for the streams rise no higher than the spring. The fruit can be no better than the tree. It is Christ’s own reasoning, Matthew 7:15-17. Then, since his end cannot be good and righteous, it must be evil and unrighteous; for there is no medium, no third thing in this case. And his end being unrighteous in all his acts, all his acts must needs be unrighteous, so that the righteousness which he rests on is all of it unrighteousness. It is a plain case; all the ends and purposes of these self-confidents are perverse and wicked, and tend some way or other to the promoting (though they will not discern it) of some other iniquity, so that the acts of righteousness which they rest on, when they are sifted, will be found no better than instruments of iniquity, weapons of unrighteousness. To conclude then, that which they rest on under the notion of righteousness is really and indeed unrighteousness. The matter, when it is searched to the

bottom, appears to be this: they trust that for their righteousness God will accept them, be well pleased with them, and admit them into heaven. Now, whether this be a greater madness or a greater wickedness is not easy to determine; sure it is in a high degree both.

(4.) Those that trust in their own righteousness are enemies to all righteousness. Their righteousness is not only no righteousness, it is not only unrighteousness, but their resting on it bears upon it the brand of an high enmity against all that is righteous. They are enemies to the righteousness of God, of Christ, of the law, of the gospel.

If you rest in your own righteousness, you are enemies to the righteousness of God; for the righteousness of God consists principally in his truth and justice. Now this confidence rises up against both, for his truth is engaged that no man shall come to heaven without a righteousness that can satisfy his justice, and justice has declared that it will not be satisfied with any imperfect, sinful righteousness. Yet this self-confident believes and rests on it, that his own righteousness will please and satisfy God, and that, however it appear to be sinful and unrighteous, it will make his way to heaven notwithstanding, so that to trust in this is indeed to trust that God is unrighteous, that God is no God; for he is no God if he be not true and just, if he be not a righteous God, and he is not righteous if he be not true and just.

If you rest in your own righteousness, you are enemies to the righteousness of Christ. This confidence in self-righteousness thrusts Christ's righteousness out of doors, leaves no place for it, no use of it. It counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, a thing of no use or value; tramples upon the blood of Christ as an useless, a fruitless thing; counts Christ to have done and suffered so many things in vain, Galatians 2:21. Now the self-confident says he has a righteousness that comes by the law, by some outward works and acts which the law requires; places his righteousness in some outward observance of and conformities to the law, and so would make Christ to have died in vain; for why did he die, but that lost man might have a righteousness to bring him to heaven? If men have this in themselves, Christ's undertaking, and his sufferings too, were vain and needless. In vain did he take upon him 'the form of a servant,' in vain was he 'made under the law,' in vain did he 'fulfil all righteousness,' in vain did he become a 'man of sorrow,' in vain did he bear the wrath of God, in vain was he wounded, scourged, and crucified. All this was needless and waste if men have a righteousness of their own to be rested on. Oh, what a horrid reflection does this cast upon Christ! What a monstrous provocation is this! No imagination can fathom the depth of it.

If you rest on your own righteousness, you are enemies to the righteousness both of the law and of the gospel, for by thus doing, you give the lie to both. The law says, there is no life to be had without perfect obedience; the self-confident says, he shall have life, though he have neither such an obedience, nor faith to be justified from the defects of it. The law says, 'Cursed is every one that continues not in all things,' &c., Galatians 3:10; he says, he shall be blessed, though he continue not in all things, no, nor any thing, as it is prescribed in the law, though he rest not only upon him who only can free a sinner from the curse.

It gives lie to the gospel too; for that says, 'By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.' But he says, he shall be accepted for his works, for his righteous acts, and his observance of the law therein. The gospel says, no sinner shall come to heaven but by the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of faith: he trusts he shall find acceptance and life for his own righteousness. See

here what it is to rest in your own righteousness. View it in its own colours, and then judge whether it be not a horrid provocation, since it is no better than this when unmasked, than to trust he shall have acceptance and life, and procure it by such a horrible wickedness, as this appears to be. If there be any fear of God, any respect to Christ, any regard to your own souls, let this consideration fright you from resting on any righteousness of your own.

Thus much for the removing of the impediments, which keep insensible sinners from believing.

I now proceed to answer those objections which are ordinarily made by sensible sinners; those that are convinced of their sin and misery, who are apprehensive of the weight and burden of sin and wrath; who not only see, but feel an absolute necessity of Christ; who highly value Christ, and prefer him above all; and whose souls are drawn out in strong and restless desires after him. These are they indeed whom Christ invites to come to him, and rest their weary souls on him. But several discouragements there are ordinarily cast in their way by Satan and unbelief, which hinder them from complying with Christ, and closing with the promise. These I shall endeavour to remove, but briefly; because, considering how small the number is of humbled and awakened souls, in comparison of these who are secure and insensible, I fear it will not be so generally seasonable. Some few I shall touch on.

1. One objection wherein humbled souls are ordinarily entangled is drawn from election. Oh, says the soul, I fear I am not elected; and then what ground have I to believe in Christ, to rest on him for pardon and life? Faith is peculiar to chosen vessels, it is called ‘the faith of God’s elect.’ If I knew that I belonged to the election of grace, then I might believe indeed; but till then, I cannot, I dare not; till then, I cannot think that Christ or the promise belongs to me. To this I answer,

(1.) It is impossible to know election before faith; therefore to desire this, is to go about to compass impossibilities. This was never done, nor ever will be. If this had been stood upon, there had been no faith in the world, no soul had ever believed in Christ; for it is not possible for any to know he is elected till he believe. This is to desire to see thy name is writ in the book of life, written in heaven, before thou hast an eye to see it. It is the eye of faith that only sees this, that alone can read this; it is impossible you should see it without an eye, without this eye.

It is impossible you should read this in the book of life till that book be opened; now it is a book shut and sealed till faith open it. Election is a secret, it runs under ground till faith. When the soul believes, then it first breaks forth; then, and not till then, is this secret made known and brought to light. When you desire assurance of it before, you desire to know that which cannot be known, to see that which cannot be discerned.

(2.) It is preposterous. To attempt this, is to set the cart before the horse, to desire to be at the end before ye are in the way; as if a man would be at a good distance from him,* before he set a foot out of his own door: as if the Israelites would have been in Canaan, that pleasant land, before they were come out of Egypt. This is to have a conclusion proved without any premises, without any good medium to prove it by. You must first have the ground and medium before you can reason and draw the conclusion. If ever you would conclude on good ground that you are elected, faith must be the ground on which you must conclude it. I believe, therefore, I am elected; that is the method wherein the Lord would have you reason. First, make that sure, I believe; and then this conclusion will be easy and certain, I am elected. This is the apostle’s method, 1 Thessalonians

1:4, first the work of faith, and then the election of God. The work of a sinner's salvation is like Jacob's ladder; it reaches from earth to heaven, and so has many rounds: the highest round is election, that is as high as heaven; the lowest round is faith, that is on earth. Now would ye be at the highest round before you have set foot on the lowest step? No; be not unreasonable, invert not the order that God has set. If you would get up to this great height, and mount this heavenly ladder, begin at the bottom; begin at faith, that is the lowest step, and so you will ascend by degrees towards election, the knowledge and assurance of it.

(3.) It is impertinent to trouble thyself about this. It is a secret, and so the Lord will keep it till thou believest. It is not his will that it should be known to any before faith. To inquire into it before is to pry into God's secrets. Indeed, if a man were certain that he were not elected it were another case, but as it is not certain that thou art elected, so it is not certain that thou art not elected. Thou hast no means to know either the one or the other till faith certainly; till then the Lord reserves it in his own breast as a secret. Now 'secret things belong to God,' Deuteronomy 29:29. The Lord shews here what belongs to him, and what belongs to us, that we should mind our duty, and not busy ourselves with impertinencies. Whether thou art elected or no at this time is a secret which the Lord never discloses to an unbeliever, and therefore till faith it belongs not to thee. But that thou shouldst believe is no secret; that is a revealed duty; the law, the gospel enjoins it. The law of faith is a known law; this is it which belongs to thee, to do all the words of the law. Thou wilt not believe, lest it should be too much boldness, being uncertain whether thou art elected; but is it not a greater boldness to pry into God's secrets? Thou thinkest it would be presumption to believe, though God reveals it to be his will; but is it not greater presumption to inquire into that which it is his will thou shouldst not know?

Observe the apostle's order, 2 Peter 1:10. Both belong to thee, but not both together, but one after the other, as the Holy Ghost has placed them. First make thy calling sure: till then it belongs not to thee to seek assurance of election; till then thou wilt seek in vain, never find it. The duty that lies upon thee, and which must first be looked to, is to make sure thy calling. The Lord calls thee now to believe; answer his call by believing, and so thy calling will be sure. This being assured, thou art in the highway to assure thy election. Thy diligence will not miscarry, because thou takest the way, and followest the method that God prescribes thee. But to follow thy own way, and give diligence in that which belongs not to thee, is not the way to prosper. Believe in the Lord, and so shalt thou prosper; but unless thou believest, thou wilt never be established as to thy election.

(4.) You think it needless, unreasonable, to pry into God's decrees before you apply yourselves to other undertakings; and it is as unreasonable here. When you are dangerously sick, and the physician tells you unless you take such a course of physic, your case is desperate, do ye use to reason thus: If I knew that God had decreed my recovery, I would take that course that is so like to restore me; but till I know that God has decreed my recovery, I'll take nothing. Sure we should think such a reasoner not only sick, but distracted. Thus it is here. The sinner is ready to perish; apply thyself to Christ, says the Lord, cast thyself on him, apply the promise; there is no other way to save thy life. Oh, says he, if I knew the Lord had decreed my salvation, I would venture on Christ; but till I know this, I must not believe. Oh the unreasonableness of unbelief! Satan's suggestions make poor creatures act as though they were distracted. This is as if an Israelite, stung with the fiery serpent, should have said, If I knew that the Lord had decreed my cure, I would look upon the brazen serpent; but till I know this, though there be no other way to save my life, I

will not look on it. If all the stung Israelites had been thus resolved, it is like they had all perished. Or as if one pursued by the avenger of blood, should have set him down in the way to the city of refuge, when he should have been flying for his life, and said, If I knew that the Lord had decreed my escape, I would make haste for refuge; but till I know this, I will not stir, till I die for it. Would not this be counted a wilful casting away his life, with a neglect of that provision which God had made to save it? Was it not sufficient that a way was made for his escape, and a way feasible enough, the city of refuge always open? Even so are the arms of Christ always open to receive a humbled, distressed, perishing sinner flying to him for refuge. And wilt thou destroy thyself, by suffering Satan to entangle thee with a needless, impertinent, and unreasonable scruple? If there be no way but one, and any encouraging probability to draw men into it, they fly into it without delay, never perplexing themselves with the decrees and secrets of God. This is thy case, Christ is thy way; there is no way but this one, fly to it as for thy life; and let not Satan hinder thee, by diverting thee to impossibilities and impertinencies. Do thus, and prosper. When the disciples were inquiring after an impertinent secret, Acts 1:6-7, Christ takes them off, and directs them to the duty that then lay upon them: ‘It is not for you to know,’ &c.

Obj. 2. Oh but I am unworthy to come near Christ, unworthy to have anything to do with the promise. Will Christ entertain such an unworthy wretch as I am? I have not only no merit, but no motive, nothing to engage, nothing but what may disoblige him, most highly engage him against me. Oh the sense of my unworthiness sinks my heart, and does utterly discourage me.

Ans. 1. Christ never excluded any upon this account, because they were unworthy. Christ never laid this as a bar to keep thee out; why shouldst thou make use of it to bar thyself out? He has always shewed himself ready to entertain a humbled returning sinner, how unworthy soever. Christ makes this no exception; why dost thou make it one? He never spoke word of discouragement to this, and why dost thou make it a discouragement? Who more unworthy than the prodigal, either really, or in his own apprehension? How unworthy he was really, you may see in the former part of the parable; how unworthy in his own apprehension, you may see by his own expression. Yet does not this hinder him from returning, nor did it hinder the father (who there represents Christ) from receiving and embracing him. When he returns, filled with shame and sorrow, burdened with the sense of his former unworthy carriage, see how freely, how affectionately, how joyfully he entertains him. See it, and never let the thought of unworthiness discourage thee more. Methinks the sad heart of a humble, dejected sinner should revive and leap within him to see this affectionate passage. When this worthless wretch is afar off, he runs and meets him; when he comes at him, he falls about his neck and kisses him; when he has brought him home, he has the kindest entertainment that love can make him, thinks nothing too dear, nothing too good to welcome him, who in the mean time is thinking nothing so vile, nothing so bad, so base and unworthy, as himself. He rejoices in him as one would do who receives a dear child from the dead. He rejoices himself, and he calls heaven and earth to rejoice with him. Oh see here the tender compassions, the wonderful kindness, the overflowing affections of Christ to the unworthiest of sinners, when he does but really return to him. As sure as that parable is Christ’s, so sure will this be thy welcome, thy entertainment, poor dejected soul, if thou wilt but return to him. Thou hast unworthy thoughts of Christ, if the thoughts of thy unworthiness do discourage thee from coming to him. Will that hinder Christ from receiving thee, that never hindered him from admitting any?

Ans. 2. None that were worthy did ever believe. None such ever came to Christ, nor did Christ ever receive any such; and wilt thou have that before thou believest, which none ever could have? There are none, there never were any, really worthy; and those that think themselves worthy, will not believe, cannot cast themselves on Christ; or if they should come, yet would not Christ receive such. It is not his way, it stands not with his honour. Look over all those thousands or millions that have trusted in Christ, thou canst not find one amongst them all that were worthy. If thou canst find any thing in them that will bear the name of worth, they brought it not to Christ, but received it from him; they had it not before faith, but received it by faith. And wilt thou be such a one before thou believest, as never any one will be after thee? If none had believed but those that were worthy, there had never been a believer in the world, there had been no faith on earth, there had been no soul in heaven. And wilt thou be such a one as neither heaven nor earth will afford? If thou wilt never believe till thou art worthy, thou wilt never believe while thou hast a being. If thou must either believe while thou art unworthy, or not at all, why does unworthiness hinder thee, unless thou intendest to continue in unbelief for ever?

Oh it is true, you will say, none are worthy, all are unworthy! but I am more unworthy than any, there is none like me for that. Well, suppose this were true, which is not so likely, yet consider,

Ans. 3. It is most for Christ's honour to receive those which are most unworthy. It suits best with his greatest and dearest design; it tends most to promote that which he most aims at, when he graciously receives those that are most unworthy. And therefore thy unworthiness should not discourage thee, nay, it should rather encourage. For will not Christ do that freely, which most advances his own great and glorious design? You doubt not but an intelligent man will do that freely, which is most for his own interest. Why, it is the interest of Christ to receive those that are most unworthy; and will he not freely do it? Do ye think he does not know his interest? Will ye make him more ignorant than the sons of men? Or do ye think he will neglect his interest? Can he be guilty of negligence? To make unworthiness a discouragement, accuses Christ of both, casts those unworthy reflections of ignorance or negligence. Sure to do thus, is as great an unworthiness, as that which you object. Though you be worthy to be neglected, yet sure Christ will not neglect himself, his own great design and interest. This is Christ's design in admitting sinners, to make his freeness and riches of his grace most conspicuous, to make his grace glorious, Ephesians 1:10-12; Ephesians 2:7-9. This is his counsel, his purpose, his design, his interest; to shew the exceeding riches of his grace. Now grace is most rich, grace is most grace, when it is most free. That is plain to any who understand what grace is; and grace is most free when it is shewed to those that are most unworthy, those who have nothing in the world to boast of. Then it appears in its lively colours, then it shines forth in the riches of its glory. Well, then, thou art unworthy, thou art most unworthy; thou art greatly afflicted, deeply humbled under the sense of thy utter unworthiness; and does this discourage thee from coming to Christ? Dost thou think for this he will reject thee? Why, thou art the person in whom, above others, Christ may meet with that which he most aims at; thou art he on whom Christ may make himself, his grace, most glorious. Thou art the fittest subject for Christ to accomplish his great design on. And why? Because thou art, and art sensible thou art, most unworthy. Lo here, that which thou objectest as a discouragement to keep thee from him, from believing in him, proves a great encouragement to hasten thee to him.

Ans. 4. Christ, in pursuance of his gracious design, does, as it were, pick out those that are most unworthy. Who is more worth? he that can bring money and a price, something of worth to Christ; or those that have nothing? Now Christ will have those to come that have nothing, Isaiah 55:1. Who are worthy? Those that are rich and full, or those that are hungry and empty? Why, these will Christ choose, while he rejects the other: ‘He fills the hungry,’ &c. Who are more worthy, the righteous or sinners? Why, Christ calls the unworthiest of these: ‘He came not to call the righteous, but sinners,’ &c. Who are more worthy, the wise or the foolish? the mighty or the weak? the noble and honourable, or the base and despised? those that are something or those that are nothing? Why, Christ pitches most on the more unworthy, 1 Corinthians 1:26–28. If thou wouldst be more worthy, thou wouldst be among those whom Christ is wont to reject or pass by; while thou art more unworthy in thy own apprehension, thou art one of those whom Christ is wont to choose and pick out for himself. And is unworthiness a discouragement? Thou hast more encouragement now than thou wouldst have, if thou wert in thy own sense more worthy.

Ans. 5. Unworthiness does rather qualify you for Christ than otherwise, and therefore should rather encourage you to come to him than keep you from him. The Jews plead ill for the centurion, when they allege that he was worthy, Luke 7:4. He pleads better for himself, and there is more truth, more ingenuity in his plea, that wherewith Christ is more taken, Luke 7:6-7; not worthy that Christ should come to him, not worthy he should come to Christ. But does he fare worse for this? No; he obtains all that he desires, and a transcendent commendation besides. No subjects so capable of Christ and his benefits as unworthy creatures; not only in reference to Christ’s honour, of which before, but in respect of their necessities, those that render them unworthy. If they were not such, they were not in such a capacity of a Saviour. Are you such in a spiritual sense, as you find Luke 14:21? Why, these are they whom God invites to the marriage of his Son. Are you in Laodicea’s state? a condition unworthy enough, Revelation 3:15. Why, Christ offers the riches and treasures of his purchase unto such, Revelation 3:18. None else are so capable of them. Art thou poor, afflicted with thy soul-poverty? Why, who else should Christ enrich but such? His treasures would be slighted by, and thrown away upon others. Art thou blind, afflicted with that darkness that covers thy soul? Who else should Christ restore to light but such? His eye-salve others will count needless. Art thou naked? Hast nothing to hide thy soul defilements, nothing to cover the shame of thy inward nakedness? Why, who else should Christ clothe but the naked? The white raiment will be useless to others. Art thou halt and maimed, thy soul out of joint, and discomposed? Why, who else should Christ cure but the maimed? The more desperate thy case seems to be, the more will it be for his credit and honour to undertake and effect the cure. The whole need not the physician, but the sick. Art thou wretched and miserable? Who else should Christ enhappy but those that are miserable? Art thou sinful, exceeding sinful, ashamed, grieved, burdened with thy sinfulness? Why, who else should Christ pardon but sinners? Art thou over-spread with soul-pollution? Who else should the blood of Christ cleanse but those that are polluted? For whom was the fountain opened? Art thou empty? Who else should Christ fill but the empty? To what end else did it please the Father that in him should all fulness dwell? Can he fill those who are full already? Are they capable of it? Art thou lost indeed, and in thy own sense? Who else should Christ seek but those that are lost? Should he seek those that never went astray? He came to seek them that were lost. Art thou a captive to sin, to Satan, weary of it, groanest under it? Who else should Christ redeem but the captives? Art thou nothing, less, worse than nothing, in thy own apprehension? To whom else should Christ be all in all? To whom else can he be so? Can he be all in all to those who are

something in themselves?

Take a view of whatever makes thee worthy* in thy own apprehension; and being sensible of it, afflicted with it, and it renders thee more capable of Christ; so far is it from being a discouragement to keep thee from him.

Ans. 6. To believe is not only a privilege, but a duty. (Vid. Serm. on James.)

Ans. 7. The longer you continue in unbelief, the more unworthy you will be to come at Christ. Whatever tends to make you unworthy is hereby increased. Is it hardness of heart? Your hearts will be daily more and more hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Is it inability to be serviceable to Christ? You will be every day more unfit, more unable to do him service. Sin is every day wounding and weakening your souls. You lose time too, wherein you might do him much service, you lose both ability and opportunities. Is it sinfulness? You will grow every day more and more sinful. Is it the defilement and loathsome pollution of your hearts? Your souls will every day grow more and more loathsome; no stepping out of that puddle of sin, till you come out to Christ. You will still wallow more and more in it till you believe, still more besmear yourselves with that which renders you loathsome and hateful in the eye of Christ. Is it the multitude of your sins? You will find them grow more and more numerous; that horrid heap will rise higher and higher, swell bigger and bigger. Is it the heinousness and grievousness of your sins? Till you believe, they every moment grow more and more heinous, more provoking. They cry louder and louder to the Lord against you. You add to them more unbelief, which has in it a peculiar provocation above the rest.

If you be unworthy now, you will be much more unworthy hereafter. If it discourage you now, it will much more discourage you when it is greater; so that if you believe not now, it is like you may never believe. If you leap not over this discouragement, when it is but as a mole-hill in comparison, how will you get over it when it is grown into a mountain? If you now suffer yourselves to be carried down with this stream, how will you get up it, when the waters of it are swelled higher and higher, and break in upon you with greater violence? It is most unreasonable to let unworthiness discourage you now from believing, unless you never intend to believe; for you will never be less unworthy.

If a man were to wade through a river, or die for it, he would enter it when it is lowest; for when he still sees it rising higher and higher, the longer he stays the more he may be afraid to venture. The water, which is but to the knees now, may be above his height in a little time. So here thy unworthiness is now at the lowest that ever it will be; thy life lies on it to believe on Christ. The longer thou stayest, the deeper, the larger will thy unworthiness grow. If thou beest not careless of thy life, venture now.

Ans. 8. Unbelief is the greatest unworthiness, the most provoking, that which seals thee up under all former unworthiness, binds it all upon thee, that which adds a new aggravation to all; not only incenses justice, but refuses mercy. It is the only excluding unworthiness.

Ans. 9. The Lord requires no other worthiness of thee but faith, nothing but a cordial acceptance of Christ as he is offered. He that hath this, the Lord will no more question him for his unworthiness, than the Lord’s own goodness and faithfulness can be questioned.

Obj. 1. But I am not prepared for Christ; I am not sufficiently humbled, I have not had experience of the work of the spirit of bondage as others have. I never was so deeply afflicted with the apprehensions of God's wrath; nor have I had such terrors of conscience as are usual in others when the Lord is bringing them to Christ.

Ans. 8. It may be you lay more stress upon those terrors and legal humblings than is requisite. To prevent miscarriages, and remove mistakes herein, which seem to be the grounds of the objection (observe) that you may form right apprehensions of this matter, before which this scruple will fall.

(1.) Legal terrors are no parts of faith or conversion; they are neither essential nor integral parts. Those are essential parts which make up the essence of a thing, as soul and body are the essential parts of a man. Those are integral parts which make up the entireness of a thing, as the several members are integral parts of a man's body.

Those parts which give the essence to a thing begin with it, and continue with it while it is in being, but these terrors cease as soon as faith begins, and so they are no essential parts. A thing cannot be complete and entire without its integrals; the body, when it wants some members, is lame, or maimed, or defective; but faith may be entire and complete without these; it is not the more defective when these are gone and vanished; so they are not integrals. They are so far from being parts, as they are no degrees of faith; though some step to it, yet not the least degree of it. As the dryness of wood is no degree of heat or fire which kindles the wood, though it tend something to make it kindle more easily; so these, though they may something dispose a man towards faith, yet they are not any degree of faith. The least degree of true faith is saving, but these humblings may be in those who shall never be saved.

(2.) They are no causes of faith; no efficient causes to produce faith; nor subservient causes, by which alone the Lord does immediately produce it; nor moving causes, which oblige the Lord to work it.

They are not efficient causes which work faith, or have any virtue in themselves to effect it. The mere pulling off the gloves does not make clean the hands, there must be a farther act to do that, they must be washed. Those are but as the pulling off the gloves, something by way of preparation, but no causes that will do the work And as they are no causes of faith in themselves, so the Lord does not work faith by these only, nor by these as the next and proper means. These are wrought by the law, faith is wrought by the gospel; that is the means by which the Lord produces faith; not the law, nor any effect of the law. The Spirit of Christ begets faith, not as a spirit of bondage, but as a sanctifying Spirit. Unless this regenerating Spirit proceed to a farther work, those legal humblings will be vain and fruitless. Nor are they moving causes, such as engage or induce the Lord to bestow faith. When these terrors are in the highest degree, the Lord remains free whether he will give faith or no, and we see his proceedings are answerable. Sometimes he bestows it, sometimes he denies; but if these laid any engagement upon him, he could never deny faith to any who are once under the spirit of bondage; for the Lord will answer all engagements.

(3.) These are no conditions of any promise. The Lord has not promised faith, or any grace, to these legal preparations; so that as these cannot engage him to give faith, so he has not engaged himself thereto. There needs no proof of this, because no such promise can be produced. But the ground hereof is clear; for those who have gone no farther than these legal humblings are yet in a

state of nature, and these preparatory works are common to reprobates. Now the Lord promises no grace to nature, nor to any thing that can be found in a mere natural man; no such thing is ever made the condition of any promise: otherwise the Lord could not deny grace to reprobates, could not deny faith to vessels of wrath, without the forfeiture of his truth and faithfulness; for where the condition is found, to him the promise must be accomplished, the truth and faithfulness of God requires it. Nothing which can be found in castaways can be the condition of a gracious promise; but these terrors may be found in a high degree in reprobates and mere natural men, ergo, &c.

(4.) These are not necessary antecedents of faith, though they be usually antecedents of faith, yet not necessarily; though they ordinarily go before faith, yet not always. It is possible some may have faith without these, and so it is possible a man may be fit for Christ who never had them. There is no place for legal terrors in infancy; yet that some have been sanctified from the womb we have some instances in Scripture. And though it be denied that infants are capable of actual faith, yet few or none deny but that age is capable of the habit or principle of faith. So that the Lord may prepare some for Christ in another way than this of legal terrors, though this be the usual way; and therefore they are not necessary indispensable antecedents of faith, though they be the ordinary way to it.

Hence it follows that, as he who finds in himself undoubted effects and evidences of faith need not question the truth of his faith for want of legal humiliation, so he that finds in himself the clear evidences of a preparedness for Christ, need not be discouraged from coming to him for want of these legal terrors, because these do not always go before faith, at least in the same degree with it.

(5.) Though these legal humblings do ordinarily go before faith, yet there is a great variety both as to the measure and continuance. All have not alike as to the time they are under them, Some have a quicker passage to Christ. All have them not in the like degree, in the height and depth of them; some have an easier passage to Christ than others. We find not that Zaccheus and Lydia were so deeply humbled, so much terrified, as Saul and the jailor. When good education prevents those gross enormities which are the occasions of those strong convulsions of conscience; or when the Lord begins to work in younger years, when sin is not so ripe nor so deeply riveted in the sinner by custom; or when wrath and mercy, misery and a redeemer, are both propounded together; there is many times some abatement of terror in these cases. And the Lord, who is a most free agent, and works how and in what manner he pleases, may make some abatement thereof in other cases, upon such reasons, and for such ends, as our shallowness cannot sound. That degree of humbling which is sufficient for some may not be enough for others. And that which is too little for one may be too much for another; his temper may not bear it, his case may not require it. That degree may fit one for Christ which will not so much as move another. And therefore you cannot upon any ground conclude that you are not prepared for Christ because you are not afflicted with such a degree of terror as you may meet with in some others; a threatening word, a light apprehension of wrath, may fright some out of their ways of sin, which others will not leave till they be fired out.

(6.) You must not judge of your preparedness for Christ by the depth of your humblings or the height of your terrors, but by the effects thereof. Judge of your fitness for Christ by those things wherein this fitness consists, that is a sure way, not by those things which are accidental to it and

separable from it, as this or that degree of legal humiliation may be; to judge by these is the way to mistake. Inquire not how much or how long you have been under the spirit of bondage, but what is the issue of it, what is the end, and how much thereof is hereby attained. The end of those legal humblings is to fit you for Christ, they are but means used for this end. If the end be attained, the means are no farther necessary nor desirable. Whether more or less of those means have been applied, if you be prepared for Christ by that measure of humiliation you are under, be it more or be it less, no more is necessary or desirable, because the end of these means is attained. He is an unreasonable patient that will have more physic than is requisite for his health, a strange person that will have the chirurgeons to lance and scarify or cauterise him more than is necessary for the cure of his wound. If you be fit for Christ it is enough, how little soever your humblings have been.

Oh, but how shall this be known, whether I be fit for Christ? Why, it is best known by those things wherein this fitness consists. They are such as these; I will but name them.

(1.) He that is brought off from all dependence on himself and his own righteousness, so as to see and feel an absolute necessity of Christ.

(2.) He that is fallen out with every sin, so as to hate that which he has formerly most loved, and resolved to pursue every lust to the death.

(3.) He that hungers and thirsts after Christ, so as to be ready and willing to part with all for him.

(4.) He that is in love with holiness, purity of heart and life, so as he is heartily willing to comply with Christ in all his ways, even in those that are most strait and holy. He that, upon a faithful and impartial search, and observance of his heart, finds that he is truly and indeed brought thus far, whatever his humiliation have been, he is sufficiently prepared for Christ.

If this be thy case, thou hast no more ground (for want of legal humblings) to be discouraged from coming to Christ, and resting on him for pardon and life, than those who are already clasped in his everlasting arms.

Obj. Oh, but Christ does only heal the broken-hearted; he has comfort indeed, but it is only for the mourners. Now, alas! my heart is hard, it is a heart of stone; I find not that softness, that tenderness, those tears and meltings, which is requisite in those returners whom Christ will welcome.

Ans. 1. Observe, there is a threefold tenderness, a tenderness of heart and will, a passionate tenderness, and a tenderness in expressions.

Tenderness of heart or will is when the will is pliable, when it is facile and easy to yield to Christ. And so that is a hard heart which is stiff and untractable, which will not be persuaded, is not yielding and complying with the will of Christ. This the Scripture calls a hard heart; and it is so, whatever meltings or relentings there be in it upon occasion. There are some natural men who will find strange meltings and passionate motions within them at the hearing of some pathetical discourse on the sufferings of Christ, or the like affecting exercise, whose hearts are nevertheless as hard, in Scripture phrase, as the nether millstone; even as that wax, which you call hard, will melt if you apply it to a flame, but hard it is, and so we account it for all that. That is soft wax indeed which with a little warmth becomes ductile and pliable, so as you may mould it into any form, and is apt to receive any impression. And that is a soft heart which is pliable in the hand of

Christ, which will be moulded as he would have it, which is not stiff against his word, but yields to any signification of his will. The passionate tenderness consists in grief and sorrow, when these passions or affections are easily raised, excited, and drawn out by their proper objects and occasions, when the objects of them are sin, and the unkindness and dishonour to God that is in sin. The Scripture comprises this also under the notion of a soft and tender heart. The heart in Scripture is both will and affections. The tenderness of expressions consists in tears and weeping, and this is properly a softness or tenderness of complexion.

Now, for the application of the several parts of this distinction to our purpose,

Ans. 2. This tenderness of expression in tears and weeping may be where there is no tenderness of heart in Scripture sense. This, as it is free, so it signifies rather a tender complexion of body than a tender constitution of the heart. This is not a property, but a common and separable accident of a soft heart. There may be tears, and that in abundance, and possibly in some consideration of sin too, where the heart is extremely hard. And, on the contrary, there may be a very tender heart, a heart of flesh, the blessing of the covenant, where there are no tears at all. It is in this case as it is with words in reference to prayer, there may be a prayer where there are no words, as in Hannah; and there may be words, yea, very high expressions, where there is no prayer; for the essence of a prayer consists in the desires and motions of the soul, the expressions are but the dress and outward garb of it. So here, there may be a soft heart where there are no tears, and there may be many tears where the heart is exceeding hard; for tenderness of heart consists principally in a pliableness to the will of Christ, seconded with some motion of the affections. And as words and expressions in prayer, so tears may proceed from some other cause than tenderness of heart. Indeed, they depend much upon age, natural temper of the mind, or complexion of the body. So that from want of this tenderness of expression you cannot duly conclude a hardness of heart either in yourselves or others. Indeed, if crosses, disappointments, loss of friends, and other sorrowful accidents in the world, can draw tears from you, and the consideration of sin, its unkindness, dishonour, heinousness will draw none, this alters the case; this signifies the want of them is from the constitution of a hard heart rather than a less tender complexion of body.

Otherwise you cannot from hence conclude your heart is hard, and so have no ground from hence to discourage you from coming to Christ and resting on him. If there were a just ground to discourage from believing, it might as well hinder those who have true faith from being true believers; for many, who are truly and eminently so, while they can find a heart bleeding for sin, yet want an eye that can weep for it; the renewed constitution of their souls help them to that, but the temper of their bodies will not afford this.

Ans. 3. The way to have clear evidence of a soft and tender heart, is to believe. This is the direct way, both to get present hardness removed, and to get a sure evidence that former hardness is removed. This is clear from what I have premised. Tenderness of heart, that which the Lord in Scripture most commends to us, consists principally in a pliableness with the will of Christ, an easiness to be persuaded by him, a facileness to yield to him, a softness that will be easily bended into a compliance with his good pleasure. Now this is the will of Christ, that thou wouldst come to him, believe in him, rest on him. This is his will, wilt thou comply? This he calls thee to, wilt thou answer his call? This he persuades thee to, art thou easy to be persuaded by him? This is thy

present duty, that will afford thee the clearest evidences. We are apt to flatter ourselves with imaginary compliances in duties past or future. Oh, say the Jews, if the Messias would come, how would we receive him! how would we rejoice in him! but when he has come indeed, and they were put upon trial by a present duty, the deceit appeared. Instead of receiving him, they rejected him; instead of welcoming him with joy, they pursue and persecute him with a strong hatred. So in another case, they flatter themselves with a compliance, upon an imaginary supposal. Oh, say they, if we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would never have treated the prophets as they did. And yet when Christ himself, the great prophet, was amongst them, and their present duty was to hear him, the deceit appeared, the hardness of their hearts was manifest. They treat him as unworthily as ever their forefathers did the former prophets. We have the same deceitful hearts, and are as ready to impose upon ourselves by the very like delusion. Oh, says one, if I should be assaulted with such a foul temptation, how far would I be from yielding to it! and yet the temptation that he is under at present, he yields to it. Oh, says another, if I were called to suffer, as martyrs formerly, I hope I should suffer cheerfully, and part with all; and yet his present duty he neglects; the sacrificing knife of a mortifying course must not touch his lust; he cannot suffer that, who fancies he would readily suffer all. Indeed, these imaginary compliances argue no tenderness of heart, but that which is merely imaginary; it is but a fancy, a delusion, there is no reality in it. But if thou wouldst not be deluded, here thou mayest have a just trial. How doest thou demean thyself towards thy present duty? If thy heart be tender indeed, it will not be stiff against it, it will yield to it.

Christ requires thee to abandon every sin, the lusts, carnal or worldly, which thou hast been so fast in league with; doest thou yield here? Does thy heart say, ‘Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; thy law is in my heart; my soul has received the impressions of it, I desire nothing more in all the world than to be rid of sin.

Christ requires thee to receive him as thy Lord; does thy heart yield? Does thy soul answer, I’ll have no Lord, no king but Jesus; his burden shall be light to me, his yoke shall be easy; Oh that he would bore mine ear, that I might be in his service for ever! Oh that he would free me from this slavery to sin and the world, which is so intolerable to me!

Christ requires thee to come and cast thyself on him; here is thy present duty. Wilt thou be persuaded to it? Yield now, and thou needest not doubt but thy heart is soft and tender. A persuadable heart is a soft heart; thou needest never any more make this a discouragement.

Ans. 4. As for that passionate tenderness, which consists in grief and sorrow for sin, never expect these to purpose, till thou believest. These ingenuous meltings, those passionate relentings, those streams of sorrow, which thou wantest and longest for, they are the fruits, not the forerunners, of faith. If thou expect them full and ripe before thou believest, thou expectest fruits of a tree before it be planted. That which pierces the heart, that which makes it a spring of sorrow, that which sends forth the streams of it in abundance, is the sight of Christ pierced, the sight of him by faith; it is the eye of faith beholding Christ pierced, and pierced for thee, that will so affect the heart, as to dissolve it into sorrow, and spring in it a bitter mourning, Zechariah 12:10. When the eye of faith sees Christ pierced, when it sees him lifted up in that highest expression of his love, when the heat of that love reaches the heart, when the shines of Christ’s countenance, the beams of the Sun of righteousness, penetrate into the soul, then will it melt, then will it dissolve indeed, then will it flow out in streams of sorrow. Those meltings that are most kindly, that sorrow which is most

ingenuous, is the proper issue of faith, that which follows it, not that which goes before it. When thou hast experience of the loving-kindness of Christ; when thou feelest his tender compassions to thee; when thou findest him as it were falling upon thy neck, and kissing thee; what, such love, such compassions, such kindness for me! for me, who have been so unkind, so unworthy! for me, who have been such a rebel, such a prodigal! oh, a heart of flint will melt now, and the rock will be dissolved into waters! This is the effect of faith; it is unreasonable to expect the effect till the cause is in being. The want of this should not discourage from believing; it is not to be expected before. But if thy heart desires it, the want, the desires of it, should quicken thee to make haste to Christ, make haste to believe; because this is the only way to obtain what thou desirest, to be possessed of this melting temper.

Obj. Oh, but I have slept out the day of my gracious visitation; I fear the time of mercy is expired. I have often resisted the Spirit, long neglected, yea, rejected the offers of Christ and mercy; and now I am afraid the decree is gone forth against me. Alas! I fear it is too late.

Ans. This is a tender point, I must proceed warily in it. The resolution may be useful to all, and therefore I shall insist a little on it. For answer, 1, I premise some things by way of concession; 2, add some things for satisfaction.

1. By way of concession. (1.) It is granted, there is a time wherein the Lord offers mercy; which being determined and come to its period, the Lord withdraws, the sinner is left to himself in a forlorn condition, to reap the woeful fruits of his own obstinacy. This time expires, when the Lord, provoked by obstinate resistance and wilful refusals, gives over the sinner as hopeless and incurable; will use no more importunity, will strive no longer; leaves him to those lusts, and in that state which he has chosen; seals him up under spiritual judgments; gives him up to blindness of mind, hardness of heart, a spirit of slumber, a reprobate sense. Nothing more evident in Scripture than that there is such a time of grace, and such a period of it, Ezekiel 24:13. The Lord would have purged them, while he afforded means for this purpose. They resisting those means, rendering them ineffectual, this time ended. And this was the end of it, Thou shalt not be purged; and the Lord seals it, Ezekiel 24:14. Matthew 23:37, Christ would have gathered them. While he endeavoured this, it was their time of mercy; but they would not be gathered; this puts a period to that time. He leaves them, that is the issue of it, and their house is left unto them desolate, Luke 19:42. They had light to discover the things which concerned their peace. All the while that shined, it was their day; but they neglected, shut their eyes, employed about other objects; so these things are hid from their eyes. There is their night, the sad period of that gracious day, Isaiah 55:6. There is a time when the Lord may be found, while he is near. That is the time of mercy. But the expression implies there is a time when he will not be found, when he is gone far out of sight, out of call. That is the time succeeding the former, a time of rejection. As sinners have their time of rejecting God, so he has his time of rejecting them, Proverbs 1:1-33. When the Lord calls, stretches out his hand, that is the time of mercy; but their continued refusals and neglects puts a period to that time, it ends sadly. When this woeful period comes, the gospel, in itself a message of peace and love, has then a new commission of a sad tenor, Isaiah 6:10. When this period comes, then comes forth that dreadful decree, ‘He that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still,’ &c., Revelation 22:11.

(2.) This time of visitation is sometimes longer, sometimes shorter; it is continued to some more, to some less. The period comes sometimes later, sometimes more suddenly. And no particular man knows but his own share therein may be the shortest. This time is in some places measured by years. Three years is allotted them who are represented by the fig-tree, Matthew 13:6-7. With much importunity, one year longer is obtained. And about so many years was Christ gathering Jerusalem: the time of that their visitation was of betwixt three and four years' continuance. This time is elsewhere expressed by a day, as if it were confined in such a narrow compass: Hebrews 3:1-19, 'To-day, if ye will hear his voice.' This is the day of salvation; and this, as other days, is sometimes shorter, sometimes longer. To some it is a longer day, like the days of summer; to others it proves a winter day, a day of short continuance. To determine precisely of the continuance of this time, to say thus long it shall be, and no shorter, to fix its period, is a presumption for any son of man to undertake. The length and period of these times and seasons of grace, the Lord has reserved in his own power, they are amongst his secrets. He has cut off all occasions of presuming on his patience, leaving us at uncertainties. No man can make account of another hour, he is not sure of any further moment.

Only this seems clear in the negative: the time of grace to a particular man is not always as long as his life, how short soever his life be. The longest time of patience we find allotted to any, is that determined for the old world, Genesis 6:3. These are those days of which the apostle Peter says, that the long-suffering of God waited on them, and that Christ, by his Spirit in his servant Noah, preached to them, 1 Peter 3:19-20, which Spirit, in his ministry, did strive with them; so that this was the time of their visitation, and the continuance of it is an hundred and twenty years. Yet this was not the seventh part of the time to which their lives were ordinarily prolonged before the flood. An hundred and twenty years, compared with their lifetime, is not so long for them as ten years are now for us. I think we may conclude, though the time of grace be sometimes shorter, sometimes longer, yet it is seldom drawn out to the length of lifetime. Sin often puts a shorter period to it. Many men who live under the gospel, outlive their time of grace.

(3.) It were just with the Lord to put a period to the time of grace, upon the first refusal of any offer of grace. A wonderful thing if Christ and mercy be ever again offered, after it has been once refused; for as the apostle argues, 2 Peter 2:4, 'If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell,' why should man expect any favour or forbearance? The angels were glorious and powerful creatures; man is an impotent and contemptible worm in comparison. Those angels, for one sin, were destroyed; men loaden with multitudes of sins are spared. Those angels perished, for anything appears to us, without any mercy so much as once offered them; sinful men have Christ and mercy tendered, before justice seize on them. Now, if it were just with the Lord to destroy the angels, without any offer of grace made to them, may he not justly proceed against sinful men, after grace offered and rejected by them? Might he not justly proceed upon the first rejecting of it?

(4.) It must be granted that any refusal of Christ and mercy is exceeding dangerous. If we consider who Christ is, what pardon cost him, who the sinner is to whom these are offered, we may easily see that any slighting or refusal of these offers does highly provoke the Lord to take you at the first word. You make excuses. You cannot yet close with the terms of the gospel: you are too busy, you have no leisure. Well may the Lord say, Be it so; yet you shall have leisure enough to see your madness in eternal torments; you shall have leisure enough in that endless eternity. You use

delays. You cannot yet enter into the strict and holy ways of Christ; you will have a little more ease, a little more pleasure, a little more gain by sin. Well may he say, Ye will not when ye may, ye shall not when ye would; ye shall never taste of the sweetness and happiness of my holy ways. Ye will not take Christ, and submit to him, on the terms he is offered. Well, it shall be so; ye shall never have Christ; 'ye shall die in your sins.' Ye will not come when I invite you. Well, 'not one of you shall taste of my supper.' It is Christ's threatening in so many words, Matthew 14:24. The apostle insinuates the danger in the form of that expression, Hebrews 2:3. Here is very great danger; here is occasion enough of fear, lest the Lord, being thus provoked, should 'swear in his wrath, Ye shall never enter into his rest.'

(5.) Some, in special manner, have great cause to fear that their day is past. I say not they have ground certainly to conclude it, but canse to fear it. Some signs of an expired day of grace are visible upon them, such as are probable signs, though not infallible. Such as these, to give you briefly some instances:

[1.] A long, wilful continuance in known sins, under a searching, convincing, and lively ministry. Take it as I deliver it, lest it be mistaken. When a man continues in sins, in known sins, continues long in them, continues in them wilfully and obstinately, and that is resolved to do it, under a ministry that shews him it, convinces him of it, threatens it, declares the danger and sinfulness, and brings this home to his heart and conscience, I say not this is a certain sign, but I say it is a dangerous sign, that the day of his visitation is expired. I say not this case is utterly desperate; but were I without assurance of heaven, and under doubts and fears of my eternal state, yet would I not be in that sinner's condition for ten thousand worlds, for such are scarce ever recovered.

[2.] When the means of grace are withdrawn upon contempt and refusals, when the candlestick is removed, the glory departed, the light of the gospel gone, then it is too plain the day is at an end. When you see the sun set and the light gone, you doubt not but the day is expired. When no gospel light is left, the things that concern a sinner's peace must needs be hid from his eyes. And this is it wherewith Christ shuts up Jerusalem's day.

[3.] When men withdraw from the means of grace, though the means be not withdrawn from them. A man may make it night in his chamber when it is day abroad, by shutting out that light which makes the day. Thus may a man bring a night upon himself in particular, though those in the same place enjoy a day of visitation, when, after other disobediences to the word, he adds this contempt, he will not so much as hear it; when he puts away the word from him, or puts himself from it. Thus the Jews' day ended. Though they might have had the word, they would not, Acts 13:46. That which was hereby brought to the Gentiles, departed from the Jews; that was light and salvation, Acts 13:47. Those that put themselves from the word, or put the word from them, put light and likewise salvation from them; and when they are gone, sure the day of grace is expired.

[4.] When the Spirit will strive no more with a sinner, then he is cast off. The means of grace are continued, and he attends on them; and has formerly, in the ministry of the word, found some motions of heart, some stirrings of affection, some strugglings of conscience; but now all is hushed and gone, the sense of his soul is locked up, as it were, in a deep slumber; a stupefying humour is seized upon every faculty, and the promises, the threatenings, the terror of the law, the sweetness of the gospel, fall on his heart with no more effect than if it were a senseless thing. This is a dangerous sign his time is past, When the Spirit will strive no more with a sinner, his day is at an

end. The end of the old world's day is thus described, Genesis 6:3.

2. Though all this must be granted, yet there remains enough to satisfy this scruple. We shall comprise it in these heads.

(1.) It is not usual with Christ to put an end to the time of grace when his gracious offers are first refused. Though he might justly do it upon the first provocation, yet such is his mercy, his patience, he will not be so provoked. He breaks not off the treaty with sinners when his terms are first rejected, but sends his ambassadors again and again to beseech, to importune, to persuade sinners to be reconciled, and to be at peace with him. The treaty, when sinners would break it off, is often resumed, and those gracious proposals renewed and also reinforced, 2 Chronicles 36:15, on which you have a comment, Jeremiah 25:3-4. The Lord from time to time diligently addressed himself to them by the prophets. No time was slipped; they rise early day by day, and that for divers years.

He uses not to depart, though he might justly, when the heart opens not to him at the first knock, but he stands knocking, Revelation 3:20. He stands long, all the day long, Song of Solomon 5:2. Though there is more provocation in the unkindness of his spouse than of strangers, yet this occasions not a sudden departure. He stays till his head be wet with the drops of the night. When they will not be gathered at first, he tries again, he tries often: Matthew 23:1-39., 'How often would I have gathered you?' &c. He withdraws not the golden sceptre, if sinners come not in, when it is first holden forth. He stretches it out all the day long, even to the stiff-necked, those that will not stoop to it, those that rebel and rise up against the sceptre of his Son. If the day should end at the first provocation, if this day should be thus shortened, no flesh would be saved. There are divers hours in this day; if they come not in at one, he tries another. He goes out at the third, the sixth, the ninth, the eleventh, all the hours into which their day was divided, Matthew 20:3. He that, when he was first called, said he would not go, was not shut out because he went not at the first call, Matthew 21:28, Matthew 21:30. The Lord waits to be gracious; that imports a continued patience and expectance, 1 Peter 3:20. He strives, he gives not over at the first impulse. He comes seeking fruit for some years together, one year after another, Luke 13:6, 7. That seems great severity, Mark 11:13. It was not a good, a seasonable year for figs; it afforded not many. This seems extraordinary rigid and severe, that he should be so quick with it as to curse and blast it at the first disappointment. But it appears so only as to the emblem, the fig-tree. As to Jerusalem, which it signifies, this was not the first disappointment. He had been with her again and again, and a third time, before he blasts her. He both comes and sends; and contents not himself to send once, how ill soever his messengers be treated, but sends a second, a third, a fourth time, as Mark 12:1-2, Mark 12:4-5, &c. He is not wont to take sinners at the first word; to offer no more, when they once refuse; to try no more, when they once resist. Alas! even the best, those that yield at length, yield not at first; they resist too long, too much. When Christ would lay his yoke on them, how easy soever it is, he finds them like an untamed heifer, a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. So they demean themselves. So it was with Ephraim, when returning, Jeremiah 31:18. His demeanour was no better than that of an untamed and unruly beast. So Ephraim complains, and so all the people of God, who observe the carriage of their heart towards God while he is reducing them. Before you make your resisting and refusals a discouragement, first see if you can meet with any who can truly say they never resisted or refused.

(2.) No man can certainly determine concerning himself or another that the time of grace is past, especially where the means of grace are continued and made use of. Some probabilities there may be, which I gave an account of in the premised concessions; but no peremptory certainty. Some cause there may be to fear it, but no ground absolutely to conclude it. Indeed, one exception there lies against this rule. When it is known that a person hath committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, it may be known that there is no mercy, no more time of mercy for him. If that be certain, it will be an infallible sign his day of grace is ended. And it may be sometimes known that this unpardonable sin is committed; for the apostle makes it a rule that we should not pray for him that has sinned unto death. Now if it could never be known when a man is guilty of this sin unto death, his rule would be utterly useless and unpracticable; he should lay down such a rule as none could ever practise or walk by. But to leave further inquiries into that, this may be sufficient for our present purpose, that the ground of the objection now before us, cannot be a ground to any one to conclude that he has committed the unpardonable sin. The ground of the scruple is refusing offers of mercy, resisting the Spirit. Now every one that resists the Holy Ghost, though he do it long and often, does not sin that sin against the Holy Ghost which shall not be pardoned. This is clear from Acts 7:51. He tells the Jews they ‘always resisted the Holy Ghost;’ they had resisted, and resisted the Holy Ghost, and that striving with them in the most powerful ministry that ever the world enjoyed. Not only their fathers, in the ministry of the prophets, but in the ministry of Christ himself and of the apostles, wherein the Holy Ghost appeared in the clearest light and greatest power, in the glory, power, and convincing evidence of miracles. Here they had resisted the Holy Ghost; and that not once only, or seldom, or for a short time, but always. And yet these had not sinned against the Holy Ghost unpardonably; for Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, prays for their pardon, Acts 7:60. Now if their sin had been that against the Holy Ghost, he would not have prayed for them, there is a rule which prohibits that, 1 John 5:16. Further, Saul was one of the resisters of the Holy Ghost, being one of his persecutors, Acts 7:58, and so one that he prayed for. And his prayer was heard for Saul; his conversion, of which you have an account presently after, is accounted a return of Stephen’s prayer. So that though he did resist the Holy Ghost, yet sinned not unpardonably; otherwise Stephen would not have prayed for him, he could not have been pardoned, he would not have been converted. From hence also it appears that a man may resist the Holy Ghost much, long, often, so as to amount to an always, and yet his day of mercy may [not] be expired. And so it was with Saul, whom grace at last conquered, after such resistance. Though you have resisted the Holy Ghost, you cannot from hence be certain that you have sinned the unpardonable sin, you cannot hence be certain that the time of mercy is at an end. There is no certainty of it for all this.

(3.) There are strong probabilities, such as are next to certainties, for the sensible or gospel-sinner, that this day is not past. I shall give you some signs of it; some that will be probable grounds, some that may be certain grounds, that his time of mercy is not expired.

[1.] Fear that it is past is a probable sign it is not past; for Satan usually troubles those most with fears of this who have least cause to fear it, and leaves them most secure and fearless who have most cause to be fearful. This is the way whereby he promotes his great design upon sinners. His great interest is to make them sure to himself; to effect this, he strives to cut off all endeavours by representing them hopeless, so he tells them their day is past, it is to no purpose.

He would take off insensible sinners from endeavours by representing them needless; their state is safe, or else they have time enough, they need not fear, he will not have them disturbed with

any such fears while they are in his custody, that being quiet, they may not so much as think of an escape. ‘The strong man armed keeps the house,’ &c., Luke 11:21. They are asleep in sin, and while they are so, he is sure of them, so he is concerned to keep them from being awakened with any such fears. While they are thus lulled asleep, they dream that mercy, grace, heaven, and all is sure; they put away the evil day far from them when it is just upon them; ‘They cry peace, peace, when sudden destruction is coming upon them;’ they will not so much as apprehend, conceive of it, till they be in travail; they go on, bless themselves, say they shall have peace, Deuteronomy 29:19. Such a security had seized on the old world when their day was expired, Luke 17:27. When the Lord had rejected the Jews, and so their day was gone, the effects hereof was a spirit of slumber, Romans 11:8. The word in the prophet, ■■■, signifies to nod, Isaiah 29:10, which is the consequent of a sleepy or lethargic humour, which leaves them senseless: ‘Eyes they have, but see not; ears, but hear not.’ They see no cause of fear, nor will they hear of any; without sense of danger, and so without fear. Such a spirit of slumber is a sign of an expired day. But when the soul is fearful it is wakeful, the spirit of slumber has not seized on it; that is a probable sign the time of mercy is not past. Your fears may give you hope in this case.

[2.] When there is a diligent attending upon the means of grace, it is a sign the day of grace is still continued. When the Lord gives the heart to be diligent in the use of his appointments, to be diligent in hearing him in the word, seeking him by prayer, and giving encouragements to his messengers, it is a sign the Lord is not yet gone, he has something further to do before he depart. We find not that the Lord utterly rejects a people till they some way or other reject him in his messengers, or in those means of grace wherein he offers himself. The Lord gives encouragement to those that diligently seek him; those that hear him, watching at his gates, and waiting at the posts of his doors; and so long as here is encouragement, the time of mercy is not past; when that is gone, all hopes are gone. When the Lord sends forth his disciples, he orders, that when any received them, there they should stay, and their staying was a continuing, a prolonging of the day of grace and visitation; but if any would not receive them, i. e., hearken to them, entertain them, encourage them, they were to shake off the dust of their feet, as a token that such were cast off by the Lord, Matthew 10:14. And we find Paul and Barnabas proceeding according to this rule, Acts 13:46, Acts 13:51. When the Jews put away the word from them, they shook off the dust, to signify that the Lord had so shaken off that people, he had quite left them off, their time was past. When the Lord is gone, a spirit of sloth and torpor seizes on the soul; he will not stir up himself to follow after God or wait on him, a spirit of contempt possesses him, he cares not for the means of grace. He hears now and then out of custom, but if some by-respects did not move him, he cares not much if he never heard at all. As this temper provokes God to put a period to the day of grace, so, when it is ended, this: sloth and contempt increases. As it was before, in its beginnings and progress, a cause, and so it is now, in its height, a sign that the Lord has cast him off, his time is past and gone. But when there is a heart to prize the means of grace, and to attend on them accordingly, it is a probable sign not only that the day of grace is continued, but that the Lord will continue it yet longer, if this be thy case.

[3.] When there are desires after the breathings and workings of the Spirit in the ordinances, this is a sign of more evidence and probability than the former. When the soul cannot be contented with this, that he enjoys the means of grace, and that he waits on them, unless he find himself wrought upon by them, unless he find some enlightenings, some motions of the heart, some stirrings of

affection; cannot rest in the bare performance of holy duties unless he find some light and heat of the Spirit in them; is not satisfied that he prays unless he find that his heart moves therein more than his lips, nor that he hears the word unless his soul be affected with what he hears. If this be thy case, thou countest it a sad day, a sad duty (whatever other respect may commend it to thee), when no other impression is made on thy soul, thou hast no cause to fear thy day is past. The Lord never withdraws while his presence is desired. The Spirit never leaves that soul which is ready to make him welcome, while his workings and breathing are acceptable and desired. These desires argue he might be welcome if he would come in; his workings would be acceptable if he would vouchsafe it. The Lord is with you while you are with him; and so far as you truly desire his effectual presence, so far he counts you with him. The Lord does not judge of us by what we are, but what we would be.

[4.] When the Spirit is striving with the soul. When he not only desires the strivings of the Spirit, but feels them, this is not only a strong probability, but an evident certainty that his time is not past. When the Spirit looks into the mind, and lets in some light to discover the things that concern a sinner's peace; when Christ is knocking at the heart, and using importunity to get in; when he is awakening the conscience to a sense of sin and misery; when the Spirit is thus enlightening, convincing, persuading, humbling; when the word is brought home to the mind, heart, and conscience with these effects, it is evident the Spirit is not gone, for he is now at work. If this be thy case, thy day is so far from being ended, that it is now at the height. This is the accepted time, this is thy hour, take heed thou do not slip it. Satan makes the hour of thy visitation an hour of temptation; he would make thee let it slip by persuading thee it is past already; but as sure as he is a liar this is truth, it is now thy day; this is the accepted time, and will be a day of salvation if thou improve it, if thou yield to the Spirit's strivings, and resist no longer: 'My Spirit shall not always strive,' Genesis 6:3, and then sets down how long the Spirit should strive. The length of our days is measured by the continuance of the Spirit's striving. Every hour that he strives is an hour of that day. It is not night till the Spirit will strive no longer. And therefore your day is not yet ended who feel the Spirit still striving.

[5.] When the soul is grieved for former refusal; when the heart bleeds to think of former resistance. This clearly signifies the day is not past. You may see this in Ephraim, Jeremiah 31:18. Here is first observable his resistance: when the Lord took him in hand, would have laid his yoke upon him, brought him under his government, he demeaned himself as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; he was wanton, unruly, slung off and refused, withdrew his shoulder and resisted. Turn thou, else no turning. Then take notice how he resents this. When he came to himself he bewails it. This was it for which he bemoaned himself; of this he was ashamed, confounded; for this he smote upon his thigh, used all the actions of one moaning himself under pain and grief; such grief, shame, sorrow did the thoughts of his former resistings and refusals smite his heart with. If this be thy case, why then surely it is the time of mercy; for so Ephraim in this condition found it, Jeremiah 31:20. Though he spake against him for his former froward refusals, and perverse resistings, yet when he saw Ephraim remember this, so as his soul was troubled for it, why the Lord does earnestly remember him, and his bowels are troubled for relenting Ephraim. I will surely see here. If Ephraim's case be thine, though thou have resisted as he did, yet if thou art troubled for it, as he was, the Lord assures thee of mercy; it is not only a time wherein he offers, but a time wherein he will vouchsafe it; he assures thee of it. It is so far from being past already, as it shall never be past;

thou mayest be sure of it, if the Lord's word can make it sure.

[6.] When the Spirit has prevailed with the soul to refuse and resist no longer. When it does not only strive, but prevail with a sinner, so far as to be heartily willing to yield to Christ on his own terms. This is an undoubted sign that the time is not past, when the soul strives and wrestles with that principle of opposition and resistance that is in itself, &c. If this be thy case, thy day is so far from being ended, as it shall never end.

(4.) The readiest way to put this out of question is to believe, to cast thy soul on Christ. There is no danger for a sensible sinner to venture on this; there is all encouragement. Thy day is not so past, but if thou come in there is mercy for thee; if thou lay down thy weapons and submit, Christ will receive thee. He does not say, I have mercy, but it is only for those who have [not] refused and resented. This is contrary to the tenor of the gospel. The promises are not in any such strain. That whosoever believes, not that those only who have not resisted so long or so much, but that 'whosoever believes shall be saved;' 'He that comes, I will in no wise cast out,' upon no consideration, however he have resisted and refused. The apostle Paul is an encouraging instance. Who had more resisted and refused than he? Consider what resistance he made. It was a scornful resistance, Acts 9:5. He kicked against Christ, he rejected his offers with scorn. It was a violent and bloody resistance; he resisted Christ unto blood and slaughter of his messengers; he embrued himself in the blood of Christ's members, Acts 8:1, Acts 8:3, Acts 9:1-2. It was a continued resistance; he was one of those of whom Stephen complains, Acts 7:51. Now, was his time of mercy expired for all this? No; he believed and found mercy, and he found mercy for this very purpose, that he might encourage thee, that he might be a pattern, an encouraging instance to all humbled and returning sinners, whatever their refusals or resistance have been. He tells you so expressly: 1 Timothy 1:16, 'For this cause,' &c. Christ holds him out as a standing instance of his great long-suffering, that every humbled and returning sinner, apt to be discouraged from believing by the sad consideration of his former rebellious and obstinate resistance, might in him clearly see that he is not so short and quick with sinners as to cut them off from mercy for some resistings, no, not for such resistings as Saul's were. They put not a period to his time of mercy, but upon believing he found mercy. If thou hadst resisted as he did, yet believe as he did, and thou shalt find like mercy. The Holy Ghost has recorded this example on purpose to encourage those that should believe hereafter.

Obj. 6. Another discouragement which keeps sensible sinners from believing, is a fear that they have sinned the unpardonable sin. There are two extremes of faith (as every grace and virtue has its extremes), presumption and despair. If Satan can drive the sinner into either, both being at the greatest distance from the middle, he keeps them far enough from faith. Now that his malicious attempts may be successful, he suits them to the condition of the sinner. Those that are secure he draws them to presumption, of which before. Those that are sensible and awakened, he would drive them to despair, and the most effectual engine to this purpose is that which is now before us, a suggestion that they have sinned against the Holy Ghost, and so there remains no more sacrifice for sin, Christ can profit them nothing, it is impossible they should be renewed either by repentance or faith. This is a temptation whereby he too often perplexes awakened sinners; nay, this fiery dart he sometimes sticks in the consciences of believers too. Those that are not assaulted have no security but they may be. Therefore it will not be amiss to give some satisfaction to this scruple, such as may serve either for cure or prevention. That which will be

most satisfactory is a right understanding of the nature of this sin. The great advantage of that prince of darkness is, that he assaults the soul in the dark, and when he wants light to judge, puts that upon him for this sin, which indeed is no such thing. The texts wherein this sin is described will scatter this darkness. I shall not engage in a full discourse on this subject, but only open this sin by opening those texts, so far as may be sufficient for my present purpose, as briefly as may be consistent with perspicuity. There are many scriptures where this sin is mentioned, but I find but three where it is described: Matthew 12:1-50, Hebrews 6:1-20 and Hebrews 10:1-39, with the other evangelists concurring. And from these scriptures we may collect this description of this sin. It is a blasphemous renouncing of Christ and his doctrine out of hatred, and against conviction by the Holy Ghost's light and testimony. We shall take it into parcels, that you may see distinctly how every part is contained in all and every of those alleged texts. (1.) It is a renouncing or denying of Christ. (2.) With blasphemy and reproaches. (3.) Out of hatred and malice. (4.) Against light and conviction. The two former are as the matter of it; the two latter the form which constitutes this sin in its peculiar being, and distinguisheth it from all other sins.

(1.) A renouncing or denying of Christ and his doctrine. You may see this in the scribes and Pharisees, Matthew 12:1-50. When Christ by a miracle had drawn the people to acknowledge that he was the Messias, Matthew 12:23, nay, say the Pharisees, he is not the Messias for all this, this he does by the power of Satan; he is not the king of Israel, the king of the church, but he tampers with the prince of devils. He is not the prophet, but a conjuror, a deluder, and consequently he is not the great high priest that must be a sacrifice for sinners; for a sinner cannot be a sacrifice for sin. This more expressly elsewhere: 'We will not have this man to reign,' Luke 19:1-48, and so rejected him as king. No: 'but he deceives the people,' John 7:12. So rejected him as prophet. And after crucifying him as a malefactor, shed his blood as the blood of a notorious sinner, and so utterly denied him to be the priest, even when they made him a sacrifice. So answerably in Hebrews 6:1-20. It is a falling away, a falling off from Christ, his ways and truths, a putting him to open shame; not only a putting Christ away, but a putting him away with shame and reproach; a crucifying him again, that is a renouncing of him with a witness. So Hebrews 10:29. A treading the Son of God under foot, a casting him down from being king, so as to trample on him; accounting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, no better than common blood, the blood of a malefactor. So his priesthood is renounced; for it was that blood by which he was sanctified or consecrated to be a sacrifice, John 17:19.

Doing despite to the Spirit. So the prophetical office of Christ and the doctrine which he teaches is rejected; for it is the Spirit of grace and truth by which Christ executes his prophetical office.

Christ is renounced, both when there is a falling off from him, after he has been professed and acknowledged, so it is described in that Epistle, or when there is an opposing of him, when clearly and convincingly propounded, though he have not been openly professed. So it is described in the Gospel as the sin of the Pharisees. Here is some difference in the subjects, but the act is the same, a renouncing of Christ in both.

(2.) With blasphemies and reproaches. This sin is expressly called blasphemy, Matthew 12:31-32, speaking a word, that is, a blasphemous word, such as is shameful and reproachful to him. The blaspheming of the Son is called blaspheming of the Holy Ghost, because it is against the Son as discovered and borne witness to by the Holy Ghost; against the person, offices, and doctrine of the

Son, but against the light and testimony of the Holy Ghost. Their particular blasphemy is set down, Matthew 12:24, where they do as bad as call Christ a conjuror, and the Holy Ghost, whereby he acted, an evil spirit, the prince of devils. Expressly, Mark 3:22, Mark 3:30. And this was their blasphemy, Mark 3:29; this sin is blaspheming too, as described Hebrews 6:6, a putting Christ to open shame, ascribing that openly to him which is shameful and reproachful. It is the same word which is used Matthew 1:19, παραδειγματ■ζειν, to make a shameful example of her. He was willing to put her away, but not so as to make her a public shame and reproach. But this sin is a putting Christ away, a rejecting him in a shameful and reproachful way, with blasphemies and opprobrious reflections and aspersions. So Hebrews 10:29, ■νυβρ■σας; to use one injuriously and contumeliously, rendered contumeliâ afficere. When Christ, as held out by the light and testimony of the Spirit of grace, is shamefully abused, either in words or deeds, he and the Spirit are blasphemed; really blasphemed, by injurious affronts; verbally, by opprobrious and reproachful speeches. The word will bear either, so that in all the descriptions it is blasphemy.

(3.) Out of hatred and malice. This is the rise, the principle, from whence this sin proceeds; it is from hatred of Christ and his truth. It is not for want of care and watchfulness, as in sins of surprisal; nor from want of knowledge, as in sins of ignorance; nor from passion and fear, as in sins of infirmity; nor from boldness merely, as in some sins of presumption; but from hatred and malice. This was the rise of it in the Pharisees, this was at the bottom. That which appeared was horrible, they broke out into blasphemies; but Christ minds not that only, but what was within, Matthew 12:24-25. He takes an estimate of their sin, not by their words only, but by their thoughts, which were boiled up and set a-working by hatred and malice. And this he charges them with expressly elsewhere, John 15:25; cited from Psalms 35:19, where the word is ■■■, used 1 Samuel 19:5, hated him as Saul did David. This put them upon rejecting his government, Luke 19:14, upon rejecting his doctrine, John 3:19, John 7:7. This put them upon seeking his life, and murdering him when they had found opportunity. It was not anger, for that acts rashly; but they consulted how they might do it, John 11:53, acted deliberately, and so were wilful and malicious murderers.

Aristotle puts this difference betwixt anger and hatred, ■ μ■ν γ■ρ ■ντιπαθε■ν βο■λεται ■ ■ργ■ζεται, ■ δ■ μ■ ■■ιναι. Anger would make him suffer who has occasioned it, but hatred would deprive him of his being. Nothing less would satisfy the hatred wherewith they were acted but a shameful and cruel death. And this hatred is expressed by the like acts, Hebrews 6:6; they crucify him again; not as to the physical action; that cannot be repeated, Christ is now above their malice; but as to judicial interpretation. They disprove* not what the Jews did, they have the same malicious mind, they use him as far as may be like the Jews; if the same could be done, they would do it again. Their actings against him, his truth, his members, are equivalent, they will bear such an interpretation. What clearer expressions of hatred, than Hebrews 10:29, to trample on him, to vilify his blood as the blood of a malefactor. If their tongues do not speak it, their actions do. All is of malice, they do despite to the Spirit of grace. Their actings are from spite and malice. It is clear, in all the descriptions, that there is in this sin a hatred against Christ. But observe, that it is not necessary to this sin, that this hatred should be of truth as truth, or of Christ as Christ, i.e., as a Redeemer, as a Saviour, as the Son of God, or the Messiah; for so he cannot be the object of hatred; but it is a hatred of the truth and of Christ, and of the Spirit witnessing of him, as these are contrary to their desires and expectations, to their lusts and interests, John 3:19, John 7:7;

Matthew 21:8; they feared Christ would deprive them of that power, honour, good opinion, which they then inherited amongst the people, &c.

(4.) All this must be against light and conviction. This is express, Hebrews 6:4-6; it is the falling away from Christ of those that have been enlightened; so Hebrews 10:26, a sinning after the receipt of knowledge, a sinning wilfully, which cannot be but against knowledge.

There is some question of this concerning the Pharisees, started by some who would otherwise state this sin; but I see no reason for it, I see much in Scripture against it.

They knew that Christ wrought miracles, they acknowledge it, John 11:47. It is strange if they were not convinced that these miracles were acts of a divine power, the finger of God. Can we think them more stupid than the Egyptian magicians? They saw and acknowledged the finger of God in Moses's miracles, Exodus 8:19. Were they blinder than those instruments of Satan in the midst of Egyptian darkness? There was a convincing light went along with the miracles of Christ, which shewed their original, and convinced all the people who was the author of them: John 11:47-48, 'All will believe on him,' Matthew 12:22-23; John 7:31; John 3:2. 'We,' i. e., he, and those of his sect, the Pharisees, they knew it, were convinced of it; and when they spake otherwise, said they were of the devil, they had something within them that gainsaid them; they said it with some reluctancy of conscience.

They were convinced that Christ was the Messias; the light of the Holy Ghost, shining in his doctrine and miracles, discovered this unto them; though they were loath to see it, unwilling to believe it. Their rebellious will rising up against their judgment, did check and oppose this light, but it could not be avoided, nor quite suppressed. Christ tells them they knew him, John 7:28. They knew he was the heir: Matthew 21:37-38, 'This is the heir.' They knew who he was, and they perceived that Christ intended them in that parable, Matthew 21:45-46. All the three evangelists agree in it. This was that which completed this sin, so as it became unpardonable, Luke 23:34. There were some of those actors against Christ that could not be forgiven, Luke 12:10; for those Christ prays not; he would not pray for that which he knew could not be granted. But there were some who might be forgiven, for such he prays; and who were those? Why, those who knew not what they did, acted not against knowledge and conviction. So then, those who knew what they did, are they who could not be forgiven. Their sin, acted against knowledge and conscience, was the unpardonable sin. So Peter encouraging the Jews to repent, by proposing hopes of pardon, lays down this as the ground of the encouragement, Acts 3:17-19, as your rulers, Herod and Pilate did, implying that if they acted against knowledge, if they had known him to be the Lord of life whom they crucified, there had been no hopes or encouragement for them.

Answerably, the apostle Paul shews how it came to pass that he found mercy, after he had so blasphemously and maliciously opposed Christ: 'I did it ignorantly,' 1 Timothy 1:13. There were all other ingredients of that unpardonable sin in Paul's sin, but this only, he acted not against knowledge and conscience; if he had not done it ignorantly, he had found no mercy, as the expression seems to insinuate. This seems to be the reason why this sin directed against Christ is yet called the sin against the Holy Ghost. Light and conviction is the work of the Holy Ghost; his office and operation is to convey light, and thereby effect conviction. When Christ discovered convincingly by the light and testimony of the Holy Ghost is thus renounced, the Holy Ghost is blasphemed, which discovers and bears witness of him; his light and testimony is rejected and

renounced. The Holy Ghost gave the Pharisees a double testimony of Christ. One,

[1.] Outward. Those miracles which he wrought were the work of the Spirit, ver. 28 (and elsewhere the receiving of miraculous gifts is called the receiving of the Holy Ghost), and they were wrought by the Spirit of God to testify of Christ, John 5:36; Matthew 12:28.

[2.] Inward. And that is, when the Holy Ghost brings the light, which shines in the doctrine and miracles, home to the mind and conscience, with convincing evidence. When Christ appearing with this evidence is renounced, the Holy Ghost, whose evidence and testimony this is, is therein renounced, and so blasphemed. And by this we may be led to conceive aright of that distinction, Luke 12:10. Christ may be considered two ways, either as appearing in the weakness of human state, as merely the Son of man; or else as appearing in the light of the Holy Ghost, viz., in the light and evidence of his doctrine and miracles, whereby he is declared to be the Son of God with power. Blasphemy against the Son of God, in the former appearance, may be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Son, in the latter appearance, shall not be forgiven; because then it is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which, attended with the fore-mentioned ingredients, is declared to be unpardonable.

Thus you see what this sin is. Not every blasphemy, nor every blasphemous renouncing of Christ; no, nor every blasphemous opposition of Christ out of hatred; but withal this is done against knowledge and conscience. It is not every sin against knowledge and conscience; nor every blasphemy against knowledge and conscience; nor every blasphemous renouncing of Christ against these; but when there is all this out of hatred and malice. You must not judge yourselves or others guilty of it, because of one or more ingredients; there must be a concurrence of all, both matter and form, the form especially, else there cannot be this sin. And this being positively cleared, will afford some negatives which may be most satisfactory in this case. I shall instance in such as are most apt to be mistaken; such sins, which humbled souls or others may take to be the sin against the Holy Ghost, when indeed they are no such thing, fall short of it in something or other which is essential thereto.

1. It is not every forsaking of Christ. Then not only Judas, but the rest of the disciples had been guilty of this sin; for they forsook him, and that in his greatest extremity, when their love should most have shewed itself in cleaving to him, Matthew 26:56, Mark 14:50. They all fled, and left him, to secure themselves. Only John must be excepted; we find him after in the high priest's hall. Hence is drawn an instance of Christ's faithfulness in making good his word, Matthew 10:1-42, Luke 9:23. John, who fled not from Christ to save his life, he saved it; he survived them all, lived to a great age, and died in his bed. All the rest, who fled to save their lives, lost them, and were plucked out of the world by violent death. But though they lost their lives, they did not lose their souls; they found pardon and favour, both to be saved themselves, and to be instruments for the saving of others. They were far from this sin, though one might think, by flying from Christ, they came near it.

2. It is not every resisting of the enlightening Spirit. A man may be guilty of sinning against the Holy Ghost, in such a high way as that of resistance, and yet not be guilty of that sin against the Holy Ghost. Many of those who did resist the Holy Ghost in the ministry of Christ, did yield afterwards to it in the ministry of the apostles, and so were converted and pardoned. I shewed you this before, from Acts 7:51. Indeed, if all should sin unpardonably who resist the Spirit, who is there that would

be pardoned? for who is there that has not resisted? Upon what account should the grace of the Spirit be called victorious, but that it meets with resistance? It is conquering grace, not because it is not resisted (that is no great conquest where there is no opposition), but because it prevails against resistance; not because it meets with no opposition, but because it masters all opposition.

3. It is not every persecuting of Christ, his truth, and members; no, not that which is out of spite and hatred. Such a persecutor was Paul, an eager persecutor, Php 3:6, which zeal made it a piece of his religion. His zeal was as a burning flame, as wild-fire in the church; he wasted it, made havoc of it. His violence transported him beyond all bounds, Galatians 1:13. He did it out of hatred and malice, nothing would satisfy him but the blood and slaughter of Christ's saints, Acts 22:4, Acts 9:1. An outrageous persecutor, pursued them with exceeding rage and fury, Acts 26:11, his cruelty reached not only their bodies, but their souls. He 'compelled them to blaspheme,' and that was the high-way to destroy their souls. Now all this Christ takes as done against himself, Acts 9:4-5. All this fury and bloody rage is resented by Christ as let out upon himself, and yet he finds mercy.

4. It is not every blasphemy.

(1.) Not every blasphemy injected. There may be blasphemous suggestions cast into the mind, without any guilt of blasphemy, where they are not entertained and consented to, but rejected and cast out with indignation. In this case the soul is as it were ravished, and may be nothing the less chaste and pure, when it is a mere patient as to this force, and no consent yielded. Christ himself was assaulted by Satan with such suggestions. In the history of his temptation, you may observe Satan's drift is to fasten on him this doubt, that he was not the Son of God.

(2.) Not every blasphemy admitted. Blasphemous suggestions may be admitted so far by the saints of God, as to occasion some doubtings of a blasphemous tendency, e. g., concerning the providence of God, the natures and offices of Christ, the truth and divinity of Scripture. What unworthy thoughts had the psalmist of the providence of God, Psalms 73:1-28. for which he censures himself severely as a fool and a beast.

Some of the disciples, after his death, seem to question whether he was the Messias, the Redeemer of Israel, Luke 24:21. They had believed this before, but now things being of another appearance, they call it into question, as the words imply. They had the word of God, the word of Christ, which is now scripture to us, that Christ after his sufferings should rise the third day, Matthew 18:1-35. And yet when this was come to pass, and they had divers testimonies of it, they doubt of the truth of his word, so that he upbraids them, Luke 24:25-26.

(3.) Not every blasphemy expressed. Saul forced some blasphemous expressions from the saints that he persecuted, Acts 26:1-32. To secure themselves from his rage, they utter some reproachful speeches against Christ, his truths, or ways.

(4.) It is not that particular blasphemy, Matthew 12:1-50, in the matter and substance of it, if it be without that attendant, which formalised and aggravated it to that height in those Pharisees (though it has been of late otherwise determined). This to me is an evident reason of it. All the Jews, or others, who knew that Christ wrought these miracles, and yet did not receive or acknowledge him to be the Messias, I see not how they could avoid that blasphemy, at least in thought. For knowing that he wrought such miracles, and that they were wrought to testify that he

was the Messias, either they thought that he did them by the Spirit and power of God, and then how could they choose but believe that he was the Christ, without running into as great a blasphemy, by thinking that the Spirit of God would give such a testimony to a lie? And it is evident many of them did not believe him then to be the Messias, being not converted till after his death. Or else they thought he did those miracles by some other spirit and power than that of God. No third thing can be imagined. And what other spirit and power could that be, but the same to which those Pharisees blasphemously ascribe it? Yet they might do that ignorantly, which those Pharisees did against conviction. And so, though they were guilty of blaspheming the Holy Ghost, yet not of that unpardonable blasphemy, though it was materially the same blasphemy, yet wanted that ingredient, which does formalise it into the unpardonable sin.

Yea, it seems probable to me, that Paul before his conversion was guilty of this particular blaspheming materially considered, as before expressed; that he ascribed those miracles to the working of Satan. Which may thus appear: he could not but know that Christ wrought miracles; this was generally known and acknowledged by those of his own sect, the Pharisees. It was not denied by the most malicious enemies that Christ had, John 11:47. It is like Saul was an eye-witness of some of them, coming to the passover (as all such were bound to do), when Christ wrought many of his miracles, Matthew 21:14. At least he could not but know that the apostles wrought miracles; and they were done expressly to confirm this truth, that Jesus was the Messias. Either then he thought these miracles were done by the Spirit of God, and then he had been convinced that Jesus was the Christ; but this he says he was ignorant of while he was a persecutor. And since he thought them not done by the Spirit of God, what spirit could he think they were done by, but Beelzebub, that evil spirit? Now this was materially the very blasphemy of the Pharisees his associates. And indeed he confesses he was a blasphemer, 1 Timothy 1:13, but adds, that which hindered his blasphemy from being that unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, ‘I did it ignorantly.’ He did not know, he did not believe, that Jesus, whom he persecuted and blasphemed, was the Christ, acted and testified of by the Holy Ghost. If the rest of the Pharisees had done it ignorantly too, as he did, for anything I can see, their blasphemy had not risen up to the height of that sin which is declared to be unpardonable. So that, in fine, that particular blasphemy, Matthew 12:1-50, is not the unpardonable sin, but when it is against knowledge and conviction.

5. Every denying and renouncing of Christ, when it is against knowledge and conviction, is not the sin against the Holy Ghost. For Peter denied and renounced Christ, when he clearly knew, and was convinced that he was the Christ; when he fully believed it, and had openly professed and acknowledged it, Matthew 16:16. He denies him after admonition, denies him openly and scandalously, and this with cursing and swearing, against conscience, former resolutions, solemn engagements. A horrid sin indeed! Yet Peter repented, was pardoned. This was not the sin against the Holy Ghost. There was something of infirmity in it. He did it out of fear and passion, not wilfully, not presumptuously.

6. Every presumptuous sin is not the sin against the Holy Ghost. Though this be a sin of high provocation, and all persons, especially the people of God, are highly concerned to watch against it, as David, Psalms 19:12. The Seventy render it, ■π■ ■λλοτρ■ων, and vulgar, ab alienis, from strange sins. They are sins to which the people of God should be wholly strangers; and yet David himself was not altogether a stranger to it. There was too much presumption in those sins of adultery and murder. This latter especially was wilful, against knowledge and conscience, upon

deliberation. He compassed not the death of Uriah, but by a series of plots and contrivances succeeding one another. And see how the prophet charges him, 2 Samuel 12:9. In that he charges him with the despising the commandment of the Lord, he accuses him of sinning presumptuously. For this is the very phrase, by which the Holy Ghost expresses a presumptuous sin, Numbers 15:30-31. And it is expressed by the same phrase, Hebrews 10:28. A heinous sin indeed! There was no sacrifice for this sin under the law. If a man sinned ignorantly, an atonement might have been made for him by a sacrifice, so the Lord appointed. But if a man sinned presumptuously, no sacrifice was appointed, none could be accepted in lieu of his life, he was to die without mercy. This was a grievous sin indeed, yet not unpardonable; so David found it. But there is something more grievous in the sin against the Holy Ghost. For the apostle argues there from the less to the greater; from that as a less sin, to this as a greater, Hebrews 10:28-29. He that sins against the Holy Ghost (for he is describing that wickedness), shall be thought worthy of much sorer punishment, than he that, sinning presumptuously, despises Moses's law. And why worthy of much sorer punishment, but because it is a much more grievous sin? The sin against the Holy Ghost is not a sin of presumption only, but something more, something worse; something that has in it more provocation, and shall have sorer punishment.

Obj. 7. Faith is an application of the promise; the promise is conditional. And there are none have any ground to apply the promise, but they that have the condition, that is, it upon which the promise is suspended. Now, alas! I have not the condition, and what ground have I to apply the promise? I have no ground to believe. To apply the promise without ground, is not to believe, but to presume. It would be groundless presumption in me to offer it.

Ans. 1. Faith may be without the application of a promise. This cleared, the main foundation of this scruple falls. Now it is clear, both from the principal object and the first acts of faith. The principal object of faith is quid incomplexum, it is Christ himself, not a proposition nor a promise; so that, if there be no promise which thou canst apply, yet is there an object for thy faith. Christ may be embraced, though not in a promise. It is true Christ must be discovered and offered, before he can be the object of faith; but so he may be in other parts of the word, not in the promise only. The whole gospel discovers and propounds Christ to sinners; the promises are but some parts of the gospel. The promise is not the only or the principal object of faith, but Christ himself. And it is clear from the acts of faith too. The first acts of faith are acceptance of, or dependence on Christ, not the application of a promise. The application of a conditional promise is for assurance, and that is a consequent of faith, or faith in its growth and elevation, not in its first actings, Ephesians 1:1-23. The Spirit seals the promise to a soul by application, but that is after believing; some acts of faith go before it. The first act of believing is a hearty acceptance of Christ for a Lord and Saviour, or a soul's dependence on him for pardon and holiness. Indeed, these are both one; for to take Christ for a Lord and Saviour, which I call acceptance, and to commit myself to him, to be pardoned and governed by him, which is dependence, is the same thing.

You say you have no ground to apply the promise; well, but have you no ground to accept of Christ as he is offered, to apply yourselves to him for pardon and life, to commit your souls to him to be saved and ruled by him? have you no ground for this? Why, the command of God is a sufficient ground for this, he enjoins you to do it. The promise has a condition, you say, and the want of it hinders you from applying the promise. Ay, but what condition has the command to hinder you from obeying? Will not the Lord be obliged but upon condition? Is he not absolute Lord?

You say you may not apply the promise; but may you not give your consent that Christ shall be your Lord and husband, and rest on him accordingly? Why, this is it you are called to do; do but this heartily, and you believe on the Son, though you cannot apply the promise, John 1:1-51. The receiving of Christ is the heart's consent to take him upon his own terms; and this is believing. Where this is there is faith, though there be no application of a promise.

Ans. 2. There are absolute promises, to which no condition is annexed; general offers of Christ, not restrained to special qualifications, Isaiah 48:9, Jeremiah 33:8, Micah 7:18, Ezekiel 36:26, Revelation 21:17. Now, though the want of the condition hinder a sensible sinner from applying conditional promises, yet why should want of the condition hinder him from applying those promises that have no conditions? I speak to those that are sensible and humbled; for secure and presumptuous sinners are too apt to catch at these, and thereby to harden and encourage themselves in their presumption, to their ruin; such have neither share nor lot in this encouragement. But for the humbled sinner, who is weary of sin, and would count it the greatest mercy to be rid of it, the way to these promises is set open to them. They were so delivered on purpose for their encouragement. To these I speak: Though ye cannot apply a conditional promise, yet can you not apply yourselves to Christ in an absolute promise? May you not apply Christ to yourselves in those free and general offers, wherein the Lord tenders him to you?

These are sufficient grounds of dependence, if not of assurance; sufficient encouragements to receive Christ, though not to apply him and rejoice in him as already received; sufficient to make him yours, if sons.* These offers will make him yours if you will close with them, though not prove him yours; that follows acceptance.

If a man should hold out his hand and offer you a jewel, you would think that a sufficient ground to take it, though he should not express by any special qualifications that he intended it for you in particular; nay, though he should speak never a word, yet being one who is not wont to delude any, his holding it out and offering it to you would be a sufficient encouragement to receive it. So it is here, the Lord holds out Christ to humbled sinners in the general offers of the gospel; and he is never wont to delude any, much less those that are returning to him. Is not his offer a sufficient ground for you to receive what he offers? If you cannot apply him upon promised conditions, yet may you not receive him offered freely? But 'whosoever will,' &c., close with that word, come and embrace Christ as he is offered; and in so doing you believe, though you cannot apply any other promise.

Ans. 3. The least degree of the condition in sincerity shews title to the promise. Perfection is required by the law, but it is not the condition of any promise of the gospel; perfection would be acceptable under the gospel, but sincerity is accepted. The gospel would have us strive after perfection, but it has pardon for imperfections; it has promises to the least degrees in truth, when accompanied with greatest imperfections, Matthew 12:20. Though there be but in the soul a spark from heaven, more smoke than heat, almost smothered in corruptions and imperfections, yet this has the promise. Not to quench is to kindle, not to break is to strengthen; a με■ωσις, where much more is intended than expressed, Matthew 5:1-48. What less degree of righteousness or holiness than a sincere desire of it! Yet this has the promise of satisfaction and blessedness. And lest this should be thought a high degree of desire, it is expressed by willingness. It may be the sensible sinner concludes he wants the condition, because he has it not in such or such a degree, and then

the discouragement is raised upon a mistake. The least degree shews thy right to the promise.

Ans. 4. He that has the condition of any one promise has title to all the promises; to all, except those which are made upon some special and singular account; for he that has the condition of any one promise is in Christ. And in Christ ‘all the promises are yea and amen;’ they shall all be accomplished to such a one faithfully and certainly. He that has the condition of any one promise is thereby admitted into the covenant of grace, the league with Christ. Now, the promises are so many several articles of the covenant, and he that is in league and covenant with Christ shall have the benefit of all the articles; he may upon that ground plead his right thereto. The covenant is made up of so many promises, as a golden chain of so many links; one link draws with it all the whole chain. He that has hold of one, by virtue of that he has hold of all. Indeed, he that has the condition of any one promise, has the conditions of all the promises really; if not in his own apprehensions, in one degree or other, in principle or in act. For every condition of a promise evangelical is some gracious quality, or some act of such a quality. Now, as there is a concatenation of vices (as moralists), so there is a connection of graces (as divines). They are never found single, they are never divided; the soul that is possessed of one is possessed of all. The sensible soul may be apt to conclude he has no qualification and no condition of any promise; it is because he has not such and such; but this is a great mistake, and he herein discourages himself from applying the promise without ground; for if he has any one, he has all and every one indeed, though not in his own apprehension; for they are never really divided.

Ans. 5. You may have the condition though you discern it not. It may be discernible in you though you do not see it, will not acknowledge it. Here is one difference between the humbled and secure sinner; the secure confident will conclude he has those qualifications which he never had; the humbled is apt to conclude he has them not when he is in possession of them. You cannot persuade those but they have that which they have not; you cannot persuade these that they have that which indeed they have. The least degree of the condition is not easily discernible; for that which is least is next to nothing, and it must be a quick eye that can discern that; and when it is come to be discernible by others, yet it is not easily discerned by himself; in that dejected state he is not apt to believe it; he has had such a sight and sense of his sinfulness and misery as hath brought himself quite out of conceit with himself, so he is more apt to suspect the worst than to believe anything that is good concerning himself; and, therefore, if the humbled soul would not mistake, he should not judge himself till he has duly examined, not pass sentence before a just trial. And because he is more apt to mistake himself, he should consult with those who have more light to discover it, and will more impartially judge of it. Let me propound a question or two for trial: Hast thou not forsaken every sin? Is not thy heart resolved against every evil way? Doest not thou confess, bewail, and set thyself against every sin? Why, this is the condition of a promise, Proverbs 8:13. Wouldst thou not come to Christ if he would entertain thee? Wouldst thou not leave every by-path, how pleasant soever, wherein thou hast lost him? Doest not thou heartily consent to come to Christ upon those terms on which he calls thee? Why, this is a condition of a promise, John 6:1-71.

Ans. 6. Go to Christ for the condition. Believe, and you have the condition.

IV. It remains that I should shew by what means faith may be attained. Faith is the gift of God, but he gives it in his own way. Those that would come by it must walk in this way. If you would receive

this gift, set yourselves in that way wherein he is wont to communicate it.

Faith is the work of God. But he works it not immediately, but in the use of appointed means. He can work it without means, but he will not do so ordinarily. It will be presumption to expect extraordinary acts, while the ordinary way is open. The means prescribed cannot effect faith of themselves. They are no further effectual, than as instruments in the hand of him who is the principal cause. They can do nothing without him. But usually he does nothing in this business without them. It is his power that works faith; but in that way, and by those means, which he has prescribed. Though he has not absolutely tied and confined himself to them, yet he has tied and confined us. Though he is free, yet the means are necessary to us.

I shall but instance in two, viz., prayer, and hearing the word; and will endeavour to shew you that they are means appointed for this end; and withal how you may use them so as this end may be attained, laying down some particular directions for this purpose.

1. For prayer, that one way wherein the Lord will be sought, and wherein he may be found. That is one means which the Lord will have used for this end, Ezekiel 36:26. Here is a promise of the first grace, under the notion of a new heart. He promises conversion and regeneration, of which faith is a principal part. But in what way will he accomplish this and those other promises? What means will he have used for this end? That he shews, Ezekiel 36:37. So Saul, after he was humbled and struck down in an extraordinary way, before his conversion was completed by the Lord concurring with the ministry of Ananias, before he was filled with the Holy Ghost, we find him seeking of God, Acts 9:11. The Lord takes notice of this in Saul, and will have Ananias to take notice of it, to encourage him in his work. Here is the way wherein this chosen vessel was carried. And you see, both by precept and example, that it is your way; if ever you would meet with faith, walk in it. It concerns every sinner who is not careless of his soul, who has any regard of everlasting life, any fear of everlasting death, any care of his eternal state, who is not desperately regardless of all that is dearest to him, to be seeking God for faith. For upon this are the issues of life and death. You especially, to whom the Lord has shewed so much mercy, as to shew you your want of faith, your necessity of it, your misery without it, be diligent, be importunate with God in prayer, that he would give you faith. Whatever you do, pray; whatever you pray for, pray for faith especially. The life of your souls depends on it.

Pray diligently. Spend that time in prayer which you have been wont to mis-spend in idleness, in vanities, in unnecessary employments. You have thrown away too much time already; that which remains is short, you know not how short. Labour to redeem it. Redeem time from your vanities and recreations, from your worldly business, yea, from your meat and sleep, rather than want time to seek God for this. For faith is of far more concernment to you than the world, than your pleasures, yea, than your meat and sleep, than your bodies and lives; the everlasting life of soul and body depends on faith. The wrath of God is more dreadful than poverty and wants, yea, than death itself. And till you believe, the wrath of God abides on you. Oh then seek God for this, above all things seek him, seek him night and day, give him no rest, &c.

Pray importunately. Seek faith of God, as a condemned malefactor would beg a pardon. There is no pardon without faith. Seek this of God, as one that feels and sees a sword at his breast, sees death present before his eyes, would sue for his life. There is no life for you without faith. Fall down before God, and cry to him as for life, Oh give me faith, else I die! I may live without friends, or

wealth, or honours, or pleasures; but I cannot live without faith. There is nothing but death for me in unbelief. Lord, whatever thou deny me, deny me not faith. I am lost, undone, I perish, I am a dead man, without faith. It had been better I had never been born, than to live in unbelief; the wrath of God abides on me, while I abide in this woeful state; and so it is like to abide on me for ever. I shall never see life, unless I believe; there is no hope for me till then. My case is miserable and desperate till I believe, and I can never believe unless thou give me faith. Lord, give me faith, or else I die. Get the sense of your misery without faith, and let this stir you up to be importunate. Content not yourselves to seek it in a careless, heartless, formal way; but seek it as that on which the life and happiness of your souls depends.

Obj. But what ground has he to pray, who is an unbeliever? His prayer is sin: 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,' Proverbs 15:1-33. What encouragement has he that his prayer may be heard, who cannot pray in faith? What has he to plead for himself, either for audience or acceptance, who has no promise to be heard, who has no interest in the intercession of Christ for acceptance? It seems either that prayer is not his duty, or else that he has no encouragement to perform it. This is a difficulty which may be of very dangerous consequence, if it be not removed. There is that wrapt in it, which is apt to mislead some in their judgments, others in their practice, and that in a way very injurious and dishonourable to God, very dangerous and pernicious to the souls of men. And therefore it highly concerns us to remove this stumbling-block, and satisfy this scruple, which Satan may make such a great advantage of, both against God and men. That this may be done clearly and fully, I shall (1.) shew the ground of the objection is a mistake; (2.) prove that prayer is a necessary duty to unbelievers; (3.) shew that they have encouragement to pray; (4.) what pleas they may use for themselves in begging for faith. For the

(1.) The ground of the objection is this, that the prayer of an unbeliever is sin, that it is a sin for him to pray; and hence it is inferred, that he ought not to pray. That the mistake herein may appear, observe,

[1.] Though an unbeliever sin in praying, yet it is not a sin for him to pray. There is sin in the manner of his praying; but prayer, as to the act and substance of it, is his duty. He sins, not because he prays, that is required of him, but because he prays amiss, not in that manner that is required of him. There are abominations in the prayers of a wicked man, but for him to pray is not an abomination, it is the good and acceptable will of God, that which he commands. He commands him to pray, and he sins not in complying with the command, so far it is obedience; but he prays not as he ought to do, there is his sin. Now he should leave his sin, not his duty. He should pray better in another manner, that is all which can be inferred, not that he should not pray at all. For so he leaves not his sin, but his duty. A boy is learning to write; he scribbles at first untowardly, makes, it may be, more blots than letters. It is his fault that he blots, not that he writes, that is his duty; in this case you would have him leave blotting, not leave writing. So here, the act of prayer is a duty, but the manner of performing this act, therein is the fault; this should be corrected, but the act should not be omitted. Ay, but since an unbeliever cannot perform his duty in the manner that he ought, were it not as good he should not perform it at all? No, not so. For observe,

[2.] An undue performing is better than a total neglect. Better he should do what he can in a way of obedience than do nothing at all; better pray as he can, though he cannot pray as he ought, than

not pray at all.

If your servant do what you command, you like it better (though he do it not in that manner, and for that end which you desire) than if he should refuse to obey you at all. An unbeliever sins, whether he pray or pray not. Such a woeful necessity has sin brought him into, that he cannot but sin, whatever he does. But in this case the less evil must be chosen. Now when the Lord enjoins a duty, not to do it at all is a total disobedience; to do it in an undue manner is but a partial disobedience. Not to do the act is a wilful disobedience; to fail in the manner of doing it is an unavoidable disobedience. Now a total disobedience is far worse than that which is but partial; a wilful disobedience is far more provoking than an unavoidable failing. He may do the act if he will; if he do it not, he wilfully rebels: he cannot do it as he ought, his falling short therein is that which cannot be avoided. So it is far more excusable, far less sinful, to pray as he can, than not to pray at all. His best is bad enough; yet he must do his best, else he sins more, and shall suffer more.

[3.] If an unbeliever must not pray, because he sins in praying, then believers themselves must not pray for this reason too, because they also sin in praying. ‘In many things we offend all,’ James 3:2. ‘All their righteousness is as a menstruous rag,’ Isaiah 64:6. The best of them, when they do their best, fall far short of praying in that manner as they ought; they sin in the manner themselves.

Oh, but they sin less herein than unbelievers.

I answer, If they may pray, though they sin in praying, because they sin less; by the same reason unbelievers may pray, because they sin less in praying than in omitting prayer, as before.

[4.] If an unbeliever may not pray, because he sins in praying, then by the same reason he must not do any thing at all, because he cannot do any thing in the world, but in doing of it he sins. He must not do any thing spiritual, or civil, yea, or natural; for he sins in all as much as in praying. He must not read, nor hear the word (though this be the plain duty of heathens and infidels), because not mixing the word with faith, he sins in that. He must not work, not do the necessary duties of his calling (if this were a sufficient reason) for he sins in that, Proverbs 21:4. He must not eat; for that ensnares him in sin. His table is a snare. He must not speak; for therein he sins, Proverbs 12:13. He must not walk or converse with men, for even his way is an abomination, Proverbs 15:9.

Now if this be absurd, that an unbeliever must not hear, nor work, nor speak, nor eat, nor move, notwithstanding he sins in all these (as indeed there can scarce any greater absurdity fall into the imagination of a man), then it is absurd that an unbeliever must not pray, notwithstanding he sins in praying. If that woeful necessity of sinning in all these will not hinder any of them from being his duty, no more can it hinder prayer from being his duty. This may be sufficient to shew the vanity of the objection, the mistake of the ground upon which it is raised.

(2.) The necessity of it. Prayer is a necessary duty to wicked men and unbelievers; and that will appear many ways. But briefly:

[1.] The Lord’s express commands directed to such, enjoining them to seek him and call upon him, Isaiah 55:6. It is taken by many to be an exhortation directed to the Gentiles not yet converted; and so prayer is a duty before conversion; but whether it be Gentiles or Jews for whom it is intended, it is for such as are wicked and unrighteous, as appears, Isaiah 55:7. Wicked and unrighteous men are enjoined to seek God, and call upon him, and those that are such in a high degree. The most

abominable sinner in the world is called the man of sin, and that is the expression here; the ‘unrighteous’ is in the original the ‘man of iniquity.’ So Acts 8:1-40, Peter lays the injunction upon Simon Magus, when he knew him to be a graceless wretch, Acts 8:21, Acts 8:23. He directs him to pray, Acts 8:22.

[2.] Neglect of prayer by unbelievers is threatened. The prophet’s imprecation is the same in effect with a threatening, Jeremiah 10:25, and the same imprecation, Psalms 79:6. The prophets would not have used such an imprecation against those that call upon God, but that their neglect of calling on his name makes them liable to his wrath and fury; and no neglect makes men liable to the wrath of God but the neglect of duty. Prayer then is a duty even to the heathen, the neglect of which provokes him to pour out his fury on them.

[3.] We have examples for it in Scripture, such as are unquestionable. The example of the prophets by divine instinct calling wicked men to this duty, Joel 1:14, all the inhabitants; and yet many of the inhabitants were extremely wicked, such as deserved to be cut off both from church and state, and such as the Lord is threatening to cut off by a destroying judgment, Joel 1:15. And yet all these must join in prayer, he leaves no scruple for joining in this duty with wicked men; yea, sucking children must join too, lest any think that little ones have nothing to do with prayer, Joel 2:16.

[4.] The Lord charges the neglect of this duty upon wicked men as a heinous crime; as that which involves them, or shews them to be involved, in the greatest and most horrible guilt.

First. He charges it as an act of pride and contempt of God, Psalms 10:4. If prayer be not the duty of wicked men, then pride and contempt of God is no sin. The connection which the Holy Ghost makes between these does make this evident.

Secondly. It is charged as the casting off all fear of God, which is the height of profaneness, Job 15:4. If it be not a duty for all to pray, it is not a sin to cast off all fear of God.

Thirdly. It is charged as atheism, one of the characters by which the atheist is described, Psalms 14:1-2. Those that do not seek God, say in their hearts there is no God. So Psalms 14:4. Who are they that say in their hearts there is no God? Why, he describes them to be such as call not upon the Lord. This is a plain sign of speculative, a principal act of practical atheism. So Psalms 10:1-18. It may be read, ‘All his thoughts are, there is no God.’ He that will not seek after God, does hereby shew that all his thoughts are, there is none. Those that would not have all men to pray, would have all men to be atheists. Atheism is not a sin, if calling on God be not their duty.

[5.] This will appear, if we consider what prayer is, in these particulars.

First. It is an act of respect and honour due to God from every man by the light of nature. It is not an act of positive and instituted worship, peculiar to the church and the true members thereof, as the seals of the covenant are; but it is an act of natural worship due from men, not as they are Christians, but as they are men; and so due from men always, and indispensably due. No sinfulness can disoblige any man from his duty; no, nor anything else but that which makes him cease to be a man; for that which is due by the law of nature is of eternal obligement; and we see the light of nature led the mariners in Jonah to this duty, though those heathens had no revealed light, no knowledge of Scripture.

Those that would not have wicked men to pray, would not have them give that honour and respect to God which is due by the light and dictate of nature.

Further. Prayer is an acknowledgment of your dependence upon God: Psalms 79:6. ‘That acknowledge thee not, by calling on thy name.’ The plain import of prayer is to acknowledge that all we have we receive it from God, and that all we want we expect it from God alone. Now, if it were not the duty of unbelievers to pray, it would not be their duty to acknowledge their dependence on the Lord; not to acknowledge that he is God, and that they are creatures; that in him they live and move, and have their being; that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights; but that they might have these without him.

Finally. Prayer, if we consider it in its essence and nature, is a motion which the soul makes to God; it is the soul’s desire of what it asks; it is but the turning God’s commands into requests. Now, if it were not the duty of unbelievers to pray, it is not their duty to desire to please God, to know him, to obey him. To instance in that which is for our present purpose. If it be not the duty of unbelievers to pray for faith, it is not their duty to desire faith; for prayer is essentially a desire, &c. When the Lord has declared that without faith it is impossible to please him, it would not be their duty to desire to please him. When he has declared that faith gives glory to God, it would not be their duty to desire to glorify him. When he has declared this to be his commandment, that they believe, &c., it would not be their duty to desire to obey him, and to comply with his revealed will. When he has declared that he that believes not makes God a liar, it would not be their duty to desire not to give God the lie.

If it be a necessary duty for unbelievers to desire these things, it is their necessary duty to pray for them; for prayer essentially is nothing but the soul’s desire.

(3.) I shall endeavour to shew what encouragement a man, yet without faith, may have to address himself to the Lord in prayer.

He has no such encouragement as the Lord offers to believers; but some encouragement he hath, especially a sensible sinner, one who is in the way to faith, though he be not yet arrived at it. I will give you an account of this in some particulars. And herein I shall not leave the good old way, though the path wherein I walk may seem solitary.

[1.] He may find some acceptance with God, some kind of acceptance; not a full acceptance, so as his person shall be accepted with his prayer; for the person cannot be accepted till he be in Christ, and he is not in Christ but by faith; and so the person of an unbeliever cannot be accepted. Nor is it an absolute acceptance; for in that sense, ‘without faith it is impossible to please God;’ he cannot please him absolutely. But he may find in his prayer a comparative acceptance, and that both negatively;—the Lord is not so much displeased with his prayers, though there be sin in them, as with other sinful acts. He was not so much displeased with Ahab humbling himself, as with his other wickedness. A less degree of displeasure is something considerable; it may bear the name of acceptance by some warrant from Scripture; for as a less degree of love is called hatred, Luke 14:26, so a less degree of displeasedness may be called acceptance.

We may express it positively too. The Lord is more pleased with the prayers of such, than he is with not only their open sins, but than he is with other acts that have a show of goodness. For as acts of sin against the first table are more heinous, and do more provoke God, than acts of sin

against the second, so, in proportion, acts of obedience to the precepts of the first table, such as prayer, being an act of worship immediately respecting God, are more pleasing to him than acts of justice or charity respecting men.

Such acts of worship, though in unbelievers, they are not spiritually good; yet there may be a moral goodness in them, which is pleasing and acceptable to God, so far forth that he likes the work, and approves it with that common allowance which he affords to all things done in compliance with his will, and bearing any stamp of his own goodness; though not so much as to accept the person, and receive it into any special favour. He has a common acceptance for common and moral goodness, and the more by how much the more it respects himself; and acts of worship, such as prayer, respect him more than others. When there is a moral and common affection and sincerity in prayer, Genesis 20:6, as some yet in unbelief may have, though not a special and spiritual affection, the Lord likes it, and accepts it, so far as it is the work and effect of his own common grace. This our divines grant in their contests with the Arminians. (Vid. Pemble, p. 83.)

Now this is some encouragement to pray. You cannot do anything in unbelief more pleasing to God. You displease him more when you neglect prayer: he has a comparative liking of them, a common acceptance and approbation for them.

[2.] The Lord may hear such prayers; he may so far accept them as to hear them. Though he have not engaged himself by promise to do it, yet he has not tied up himself, so as he may not do it. Though an unbeliever have no promise, and so no certainty that his prayers shall succeed, yet he has some probability; there is some likelihood that they will not miscarry. He has a may be for it, and that is counted encouragement enough to act in other cases. Peter gives this encouragement even to Simon Magus to pray, Acts 9:22. He determines it not against him, but leaves in suspense a question undecided for or against him; possibly thy sin may not be forgiven, but perhaps it may be forgiven, prayer may prevail for pardon. The men of Nineveh were hereby encouraged to pray, Jonah 3:9. It is not certain he will, it is not certain he will not; he may, for anything we know. They had thus much, and no more encouragement, in Joel 2:14. The people of God sometimes find no more encouragement than such a may be, Amos 5:15. Caleb expresses no more, Joshua 14:12. You count this an encouragement enough to put you upon moral endeavours, and why not upon prayer? Though it be not certain that he will hear and answer, yet he may hear and answer; there is nothing certain to the contrary. Soldiers do continually venture their lives, and merchants do constantly venture their estates, when they have no surer ground to succeed. And is not this encouragement enough to engage in a necessary duty?

[3.] The Lord does many times answer the prayers of unbelievers. We have many examples hereof in Scripture. It is not only a may be, but we see it actually done. Ishmael is represented to us as a persecutor, and as one excluded from Abraham's spiritual seed, Galatians 4:29, and yet the Lord heard his cry in the day of his extremity, Genesis 21:17. The mariners in Jonah are expressed to be heathens and idolaters, yet seeking God importunately that he would not let let them perish for Jonah's life, whom they cast into the sea, Jonah 1:14, and we have the return of their prayer in the next Jonah 1:15, 'The sea ceased,' &c.; so the men of Nineveh, whose wickedness was gone up to heaven; yet crying unto the Lord, he was entreated, and answers them graciously, Jonah 3:10. Yea, Ahab, the wickedest king that ever Israel had, though they had

few or none but such as were wicked after the division, yet none like him, 1 Kings 21:25. Yet when he humbled himself, and sought God, he prevailed; and he sends him an answer of his prayer by the prophet, who had denounced the wrath of God against him, 1 Kings 21:28-29. So that the Lord hears the prayers of such who have less ground to hope for any such thing than the sensible sinner. Here is that which may encourage all to pray, but here is more encouragement for such a one; he may fare better, when the worst fare so well.

[4.] The Lord has more respect to those prayers that are made for spiritual mercies than petitions put up for temporal blessings; such are more pleasing to him, more according to his will, and he manifests it by making readier returns thereto. He has expressed his liking and approbation of prayers, not so much in respect to the person praying as in respect to the things prayed for, and has answered them upon this account. There is a notable instance hereof in his acceptance of Solomon's petition, 1 Kings 3:10-12. The Lord was well pleased with his prayer because of the thing that he prayed for, 1 Kings 3:10; and because he asked an understanding heart, and not such things as nature is more apt to desire; upon this account the Lord grants his request, 1 Kings 3:11-12, and that with an over-plus, 1 Kings 3:13. Yet this seems to be but a moral accomplishment, an endowment that might fitly qualify him as a magistrate to discern between right and wrong, good and bad, to do judgment and justice. And if the Lord be better pleased with petitions for moral accomplishments than with those for riches, or long life, and outward success, by consequence he may be better pleased with prayers for spiritual blessings than those for moral accomplishments; if he be so ready to hear prayers for moral virtues, he may be more ready to hear prayers for spiritual graces. Corrupt nature has less inclination to these, the Lord is more honoured by them, and is more pleased with them. What an encouragement is this for those that want faith, to pray for it; being the chief spiritual accomplishment, and that which is the root of the rest. What hopes are here, that such requests will be heard and granted. What encouragement that such a request will please the Lord, when that very thing is asked which is most pleasing to him.

[5.] If unbelievers should seek spiritual blessings of God, as far as natural men may do, the Lord would seldom or never reject their requests. I do not only say he would not ordinarily deny them, but he would seldom or never deny them. But this must be taken cautiously. It must be observed that few, or rather none, in the state of unbelief, do seek for spiritual blessings to the utmost of their ability, as far as they may do. It is likely that sensible sinners come nearest to this; but even they, when they stretch out their endeavours farthest, do fall short of what they might do; when they do most, they do not their utmost. And it must be farther observed, that if natural men should do their utmost, yet this would not oblige the Lord to confer grace on them. No prayers or endeavours of natural men whatsoever, not the utmost improvement of the power of nature herein, can lay any engagement upon God; but he remains free, when all is done, to bestow grace or deny it. This we hold firm against Pelagians of all sorts and sizes. But yet we say there cannot be an instance given of any one man in the world that ever sought God so far as a natural man may do for spiritual blessings, and was notwithstanding denied and rejected. Such an example cannot be produced, nor hath it yet fallen under any man's observation. There seems to be an instance to the contrary in Esau, but it is a mistake, Hebrews 12:14. For this was a repentance in his father, not a repentance in himself, that he sought so carefully and so passionately. The word μετ■νοια, rendered repentance, signifies a change of the mind; and this was it which he sought of his father,

to change his father's mind. Isaac, his father, had given the blessing to Jacob, his brother; he would have his father change his mind as to this particular, and give the blessing, not to his brother, but to him. This was the repentance that he sought; he would have Isaac repent of this, that he had given the blessing of the first-born to the younger brother, Genesis 27:1-46. Now as this consideration clears up the justice of God in his proceedings against sinners, since none perish but such as do not what in them lies, do not their utmost to be saved, so it gives a great encouragement to all, especially to sensible sinners, to stir up themselves to seek faith, seeing no instance can be given of any who sought it of God, so far as a natural man may do, that ever miscarried, or were rejected. It cannot be observed that any man ever sought it so far as his power would reach, and so far as he was hereto moved by the Spirit of God, and yet fell short of faith; it hath not been observed that such prayers did not succeed.

[6.] The Lord does more respect the prayers of those for whom he has designed faith, when they seek him for it, than the prayers of others. Their persons and prayers are not fully accepted till they actually believe, but their requests are more accepted than their prayers for other things, or the prayers of other men. And there is special reason for it; for the Lord has some love for them even before they believe; not that which is called amor complacentiæ, the love of complacency and delight, for so he affects none but those that actually believe, and are thereby brought into a state of union with Christ, and reconciliation to God; but he affects such with that love which is called amor benevolentiæ, a love of good will; he bears them a secret good will, though he do not yet express it. He has an inclination to do them good, it is his purpose to bestow faith and those spiritual blessings on them which they are praying for. Now their prayers concurring with his own purpose, and being agreeable both to his revealed and his secret will as to the matter of them, must needs be so far acceptable.

Besides, Christ has purchased faith and spiritual blessings for those to whom the Father has designed them. And the intercession of Christ is, as it were, a continual representation of those sufferings whereby he has purchased these blessings for them, that by virtue thereof, they may be communicated in their season. Therefore, when such pray for faith, they pray for that which he did not only purchase, but for which he is then interceding. Now such prayers as go along with the intercession of Christ, and are interested in it, must needs be so far acceptable and prevail. He that is seeking that of God, for which Christ himself is interceding, will surely be heard. As redemption, so Christ's intercession is not only for actual believers, but for those of his chosen who want faith, that they may be made believers. The prayers of such for faith will be heard and answered, not by their own virtue, but by virtue of the intercession of Christ. But what encouragement is all this, though very great in itself, to a sensible sinner, since he knows not, nor can know, that God has designed faith for him, and consequently knows not that the Lord bears any good will to him, or that Christ has any respect to him in his intercession?

I answer, whether he know it or no, these things, though hidden and secret, will have their effect, and they will have such an influence on his prayers as will render them so far accepted as to prevail for answer. And farther, though he know not this certainly, for there can be no certainty of it till he believe actually, yet he has some probabilities for it, some probable grounds on which to hope it. The Lord has brought the sensible sinner into the way that leads to faith, he has given him a heart to use the means whereby faith is attained, he has carried him on so far as few go but those that reach. And these are fair probabilities that the Lord has designed faith for him, that he

has a good will to give it him, and that Christ is interceding for this purpose.

Such encouragement there is even for unbelievers to pray for faith, such encouragement the sensible sinner has to seek God for it. It is not only his duty to pray, there is not only a necessity for it, but he may do it with great hopes to succeed. He has special encouragement, not only to pray diligently, importunately, but to carry him on cheerfully in this duty. And though this last consideration speak peculiarly to the humbled sinner, yet the other particulars encourage every sinner to be much and often in seeking God for faith.

(4.) What pleas may the sensible sinner use in prayer? What has he to plead for himself when he is seeking faith of God? A believer indeed has many and strong pleas. He may plead the promise, whereby the Lord has engaged himself to hear him. He may plead the covenant, wherein the truth and faithfulness of God is engaged. He may plead the mediation of Christ, his purchase and intercession. He may plead Christ's relation to him as his friend, his brother, as his head, his husband. Here is strength in these pleas, and such as afford strong support. But what has the sensible sinner to plead, who has no interest in the covenant or promise, who knows not that Christ has any love for him, or any relation to him? Why, even he has many things to plead, though they come short to these; such as may make him fervent, importunate, and affectionate; such as may encourage him thereto, and support his heart therein. And these are the proper ends of using pleas in prayer. Not to move God, or make any impression on him, for such motion would infer some change, some alteration in God, and that is inconsistent with his perfection, who is without variableness or shadow of changing. But the use and end of them is to make impression on our own hearts, to work upon our affections, to stir us up to more fervency and importunity, and to afford some support and encouragement, that our hearts may not be dead and formal, and our spirits may not sink and faint in our addresses to God. Now the sensible sinner has many things which he may make use of for this purpose. He may plead,

[1.] His misery. How miserable he is without faith. I spread before you the miseries [of] an unbeliever in the first use. The sensible sinner may spread this before God, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter in his prayer. This was the plea which the man in the gospel used for his son, Matthew 17:15, 'My son is miserably vexed.' He lays open his misery, Matthew 17:16, and this plea prevailed, Matthew 17:18. As he pleaded for his son, plead thou for thy soul, lay open its miseries before Christ. Lord, what misery is it to be excluded from life, to be dead while I live! Unless thou give me faith, I shall never see life. What misery is it to be under wrath! How great is my misery, who am under the wrath of the great God! How unavoidable my misery, who am under abiding wrath! What joy can I have in any enjoyment, when the wrath of God is mixed with all! What comfort can my life be to me, when the wrath of God hangs continually over me! Out of the depths cry unto God, out of the depths of that misery wherein unbelief has sunk thee. Lord, hear me! bring my soul out of this mire and clay, out of unbelief, the pit wherein there is no water, no comfort, no refreshment, no relief. Thou takest no pleasure of the miseries of wretched creatures. It is no delight to thee that I am miserable, but rather that I should live. Lord, give me faith, or else I shall never see life; give me faith, or else I shall be for ever miserable.

[2.] He may plead mercy. This was the publican's plea, Luke 18:13, and it prevailed, ver. 14. This is the proper plea for a sensible sinner, the suitableness, the largeness, the freeness of mercy. He may plead,

First, The suitableness of mercy. His misery, of which he is so sensible, renders mercy suitable to him. Misery is the proper object of mercy. Who is mercy for, if not for the miserable? Mercy would be lost, it would be an useless perfection, an attribute without use or exercise, if it did not let out itself to misery; for it has no other object, but those that are miserable.

Secondly, The largeness of mercy, Psalms 145:9. His mercy is like the firmament spread over all this lower world; and every inferior creature partakes more or less of its influence, according to its exigence and capacity. True, may he say, I have made myself, by sin, the vilest of all creatures; I am become worse than the beasts that perish; as vile as a worm, as loathsome as a toad, by reason of the venomous corruption that is in my heart, and this woeful contrariety to the nature of a holy God. But there is mercy over all, even over such vile and loathsome creatures as these; there may be some over me, though wrath do now abide on me. Oh let that mercy, whose glory it is to stretch itself over all, reach my soul also! Oh that the blessed and powerful influence thereof would beget faith in my heart!

Thirdly, The freeness of mercy. That is its nature, its genius. It needs no motive, it expects no worth nor value in its object, to draw it out. It runs freely; no sin or unworthiness can stop the current of it. It is a great depth; though there be a mountain of sin, it can cover and overflow it; that can no more hinder the outflowings of mercy, than a rock can hinder the motions and flowings of the sea. Here is an encouraging plea for a sensible sinner. Lord, may he say, I have nothing to move thee to shew me mercy, nothing to engage thee to be gracious to me; nothing but what may engage thee against me, to shut me out from mercy. Oh but free mercy can move itself; it looks for no motive from without; there is enough to move it in its own bowels. If sin and unworthiness may exclude a sinner from faith and mercy, I may lie down in sorrow and despair for ever. Oh but it is the glory of mercy to run freely, to flow out upon those that are most unworthy. Such am I, O Lord, the unworthiest of any ever sought faith in thee, that ever found mercy with thee. But the more unworthy, the more will it be for the glory of thy mercy that I perish not; the more will the lustre and riches of thy grace appear, in giving me faith. Glorify thy mercy on such an object. Have mercy on me, O Lord, that I perish not.

[3.] He may plead his impotency, his own inability to believe, and the insufficiency of all things to help him to faith, unless the Lord help him. This was the poor impotent man's plea, he that lay at the pool of Bethesda, John 5:6-7, and it prevailed. Let this be thy plea. I have been sick of sin, nay, spiritually dead in unbelief many years; there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, a healing, sovereign virtue in that fountain, able to restore my soul to life and health. But, alas! I cannot move towards it of myself, and I have none to put me in. I have been a long time in this languishing condition, and I shall be so for ever, unless thou pity me. There is life for me in Christ, if I could but come to him, if I could but touch him; but such is my impotency, to such a low condition has sin brought my soul, that of myself I cannot come to Christ; I cannot move towards him, though I die for it. There is none come to him, unless the Father draw them. Lord, 'draw me, and I shall run after thee.' I would believe; 'Lord, help my unbelief.' Help, Lord; for vain is the help of man. There is no help for me in myself; there is no help for me in any creature. I am altogether helpless, I am utterly hopeless, unless the Lord help. Such is the violence of my distemper, such is the strength of my unbelief, as it is too hard for men or angels, it is too hard for all creatures, for all ordinances; nothing can overpower it but an infinite, an almighty power. Stretch out that almighty arm, and rescue my perishing soul from going down into destruction. This is a work beseeming the

greatness of that power which worketh wonders, to which nothing is impossible, nothing difficult.' Is anything too hard for God? Lord, shew thyself to be God; shew forth thy glory, by doing that for me which men and angels, which heaven and earth cannot do for me. They all say to me, while they see me perishing, If the Lord do not help thee, how shall we help? Oh I have destroyed myself, but in thee alone is my help. The more helpless my condition is, the more will it be for thy glory to help me. In vain is salvation hoped for from the mountains, in vain is faith expected from prayers, from ordinances, &c.; it is the Lord alone can help me to faith. Help, Lord, for vain is all other help.

[4.] He may plead the will of God. He commands sinners to believe; he threatens them in case they will not believe; he declares that he is highly dishonoured by unbelief. He appointed his gospel to be preached, and sends messengers to preach it, for this very end, that sinners might be brought to faith. He complains when his report is not believed, and he is glorified by believing. All this makes it evident that it is his will the sensible sinner should believe. Hence he may encourage himself to pray for faith. Lord, I have been too long disobedient to the heavenly call, I have too long resisted thy holy will; but now I would comply with the will of God, so far as I know it. I have no way to know it but by the word, and that speaks plainly, it is thy command I should believe. Why, Lord, let thy will be done in my heart; let this law of faith be written in my inward parts. If it were not thy will, I durst not ask it, I could not expect it; but since it is thy will, Lord, let it be done on earth, as it is [in] heaven. What may be done, if the will of God may not be done? What may I seek for, if not for this, that thy will may be done? What may be obtained, if this will not be obtained, that the will of God may be fulfilled? If I should ask of thee riches, or long life, or great things for myself, this might be thought rather my will than thine; but it is thy will that I should believe: 'Lord, not my will, but thine be done.' Give me a heart to believe, that I may obey thee, for thou hast commanded it. Give me a heart to believe, that I may please thee, for thou hast declared it to be thy good pleasure. Give me a heart to believe, that I may honour thee, for thou hast declared that gives glory to thee. He may plead this with great encouragement that his plea will prevail; for what petitions will succeed, if not those which are for things according to his will, those wherewith he is best pleased, and things which tend most for his glory? Though the person of a petitioner were distasteful to the prince, yet if his petition were for things that pleased him, and tended to the advancement of his honour and interest, and such as he had enjoined those that are least acceptable to him to sue for, in all probability they would be granted. So, though the person of the sensible sinner be not accepted in the sight of God, yet since, when he prays for faith, he petitions for that which is most acceptable to God, &c., there is great hopes they will succeed, there is much encouragement in such a plea.

[5.] He may plead the descent of faith, it is the gift of God: and the nature of this gift, it is a free gift. A gift, Php 1:29; a free gift, Ephesians 2:8. Not only salvation, but faith, the condition of salvation, the way to it, is χ■ρισμα, a free gift. Hence the sensible sinner may argue, Faith is a gift, therefore it may be asked, sued for; it is a free gift, and therefore it may be given to those that are unworthy; and then, why not to me? It is not to be bought or purchased, it is a gift; it is not to be merited or deserved, it is a free gift. The Lord expects no such thing as price or merit: the nature of the benefit will not admit it. Now, may I not seek that which the Lord is wont to give? May I not obtain that which is wont to be given freely? It is a gift that comes from the Father of lights, who gives liberally, and upbraids no man. The sinner may set this against all that sinfulness, unworthiness,

unpreparedness, which Satan usually suggests to the humbled soul, to hinder him from praying, or to cut him off from hopes of succeeding.

[6.] He may plead the examples of those who have obtained faith, and that against the greatest unlikelihoods and improbabilities that may be. Who would have thought that she, whose heart was the seat of seven devils, should ever have been made a receptacle for faith and the Holy Spirit of promise? Who would have thought that those bloody wretches who crucified Christ should ever have found grace to believe, and entertain him in their hearts by faith? Yet so did some thousands of them, Acts 2:1-47. Who would have thought that Saul, who was such a persecutor, such a blasphemer, should ever have found mercy to become a believer? Yet he found mercy, and mercy to believe, and for this end that his example might be a standing plea for encouraging all that should believe after him to the end of the world, 1 Timothy 1:13, 1 Timothy 1:15-16.

[7.] He may plead his willingness to submit to any condition, the lowest, the meanest that can be, so he may but find this favour with the Lord. We find the prodigal making use of this, Luke 15:18-19. Lord, such a wretch as I have been, have little reason to expect that high relation of a son, that dear affection of a father, that is too much for one so unworthy. Only I would be thine, though in a lower relation; I would belong to thee; I would not be quite shut out from a father's house, though I can never look to be entertained as a child. Lord, do but entertain me, though in the lowest capacity, though in the meanest employment; let me be thy servant, so I may but have a place in the family; nay, let me be but the meanest of servants, a hired servant, no better used, no more respected. I will submit, I will be thankful, whatever my condition be, so I be not quite disowned. Lord, let me be thine, and it is enough, in what relation soever; and that I may be thine, give me a heart to believe; without faith I can have no interest in thee. This plea in the prodigal was prevailing for more than he had the confidence to plead for, Luke 15:21-22. The father's affection breaks out in the midst of the plea, and cuts him off there, would not let him vilify himself farther. Instead of using of him as a hired servant, he commands his servants to wait on him as his son. Such a plea was that of the woman of Canaan, Matthew 15:26-27.

[8.] He may plead Christ's prayer. He, when he was on earth, prayed for those that did not then, that do not yet believe, John 17:20. He prays not only for those who did actually, but for those who yet had not faith, for those who yet were not in the way to faith, for those who yet had no being. Now the sensible sinner is in a more hopeful condition than some of those for whom Christ prays; for he is in the way to faith, and that is a strong probability that he is one for whom Christ put up this petition. And for what does he pray? see John 17:21. He prays that they may have union with the Father and himself. Now the bond of this union is faith. He prays then that those who did not yet believe may have faith in him, and so union with him. He prays that sensible sinners may have faith. Now, though the Lord hear not sinners, yet he always hears his Son. He was heard in that which he feared, he cannot be denied in that which he desired. Here is a strong plea indeed. Methinks it should be strong enough, not only to confirm faith in those that have it, but to work faith in those that want it. Methinks it should be effectual, not only to persuade the humbled sinner to pray, but to believe; not only to pray with some hopes, but to pray in faith.

[9.] He may plead the compassions of Christ to hardened and rejected sinners. For from hence he may argue there are more compassions for him, Luke 19:41-42. This was the city who shewed such obstinacy in rejecting Christ, that he gives her over as one whose condition was desperate,

of whom he had not hopes; and yet even for such he has some pity, which breaks out into tears. Now if Christ have such compassions for those who so long and so obstinately opposed him, that he sees cause to cast them off as utterly incurable, has he not some compassion for the sensible sinner, whose soul is struck with remorse for his former disobedience to Christ, and whose heart is inclining to yield to him? If he be so passionately touched with their condition, who are so rebellious as to refuse all further treaty with Christ, has he not compassions for those who are in parley with him, and are about to submit to him? This is the state of a sensible sinner, and this is a hopeful plea which he may draw from Christ's tenderness. If he have such pity for obstinate enemies, he has some affections for those that incline to be his friends. If he lament the unbelief of those, he may be ready to further the work of faith in these.

[10.] He may plead the workings of the Spirit already begun, though they be but initial and preparatory. In the sensible sinner there is some illumination, some conviction, some humiliation, some sorrow, some hopes, some desires, some endeavours after more. These look like the beginnings, the foundation of a greater work. Some strongholds of Satan are demolished, the rubbish is removing, the materials are preparing, the outworks are begun. Are not these in order to that spiritual structure which is the Spirit's master-piece, the work of faith? Now the Spirit of God does not use to leave his work imperfect, unfinished, but upon some great provocation. The sensible sinner may plead this: Lord, thou hast let in some light into my mind and conscience, let it not end in darkness; let it be like that light which shines more and more unto a perfect day. The Spirit of conviction has awakened my soul, Oh let it not end in a spirit of slumber. There are some sparks of thy own kindling, let them not be extinguished. All thy works are perfect, let not this be unlike the rest, but carry it on to perfection.

[11.] He may plead the respect which the Lord shews to irrational creatures. He hears their cries, will he shut out the cry of my perishing soul? He hears them crying for food, will he not hear me for that which unconceivably more concerns me, for that without which my soul will die for ever? Psalms 104:21, Psalms 104:27, Psalms 137:9-10, Psalms 145:15-16. Does the Lord take care for oxen? 1 Corinthians 9:9. Will he take care of lions and ravens, and will he not regard my perishing soul?

[12.] He may plead his necessity, his extreme need of faith: Matthew 9:12, 'The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.' O Lord, my soul is sick, sick unto death. Unbelief will be my death, it will be the eternal death of body and soul, unless the great physician undertake the cure. Will not he, who shewed so much compassion on diseased bodies, have some pity on a dying soul? 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?' I die, I perish, there is no help for me in heaven or earth, unless Christ will cure me; none else can cure me of unbelief. Though others pass by, and have no regard to see me wallowing in my blood, yet will the good Samaritan so pass by? Has he no compassion for me? He came to seek that which was lost, Luke 19:10. I am lost, not only as the rest of the world, but I feel myself lost, will he not seek me whom he came to find? He is found of those that seek him not, will ho not be found of me who seek him? Will he not be found of me whom he came to seek? shall a lost soul find him?

2. The other means for the attaining of faith is hearing the word. This is a means of the Lord's appointing, and which he ordinarily uses for this end, John 17:20. He prays for some that were to believe afterwards, but were to believe through the word in the ministry of his servants. And all that

the Holy Ghost mentions afterwards as believers were brought to believe by the ministry of the word. The Jews, Acts 4:4; the Gentiles, Acts 13:48; the Ephesians, Ephesians 1:13; the Corinthians, Acts 18:8. And therefore the ministers of the gospel are called ‘ministers by whom they believed,’ 1 Corinthians 3:5. And the word preached is called ‘the word of faith,’ Romans 10:8. He shews the necessity of this means by a gradation, Romans 10:14-15. There must be a mission, that there may be preachers; there must be preaching, that there may be hearing; there must be hearing, that there may be believing; and so he concludes his discourse, Romans 10:17.

Those that will have faith without hearing would have it out of God’s way, and are such ever like to find it? If the word be not preached it cannot be heard. The Lord may work it in an extraordinary way, but can it be expected the Lord should step out of his ordinary path to meet those who shew so much contempt of God and of their souls as they will not wait on him for faith in the way that he has appointed? Will God work miracles to save those who so much despise him and his great salvation? Nay, the Lord will have the ministry of the word more honoured in this respect than miracles. He has used miracles sometimes for to startle and humble sinners in order to faith, but has referred those persons at the same time to the ministry of the word for the working of faith. We find not that ever the Lord so much honoured miracles as to work faith by them without the word, though we find the Lord ordinarily so far honouring the ministry of the word as to work faith by it without miracles. Miracles are ceased many hundred years ago, yet the Lord has been working faith in all ages by the ministry of the word. And when miracles were in use, they were but used as subservient to the word, to prepare for faith, which the Lord would work by hearing the word. Saul was struck down and humbled in a miraculous way, but he was sent to hear Ananias, that he might be possessed with the Spirit of faith; he was not filled with the Holy Ghost till then, it descended on him in his ministry, Acts 9:6. The jailor was humbled by a miraculous earthquake, Acts 16:27-28, but the Lord would not work faith in him by that miracle, he reserved the honour of that work to the ministry of Paul and Silas, Acts 16:30-32, Acts 16:34.

Hearing the word is the ordinary means to attain faith, and was the ordinary means when the Lord appeared in extraordinary and miraculous dispensations. If you would have faith, then,

(1.) Be diligent in hearing. Neglect no opportunities, especially none that are offered on that day which the Lord has set apart for this purpose. When men neglect these opportunities, it signifies too plainly that they yet have no faith. If it had been wrought in them by the word, the word would be more esteemed by them; they would not proclaim their contempt of it so openly by such gross neglects. It is strange, if men can so much despise that which has even been an instrument to save their lives, to deliver their souls from death; and as these neglects signify they yet have no faith, so hereby they run the hazard never to have it; for the word is not effectual without the Spirit, and the Spirit breathes not always. The Spirit blows where and when it listeth. What know you but the Spirit may vouchsafe a gale when you are wilfully absent? And when you have provoked him by neglecting such an opportunity, such an advantage for your soul, what know you but that the Spirit of God may never vouchsafe any more? You that would have faith, neglect no opportunity; the neglect of one may be the loss of your souls.

(2.) If you would have faith by hearing, give way to no prejudice against the word, nor him that delivers it. If the devil cannot keep men from hearing, his next attempt is to fill them with prejudice, that so they may get no more benefit by hearing than if they heard not. The apostle speaks of

some whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. This prejudice was one of those hot irons wherewith he seared the minds and hearts of the Jews: so that the word, in the ministry of Christ himself, made so little impression on them; you find them frequently in the gospel expressing their prejudices against him, and this was it which made the gospel, in the ministry of the apostles, ineffectual to the Gentiles. The apostle was a babbler to the Greeks, and his preaching foolishness. Give not way to such prejudice against the word, if you would have it prove a word of faith.

I know a natural man cannot of himself pluck up the roots of this prejudice, it grows deep in the corruption of his heart; but yet the branches, the acts of it, are for the most part so unreasonable, as reason itself would cast them out if it were but exercised. To give you an instance or two:

He is not of our way and judgment, he complies not with our ancient customs and practices. This is the common rise of many men's prejudice against their ministers; but now, was not this the very rise of that prejudice which the Jews had against Christ and the apostles? They were not of their way and judgment, they decried their old customs and usages; is it reasonable to give way to that which was their ruin, and to entertain it upon the same account?

Oh, but he shews no learning, has no eloquence in his style, no ornament in his discourse. This is a common prejudice too, but very rarely objected by any, but such as cannot judge what is sound learning or true eloquence; a clear, masculine style, a spiritual, judicious discourse, signifies nothing to these persons, who have more of self-conceit than judgment. Some ridiculous quibbles, or affected jingles, is that which they count eloquence; some scraps of stories, and patches of Greek and Latin phrases, which school-boys may reach, and men of judgment count below them, is that which they call learning. But if the objections were more judicious, yet would this prejudice be unreasonable; for must the face of divine truth be patched and painted before it can please you? must it be set off with the colours of fancy, and borrow some beauty-spots from human learning? can you not like it but in a wanton dress, nor embrace it but in the habit of a harlot? must the truth of God be adulterated to please you? or were not Christ and the apostles wise enough to know what habit did best become it? I question not but Paul, yea Christ himself, would have been counted a babbler by such profane and foolish wretches as these.

Oh, but he speaks out of spite, and his reproving my sins is edged with spleen. But is not this to take upon thee the prerogative of God? Doest thou presume herein to know the heart of him that speaks? This is not only to be unreasonable, but presumptuously wicked; to make thyself like God in knowing the heart, but to act like the devil, in forming an accusation that is without all ground.

Other prejudices, as unreasonable as these, I might pursue. But judge of the rest by these; and if ever you would have the word to beget faith, empty the heart of prejudice against it.

(3.) Take most heed to that word which most concerns you. Mind that most which is most suitable to the state of your souls. Now the truths that are most proper for a state of unbelief are such as these:—

First, Those which discover the sinfulness, the misery, and impotency of an unbeliever; his sin which brings this misery upon him, and his impotency that keeps him under it. Attend diligently to that word which discovers the sinfulness of a natural man's heart and life, which shews that his heart is a puddle of corruption, a spring of sin, a seed-plot of wickedness, a sink of uncleanness, a

habitation of devils and impure lusts, a raging sea casting up mire and filth, which, though it may seem calm and quiet sometimes, yet ruffled a little with the wind of temptation, is restless, raging, and tempestuous, overflows all banks and bounds, which shews the sinfulness of his life, that it is a continued act of rebellion against him; that every thought, word, act, is an offence and dishonour to him; that his whole way is an abomination to the Lord; which shews the sinfulness of sin, which sets it out in its colours, which presents you with the aggravations of it, holds it out in its weight and pressure, which sets it forth in its dimensions, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of his wickedness.

Attend to that word which discovers the misery of an unbeliever; that he is under the curses and threatenings of the law, under the sentence of condemnation, pursued by the justice of God, exposed to the wrath of the Most High, and every moment in danger of hell. Mind that word which expresses the weight of those curses and threatenings, the danger of that sentence, the severity of that justice, the terror of that wrath, the dreadfulness of those everlasting burnings.

Attend to that word which shews the impotency of an unbeliever; of himself he can do nothing to shake off this sinfulness, to escape those curses, to repeal that sentence, to satisfy that justice, to appease that wrath, or to avoid eternal torments; that while he continues in this state, all this sinfulness increases, this misery grows bigger and swells higher.

Secondly, Those truths which tend to conviction; mind those and apply them. When the word comes home to any of your consciences and tells you this is your case, if ever you desire faith, yield to such convictions, apply that word to yourselves, and say, I am the man that am thus sinful, whose heart and life has been such a provocation to God; I am the man who am thus miserable, the threatenings are directed against me, the sentence is passed against me; I am the man whom justice pursues, and on whom the wrath of God abides. When the word is applied in particular, and the soul convinced thus in particular of its own sinfulness and misery; Satan is dislodged out of one of his strongholds, and the sinner is in a fair way towards faith. To be convinced of unbelief is a good step to faith. Satan knows this, and therefore he opposes conviction with all his might, and raises in the soul all the prejudice against it that he can possibly; suggests to the sinner that this is the way to distract him and drive him to despair, whenas that malicious spirit knows it is the way of peace; but this way of peace he would not have the sinner know, lest he should lose him, and therefore he puts the soul upon resistance, would have him rise up against the convincing power of the word, and stave it off with all his art and might. When the word comes near the conscience, and the minister is fastening conviction on it, he cries out in the soul against him, as he did against Christ in the possessed man, ‘Art thou come to torment me before my time? What have I to do with thee?’ Whereas this is not the way to be tormented, but to avoid everlasting torments; this is not the way to wound you, but to make you sensible how you are wounded, that so ye may be more capable of cure, and may make haste to the physician who only can cure you. And therefore, as you desire faith, as you love your souls, and would not gratify Satan in destroying them; yield to the conviction, yield to the convincing power of the word; resist not that Spirit whom Christ sends on purpose to convince you of sin, because you have not believed in him. When the Spirit has done this work effectually, when the soul is convinced of unbelief and of the miseries that attend it, when he applies these to himself, then he is under sail for faith and happiness.

Thirdly, Those truths that discover the rich grace and all-sufficient righteousness of the Lord Jesus. When the sinner is sensible of his wound, it will be seasonable to apply that word which leads him to the balm that is in Gilead, which discovers Christ lifted up for the healing of wounded sinners; when he sees himself miserable by unbelief, the word that discovers Jesus the author and finisher of faith will be in season; when the Spirit has convinced him of sin, the word should be applied to convince him of righteousness, that there is a righteousness sufficient to expiate his sin, sufficient to redeem him from misery.

He should mind that word that may moderate his fears, raise his hopes, quicken his desires, attract all his heart and affections to Christ.

Each part of the word, as it is in season, should be laid up in the mind and pondered there; diversions from the world or carnal company should be avoided; the loose vagaries which the mind is wont to take in hearing, and after, should be curbed; the word must be kept close to the heart by fixed thoughts till it works its effect. And the soul should be lifted up in prayer to God for the concurrence and the co-operation of his Spirit.

OF LIVING BY FAITH Now the just shall live by faith.—Hebrews 10:38.

These words are used four times, Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and here. In the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, they respect justification, Paul making use of them to prove that we are justified by faith. In Habakkuk 2:4, and the text, they respect our conversation, and hold forth what should secure and support a righteous man in all dangers and necessities. It is plain in the prophet; for having, in Habakkuk 1:1-17, foretold the calamities which the Chaldeans should bring upon the Jews, in this verse he propounds faith as the security of just men in those miseries; he shall live by this, when others die by the sword; this shall keep him alive, hold his head above water, when that inundation of wrath shall break in upon Judea. And the apostle borrowing these words of Habakkuk (save that he follows the Seventy, and not the Hebrew text in the latter part), holds out this as the security of the Hebrews, in the midst of all trials, temptations, and persecutions, while they are in this world, till the Lord, who has promised to come, do come, and give them the end of their faith; he exhorts and encourages them to perseverance and constancy from Hebrews 10:26, and propounds patience as a means necessary to this end, Hebrews 10:36. And that they may be patient, tells them the exercise of it will not be tedious, nor fruitless, Hebrews 10:37. The Lord will come suddenly, and reward their patience with a triumph in glory. And in the mean time they are well provided for, they have that which will keep them alive, will secure them in all necessities, against all dangers. ‘The just shall live by faith.’

Obs. It is the privilege, or the duty, of the just to live by faith. In the prosecution of it I shall observe this method: What? How? When?

I. What is it to live by faith?

Ans. This living by faith is not a single and transient act, but something habitual and permanent. And therefore its nature, as of other habits, will best appear in its acts and objects.

1. The acts of faith. The Scripture holds them forth under the notion of dependence and recumbency. And we may thus describe it: living by faith is constant dependence on God, as one without whom we cannot live. Three things concur to its constitution.

(1.) A sense and acknowledgment that we cannot live without God. This is presupposed. Our life depends on him; and it is our life to depend, life in its latitude; life and all that pertains to it; life and livelihood; life of body and soul; in its being and well-being; in its being and actings, and all that maintain it in both. God is that to the soul, which the soul is to the body, enlivens it and acts it; so Christ quickens and acts the soul. The body cannot live, or move, or act, or grow, it cannot hear, or see, or smell, or touch, without the soul. No more the soul without Christ. Christ is the life of the soul, and faith is the bond, the copula which unites the soul to Christ. And so by means of faith we live, faith uniting us with the principle of life. Both these are remarkably holden forth, Galatians 2:20, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I live is by faith in the Son of God.' Even as we may say, the body lives; yet not the body, but the soul lives in it; and the life that it lives, is by means of its union with the soul. So in a spiritual sense, the soul lives; yet not the soul, but Christ lives in it; and the life that it lives, is by faith in Christ uniting Christ to it.

(2.) There is a relying on God for all these, for continuance of what we have, and supply of what we want; rolling ourselves, and the burden of our affairs, on God. This is the formal act of faith. And because it is above us, and few are acquainted with it, I will draw it down to your capacities, and offer it to your senses in a simile or two, which the words, whereby the Hebrews express it, afford us. The first is ■■■, to lean, to stay upon, to rely. It is used 2 Samuel 1:6, where it is said of Saul, 'he leaned upon his spear,' ■■■■ ■■■■■■■■■, the same word: Proverbs 3:5, 'Lean not to thine own understanding,' i. e., as some render it, 'trust not.' For these are used as synonymes: Isaiah 50:1-11, 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God;' ■■■■ and ■■■■ are of the same force. For to trust God, is to stay ourselves on him. Even as one standing upon a high precipice, and perceiving himself ready to fall, takes hold of some bough, and stays himself by it, and hangs there, he is said to live by staying himself there, because it saves him from death, so we live by faith, because by this we stay ourselves on God, and so escape falling into hell, sin, and eternal death, though we stand continually on a precipice. We live by faith, because, were it not for faith, we should die; but for this stay, Satan would push us into hell, and our hearts into a gulf of sin, wherein we might sink and perish; but that faith, laying hold on Christ, leaning upon him, is held above water, and so lives by faith, as a drowning man lives by means of that which stays him from sinking. The other word for faith is ■■■■ which comes from ■■■ to nourish, and thence ■■■■, a nurse. This affords another simile, which clears that other act, whereby we rely on God for all we want. As the infant depends and hangs upon the breast of the nurse, and so by depending and sucking is said to live, so we do live by such an act of faith. The Lord draws out and offers to our faith his promises, providences, ordinances, as so many breasts, on which faith hangs, and sucks out of them life, comfort, nourishment. As infants live by sucking, so the just live by believing, by faith.

(3.) Constancy, frequency. It is a continued thing; a life of faith, not one act of believing; a whole life of acts. Since we always stand upon the brink of sin and death, and have no security from falling, but God's maintaining, and our apprehending of him, we should continually depend and hang upon God, never let go our hold; for then we fall without recovery. If we live by faith, when we neglect faith, we die. Our whole life should be a continued act of dependence on God—when we eat, or drink, or sleep, or work, or pray, &c.; apply ourselves as often to God by faith, as the infant to the breast, without which it cannot live. We should exercise faith more frequently than we use

bread; for we live more by it than by bread. ‘Man lives not by bread, but by every word,’ &c. If we believe, God can command other things to nourish in the want of bread. This for the act, the objects follow.

2. The object of faith is God in Christ, as made known in his attributes, offices, relations, promises, and providences. We may refer the objects and support of faith to these heads.

(1.) Divine attributes. Those are the pillows and grounds of faith, rocks of eternity, upon which faith may securely repose: ‘Though the earth should be removed,’ &c. ‘The name of the Lord’ (i. e., his attributes) ‘is a strong tower, the righteous fly into it,’ and faith admits and there secures them. Hence this is faith’s ordinary plea in Scripture. ‘For thy name’s sake,’ i.e., for the glory of those attributes whereby thou art known to us, as men are known by their names. These are frequently propounded and made use of as the objects and supports of faith.

[1.] Power. This is it on which the heroical faith of Abraham fixed: Romans 4:21, ‘Being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform.’

[2.] Wisdom. This upheld Peter’s faith, when Christ, so often questioning his love, might have made him doubt of it: ‘Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest I love thee,’ John 21:17. And David’s faith acts upon the omnisciency and immensity of God, Psalms 139:1-24.

[3.] Justice. This was David’s plea: Psalms 143:11, ‘For thy righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble.’ And Daniel 9:16, ‘O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee,’ &c.

[4.] Faithfulness. This was the foundation on which Solomon raised that prayer, so full of faith, 1 Kings 8:33, ‘There is no God like unto thee, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants;’ and Daniel 9:4, Hebrews 10:23.

[5.] Truth. David useth this, Psalms 115:1, ‘For thy truth’s sake;’ and frequently, ‘Do this according to thy word,’ Psalms 119:154.

[6.] Mercy. Faith never finds more strong support, nor ever fixes with so much delight as here: Psalms 119:149, ‘Hear my voice, according to thy loving-kindness;’ Psalms 130:7, ‘Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy;’ Psalms 52:8, ‘I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.’

(2.) The offices of Christ. These are strong supports to faith as any, though less made use of: in special his

Priestly office. The apostle, Hebrews 4:14-16, urges them from this consideration to approach God with faith and confidence, to come boldly unto the throne of grace. Paul, Romans 3:24, makes Christ’s satisfaction the object of our faith, ‘whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.’ And this, joined with his intercession, raises his faith into a triumph, so as he makes a confident challenge to all opposers: Romans 8:33-34, ‘Who shall lay any thing to the charge,’ &c.? ‘Who is he that condemneth?’

Regal Office. Peter, persuading the Jews to believe, holds out Christ not only as a Saviour but a Prince: Acts 5:31, ‘Him hath God exalted to be a Prince;’ and Nathanael’s faith pitches here, John 1:49-50, ‘Thou art the King of Israel.’

Prophetical Office. This was prophesied: Deuteronomy 18:15, ‘The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet; unto him he shall hearken,’ i. e., believe; and cited twice in Acts 3:21, and Acts 7:37, to persuade faith.

(3.) Mutual relations betwixt God and his people. These are the sweet food of faith, which, digested, nourish it into strength, and enable it to vigorous actings; and to this end we find them frequently used by the saints: Psalms 119:94, ‘I am thine, save me;’ and Jeremiah 14:9, ‘Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave [us] not.’ And from particular relations: servant, Psalms 143:12, ‘Destroy all them that afflict my soul; for I am thy servant.’ And Jeremiah 3:14, the Lord, to encourage the faith of the backsliding Jews, clothes himself with the relation of a husband: ‘Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married to you.’ Father, Isaiah 63:15, ad. fin., ‘Doubtless thou art our Father;’ where there are the strongest actings of faith upon divers relations.

(4.) Promises. These and faith are so usually joined, as though they were relatives. These are the breasts of consolation, out of which faith sucks. These are the wells of salvation, out of which faith draws joy, &c. These have been the supports of the saints’ faith upon all occasions. Many instances will be needless. See it in Solomon, 1 Kings 8:24-26, ‘Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him.’ So Jacob, Genesis 32:9, Genesis 32:12, ‘Thou hast said, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee,’ &c.

(5.) Providences of God are objects and encouragements to faith. The consideration of what he has done for others, and for themselves, has supported the saints. These are the hands of God stretched out, on which faith takes hold. David, Psalms 119:132, ‘Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou art wont to do to those that love thy name.’ And from his own experience, 1 Samuel 17:37, ‘The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out the hand of this Philistine.’ This was Paul’s support when all forsook him in his greatest extremities, 2 Timothy 4:17-18. Some will not believe God, except, with Thomas, they may see and feel. Now herein God offers himself to be seen and felt, and leaves men without excuse if they continue in unbelief.

II. How do they, how must we, live by faith? Here I shall give particular directions how faith may act with most advantage upon its several objects formerly propounded, and shew what support and encouragement faith may find from them in all its actings.

1. Attributes of God. For the direction and encouragement of faith in acting upon them, observe eight particulars:

[1.] Study the attributes. Labour to know them distinctly, effectually. Though faith be not knowledge, yet it is not without it. Nay, the more we know, the more we believe: Psalms 9:10, ‘Those that know thy name will trust in thee;’ thy name, i. e., those excellencies whereby God is made known. Be much in thoughts of God, frequent, delightful, consistent, efficacious thoughts; such as bring a divine influence into the soul, and fill it with heat and light; leave deep impressions of God upon the heart, abstract him from all imperfection, and lift him above all perfections visible or imaginable, such thoughts as beget veneration; for high apprehensions beget great expectation, and this makes the actings of faith easy. Those who have known much have believed much; much in contemplation, strong in faith, as Abraham, Moses. Imitate David, who, studying the

omniscience and immensity of God, Psalms 139:1-24, cries out, Psalms 139:17, ‘How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God,’ &c. Then follows the actings of his faith, Psalms 139:19, ‘Surely thou wilt slay the wicked.’ Let what you have seen of these divine beauties make you sick of love till you see more. Learn Moses’s importunity to see God: ‘Let me see thy glory,’ Exodus 33:1-23. ‘Shew me thy glory: cause thy goodness to pass before me.’ Display thy glorious excellencies; dart out some lightsome beam that may discover thee; unveil thyself: open my eyes, scatter clouds, remove interpositions. The more ye see, the more ye believe.

[2.] Assure thy interest in the attributes. Let thy knowledge be applicatory. Be not satisfied that thou seest God, till thou see him to be thine; what he is in himself, but what he is to thee. It was a great refreshment to Moses that he was admitted, from the top of Pisgah, to view the promised land; but how would he have rejoiced if the Lord had assured him that he should enjoy a share in it! It is a great encouragement to faith to view the excellencies of God in an abstracted sense; but the assurance of interest therein raises it to a triumph, to say with David, Psalms 73:26, ‘God is my portion for ever;’ and Psalms 16:5, ‘The portion of mine inheritance.’ For if the Lord be thy portion, then thou mayest conclude, Omnipotency is my portion, immensity, all-sufficiency, &c. Say not, If so, then I should be omnipotent, &c. There is a vast difference betwixt identity and interest, betwixt conveying of a title and transmutation of nature. A friend gives thee an invaluable treasure, and all the securities of it that thou canst desire; wilt thou deny it is thine because thou art not changed into its nature? The attributes are thine, as thy inheritance, as thy lands are thine; not because thou art changed into their nature, but because the title is conveyed to thee, it is given thee, and improved for thy benefit. If another manage it, who can do it with greater advantage to thee, than thou to thyself, it is no infringement of thy title. Even so the Lord has given thee himself, and interest in all his glorious attributes, that whatever is in him shall be thine, and for thee; but he improves these for thee, and does it with infinite more advantage than thou canst for thyself. It is true, he drives another interest, his own glory, but never separates it from thy happiness: these are accumulative, not privative. Whenever God advances his glory, he at the same time promotes thy interest: nor does this make thy title to God less than thy title to thy estate, for that is managed for God’s glory too, else thou gainest nothing by it. It is true, we see not, we enjoy not, the total of these rich revenues which daily arise out of this glorious inheritance, but it is treasured up for us till we come at age in glory. Then the treasury shall be opened, and then we shall see that all the glorious outgoings of God, the appearance of his excellencies in this world, have been with special respect to enrich us, to enhappy us, when we never thought of it. Oh what support, what encouragement to faith, to be assured that all God’s attributes are mine, thine; as much thine, as the portion thy father left thee as thine inheritance; as the drink in thy cup, or the meat on thy trencher! for so much is holden out in those expressions, Psalms 16:5, [redacted], phrases taken from those shares which were assigned to every one in feasts, Genesis 43:34, 1 Samuel 1:4, &c., ‘My lines are fallen in a pleasant place,’ &c. With what confidence may faith take possession, and make use of them, at all essays, upon all occasions! But some may say this is a high privilege, far above poor weaklings, and requires a high degree of grace to attain it. Not so; the lowest degree of faith gives thee interest in this, for the least act of faith puts thee into covenant with God; and the tenor of the covenant is, that God will be thy God. Faith begets assurance, and assurance begets faith; yet this is not a circle, because not ad idem. A weak faith will assure, but assurance begets a strong faith.

[3.] When thou art acting thy faith, so dispose and methodise the attributes of God as thou mayest thereby prove and make it evident to faith that God is both able and willing to do what thou wouldst believe. That God is willing and able are two ansas, two handles, on which both the hands of faith may take hold, and so act more strongly (as we do) than if it use but one. A man ready to drown, if he can lay hold upon anything with both hands to keep him from sinking, is more secure than if he can but stay himself by one. Faith is but weak when it fastens but upon one of these; the doubting of either will keep off faith from its stedfastness. Martha's faith was not stedfast, John 11:1-57, when she questioned whether Christ was able; and the leper's faith staggered when he doubted whether Christ was willing, Matthew 8:2 : 'If thou wilt thou canst.' The way to make it strong in its daily actings is to confirm it in both these, which we may do by making use of the attributes to prove it. That he is able, faith may be persuaded from his omnipotency, omniscience, all-sufficiency; that he is willing, from his mercy, faithfulness, immutability; and some prove both these, as his infiniteness, immensity, eternity. Learn to draw arguments from these; and when these two premises are confirmed, faith will easily draw sweet and strong conclusions. Thus, the Lord is able to subdue my lusts, to make all grace abound, to tread Satan under my feet, and the Lord is willing, &c.; faith will easily conclude these shall be done. It is true the minor needs most confirmation; we are most subject to doubt of God's willingness; but the Lord has provided against this remarkably; for whereas there is but one attribute to prove God able directly, viz., his power, for the other do it by consequence, there are many titles that directly prove him willing, as mercy, goodness, bounty, grace, love, loving-kindness, compassion, bowels of compassion, patience, long-suffering. Get faith fixed upon this double basis, and it will stand firm.

[4.] Let faith fix on that attribute which is most suitable to thy condition. And here faith may meet with many encouragements: first, there is no condition thou canst possibly fall into but some attributes afford support; secondly, there is enough in that attribute to uphold thee, as much as thou standest in need of, as much as thou canst desire; thirdly, there is infinitely more; though thy condition were worse than it is, worse than ever any was, yet there is more than thou needest, more than thou canst desire, more than thou canst imagine, infinitely more. Some one attribute will answer all thy necessities; some most, some many. For, first, some of God's attributes encourage faith in every condition.

Omnipotency. When thou art surrounded with troubles and dangers, there is the power of God to rely on; so Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:1-37. Art thou called to difficult duties above thy strength, strong lusts to oppose, violent temptations to resist, weighty employments to undertake? Let faith support thee and itself on omnipotency, as Paul: 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.' Art thou called to grievous sufferings? Imitate the three children, act on God's power: 'Our God whom we trust is able to deliver us.' Dost thou want means for effecting what thou expectest, and so seest no possibility in reason or nature for obtaining it? Act like Abraham; believe he is able, Romans 4:21, to perform without means, or against means. Art thou afraid to fall away? Stay thyself on God's power: 'We are kept by the power of God through faith.'

Omnisciency. Wantest thou direction, knowest not what to do, at thy wit's end? Eye omnisciency: 2 Chronicles 20:12, 'Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee.' The Lord knows how to deliver the righteous. When thou searchest thy soul, and art afraid a treacherous heart should deceive thee, trust omnisciency. He searches the heart, and can teach thee to search it. Art thou upbraided for hypocrisy, and borne down by Satan's suggestions, so as thou almost suspectest

thy integrity? Let omniscience support thee here; he knows, he sees the least gracious motion. Fearest thou secret plots of Satan, crafty conveyances of wicked men, such as no eye can see or discover? Trust omnisciency.

Immensity. Art thou deserted by friends, or separated from them by imprisonment, banishment, infectious diseases? Let faith eye immensity; as Christ, 'Yet I am not alone,' &c. Fearest thou remote designs in other countries, nay, in the other world, in hell? Thou canst not be there to prevent; ay, but the Lord is everywhere.

All-sufficiency. Let faith set this against all thy wants. I want riches, but the Lord is all-sufficient; liberty, children, friends, credit, health, he is liberty, &c. I want grace, the means of grace, comfort; he is these. Dost thou fear death? The Lord is life. Dost thou fear casting off? The Lord is unchangeable. Nay, whatsoever thou fear, or want, or desire, there is one more that will give universal and full support.

Mercy. This will hold when all fail. It is the strength of all other supports, and that in all conditions. There is no condition so low but mercy can reach it, none so bad but mercy can better it, none so bitter but mercy can sweeten it, none so hopeless but mercy can succour it. It bears up faith, when nothing else can, under the guilt of sin and sense of wrath; in misery, that is the time when faith should eye mercy. Hence you may argue strength into faith. If one attribute answer many, yea, all, conditions, will not all answer one?

Secondly, There is enough in any one attribute to support thee as much as thou needest or desirest, let thy corruptions be never so strong, thy wants never so many.

Thirdly, There is more than enough, than thou needest or canst desire; more than is necessary for thy condition, for a worse than thine, for the worst that ever was. If thy dangers were greater than can be paralleled in former ages, if the impetuousness of all those lusts that have broke out since the creation were united in thine, yet there is more power in God than is needful for thy condition. If thou wert pinched with all the wants that all the indigent men in the world were ever pressed with, yet all-sufficiency can do more than supply. Suppose there were many more worlds, and in each ten thousand more sinful creatures than in this, and every one's sins ten thousand times more sinful than thine, yet mercy could do more than pardon. And faith may say, If mercy can pardon, more than pardon, so many more than mine, and so much more heinous, why may not mercy pardon mine?

[5.] There is no condition possible but some attribute encourages faith; so there is nothing in God that discourages faith in any condition, the most formidable condition. The most formidable attributes administer comfort and confidence to a believer, as purity, jealousy, justice. Oh, says a doubting soul, I am impure in heart, life, in my best services, and the Lord is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; what encouragement can I have to approach God in faith? Yes, enough; there is support in that which thou makest use of to deject thee. The Lord is pure, and loves purity; therefore may faith say, he will make me pure. He is jealous of sin, he hates it, punishes it; therefore faith concludes he will destroy my lusts, for they are the objects of his hatred, not my person; he will be a consuming fire to them, not to me. Faith may feel God embracing with one hand while the other is wounding his lusts.

Justice, both punitive and remunerative, encourage faith. That which is a rock of offence to crush unbelievers and grind them to powder, is a rock of repose and security to faith. The most terrible attribute is comfortable. Lord, I have sinned, deserved wrath; but my Surety hath done and suffered all that thy righteous law requires,—'he was wounded for my transgressions,' &c.,—and it is not consistent with justice to punish the same offences twice: 'Shall not the Lord of heaven and earth do justice?' Hence faith may conclude, justice itself cannot condemn, cannot lay anything to my charge, Romans 8:33-34; nay, justice is my security that I shall not suffer, for that would be injustice. Punitive justice has now another object, thine enemies, sin, to subdue it, Satan, to trample him under foot, the wicked, &c.: 'It is a righteous thing with the Lord to render vengeance to those that trouble you,' 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7.

[6.] Learn to draw arguments for confirmation of faith in acting upon attributes. These we may raise: first, from ourselves, laying this ground, that whatever engages God encourages faith; for it is easier to believe that one will act for us who is engaged, than one who has no inducement thereto. Now, to speak after the manner of men, yet not without Scripture warrant, the Lord seems to be engaged and induced to employ his attributes for us: 1, by our necessities, I am poor and needy; 2, our impotency, 'We have no strength against this great multitude,' as Jehoshaphat; 3, deficiency of other helps, 'Help, Lord, for vain is the help of man;' 4, danger, 'Save us, or else we perish;' 5, misery, 'I am brought low,' Psalms 142:6; 'attend to my cry,' &c.

Secondly, From the attributes themselves separately considered. To instance in two that faith makes most use of, power and mercy. Power renders everything easy. This consideration much strengthens faith. For if we have a friend who can do for us a business of great importance with ease, without trouble or expense, with turning of a hand, or motion of a finger, or speaking a word, it is no hard matter to believe he will do it. Now thus it is. There is nothing that we stand in need of, but the Lord can do it as easily as we can move a finger, or speak a word. And can we doubt the Lord will not do it.

Then for mercy, this pleases him. 'He delights to shew mercy.' Now can we doubt the Lord will do that for us which he delights to do? Jeremiah 9:24.

Thirdly, From attributes associated. We may doubt of creature power, because it is limited, but he is omnipotent. The creature may have strength, but want wisdom, and this may disable him, and weaken our confidence; but God is omniscient. A friend may have strength and wisdom too, but may be far from us; oh, but he is omnipresent. A man may have all these, but be prevented by death; but God is eternal. A man may have power, wisdom, propinquity, life, but not be willing; but God is merciful, gracious, compassionate, and joins other attributes to his mercy, the more to confirm faith. Mercy endures for ever; there is eternity. Over all his works; there is immensity. Abundant in goodness, there is its infiniteness. His compassions fail not, there is unchangeableness.

Fourthly. From God's design in manifesting his attributes, viz., his glory. Here is a stronghold for faith. It is not only our interest, but the Lord's concernment, to employ his attributes for us; not our happiness only, but his own glory. Hence that argument so frequently used, 'For thy name sake.' It is no matter for us, Lord, though we perish; but what wilt thou do for thy great name? He will not lose his end, nor be crossed in his design. If faith may confirm itself in acting by one argument, how much strength will all add?

[7.] Compare the attributes with what men usually trust, and see how infinitely they transcend; how much more reason there is to rely on God's attributes than on riches, strength, princes. Riches are an uncertain, unsatisfying, insufficient, limited, deceitful nothing, Proverbs 23:5. God is an unchangeable, satisfying, all-sufficient, faithful, all things. Strength is a vain, depending weakness. God is perfect, independent, omnipotent. Princes are shaking, piercing, broken reeds, 2 Kings 18:20. God is the Rock of Ages. Is there not more encouragement to trust the Lord than to put confidence in princes? to trust in the living God, than in uncertain riches? to trust in the Lord of Hosts, than in chariots or horses? Psalms 20:7. Shall men think it reason to trust in a spider's web, Job 18:14, to trust in a shadow, Isaiah 30:3, in vanity, Isaiah 59:4, in a lie, Jeremiah 29:31, in nothing, Proverbs 23:5, and shall not we think it reasonable to trust in the Lord?

[8.] Learn from the attributes to answer all objections that may discourage faith, viz., I cannot believe, have used all means, &c.; God is able to work faith. But my own impotency is moral, sinful, contracted by sin; God is merciful. But I am unworthy; he is gracious. But I have turned grace into wantonness; he is patient. But I have abused patience, and what reason to expect he should longer forbear me? his love. But I have played the harlot; he is unchangeable. But he may cease to love me, as he did the angels, and yet be unchangeable; he is faithful, his faithfulness was not engaged to the angels. But I am unfaithful, and the unfaithfulness of one party disengages the other. But he is infinite; it is so, as you object, with men, but his thoughts are not as ours, nor his ways as our ways. But infiniteness discourages, if infinitely above; there is an infinite distance; how can, how dare my faith lay hold, approach? There is a Mediator, which brings me to the second.

2. The offices of Christ. To direct and encourage faith herein, take these rules.

(1.) Acquaint thyself with the offices of Christ, what they contain and hold forth to us, and for us. If faith be left in the dark, it will stagger, not know where to fix; may lay hold of a shadow, and rest upon a tottering basis; cannot be stedfast nor confident. Knowledge of Christ is put for faith in Christ. 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many,' Isaiah 53:11. 'I know whom I have believed,' 2 Timothy 1:12. Find out what faith may lay hold on in every office, what are its supports in his

[1.] Kingly office. 1. As he is king, he is lawgiver; writes laws in our hearts. Gives not only laws to be obeyed, but hearts to obey; laws for obedience, and principles of obedience. 2. To subdue our enemies, Psalms 2:6, Psalms 2:8, our lusts, the world, the powers of darkness. He will bruise them with a rod of iron. 'He leads captivity captive,' Ephesians 4:11-12. 3. To rule us. The government is on his shoulders. He sets his throne in our hearts, and takes care that we live under his government in peace, plenty, safety; peace of conscience, plenty of grace, perseverance.

[2.] Prophetical. To declare his Father's will, the mysteries of salvation; to continue it as written and preached, and so to give pastors when he ascended, Ephesians 4:11; to make us understand it; to enlighten our minds; to send the Spirit of truth to clear up obscurities, resolve doubts, remove scruples, satisfy cases of conscience.

[3.] As priest. So he suffered, and intercedes. His sufferings are both satisfactory and meritorious. As satisfactory, he has redeemed us from the law's curse, God's wrath, death and hell. As meritorious, he has purchased all things, pardon, peace, grace, glory; and for this life all good

things, a spiritual title to them, a sanctified use of them. He interceded on earth by fervent and affectionate prayers, with sighs and tears, Hebrews 7:5, John 17:1-26; and he now lives to make intercession, appearing before the Father, presenting his merits, and effectually applying them; silencing Satan's accusation, rendering our persons and prayers acceptable. Oh what work is here for faith! If the just had nothing else to live on, here is enough for the life of faith.

(2.) These offices are purely relative; wholly ours, for us, in reference to us; relative both secundum esse et operari, both in their constitution and execution. He was made king, priest, &c., for us, and does exercise these for us. They are essentially relative, depending on us, as one term of the relation upon another. As there cannot be a father without a child, so Christ had not been king without believers, who are kis kingdom, 1 Corinthians 15:24. There cannot be a priest without a sacrifice; nor a sacrifice, except some for whom to offer it. It is otherwise in the former object; God's attributes are absolute essentially, their relation to us is but accidental. Their being is not for us, but only their acting. God had been omnipotent, omniscient, merciful, &c., if no creatures had ever received a being. Therefore here is more support for faith than in the attributes. Where there is more interest, there may be more confidence. Faith may plead, Christ is my king, and was anointed, crowned, in reference to me. For this end he came to the kingdom, that he might govern me. He is my priest, consecrated for my sake, in reference to my guilt, my necessities, that he might satisfy for me. Christ is my prophet; for this end he was anointed, and received the Spirit without measure, Isaiah 61:1, that he might instruct me; ergo, I will be confident.

(3.) These being the offices of Christ, he is to perform them ex officio, as a duty. He, who was independent, and stood in no need of us, was pleased, for the encouragement of our faith, to come under the engagement of a duty. The Father's command is upon him, and therefore not only called a son, but a servant: Isaiah 42:1, 'Behold my servant, whom I have chosen.' It is [not] out of courtesy to us, but out of obedience to God, that he acts; Christ submits to it: Psalms 40:5, 'Mine ear hast thou bored. Behold I come to do thy will.' A perpetual servant. Safely we may say there is as strong an engagement laid upon Christ, as upon any of us, to do our duty. This brings us to such a dilemma. Either we must believe, or else think Christ is impotent, negligent, or ignorant; for none else omit their office. Can he be impotent, unable, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth? Or ignorant, who is the wisdom of the Father? Or negligent, who was 'faithful to him that appointed him,' by the testimony of God? Hebrews 3:2. Nay, faith may draw arguments from the offices themselves to confute this blasphemous conceit, that Christ will not to the utmost execute his offices. If he should not, it must be for want of power, wisdom, or will. But the offices exclude these. As a king, he is able; as a prophet, he is wise: 'He that made the eye, shall he not see?' as a priest, he is willing, 'a merciful high priest.' So that you must either believe or blaspheme. Here is then as strong a plea as is imaginable: Lord, it is thine office to do this. It is true there was nothing that could oblige thee; but it pleased the Father so to appoint, and it pleased thee, dear Saviour, to submit, and undertake these offices. Such poor creatures as I may fail in our duties, and be unfaithful in our trust, but heaven and earth shall perish, the blessed angels shall turn devils, and glorified saints apostates, before my glorious Mediator fail his office; therefore I believe.

(4.) Christ, as he is Mediator, is both God and man, and executes his offices as Mediator. Here then faith hath all the encouragement that both heaven and earth can afford. He is God; for where he is called the Wonderful Counsellor, i. e., our Prophet, and the Prince of Peace, that is, our King, there he is called the mighty God, the everlasting Father, Isaiah 9:6. And as our priest, so our God

too; for his blood is called, Acts 20:28, the blood of God. Therefore all the attributes of God are engaged for the performance of these offices. He is man too, 1 Timothy 2:5, ‘the man Christ Jesus;’ and therefore all the affections of a man; not metaphorically, as they are ascribed to God, but properly: he loves, rejoices, delights, compassionates, as the sons of men. Nay, these affections are more tender in him than in any man; because his bodily constitution, upon which these motions depend, was more pure, and his temperament more exact. Nay, our faith in acting here has another great advantage, viz., Christ’s experience. It is some encouragement for those who are pressed under afflictions and sufferings to consider him whom they depend on for relief, of a sweet affectionate nature; but are much more confident if they know that he has had experience of the like sufferings, and groaned under the same afflictions, knows what it is, &c. Now this support faith has from the consideration of Christ’s manhood. He himself has been a sufferer, a man of sorrows, acquainted with the same griefs that afflicts us, Hebrews 2:16. He was made perfect through sufferings. He ran through the whole circle of afflictions. And why? See Hebrews 2:17, ‘That he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest:’ and Hebrews 2:18, ‘For in that he himself suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.’ For this end he suffered, that he might learn to pity them, and be as ready as able to relieve them. And this the apostle holds forth as a ground of confident access, Hebrews 4:15-16. Art thou poor, despised? He was set at nought. Art thou calumniated? so he. Deserted of friends, and hated of most? tempted by Satan, forsaken of God? So he, when he cried out to heaven, to earth. Let faith conclude, he does pity, he will succour.

(5.) Let faith begin first to act on the priestly office. This is the basis of the other. The high priest, a type of Christ, had a crown on his head, the ensign of royal dignity; and Urim and Thummim on his breast, emblems of the prophetical office, to denote that the kingly and priestly office are grounded on the sacerdotal. Begin then at the foundation. Persuade thyself that he is thy Priest, and it will be easy to believe him thy King and Prophet. If he have executed that, he will execute these. Believe that he suffered for thee, and thou mayest without difficulty believe that he will sanctify thee, illuminate thee; for faith has great advantage here. The worst is past, sufferings, the greatest employment is finished, the rest is small. That which is most difficult is overcome, the rest is easy. That which was painful and grievous is past, all that remains is delightful. That which was accompanied with shame and ignominy is past, that which is to be done is high and glorious. The conflict is over, that which remains is triumph and dividing the spoils. Here faith may act strongly. Has Christ suffered, done the greatest, the most painful, that which was ignominious? Will he not do the less, that which is delightful and glorious? Has he suffered? Will he not do? Has he conquered? Will he not divide the spoils? Was he wounded for my transgressions? Will he not wound them? Did he shed his blood? Will he not shed his love in my heart? Was he emptied of his glory, and filled with wrath? Will he not empty me of sin, and fill me with grace? Has he taken away the guilt of sin, which cost him so dear, so many prayers and tears, so many wounds and blood? and will he not take away the power of sin, which he can do with a word? 2. The other offices depend on this; grace, peace, light, glory, must be purchased before they can be bestowed. The purchase belongs to the priestly office, the communication to the other. Let faith first believe they were purchased, and it is easy to believe they will be bestowed, especially if it consider, 3, that the end why they were purchased was that they might be communicated. Here faith may act strongly. The end why Christ purchased knowledge and holiness was that he might impart them. Surely though poor, weak, improvident creatures fail of their ends, Christ will never so dishonour himself,

never be so disappointed; especially in that which cost him so dear, in his master-piece, his greatest and most glorious design. Has he suffered so many things in vain, so much wrath, so much torture and soul-affliction, so much blood, &c., to sanctify me? Oh I shall be sanctified!

(6.) They are adequate to our conditions. This is necessary for the life of faith, that in every condition possible it have something to rely on. And in these we may find it. When lusts are strong, temptations violent, grace weak, God's ways unpleasant, let faith look on Christ as thy king; it is his office, it is his glory to succour thee; he triumphs when we conquer. Christ will act as a king, will be royal and magnificent: Luke 22:25, ε■εργ■ται, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship,' &c. He will give like a king, conquer like a king, like himself. In sense of ignorance, want of the means of grace, want of the Spirit, danger of seducing, perplexity of mind, &c., look to Christ as your prophet; it is his office, his honour. In sense of wrath, guilt of sin, let faith go to Christ's satisfaction. In the sense of its pollution derived on our persons and services, go to his intercession. It would be too tedious to direct how faith should act in every particular. We will instance in one less taken notice of, the prayer of Christ upon earth, the pattern of his intercession in heaven, John 17:1-26, where he prays for union, freedom from evil, sanctification, joy, perseverance, glory, for all believers. Here what he prayed for. How he prayed, see Hebrews 5:7, 'In the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears.' Upon this faith may thus act, and as strongly as upon any ground in the world. The prayers of poor sinners that believe on Christ are always heard, much more the prayers of the Son of God. Their weak cries never return unanswered; how prevalent, then, are the strong cries of Jesus Christ! Their tears are so precious, as the Lord puts them in his bottle; of how much more value are the tears of Christ! They never wrestle with sighs and groans but prevail with God; how much more prevalent with God are the sighs and groans of Christ. Those prayers, cries, and tears are not forgot, they are on eternal record in heaven; they were presently answered, he was heard in that which he feared, and the answers shall be returned to the end of the world, and shall fall, may faith say, into my bosom; for he prayed for me, wept for me, cried for me, and therefore was heard for me, for he was always heard, John 11:22. Let faith go to God on this account, Christ has prayed that I might be sanctified, united, &c.

(7.) Consider how affectionately Christ executed these offices on earth, and it will be a strong ground to believe he will not neglect them in heaven. He looked upon this as his work, that for which he was sent, to which he was called, his calling and vocation, and went about it with all his soul, all his strength, strong desires: Luke 12:50, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.' This baptism was his death and the grievous sufferings that attended it; he was to be drenched in a sea of wrath and sufferings, which, being the most intolerable that ever were suffered, might have been most formidable. But even death, which, when but ordinary, nature shuns as the most fearful evil, Christ desires it, and so passionately as can scarce be expressed. 'How am I straitened!' συν■χομαι, my soul is so big with desire, as there is not room for it in the body. How is my soul pained with desire to sacrifice my life, my blood, for my lost people! The intenseness of his desires appears in that sharp rebuke he gives Peter, when he persuaded him to save himself, not to expose his life: Matthew 16:23, 'Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me.' That temptation to save himself from death, which he so much desired, was as detestable, as offensive to him, as a suggestion of Satan, and he requites Peter with no better title for that unacceptable counsel, though immediately before he had

pronounced him blessed, ver. 17. This appears in that he uses all means to bring men into a capacity of receiving benefit by his offices, invitations, commands, promises, threatenings, complaints, expostulations.

See with what delight: Psalms 40:8, ‘I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is written in my heart.’ The will of God in which he delighted, was (as appears by the coherence, and the quotation of this place, Hebrews 10:5) that Christ should make his soul an offering for sin, as more acceptable to God than all other burnt-offerings and sin-offerings. This law was in his heart, ■■■■ ■■■, in the midst of his bowels. He did as much delight in it as we do in following those inclinations which nature has implanted in our hearts, as we do in eating and drinking. So he expresses it, John 4:33, ‘My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.’ He was as willing to bleed and die for thee as thou art to eat when hungry. He delighted as much to be scourged, wounded, crucified, as thou delightest in meat when most delicious. His sorrow you may see in his tears and pathetical complaints when men excluded themselves from the benefit of his offices: Luke 19:41, ‘He beheld the city, and wept over it.’ There is his tears. And oh what a compassionate complaint was that, ‘Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day!’ &c. For his joy, see Luke 10:21, ‘In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit,’ &c. For his zeal, it was so ardent, as the disciples apply that of the psalmist, Psalms 69:9, to Christ: John 2:17, ‘The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,’ κατ■φαγε μ■, ■■■■■■, devoravit me. The flame was so hot within, as it drank up the vital moisture. Exhausit succum vitalem, et emaciavit me.

Now, faith will say, if the Lord was so affectionate on earth, certainly he is the same in heaven, and will there execute his offices with as much delight, desire, and zeal. He changes not, whatever we do. Where is thy zeal, and thy strength, &c. Can the Lord neglect? No; we are his members, dearer to him than his natural body. Can he forget? No; though a mother may forget her sucking child, yet cannot he forget us. We are graven upon the palms of his hands. He remembers very well who they are for whom he was pierced.

(8.) The Father and the Spirit are engaged for the execution of these offices. The Father, he decreed it, so Christ is a ‘Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.’ He sent Christ: John 17:18, ‘As thou hast sent me into the world.’ He commands it: John 10:17-18, speaking of laying down his life, he adds, ‘This commandment have I received of my Father.’ He approves it: when he entered upon his office, he had a wonderful approbation from heaven from the excellent glory, ‘This is my beloved Son.’ He therefore loves the Son: ‘Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life,’ John 10:17. He swears the continuance of Christ in office: ‘The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever,’ Hebrews 7:21.

[1.] Faith here grows confident. If the Lord have decreed, and sent Christ for this end, and commanded him to execute his offices, if he do approve and love him for it, and has sworn he shall do it, shall sanctify, justify, enlighten, certainly he will do it, here is no room for doubting.

[2.] Faith appropriates. He decreed him for me, to sanctify me, &c., sent him to enlighten &c., me, commands him to subdue my lusts, &c., loves him because he does so much for me. The Spirit is engaged too; for, 1, he furnished Christ for the execution, Isaiah 61:1. And will the Spirit lose his labour, come short of his end? 2. He co-operates with Christ in the execution. Sanctification is the great work of the kingly office; he is the Spirit of holiness, Romans 1:4, illumination of the prophetical office, he is the Spirit of truth and wisdom. And the issue of the priestly office is comfort

from the sense of justification; and he is the Spirit of comfort, of adoption. Faith hath all the security that heaven can afford in acting on the offices of Christ.

3. Promises. How faith may act with most advantage upon promises, and get support and encouragement from them in its actings.

(1.) Consider the latitude of them. There are promises suitable to all estates. No condition wherein faith may not find support from promises. Soul, body, estate, relations, actions, there are promises for all; promises, I say, that are explicitly, in express terms, quoad formam. But besides these, there are innumerable more that we take little notice of, which are promises implicitly, virtually, or by just consequence. And there is little in the Scripture out of which faith may not extract the comfort of a promise, titles, assertions, relations, prayers, commands, threatenings. The titles of God are virtually promises. When he is called a sun, a shield, a strong tower, a hiding-place, a portion. The titles of Christ, light of the world, bread of life, the way, truth, and life; the titles of the Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of glory, of grace, and supplication, the sealing, witnessing Spirit; faith may conclude as much out of these as out of promises. Is the Lord a sun? Then he will influence me, &c. Is Christ life? Then he will enliven me, &c.

Assertions. Many things delivered in Scripture as assertions may be applied promissorily. As, ‘He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely;’ i. e., he shall walk surely: Galatians 5:22, ‘The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ Faith may conclude, therefore the Spirit in me will bring forth these fruits.

Relations of what the Lord has done for his people formerly are in effect promises, as is evident from Deuteronomy 8:3, ‘He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna; that he might make thee know that man liveth not by bread only,’ &c. This here is a bare relation, but Christ seems to make use of it as a promise, Matthew 4:4. From relations of what God has done for his people in times past, faith may conclude, the Lord will do the like for the future. If he delivered others who trusted in him formerly, he will deliver me if I trust in him now: Psalms 22:4-5, ‘Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them: they cried unto thee, and were delivered,’ &c. He is the same God, the same engagements are on him. And from such we may not only conclude the same mercies, but others also proportionable to them, nay, exceeding them. David went against Goliah in the name of the Lord, and prevailed. If I go in like manner against my lusts, I shall prevail against them.

Prayers of God’s ancient people are virtually promises to us. What prayers they made for the church and themselves, we may, cæteris paribus, apply as promises. We have a remarkable ground for this, 2 Chronicles 20:9, where Jehoshaphat makes use of Solomon’s prayer mentioned, chap. 6:28, as of a promise, and urges several of his petitions as though they had been promises. The reason is this, whatever the faithful pray for, it is granted, therefore their prayers are promises, and the answers to them performances.

Commandments of God are virtually promises, equivalent to them. Not only by proportion, as that command, Luke 17:4, Matthew 18:1-35, to forgive our brother till seventy times seven, faith may conclude, the Lord will forgive much more. But directly as that, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord,’ &c., we may read it as a promise; for whatever the Lord command his people, he has engaged himself to give strength to obey. So that every command may be read by the eye of faith as a promise in this

sense, I will enable thee to love me, &c. ‘The just shall live by faith;’ faith reads it, I will enable the just to live by faith; ‘mortify your members;’ ‘let him deny himself.’ The reason is, because the Lord writes his law in our hearts, Jeremiah 31:33. And every law written there becomes gospel, every precept a promise; for to write laws in our hearts is to make our hearts answerable to the laws, i. e., both willing and able to obey: ‘We are not under the law,’ for it is in us, ‘but under grace.’ If a man command a thing, and engage to enable the performance, his command is equivalent to a promise. He works all our works in us.

Nay, which is strangest, threatenings are by just consequence promises. The threatenings denounced against the wicked are promises to the godly. Where any sin is threatened, a promise to the opposite virtue is contained in that threatening. This by the rule of contraries. ‘The wicked shall be turned into hell;’ faith may conclude, the godly shall be carried into heaven. ‘Cursed are those that do the work of the Lord negligently,’ therefore blessed are those that do it faithfully. The antithesis we find in Scripture betwixt these warrants faith: ‘Say to the righteous, It shall go well with him; but woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him,’ Isaiah 3:10-11; ‘He that believes shall be saved,’ &c., that is frequent. And when one member of the opposition is not expressed, faith may be bold to add it, as following by necessary consequence. Faith may extract as much comfort out of that terrible chapter, Deuteronomy 28:1-68, as out of any. Here is food enough for faith to live on.

(2.) Collect the promises; treasure them up; methodise them aright; meditate on them. Many in one.

Gather them. They are the meat that you must live upon in this wilderness, angels’ food. Be as careful to gather them as the Israelites to gather manna. Be often searching the mines. Suffer not these pearls of great price to lie neglected in the field. These must defray all the charges of your pilgrimage. The angels take much pains (so the word παρακ■ψαι implies) to pry into the gospel, much more should we; for these are the sweetest strains, the quintessence of the gospel, and we are more concerned than they. If the angels had had such promises as believers, none of them had fallen. In reading and hearing, take special notice of promises. Treasure them up. Let your memories be like the pot in the ark, always full of this spiritual manna. Otherwise you confine God’s gracious working by way of promise to times and means, to reading and hearing, whereas we always stand in need of promises, but have not always opportunities to read and hear. A promise treasured up will afford comfort in our beds, in our callings, in a dungeon, banishment. Faith will starve or be unactive at such times if you have no treasure.

Dispose them so as you may have some ready for all occurences, emergencies, upon all occasions, that no accident, no employment may surprise you without a promise of support. To live by faith is to make every act of your life an act of faith; and how can that be except you have a promise suitable to every act, condition, and accordingly apply it? Pray, hear, eat, walk, work, all in the strength of a promise, for direction, protection, strength, success in all. This is the life of faith.

Meditate frequently and seriously on them. They are the sweetest lines that Christ writes to his spouse, will you not often peruse these? There is majesty in the commands, severity in the threatenings, but love is predominant in promises, nothing but sweetness, we should let them stay long on our palates. What concoction is to the natural life, that meditation is to this life of faith; no meat will nourish and preserve life except it be digested. They are sweeter than honey and the

honey-comb; you get little sweetness except you squeeze it out by meditation. This clasps faith and the promises together, removes discouragements, suggests arguments. The comforts and acts of this believing life are much weakened and interrupted by neglect of meditation.

(3.) Accustom yourselves to a holy kind of discourse and reasoning. Faith does not abolish, but improve reason. Whatever is requisite to the constitution of a man may be useful to him as a Christian. The application of promises is nothing but sanctified reason exercised by faith. Argue from general promises to particulars, from specials to you as individual, from typicals to reals, from temporals to spirituals, from spirituals to temporals. From generals to individuals. All things shall work for good, &c., therefore this loss, affliction, distemper, temptation. All the ways of God are mercy, therefore this way, though cross to my desires, interests, endeavours. Whatsoever ye ask, it shall be done; therefore this want shall be supplied, this lust subdued, this temptation conquered, this occurrence sanctified: 'It shall go well,' &c., Isaiah 3:1-26, therefore now when it seems to be worst. From specials to your own particulars. From those which seem appropriated to one person, if there be no peculiar reason for a restriction; for it is with these promises as with judicial laws, they are of universal extent if their reason be so. Hence the apostle applies that to the Hebrews which was made in special to Joshua: 'I will not leave thee,' Hebrews 13:5. So may we those to Abraham: 'I am thy shield,' &c., Genesis 15:1, 'I will bless those that bless thee,' &c., the same God, the like privilege. And that to Peter: 'I have prayed that thy faith fail not.' There is the same necessity, the like temptations, and as great weakness. And that of Paul: 'My grace shall be sufficient,' 2 Corinthians 12:9. The same engagements on God, such lusts in us, and less strength. From typical promises to accomplishments in the antitype. There is ground for it, 1 Corinthians 10:6, τ■ποι ■μ■ν ■γεν■θησαν. So Egypt was a type of our natural condition, Pharaoh of our spiritual enemies; the water out of the rock, and manna from heaven, of spiritual nourishment by Christ; the cloud and fire, of direction and protection, Canaan of heaven. The promises of these to them are promises of the antitype to us, and the accomplishment an encouragement to our faith, such as these: 'I will be honoured upon Pharaoh,' &c., Exodus 14:4; 'My presence shall go with thee,' Exodus 33:14; 'Ye shall eat the good things of the land,' Isaiah 1:19. From temporals to spirituals. From those to the body to those for the soul. Spiritual blessings are included in temporal promises. Videntur temporalia proponi, quando speciale præmium occultè significatur. Temporals are pledges of spirituals, hence Paul argues, 2 Timothy 4:18, 'The Lord shall preserve thee from every evil work.' Christ useth the like argument to confirm faith: Matthew 6:25, 'Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' And the apostle, 1 Corinthians 9:9, 'Does God take care for oxen?' &c. An argument à minori ad majus is strong with God. Will he give his beloved food for the outward man, and let the soul famish? Will he guard the body with angels, and let the soul be a prey to Satan? Will he maintain the outward man in health and strength, and suffer the soul to languish under spiritual distempers? Will he heal all bodily diseases, and not the soul's more grievous and dangerous ones? Will he take care for the body, and neglect the soul? do less for precious souls than vile bodies? Will special love afford but common mercies? Shall the body prosper, and not the soul, when he delights more in the soul's prosperity? From spirituals to temporals. This is strong in all respects, à majori ad minus. Will he do the greater, and not the less? Will he give the kingdom of God, and not add the inconsiderable things of earth? Will he give the most precious things in heaven and earth, and not paper and thread to wrap them in? Will he afford the entertainment of a Father's house, and not a few husks? Will he deliver the soul from death, and not the feet from falling? Will he give special, eternal, and not common mercies? the

upper springs, and not the lower? the fountain, and not a few drops? Faith may here be confident.

(4.) Confine not God in his performances to things, degrees, times, or persons. Let not faith so act, as to limit him in acting. This limiting of God occasions disappointments, and these discourage; and discouragements weaken faith, impair its strength and life. Expect not peremptorily, either the individuals which seem to be promised, or the degrees of them. The conclusions of faith in its arguings must not exceed the premises. Conclusio sequitur deteriorem partem. Conclude not peremptorily, but when the promise is peremptory. There are some things which God does not promise peremptorily, degrees of grace, arbitrary assistances, outward blessings, inward joy. In applying such promises, faith need not conclude absolutely, but either conditionally, I shall have this if it be good for me; or disjunctively, I shall have either this, or something better. It is an ordinary, but, I think, a great misapprehension, that we do not believe, but when we confidently expect the very things promised. I think it is more than God requires in applying any promises, but those which are necessary for our being; in those which concern our well-being, we do hereby limit the Holy One of Israel, where he hath not limited himself. This is not to believe, but to tempt God. For times. In applying promises, we must not always expect a present accomplishment, but wait and depend. These are vital acts of faith, and to continue in the exercise of these, is to live by faith. Times and seasons are in God's hands, it is his prerogative to fit acts to seasons. We take notice of time, but he only knows opportunity, as what is good, so when it is so. When he seems slack, though time pass, yet he never lets slip an opportunity. How long did the faithful Jews expect the Messiah's coming, and Japhet's persuasion, yet both promised! How long have we expected the fall of Babylon, and erecting of David's tabernacle? The like for particular persons. Abraham had a son promised, he stayed long for performance. And so David for the kingdom; it was so long deferred, till his faith was near expiring; it was very weak, when he said, 'I shall one day fall by the hands of Saul.' The liveliness of faith is never more evident than in long expectations. 'He that believes makes not haste,' Isaiah 28:16. It is unbelief that hastes, Psalms 31:22, Psalms 116:11.

Confine not the accomplishment to persons. It is probable Isaac believed the promises made to him and his father should be accomplished in Esau, God performed them to Jacob. If the promise be performed to you or yours, to this child, if not to that; God is faithful, and faith is not in vain.

(5.) As to conditional promises, if you have the qualification in sincerity, let not the want of degrees discourage you from application. The lowest degree of grace entitles to the promise. It may be grace is not broke forth into a flame; it is acceptable to Christ when it does but smoke: 'He will not quench,' &c. It may be you are not grown to the tallness of a cedar, Christ delights in a reed, a bruised reed: 'He will not break the bruised reed.' He deals not with poor worms, as one that sells, but gives. Therefore he propounds conditions of so low a rate, as in contracts with men would scarce admit the notion of conditions; gives, if ask; satisfy, if desire; accept, if come; bestow, if receive. And in this respect the covenant of grace is in reality absolute, though, according to the form of proposal, it seems conditional.

God descends to as low conditions as are imaginable; and yet the least degree of the lowest condition gives interest in the promise. 'Blessed are the pure,' &c., he says not perfectly pure. Oh but I am impure in heart and life, how can I apply this promise? The Lord comes lower, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst.' To thirst after purity, is less than to be actually pure. Oh but thirst is a high degree of desire, I fear mine amounts not to so much. The Lord comes lower: 'If there be

a willing mind, it is accepted,' 2 Corinthians 8:12. 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,' Revelation 22:17. Willingness, the lowest degree of desire, and desire, the lowest condition imaginable, entitles to the highest degree of blessedness. But further; suppose you have but the qualification in so weak a degree as you do not discern it, yet should not this discourage from applying the promises. For observe it, believing is more acceptable to God, and gives clearer title to the promise than any condition annexed thereto. For this is the principal condition of the covenant, others are but accessories; this makes others acceptable, none can be accepted without it; by this the rest are attained, none are attainable without this. Therefore ye should believe, that ye may be qualified, not refuse because ye are not. If you bring faith to a promise, you bring that which most pleases God, and that which will bring the rest.

(6.) He that can lay just claim to one promise, has interest in all; he that can apply any one, has property in every one. This observation is necessary to advance the present design. For all the promises are requisite to maintain the life of faith; he that excludes himself from any, confines the influence of faith to some part of his life, which should be diffused through all. Yet this is ordinary with weak believers, to apply some, but restrain themselves from others, as pertaining only to saints of higher attainments and greater eminency. This is a mistake. He that applies one, should apply all; all the promises are his, as clearly as his inheritance; he that possesses one is heir of all. The first act of faith gives interest in Christ; and he that hath Christ, hath all; for in him all the promises are yea and amen, 2 Corinthians 1:20. The least act of faith admits you into covenant; and the promises are but parcels of the covenant, he that has the whole has every part. If the Lord has given you possession of any one, though by the weakest act of faith, he has given you interest in all; and therefore let no discouragement hinder from applying any. 'He that overcomes shall inherit all things,' Revelation 21:7. All promises are included in this one. And who is he that overcomes? John tells us, 1 John 5:4, 'This is the victory, even our faith.' He, then, that believes has right to all promises, and shall inherit all; and therefore should confidently apply all.

(7.) The Lord's word is more valuable in his account, than all his works; he will suffer all the works of his hands to perish, rather than fail in the least degree to perform the most inconsiderable promise. Angels and men shall be destroyed, heaven and earth shall be annihilated, rather than one tittle of a promise shall fail of its full accomplishment: Luke 16:17, 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than one tittle of the law to fail;' and Matthew 5:1-48, neither ■■τα, nor κερ■ια, nor the least letter, nor the least point. His glory is as much interested in the gospel, therefore he uses an expression comprehensive of both: Matthew 24:35, 'My words shall not pass away.' The heavens shall vanish into darkness, and the earth sink into nothing, rather than the least letter of a promise shall not be fulfilled. Faith resting on a promise, has a surer foundation than the earth, and stronger pillars than the heavens; therefore let it repose there with confidence in every act, and live there secure in all occurrences.

8. Persuade thyself, that God had a particular respect to thee in every promise. This is the great objection, which does much prejudice faith in its life and actings. The Lord did not intend this for me; he might respect others, those with whom he conversed familiarly, but not such a worm as I. This is an error which, though you think it arises only from a mean conceit of yourselves, yet indeed it proceeds from too low apprehensions of God, the impartialness of his love, and the infinite comprehensiveness of omniscience.

If the Lord should appear to you in a visible shape, as to Abraham, and make you a promise, as one friend to another, then you would not question his intention and respect. Why, consider you were as full in the eye of God when he engaged himself by promises, as Abraham was when he talked with him face to face. Nothing is past or future in respect of God's all-seeing eye. Things past to us will be present to him unto eternity. Things future from us were present to him to* all eternity. Nothing is hid or unobserved, Hebrews 4:13, τετραχηλισμ■να. The faces of all things are naked and open, as one of our faces to another; even those things which are so small, as they seem unworthy to come under divine cognisance; every sparrow, every hair, much more his jewels, his peculiar treasure. All believers that were, are, or ever will be, were as fully and distinctly in God's eye, while he was purposing to engage himself by promise, as our fingers are to us, when our eyes are fixed most intensely upon our hands: 'I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.' The Lord had as special and distinct a respect to every believer in each promise of the covenant, as a father has to each child in every legacy that he bequeaths by will, when he divides his estate among them, and sets out every child his portion. And therefore faith may with as much confidence make use of every promise, and live upon them, as any child may upon the portion left him by his father's will. This notion is well grounded; for God's covenant is not only called συνθ■κη a compact, but διαθ■κη, a will or testament, Matthew 26:28, and so the Seventy-two ordinarily render ■■■■. What a sweet encouragement is this to act and live by faith, to consider you were in the thoughts and eye of God promising, as a child in the eye of a father making his will; and that God gave you the promises to live upon, as a father gives a child an inheritance, a portion; and his eye as full upon you, as upon Abraham or David, when he made them promises face to face!

(9.) Consider, it is all one with God to do as to say, to perform as to promise; it is as easy, he is as willing, as able, to one as the other. There is no such distance betwixt God's saying and doing, as amongst men. His saying is doing: Psalms 33:9, 'He said, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' His τ■ λ■γειν is κοσμοπο■α: Psalms 33:6, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;' Hebrews 11:3, 'The worlds were framed by the word of the Lord.' There is omnipotency in his word, both of command and promise: therefore called, 'the word of his power,' Hebrews 1:3. One word of his can do more in an instant, than the united powers of heaven and earth can do to eternity. This consideration removes at once the chief discouragements that hinder the lively actings of faith; for what is it that weakens our confidence of the promises' performance, but because we look upon the accomplishment as uncertain or difficult, or future and afar off! Now from hence faith may conclude the performance is certain, easy, and present.

It is certain. The root of all certainty is God's will. He is willing to promise, for he has actually done it. He is as willing to perform, for it is all one with him to do as say.

It is easy. What more easy than a word! An act is not more difficult. And one word will give accomplishment to all the promises: no pains, trouble, cost, hazard. The covenant is our tree of life, the promises are its branches, laden with all precious fruits. The least word, the least breath, from God's mouth, will shake all the fruits into your bosoms. Will not he speak so little who has done so much, sent his Son to suffer so much, let his Spirit strive so much? There is but one word betwixt you and all the happiness contained in the great and precious promises. And is it not easy for faith to believe that it is easy for God to speak one word? This may be faith's plea, Only speak the word, and it shall be done. Nay, it is done, the accomplishment is present, the word is passed

out of his lips. You have as much for the accomplishment of promises, as all things that now exist had for their creation, God's word. He does when he says; his saying is doing. Nothing remains on God's part to be done further. That which suspends your enjoyments is want of faith; do but believe, and all is said, all is done, to make you happy. You may as easily believe that he will perform, as that he has promised. It is easy to believe that he has promised: you question not that. There is as much reason to believe he will perform, for it is all one to him. Men promise great things, but cannot perform without trouble, expense, or hazard; therefore may we doubt of them. But there are no such things incident to God's performances; no more trouble or pains to perform a promise than to make it. He can perform all with less trouble than we can speak, do all he has said as easily as anything he does.

10. Believers have a just and unquestionable title to all things promised, besides that title which the promise conveys. They have right to them, and therefore have no reason to doubt but the gracious God will bestow them, especially when he has confirmed the former title by promise. All that is promised was bequeathed to believers by the eternal will of the Father, and purchased for them by the precious blood of Christ, and they are instated therein by many endearing and interesting relations. They have as much right thereto as an heir to his inheritance, or a wife to her jointure; for they are co-heirs with Christ, and married to him: 1 Corinthians 3:23, 'All is yours.' All. This is more than if he had said a kingdom, though this is much; nay, more than if he had said, all the kingdoms of the earth; nay, more than if heaven and earth were yours. What then is all? Why heaven and earth, and all in both. All in heaven that you are capable of, and all in earth that is desirable and good. Not only angels and men; not only riches, pleasures, glory; but the Father (that which is more than all), Christ, and the Spirit; all that they are, have, can do, so far as these are communicable, attributes, offices, functions. All these are your own, though you do not believe it. You have jus ad rem, right to these, upon other accounts besides the promise. Faith gives jus in re, actual possession. Here is great encouragement for believers to act faith in the promises, from this consideration. Will a child doubt that a pious and indulgent father will not give him his own, though he do not promise it? But if he engage himself by promise, he will be confident. Shall we be more confident of the justice of men, than the righteousness of God? He has made all your own, and will he be so unjust as to detain it? He has promised to give all that is yours, and will he add unfaithfulness to injustice, such injustice as is odious amongst men? Shall not the Lord of heaven and earth be righteous? Faith cannot doubt here. Either you must believe, or cast such horrid aspersions on God, as though he were as unjust or unfaithful as the worst of men. The whole glorious essence of God is engaged for the performance of every promise. It is of as much concernment as the Deity. He would cease to be God if he should fail to perform any promise. This would undeify him. For he ceases to be God, when he ceases to be most perfect; for this is the proper and essential notion of God, to be quid perfectissimum. If there be absence of any perfection, or the presence of any imperfection, he would not be God. But non-performance argues both; this divests him of all perfection, and consequently makes him most imperfect.

Faithfulness. He is not faithful amongst men, who answers not his engagements; he fails his trusts who keeps not promise.

Truth. 'He that believes not, makes God a liar;' for how is he true who doth not what he says he will do?

Justice. That does suum cuique tribuere. The promise makes every thing promised our own, and it is injustice not to give it.

Goodness. He is bad amongst men, who is not as good as his word.

Holiness. His promise is as sacred as our vows to him. Violation of a vow is a profanation, so is non-performance of a promise. If he perform not, it is because either he will not, and then where is mercy? or cannot, and then how is he all-sufficient? If he cannot, it is either for want of wisdom, and then where is his omniscience? or ability, then how is he omnipotent? or opportunity, then how is he omnipresent? Nothing but absence in him can occasion the want of an opportunity. Either he never intended it, and then how is he upright? It is odious dissimulation, with men, to speak what they never intend. Or he did once intend it, but now does not; then how is he unchangeable? If he is not unchangeable, he is not eternal; for there is no succession, no variation in eternity. If not eternal, not infinite. If not all these, not God. As sure as he is God, as sure as he has any perfection, he will perform his promises. He that doubts of performance, doubts of God's being by consequence. Unbelief is horrible atheism, it dethrones God. You may as well say there is no God, as say there shall be no performance. The glory of his being is concerned; that is infinitely more than our happiness. He loses nothing if he perform; all, if he do not. His engagements are infinite. Every perfection engages, and every perfection is infinite; therefore the obligements are strong, and the performance sure, above the apprehension of men and angels.

We have all the confirmations and assurances, ad extra, that the most suspicious heart can desire.

God's word. That is more than the word of angels, more than all his works, as much as himself. He engages himself when he engages his word; he should deny himself if he should fail. Men may be men, though unfaithful, but God cannot be God: his being is concerned.

Writing. We have them under God's hand, have his hand to shew. He would not have us to depend upon uncertain revelations, here Satan might have deluded us, but inspired holy men of God to write what he dictated, has delivered it as his act and deed. His word of promise written, is more assuring than a voice from heaven would be, 2 Peter 1:19.

Sealed. The sacraments are seals of the righteousness of faith, seals of the covenant wherein faith apprehends that righteousness. 'The covenant of promises.' 'The New Testament in my blood.' A double seal: without, the impressions are Christ's sufferings in blood; a seal within, the Spirit, Ephesians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 1:22.

Sureties. A surety equal with the principal. He who counts it no robbery to be equal with God; equal, both in faithfulness and sufficiency, as willing and as able; no robbery to be equal with God, a disparagement to be compared with men or angels; he who sees no stedfastness in saints or angels, sees nothing else in him: he has engaged with himself his Son and heir, and made him the mediator of this better covenant, Hebrews 8:6, and Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 7:22, he who values his faithfulness more than his life.

Pledge. Of as much worth, and more than heaven and earth, the eternal Spirit: 2 Corinthians 1:22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit;' 2 Corinthians 5:5-6, 'Who hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident,' &c.; Ephesians 1:13-14, 'In whom ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.' God

will forfeit his Spirit, rather than fail his promise.

Oath. He has confirmed it by an oath, Hebrews 6:17-18; we have no more cause to fear the promise will not be performed than that God will be perjured.

Witnesses. Besides those in heaven who bear witness with the Father, the Word and Spirit; and those in earth, 1 John 5:8, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; 'Christ the faithful witness,' Revelation 1:5; and the 'Spirit which beareth witness with our spirits,' Romans 8:16; we have heaven and earth, men and angels, to witness. These things were not done in a corner. As the Lord calls heaven and earth to witness against the unfaithfulness of men, so may we call them to witness the faithfulness of God.

FAITH IN PRAYER But let him ask in faith.—James 1:6. The apostle, in the former verses, after the preface, directs the Jews how they should bear afflictions, viz., with joy, James 1:2-3; patience, James 1:4; wisdom, James 1:5.

'Servant.' 1, By universal subjection, and in respect of their state; not, 2, by particular employment in respect of their use, as Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus.

'All joy.' Not in respect of the afflictions themselves, for they are grievous, and we are not required to be Stoics; but in respect of the issue, to prevent sin, purge corruption, increase holiness, glorify God, and try grace, James 1:3.

'Perfect work.' Extensivè, to all its objects, occasions. Intensivè, in all its acts.

'Lack wisdom.' To demean himself under afflictions so as to attain the former ends.

'It shall be given.' There is a promise, the object of faith, with an encouragement to act faith from God's gracious disposition. He gives, gives to many, to all men; gives much, liberally and freely too, he upbraids none; how much soever he gives, he never thinks much. But the promise is conditional, and the condition is expressed: James 1:6, 'Let him ask in faith;' otherwise he asks in vain, James 1:7.

Obs. He that would have God to give what he asks, must ask in faith: Mark 11:24, 'Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them;' Matthew 21:22, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.' A great privilege, but limited.

Quest. What is it to ask in faith?

Ans. To this some things are requisite as necessary conditions, though more remotely; some things as essential ingredients.

I. The necessary conditions respect the petitioner, asker, the thing asked, the manner of asking.

1. The asker must be in the faith, or rather faith in him; the petitioner must be a believer. How can he ask in faith, who has no faith? John 16:23; how can he ask in Christ's name who believes not in it? There is no audience, no answer, for him that is not a believer: John 9:31, 'God heareth not sinners.' Those that live in sin, live not by faith; or if you live not in it as to visible practice, yet if it live in you, have entertainment, love, approbation in the heart. When there is no faith there will be no audience: Psalms 66:18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' God will not

hear that which displeases so as to answer it. But prayer without faith does not please him, it is impossible it should, for Hebrews 11:6, ‘without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’ God will not accept the service till the person be accepted, Hebrews 11:4; Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, and then God testified of his gifts. He obtained both by faith.

2. The thing asked for must be an object of faith; such things as you may upon good grounds believe that God will grant. There must be a belief, a persuasion, that the things desired are lawful according to his will: 1 John 5:14, ‘And this is the assurance that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.’ No assurance he will hear, without assurance that what we ask is according to his will; now that is according to his will for which we have command or promise; for these, though not properly his will, yet are ordinarily so called, they are that will to which our practice must be conformable. His decreeing or secret will belongs not to us, it is not the rule of our practice in praying, hearing, &c., but that which is revealed by command or promise. Example, too, may direct and encourage this act of faith; but it must be the example of the godly, approved and ordinary. Extraordinary examples are no rule for us, as that of David, Psalms 109:1-31, praying against particular enemies; it is extraordinary, since he had (as it is supposed) extraordinary assistance to discern that his particular enemies were incorrigible; otherwise, though it may be lawful to pray against the public enemies of God, his ways, and people, or against the cause and practices of particular enemies, yet not against their persons. If there be no persuasion, or none upon these grounds, the prayer is not of faith, and so it is sin; for whatever is not of faith is sin, and sin can expect no comfortable return from God. He that cannot behold it will not hear it, or hear it so as to reward it but with punishment. A fervent prayer for a thing unlawful is a crying sin.

3. The manner of asking must be faithful. As it must be in fide as to the person, and de fide as to the object, so fideliter as to the manner. As he must be bonus that asks, and bonum that is asked, so must he ask this benè, in three particulars.

(1.) With fervency. He does not ask in faith that asks not fervently: James 5:16, ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.’ And what prayer that is, see James 5:15, ‘the prayer of faith.’ It must be δ■ησις ■νεργουμ■νη, it must be an inwrought prayer, proceeding from the powerful working of the Spirit in the heart. Now what the workings of the Spirit are in the heart as to prayer the apostle tells, Romans 8:26, ‘sighs that cannot be uttered.’ Such prayers as shew the parties to be ■νεργουμ■νοι in a good sense, i. e., possessed with the Holy Spirit, and acted by it. Prayers must be strivings: Romans 15:30, ‘Strive together with me in your prayers.’ He that will prevail must wrestle, as Jacob; give the Lord no rest, as Isaiah 62:7. Cold, heartless prayers argue want of faith, and will want success; teach God to deny. If there be only lip labour, draw near with the lips only, God will withdraw. If we pray as if we prayed not, God will hear as though he heard not, take little notice except to correct. Strong cries only reach and pierce heaven; such were Christ’s.

(2.) With submission. We must not limit God. To limit the Holy One of Israel is to tempt him, and that is a notorious effect of unbelief, Hebrews 3:9, Hebrews 3:12, and Hebrews 11:18. We must not limit God as to time, place, persons, things, degrees.

Time. Be willing to stay God’s time. He that believes, makes not haste. It was an unbelieving prince that said, ‘Why should I wait on the Lord any longer?’ And Habakkuk 2:3-4, ‘The vision is for

an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it,' &c.

Place. Jacob would not have prayed in faith for provision, if he would not have had it in Egypt.

Persons. Noah would not in faith have asked blessings for Ham, if he had limited God as to the person. We must leave the Lord to his own way of free dispensation.

Things. Lawful things are temporal or spiritual; and these necessary for being, as grace, and the means of grace; or well-being, as joy, assurance, enlargements.

Temporal blessings must be desired with such conditions as they are promised, and besides, with reference to God's good pleasure, and caution of their expediency for us; if it seem good to thee, if they be good for us. Spiritual blessings for well-being, though they may be desired with more importunity, as being of more worth, and more expressly promised, yet with the like references. But spirituals necessary to salvation may be desired absolutely, without reserves, conditions, exceptions, because they are so promised, and we are so commanded.

Degrees. We must not limit God to degrees of grace, or plenty or plausibleness of the means, but refer it to infinite wisdom to bestow what degrees he knows will make us most serviceable, and what kind of means soever he will please to make effectual for attaining those degrees.

(3.) With right intentions. It is not bene, except ad bonum: James 4:3, 'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.' We must pray to glorify God, make us serviceable to him, capable of communion with him. We must not desire grace to excel others, or, as Simon Magus, the Spirit, to be admired, praised. We must not desire gifts, to advance our credit, get applause; riches, to satisfy lusts, to live at ease, &c. This is to ask amiss; and he that asks amiss, must miss of an answer.

These are the necessary conditions of this duty. I call them but conditions, because, though we cannot pray in faith without them, yet we may have these, and yet not pray in faith.

II. The essential ingredients of this duty are the actings of faith in prayer, which are one or other of these four. He whose faith puts forth any one of these acts prays in faith.

1. Particular application. Believing the promise whereby God has engaged himself to give what he asks; so to ask in faith is to pray with confidence the Lord will grant the petition, because he has promised; to pray with David, 'Do good to thy servant,' &c., and to rest assured he will do it, because it is his word, his promise, 1 Kings 8:24-26.

2. Fiducial recumbence. Casting himself upon God, without the mediation of a promise, and relying, depending on him for the grant of what he asks, when faith in prayer supports itself upon God immediately; which act of faith has place either when there is no particular promise of the thing asked, or faith is so weak as it cannot make use of it by way of application. There are other supports of faith besides a promise, and other acts of faith besides applying a promise, which the soul putting forth in prayer may be said to ask in faith, and this act of dependence is one in special. Faith can read an answer of prayer in the name of God, and stay itself there, when a promise appears not, or, through faith's weakness, cannot support it, Isaiah 50:10-11.

3. A general persuasion that the prayer shall be heard. I call it general, to distinguish it from that particular persuasion that the thing asked shall be presently granted, or granted at all, which is not simply necessary to this duty. The prayer may be heard, though the thing desired be not presently bestowed, or not bestowed at all. And so a man may pray in faith, though he be not confident that what he prays for shall be given him, much more that it shall not be presently given. Zachariah prayed in faith, and it is like he prayed when he was young, yet a child, though that which he asked, was not given him till he was old, Luke 1:13. Noah prayed that God would persuade Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem, and he prayed in faith; yet this was not granted till many hundred years after. Christ prayed in faith that the cup might pass from him, the bitterness of death; yet he had not a particular persuasion that this should be granted; for this persuasion had been false, for it was not granted; yet was his prayer heard, Hebrews 5:7. Paul prayed in faith that he might be free from that messenger of Satan; that mercy was not granted; yet was his prayer heard and graciously answered: 2 Corinthians 12:9, ‘My grace is sufficient.’ A prayer may be heard, though the mercy desired be not granted; therefore it is not necessary to this duty that a man should have a special persuasion to receive what he asks. He prays in faith, who is persuaded in general that his prayer shall be heard, referring the answer to the wisdom and goodness of God, to be returned when and in what kind he pleases. He that believes God will hear his prayer, though he be not confident that he will grant this particular desired, yet prays in faith.

4. A special confidence that the very same thing which is asked shall be given. This is the highest and rarest act of faith; and if the mercy desired be temporal, it is extraordinary, not raised in the heart but by special instinct; yet may it now and then be vouchsafed to some who are admitted to sweeter familiarity and nearer communion with God, Psalms 27:1-14.

Use. Take notice of the misery of unbelievers. They that cannot pray in faith must not expect to have their prayers heard. All men have not faith, though most presume. They cannot give an account how or when it was wrought, cannot shew their faith by their works. Such, though they make many prayers, God will not hear. If this be your case, what will ye do for support in distress, for supply of wants, for removal of fears and dangers? It is the great, the sweet privilege of believers, whatever they ask in Christ’s name it shall be given. It is the misery of unbelievers, whatever they ask it shall be denied, or given in wrath. ‘Call upon me,’ says the Lord to believers, ‘in the day of trouble, and I will hear you.’ Unbelievers must read the contrary: ‘Though ye call, I will not hear,’ &c. To believers Christ says, ‘Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:’ but to them, Though ye ask, I will not give, &c. Christ says to them, as to the Jews, ‘Ye shall seek me, but shall not find me, and whither I go ye shall not come;’ and if they must not come to Christ, whither then? Christ will neither hear them in life, nor at death, nor after death. Those that live in unbelief may read their doom, James 1:7 those that die in it, Christ will send them to the gods they have served. He will say, Ye would not come to me, believe in me, that ye might have life; therefore ye shall die in your sins, die now, die for ever. And after death, if you come with the foolish virgins, and knock at the bridegroom’s chamber, Christ will profess, ‘I know you not,’ and command a sad and everlasting departure.

Obj. The Ninevites prayed, and were heard, Jonah 3:7-8, John 3:10. Ahab prays, and is heard, 1 Kings 21:27, 1 Kings 21:29; yet both unbelievers, Ahab notoriously, 1 Kings 21:25-26.

Ans. 1. As a prayer may be heard, yet the thing prayed for not granted, so the thing desired may be granted, and yet the prayer not heard: so it is with unbelievers; for, to speak strictly and properly, a prayer is not heard, but when both person and prayer is accepted. None are accepted but in Christ, and none are in Christ but by faith; therefore unbelievers, both person and prayer, are not accepted, and consequently their prayer not heard; though what they pray for be granted, it is not out of respect to the prayer.

Ans. 2. The Lord gives nothing but temporal things upon the prayers of unbelievers. The Ninevites obtained but a temporal deliverance, no more does Ahab; not a removal of the judgment threatened, but a delay of the execution; not forgiveness, but forbearance. In the next generation, as some observe, Nineveh was quite destroyed; and the evil threatened to Ahab's family surprised it in his son's days, and the severest part of it is executed upon himself, 1 Kings 22:24. Unbelievers do not unfeignedly desire spiritual mercies, grace, regeneration, holiness; none desire these but those that in some degree have them, 'found of them that seek him not.' And will the Lord hear a prayer not accompanied with unfeigned desires?

Ans. 3. He gives not temporals in mercy, when unbelievers pray for them. Israel desires a king, he gives them one in wrath: they desire flesh, he sends quails, but sends his wrath upon them; that pleasant meat had bitter sauce, Psalms 106:15, Numbers 6:11, Numbers 6:13, Psalms 78:29-31. He gives them outward blessings, but curses them. Unbelievers, as such, have nothing in mercy, because neither rise nor issue merciful; not the rise, they proceed not from love; nor the issue, they make them not better. That is cursed which brings not a soul-blessing with it. Then only prayer is heard properly when mercy is the return of it.

Obj. If the Lord will not hear, why should we pray?

Ans. 1. We are obliged to obedience, though we be not assured of any reward. Subjection to God is necessary, being founded in our natures, as his creatures, and such creatures. Reward is arbitrary, as being grounded merely on his will, which moves freely. Though God do not hear, we are bound to pray, for he has commanded.

Ans. 2. Though unbelievers sin in praying, and therefore God will not hear them, yet they sin worse in not praying at all. It is a more heinous sin not to pray, than not to pray in faith. A total omission is a greater abomination than an undue performance. It is much worse to fail in the substance than in the manner only.

Ans. 3. It is more dangerous not to pray at all, than to pray amiss. The danger is proportionable to the heinousness of the sin. He may deny mercy to those that pray amiss, but he will pour wrath on those that pray not at all, Jeremiah 10:25.

Use. Exhortation to practise this duty. Whatever ye do, ask; whenever ye ask, ask in faith. Nothing more necessary than prayer; no qualification of prayer more necessary than faith. Of all duties and privileges, none more advantageous and comfortable than prayer; but it is faithful prayer: for without faith there is neither advantage by it, nor comfort in it. To pray, and not in faith, is to profane the ordinance, to take God's name in vain, and to pray in vain. Pray as much, as often as you will, if not in faith, you lose your labour. The apostle is peremptory: James 1:7, 'Let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord.'

Now to prevent this wavering, this doubting, so dishonourable and offensive to God; so prejudicial, dangerous, uncomfortable to you: let me prescribe some directions, the observance of which will establish the heart, and encourage faith, in your approaches to God.

Direct. 1. Get assurance of your interest in the covenant; that Christ has loved you, and washed you from your sins in his blood; that he has given you his Spirit; that you are reconciled and in favour. If you be sure you are his favourites, you may be sure to have his ear. As acceptance of persons goes before acceptance of services, so assurance of that is the ground of confidence in this: 1 John 5:13-15, ‘These things have I written, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.’ First, assurance that ye have eternal life, and then confidence that he will hear. If ye know that ye have right to eternal life by faith, the first fruits of it, then ye may be sure he will hear and grant; not hear in vain, but make sweet returns to the petitions he hears, 1 John 5:15.: John 15:7, ‘If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’ First assure your union, and then doubt not of your audience. Union goes before audience, so assurance of one goes before assurance of the other.

Faith in its infancy may put forth some weaker acts of recumbency and dependence upon God for answer of prayer; but till it be grown up to assurance, it cannot be confident that he will hear or answer.

Direct. 2. Consider, the Lord is engaged to hear prayer. If the Lord be engaged, strong engagements lie upon him to hear. Faith may conclude he will hear, for he will not, he cannot, be false to his engagement; but he is engaged strongly, by his titles, attributes, &c.

(1.) His titles: Psalms 65:2, ‘O thou that hearest prayer!’ This is one of his titles of honour, he is a God that hears prayer; and it is as truly ascribed to him as mercy or justice. He hears all prayer, ‘therefore unto thee shall all flesh come.’ He never rejects any that deserves the name of a prayer, how weak, how unworthy soever the petitioner be. All flesh! and will he (may faith say) reject mine only? Romans 10:12, ‘He is rich unto all that call upon him;’ Psalms 86:5, ‘Thou art plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee;’ Hebrews 11:6, ‘A rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’ This must be believed as certainly as we believe that God is. As sure as God is the true God, so sure is it that none who sought him diligently departed from him without a reward. He rewards all seekers, for indefinita in materia necessaria æquipollet universali. And if all, why not me? You may as well doubt that he is God as doubt that he will not reward, not hear prayer; so James 1:5, ‘If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.’

(2.) His attributes. To instance in his power and goodness; from hence faith may infer that he is both willing and able to hear, and from hence confidently conclude that he shall be heard. These are strong supports of faith, like the pillars of Solomon’s temple: Boaz, ‘In him is strength,’ i. e., he is able; and Jachim, ‘He will establish,’ i. e., he is willing, 2 Chronicles 3:17. When you pray, consider he is,

[1.] Able to hear and give what you ask. It is gross atheism to doubt of this, to question omnipotency. If able to do all things, then sure what you pray for. Omnipotency has no bounds, no nil ultra to it, no limit to this but his will: Psalms 135:6, ‘Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and earth.’ Consider he can do,

First, Abundantly, Ephesians 3:20. He can do more than we ask. We can think more than we have any reason or necessity to ask; he can do more than we can think, abundantly more, exceeding abundantly. He has done more at the requests of his people than we can ask, and he can do more than he has done: create more worlds; Hebrews 7:25, ‘Save to the uttermost.’

Secondly, Easily. He can do the greatest thing you ask more easily than you can do the least thing you think. That which all the united strength of men and angels, the whole creation, cannot do at all, or not without great labour and travail, he can do as easily as you can move a finger or turn an eye; he can do that with a word, with a look, which all the creatures in heaven and earth cannot do with their whole strength; Matthew 8:8, he can work a miracle with a word, how easily then can he do all that you need ask! And if it be so easy for him to grant, why should faith doubt?

Thirdly, Safely. Without any loss or damage to himself, without any diminution of that infinite store that is in himself. Whatever he gives he has never the less, for he bestows favours as the sun communicates light; the sun loseth nothing by shining, the more it shines the more illustrious; the more he bestows, the more glorious. All that you can desire is not so much to God as a drop is to the whole ocean. The sea would lose something, though an inconsiderable loss, by the subtraction of a drop; but God, whatever he gives, loses nothing, because what he bestows are things without him.

[2.] He is willing. Faith seldom questions God’s power; that which hinders its actings is doubts whether he is willing. But there is more reason to question this, for he is as willing as he is able. His goodness is infinite, and so nothing less than his greatness. Nay, he is as willing (if not more willing) to hear as you are to pray, as willing to grant as you to petition, as willing you should have what you desire as you are to have it; nay, more; which appears from,

First, His secret will. He was willing, resolved, determined to hear, before you were willing to ask. He decreed it from eternity; he was willing before you had a will, a being. Nay, he was not only willing before, but he was the cause why you are willing. You must not think that your prayers move God to be willing; his will is the same for ever, not subject to the least motion or alteration. Prayers are rather a sign than a cause that God is willing. He is not made willing because we pray, but because he is willing he stirs up our hearts to pray: Psalms 10:17, ‘Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.’ He is first desirous to do us good, and then makes us desire it, and pray for it, that we may have them in his own way,—a clear evidence he is more desirous than we, because he makes us, so our desires spring from this.

Secondly, His revealed will. He that prescribes the only course whereby prayer may get audience without fail, and commands us to follow that course, is more willing prayer shall be heard than those that are negligent in observing that only fallible way. But so it is, the Lord has commanded and prescribed such a course, which punctually followed, prayer can never return without the answer desired. But the best of men are more or less negligent in observing this prescript;

therefore he is more willing our prayers should be heard than we ourselves.

Now, since the Lord is willing, and so willing, to hear, why should we not believe that he will hear? What strong encouragement is here to pray in faith! There is as much reason to believe that God will hear as there is to believe that you are willing to be heard. You may as well doubt that you are unwilling to be heard, as that God is unwilling to hear.

Thirdly, Christ's intercession. A great encouragement to faith, and so it is propounded by the apostle: Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 4:16, 'Seeing that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession;' 'Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy,' &c.; μετ■ πα■■ησ■ας, a confident freedom to speak all your mind and heart. And speak it with assurance of prevailing: Hebrews 10:19, Hebrews 10:22, 'Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith:' ■ν πληροφορ■α π■στεως. Why? Having a high priest whose office is to intercede. In him, as such, we may have access with boldness and confidence, Ephesians 3:12; π■ν πα■■ησ■αν, &c., ■ν πεποιθ■σει. This affords many things to embolden faith, and make it confident in its access by prayer.

First, He appears for us, Hebrews 9:24; he entered into heaven for this purpose; and for this end he sits on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, Hebrews 8:1. How confident might you present a petition, if assured that one who not only has the greatest power, but all power, in the court where you prefer it, would appear for you! Christ has all power in heaven and earth; in that court where your petition is to be presented, he appears for you who thinks it no robbery to be equal with God, he who can do whatever he will in the whole world. And can you doubt but that your petitions will prevail, when Christ owns you and stands up in your behalf?

Secondly, He presents us, our persons, unto God; presents us as acquitted from guilt, adorned with his righteousness, united to himself; in so near relations, as if we be rejected he must be rejected. He presents us as free from whatsoever might exasperate justice, provoke wrath, or render us in our addresses in the leastwise unacceptable, Zechariah 3:4. No filthy garments, nothing in our persons, so presented, can prejudice our petitions. This was typified by the high priest carrying the names of all the tribes on his breast into the holy of holies. He presents us to his Father as the travail of his soul; as though he should say, 'Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me.' He presents us as those that are as dear to him as his spouse, does as it were take us by the hand and lead us to his Father and our Father, Ephesians 3:12; προσαγωγ■ν seems to intimate such a similar posture. And Paul's expression, as some think, does imply as much: Php 3:12, 'I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.' He presents us as those that are as near to him as his own members. And in reference to that intimate union we are said, Ephesians 2:6, to 'sit with him in heavenly places.' He presents us in such a lovely, endearing posture, as we need not doubt of acceptance, though himself should not pray for us: John 16:27, the Father himself loveth you, because he hath loved me. And when we are thus presented, what reason to doubt but that the Lord will hold forth the golden sceptre?

Thirdly, He offers our prayers. This was the high priest's office, Hebrews 5:1, and Hebrews 8:3. And he was a type of Christ therein. The Lord receives our petitions from his hand, Revelation 8:4. He, as it were, takes us in one hand, and our petitions in the other, and in this engaging posture delivers them; and can you fear the Lord will reject a petition delivered by the hand of Christ?

Fourthly, He sanctifies our prayers, and separates whatever is offensive from them. The Levitical priests were his type in this, who were to bear the iniquity of the holy things, Exodus 28:36, Exodus 28:38. When the Lord looks upon Christ he takes notice of nothing but holiness in the prayers presented by him; he reads nothing in them as offered by Christ, but holiness to the Lord, Christ expunges the rest. Christ is always ready at hand to present them: 'He ever lives,' &c. He intercedes as Paul for Onesimus: 'I beseech thee for my sons,' Philemon 1:9. And if there be anything blame-worthy, put that on mine account, Philemon 1:18-19. He stands up as our advocate, to prevent the prejudice that sin might bring to our prayers, 1 John 2:1. He not only petitions, but pleads. It is just and equal that the Lord should not take notice of sin in our prayers, so as to reject them, because he has fully satisfied even for every failing. If anything should make faith doubt of the success of prayer, it is their sinfulness; but Christ prevents that, for he has so fully satisfied for that, as the Lord will not, cannot take notice of it, so as to be angry with prayers. It is through the virtue of Christ's intercession that our prayers are not dead works, that they are freed from that guilt that would make them deadly. For this end he entered into the holy place with blood, Hebrews 9:12, sprinkling unclean prayers, that they may be sanctified and pure, Hebrews 9:13-14. And when they are thus purged, they are services acceptable to God, 1 Peter 2:5. It is Christ's work to purge, and this his end, Malachi 3:3-4. He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, &c. Now, is there any room for faith to doubt here? Will not the Lord accept of that which is rendered acceptable by Christ? Can he be displeased with that which through Christ is pleasant to him? Will he reject a peace-offering? Malachi 1:11. Christ's intercession leaves no exception. Will he deny a prayer against which he has no exception? Faith must either be confident here, or entertain blasphemous thoughts of God.

Fifthly, He answers all accusations that can be framed against our prayers. And indeed he having undertaken to remove all just ground of accusation, whatever is that way suggested reflects upon the sufficiency of his undertaking; and therefore it nearly concerns him to vindicate them, since if any exceptions can be taken to our prayers, for the utter rejecting of them, his own merit and satisfaction is equally liable thereto. Hence it is that he takes up Satan with such indignation for accusing Joshua: Zechariah 3:1-2, 'The Lord rebuke thee, Satan,' &c. And hence it is that Paul's confidence rises up into a triumph: Romans 8:33, 'Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' &c. And if our prayers can be charged with nothing to hinder the Lord from answering, why should we doubt but he will answer them? Will the Lord reject that against which there is no exception? Can we imagine the Lord will be of such a disposition, as none but the perversest of men are guilty of, to except against that which is freed from exception? Or will the Lord hearken to Satan rather than his own Son? Such reason is there for confidence here, that we must either believe, or entertain most horrid thoughts of God.

Sixthly, He mingles his own prayers and intercession with our requests. He joins with us, and as it were petitions that our petitions may be received. He adds the virtue of his merits to our prayers, and this, as incense, does sweeten and make them acceptable; so that these and all other services are like those contributions of the saints which Paul mentions, Php 4:18, an odour of a sweet smell, or like Noah's offering, Genesis 8:21, from which the Lord smelled a sweet savour. This was typified by the legal service. While the people under the law were praying without, the priest offered incense within, Luke 1:8-10; answerably, while we are praying, Christ offers incense to sweeten them, and make them ascend as a delightful odour before God, Revelation 8:3-4.

Seventhly, That Christ does not only present us and our petitions unto the Father, but does as it were prefer a petition himself to the Lord, that he would answer our prayers, so that if the Lord deny us he must deny him too; and can we doubt Christ will be denied? We are as sure to be heard as Christ himself, and the Father always hears him, John 11:42, John 12:28. No surer ground of confidence in the world than Christ's prayer for us.

It is true indeed, the Scripture, in describing Christ's intercession, uses some expressions which must not be taken properly; for if so understood, according to the letter, they import something inconsistent with Christ's glorious state, and his equality with the Father. But yet we have ground enough to say and believe that Christ prays for us, for Christ himself professes it, John 17:1-26. He did pray, and he promises he will pray, John 16:26, John 14:16. And the Father expects and requires it, Psalms 2:8, even after his exaltation.

There are four acts of Christ which amount to as much as prayers for us, are more than equivalent thereto, and afford more encouragement to faith than if he should now pray for us after the manner of men. I do the more willingly insist on this particular, because Christ's praying for us, and the success of our prayers, is such a confirmation of faith as leaves no room for doubting.

(1.) His requests on earth, which are properly and formally a prayer, and such a prayer as, though made on earth, is no less effectual than if it were now made in heaven, for he is always heard, then as well as now, John 11:42. This prayer is delivered to us, John 17:1-26. Wherein observe for whom, John 17:20, not only for his disciples, but for all that shall believe to the end of the world. For what? For all things that we stand in need of while we are on earth, nay, to all eternity. It is so comprehensive as there is nothing we can desire of God but may be reduced to some of his petitions; so that whatever we need desire was granted to Christ praying for us, before we actually pray for it. Therefore in respect our petitions are as good as granted before they be performed,* Christ has prevented us in desiring all things of his Father for us that we can desire for ourselves. Therefore when we go to pray, faith may be encouraged to consider that Christ prayed for us, and was heard as to those very particulars which we are to pray for.

(2.) The cry of his blood; that is metaphorically, yet really a prayer. It is a pleading, a speaking blood: 'It speaks better things,' &c., Hebrews 12:24. It is as effectual to procure the bestowing of those things which are purchased by it as innocent blood is to procure vengeance for those that spill it. Christ's blood is an importunate, a prevailing advocate, it is never non-suited; its plea is justice; it is just the Lord should hear our prayers, since this was one end for which the blood of Christ was shed; it is just our request should be granted, since his blood was the price of this privilege; the Lord should be unjust, and undervalue the blood of his Son, if he should not give that which he shed his blood to purchase. You must either believe upon this consideration, or blaspheme. It is the blood of the covenant, Hebrews 10:29, by which the blessings of the covenant were purchased and are confirmed. Now that is one article of the covenant, that whatever we ask in Christ's name shall be given; and his blood cries for the performance of this, and justice itself hears it. It is but a righteous, a just thing in reference to Christ, though pure mercy to us, that all our prayers should be heard.

(3.) The will of his divine nature; this is transcendently a prayer. A. prayer I call it, because his prayer on earth runs in the same tenor: John 17:24, 'Father, I will,' &c. It is the will of Christ, as he is God, that all our prayers should be heard, else he would not so often promise it. A prayer

transcendently, because though it differ from ours in form, yet it far, yea infinitely, transcends them in efficacy. His bare will, as he is God, is more effectual for the comfortable returns of our petitions than if as man, and as he was upon earth, he should prostrate himself, and with strong cries and tears importune the Lord to answer us; for his divine will is all one with his Father's will, they differ not; therefore if the Father should deny him, he should deny himself. Here is encouragement indeed; we may as well imagine he will deny himself as doubt he will deny us.

(4.) The desires of his human nature. This is effectuality a prayer, it has all that is essential to a prayer. The voice and outward posture are but accidents. It is a mental, though not a vocal prayer; has as much of a prayer in it as any angel or soul can make, 1 Samuel 1:13. This was his desire on earth, and this is his desire in heaven, that all our prayers may be answered. His affection to us was not impaired by his removal, but rather improved, and he that was heard in that which he feared will be heard in that which he desires. Now let faith put all these together, and it will be easy to read the necessity of an answer. Let it observe the premises, and it may well conclude the Lord will answer. If the Lord will hear his Son, if he will not deny himself, if he cannot be unrighteous, if he cannot be changeable, then he will hear us.

4. The Spirit's office. He is a Spirit of supplication, Zechariah 12:10. It is his function to intercede for us, to pray in us, i. e., to make our prayers. He, as it were, writes our petitions in the heart, we offer them; he indites a good matter, we express it. That prayer which we are to believe will be accepted, is the work of the Holy Ghost; it is his voice, motion, operation, and so his prayer. Therefore when we pray he is said to pray, and our groans are called his, and our design and intent in prayer his meaning, φρ■νημα το■ πνε■ματος, Romans 8:26-27, συναντιλαμβ■νεται; he joins with us in prayer, and supports us under infirmities with his own strength, ■περεντυγχ■νει ■π■ρ ■μ■ν. That prayer is the work of the Spirit, appears in many particulars.

(1.) He stirs us up to pray. He prepares and disposes, incites and inclines the heart to make requests; removes that backwardness, averseness, in-disposedness, that is in us naturally unto this spiritual service: Psalms 10:17, 'Thou wilt prepare their heart.' He prepares it by his Spirit. Interpellat, says Augustine, quia interpellare nos facit. He intercedes for us, because he makes us to intercede. He stirs us up to do it, nos ad preces instigat, excites us, provokes us to pray. Nemo sponte præmeditari vel unam syllabam potest, no man of his own accord can premeditate one syllable, says Calvin, nisi arcano spiritus sui instinctu nos Deus pulsat, but that God by the secret instinct of his Spirit does knock up the heart to it; he puts the heart into a praying frame, and sometimes excites us so powerfully, as we cannot withhold from pouring out our souls before him. As it was with the prophet in another case,—Jeremiah 20:9, 'His word was in mine heart as a burning fire,' &c.,—so, as to prayer, the workings of the Spirit are sometimes so powerful in the heart, so fill the soul, that it cannot contain, but must vent itself, and pour out its requests. Thus with David: Psalms 39:2-3, 'I was dumb with silence; I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue.' Those that have the spirit of prayer, do find this by experience, especially when the Lord intends, and is about to shew them some special favour, or do some great thing for them, he stirs them up answerably to seek it; so that often, if they observe it, they may discover the return of their prayers in the temper and workings of their hearts to it. The Spirit's preparing the heart to pray, signifies the Lord will cause his ear to hear.

(2.) He presents matter, teaches what we shall pray for. This is plain in the apostle's expression, Romans 8:1-39. We know not what is proper and expedient for us, what is seasonable, what is best for us, or when it will be so. We of ourselves would be ready to ask that which is impertinent, or unseasonable, or hurtful to us; we would have ease, and liberty, and plenty, and deliverance out of troubles, or freedom from sufferings; we would have joy and assurance, yea, triumphs and raptures; we would have these or the like presently, and in full measure, at such a time, or in such a degree as might be prejudicial to our souls; and so we would seek them if we were left to ourselves, if the Spirit did not better direct us, and lead us to what is most necessary, and proper, and advantageous. And this κατ■ Θε■ν ■ντυγχ■νει, he helps us to pray according to the will of God, for such things as are according to his will. Ut bene possit mens orare, says Ambrose,* præcedit Spiritus, et deducit eam in viam rectam; that the soul may pray well, the Spirit goes before it, and guides it into the right way, that we may not seek what is carnal, nor things that are either too small or too great for us. A good physician knows what diet is most proper, and when it will be most for the advantage of health. The opportuneness of meat sometimes restores the health, which, if it be taken unseasonably, endangers the patient; therefore, says he, because we know not what to pray for, and how we ought to seek it, postulat pro nobis Spiritus, the Spirit intercedes for us, viz., by directing us what to ask.

(3.) He helps his people to expressions; and therefore that manner of praying seems best, which gives most liberty to the Spirit in its workings, and leaves us under his influence and assistance, not only as to the inward, but also as to the outward manner of praying, letting the Spirit clothe his own matter in his own dress, and taking words from him as well as things, when he is pleased to afford them. I do not say that all the expressions used by his people in prayer are from the Spirit, nor that he always helps them to expressions immediately. Whether they have them by the use of such means as he has appointed and concurs with, or whether they have them by immediate suggestion, either way they are from the assistance of the Spirit; and that he is ready to assist them some way, even as to words, seems signified by the apostle's expression, Romans 8:1-39 which I have opened before, and shall now further insist on. The word is ■περεντυγχ■νει; ■ντυγ χ■νειν κατ■ τ■να, is to act as an accuser, a κατ■γορος; ■περεντυγχ■νειν ■π■ρ τ■νος, is to act as an advocate, a συν■γορος. And so the Holy Ghost is frequently in the New Testament called an Advocate. Παρ■κλητος, as the Spirit is called by our Lord Jesus, is an Advocate, one called in for the assistance of a client. And very fitly may παρ■κλητος be rendered an advocate, this comprehending the other notions, whereby it is expressed, particularly that of a comforter, by which it is translated. For an advocate is the comfort and encouragement of his client, advises him, pleads for him, moves for him, draws up his petitions or motions, dictating the form or words. And so παρακλ■σις in other authors is sometimes used for a prayer or petition, and παρακαλε■ν is to petition or invocate. Now the Holy Ghost is an advocate for his people, both with men and with God. And by observing how he performs this office for them with men, we may probably collect how he performs it for them with God. He acts as an advocate for them with men, by telling them what they shall say when they are brought before men's tribunal, Matthew 10:20, Mark 13:11, Luke 12:11-12, and Luke 21:14-15; answerably he acts as their advocate with God by dictating or suggesting to them what they shall say in prayer, when they come to the throne of grace. And so the best interpreters that I meet with explain the expression. Veluti verba et suspiria nobis intus dictat,* he doth as it were inwardly dictate to us words and sighs; he assists us by his holy inspiration both with powerful and effectual words and sighs; he telleth us as it were within what

we shall say, prompteth as it were our lesson to us.†

(4.) He stirs up affections in prayer suitable to the subject thereof, joy or sorrow, and love and delight, with earnest desires, called στεναγμ■ι; fills the heart with affections and motions, as manifest themselves by sighs and groans, and cannot otherwise be expressed, therefore called ■λαλητ■ι; so full of affectionate workings as it cannot find vent by words. A pretender to the Spirit has more in his expressions than is in his heart; but one effectually assisted by the Spirit, has more in his heart than he can express; the words of those over-reach, but the expressions of these fall short of what they feel within. The Spirit helps his people to the sense of their spiritual state, makes them sensible of their spiritual wants, their inward distempers, their soul-grievances; makes them apprehensive of the importance, the necessity, the excellency of what they are to seek, and hence spring love to them, desires after them, zeal and fervour in seeking them. Hence those affectionate workings in their hearts, which are too big to be let out by words, which are signified by sighs and groans, such as cannot otherwise be uttered.

(5.) He acts graces in prayer; helps the weakness and infirmity of spiritual habits and principles, and draws them out into vigorous exercise. He helps the soul to approach with confidence, and yet with reverence; with filial fear, and yet with an emboldened faith; with zeal and importunity, and yet with humble submission; with lively hope, and yet with self-denial. As it is the Spirit of supplication, so it is the Spirit of grace, not only works grace in the heart, but sets it a-work, and brings it into exercise, as in other acts and duties, so especially in that of supplication.

(6.) He removes, or helps the soul against distempers which are ready to seize on the soul in prayer, distractions, straitness of heart, indifferency, formality, lukewarmness, hypocrisy, weariness, pride, self-confidence. Now since thus much of prayer is to be ascribed to the Spirit, since he gives both matter and form, expression and affection, the act and motion to the act, since he teaches both when, and what, and how we should pray, affords assistance answerable, well may believers' prayers be counted the work, &c., of the Spirit. And this consideration affords great encouragement to faith. If prayer were our own work only, we might fear it would be rejected, for all our righteousness is as filthy rags; but the work of the Spirit must needs be acceptable, yea, accepted. If we ourselves only spoke, the Lord might shut his ear and refuse to hear sinners. But prayer is the voice of the Spirit: he speaks in us and by us, Matthew 10:20; and the Lord will certainly listen to that voice. Prayer is the motion of the Spirit, and whatever motion he makes in the court of heaven, it can never be rejected. If we prayed of ourselves only, the Lord might refuse to send any comfortable returns; but since the Spirit intercedes for us, the Lord cannot deny him, else he should deny himself. Nobis gemendi et interpellandi imponit affectum.* The Spirit intercedes as effectually, though not in the same manner, as Christ. Christ intercedes by office, the Spirit by operation. Christ appears in person for us, and pleads our cause himself; the Spirit inspires and assists us to plead for ourselves. Not only through Christ, but by the Spirit we have access, Ephesians 2:18. And will the Lord exclude those who have access by the Spirit? The Spirit 'strengthens us with might in the inner man,' Ephesians 3:16, and the strength of the Spirit will prevail, as Jacob. Come armed with this strength, and you may come boldly, Hebrews 10:15, Hebrews 10:19.

5. Consider his providence. That affords many encouragements to faith.

(1.) He hears those that cannot pray, answers that which cannot be called a prayer. He hears irrational creatures, brutes, listens to their cries, though they want both matter and form of praying. He rewards their very looks, answers their expectations, fulfils their desires, though they do not, nor cannot be properly said, either to look up to him, or wait on him, or desire of him. Psalms 104:21, 'The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat of God;' Psalms 104:27, 'These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season: thou openest thine hand;' Psalms 104:28, 'They are filled with good;' Psalms 147:9, 'He giveth to the beast his food, to the young ravens that cry;' Psalms 145:15-16, 'The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them meat in due season: thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' They do but open their eyes, and God opens his hand. They do but intimate a natural desire by crying and looking, and God satisfies.

Now may faith say, as 1 Corinthians 9:9, 'Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt, that he that prayeth should pray in faith,' &c. Will the Lord hear lions and ravens, and will he not hear me? Will he satisfy their natural, and not my spiritual desires? Will he regard when their eyes are lift up, and not the lifting up of my heart? Am not I much better than they? It is Christ's own argument to strengthen faith, Matthew 6:26. Shall he not much more hear me? ver. 30. He that will doubt here, deserves the brand of ■λιγ■πιστος, may well pass for one that has little faith. It is very weak, if this will not support it.

(2.) He grants some things to men that they pray not for; much more will he grant when they pray: Isaiah 65:1, 'I am found of them that sought me not;' Isaiah 65:24, 'Before they call, I will answer.' Some things, nay, the greatest, are granted to those that pray not. No prayer had any influence in election, and our prayers did contribute nothing to the glorious work of redemption. These fountains of all our mercies were digged without the help of any; the greatest, the sweetest streams of love that issue hence run freely, before our prayers can draw them out. Regeneration, justification, pardon, adoption, reconciliation, are bestowed on those who cannot, who will not pray for them. For we cannot unfeignedly desire these, before they are given; and will we pray for that which we do not desire? And how many other mercies, which we thought not of before we enjoyed them! Much precious fruit falls into our laps, before we by prayer shake the tree. It may be they were the issue of some other's prayers, but not of ours. Now if the water of life do flow in such streams upon us when we pray not, how pleasantly will they flow when they are drawn by the attractive power of prayer! If the Lord is found when we seek not, open when we knock not, answer when we call not, how much more will he open and answer when we knock and call! If the greatest be vouchsafed before we have hearts to pray, how confident may we be that prayer will obtain the less!

(3.) He makes some kind of returns to the prayers of unbelievers. He heard the voice of Ishmael, Genesis 21:17-18, &c., a persecutor; of Ahab, the most abominable of all the twenty kings of Israel. Now if they be heard in any sense, who hate God and are hated of him, they whose prayers are as the howlings of dogs, an abomination, to whom God is no way engaged, who have none to intercede, none to help their infirmities, no promise, how much more those who are his servants, and have interest in the intercession of Christ?

6. Consider the nature and dignity of prayer, which affords divers arguments to confirm faith.

(1.) It is God's ordinance, instituted and enjoined for this end. He commands us to pray, that we may be heard; and therefore ordinarily, where you meet with a command, you find a promise: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer;' 'Ask, and ye shall have,' Matthew 8:7-8. When he commands prayer, he promises audience. It was his intention in this institution. Therefore if the Lord should not hear, his ordinance would be in vain, the Lord should lose his end. And is it not more easy to believe the Lord will hear it, than to believe he will come short of his end?

(2.) He in Scripture adorns it with, and ascribes to it, many transcendent privileges, such as, considered, may fortify the most languishing faith. There is a strength in prayer which has power with God: Hosea 12:3-4, 'By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him.' That strength was weeping and supplication. With this he wrestled, Genesis 32:24. He had power, i. e., was a prince, a princely deportment. Poor dust and ashes, in a praying posture, are in the state of princes, honourable and powerful, in such a state as the Lord will not resist; therefore it must prevail. The Lord may seem to wrestle, as though he would give a repulse to the assaults of prayer, but this is but to exercise the strength of this princely champion; he honours it so much, as in the issue he always suffers it to prevail. No wonder if it be powerful, for it lays hold on God's strength. So some apply that, Isaiah 27:5, 'Let him lay hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace.' The Lord, for our encouragement, condescends to express the power of grace in such terms, as though it laid some restraint upon his infinite self: Exodus 32:10, 'Let me alone.' He seems so unwilling to deny prayer, as though he were unable to act anything against it. That is a transcendent expression, Isaiah 45:11, 'Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and the work of my hands, command ye me.' A wonderful indulgence! An astonishing condescension! As though asking were commanding. It is blasphemy to imagine that the creature should command the sovereign Majesty of heaven; yet thus much we may safely infer, prayer shall as surely prevail, as though it could command; it shall prevail as much with God, though infinitely above us, as we can do with those who are under our command.

(3.) Prayer is the Lord's delight, the most pleasing service we can ordinarily tender; therefore he does not only most frequently command it, but importunately sue for it. Let me hear thy voice, says Christ to his spouse, Song of Solomon 2:14, for thy voice is sweet. It is sweet as incense, Psalms 141:2; Proverbs 15:8, his delight; ascends as the odour of a sweet smell; no sacrifice more acceptable. One sincere prayer pleases him better than hundreds of rams, or thousands of rivers of oil. Therefore, after he had declared how little he needs or regards sacrifices and burnt-offerings, he tells what would better please him: Psalms 50:14-15, 'Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows to the Most High: and call upon him in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' The reason is, it most glorifies him; it acknowledges and gives a clear testimony to most of his glorious perfections, power, wisdom, bounty, goodness, immensity, all-sufficiency, providence. Now that which most glorifies him does most please, for his glory is the end of all his administrations. Now, will the Lord reject that which pleases him? will he not listen to that wherein his soul delights? will he not make gracious returns to that which is the most acceptable service?

(4.) He threatens men for not answering prayer: Proverbs 21:13, 'Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.' Now, will he do that himself for which

he threatens us? Matthew 18:28. He will deal severely with those who will not hearken to the importunity of such as seek to them in their want and distress.

7. The things prayed for may afford arguments for faith. Either they are of great consequence or of small consequence. If small, then faith may argue, Will the Lord stand with me for small things? will he deny inferior mercies? will he who has granted greater things deny less? will not infinite love vouchsafe small favours? will he who has given me Christ deny any thing, any small thing? will not he who has delivered your souls from death deliver your feet from falling? If of great consequence, faith may argue, Though it be great, yet the Lord has granted greater to me, to others. Is anything greater than Christ? any of more importance than pardon of sin? is any more precious than the blood of Christ? I can ask nothing so great but the Lord has already granted greater; or, suppose it be the greatest thing that ever was granted to or desired by you, the greater it is the more encouragement to ask it, the more hopes God will grant it. It becomes the great God to grant great things, 'To him alone who does great wonders,' Psalms 136:4. When you ask great things, you ask such as becomes God to give, 'whose mercy is great above the heavens,' Psalms 57:10. Nothing under heaven can be too great for him to give. The greater things he bestows, the greater glory redounds to his name. Great and wondrous works speak the glorious honour of his majesty, Psalms 145:5. Great personages shew their magnificence by great presents; it is their delight, their honour. God shews his infinite greatness by doing such things, bestowing such favours, as are above the creature's power. Jehohsaphat argues, 2 Chronicles 20:6, 'Art thou not God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathens? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that not none is able to withstand thee?' But suppose the greatness of what you desire does discourage, consider it is great only in your apprehension. Nothing is great to God. See how he is described, Isaiah 40:15, Isaiah 40:17, Isaiah 40:22. What greater than this vast fabric of heaven and earth? How did the Lord make this only with a word? Let there be, and it was so, Psalms 33:6. It is true the Lord speaks not, but this manner of expression tells us the effecting of the greatest things is no more to him than the speaking of a word is to us, 2 Chronicles 14:11, so 1 Samuel 14:6. It is all one with God to save by few or many; to do that which seems great to us, as that which seems small.

8. Consider the promises. The Lord has promised he will hear. If ye doubt he will hear, ye doubt he is not faithful. Consider how many, how universal, how engaging.

(1.) The multitude. No duty, no act, to which the Lord has made so many promises as to prayer. Now, why should the Lord multiply his promises, but that he will never fail to answer, but that he would have us to be confident we shall never fail?

(2.) Universality. He has promised again and again to hear whoever prays, and grant whatever is prayed for. Whoever prays, whatever they pray for, they shall be answered, it shall be granted. Whosoever: Joel 2:32, 'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered;' repeated Acts 2:21; 'plenteous in mercy to all that call upon him,' Psalms 86:5; 'nigh to all,' Psalms 145:16; 'rich unto all,' Romans 10:12. Whatsoever: 'All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive,' Matthew 21:22; John 16:23, 'Ye shall ask me nothing; whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you;' 1 John 3:22, 'Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him;' John 15:7, 'Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.'

(3.) The obligement. It is more engaging to him than an oath, he more values it than we our lives. It is more valuable to him than heaven and earth; he will suffer these to perish rather than a jot of his word shall fail: ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.’ The Lord would lose more by failing to answer than you by failing of an answer. That is engaged for your security, which is more precious to God than anything you ask: his word, truth, faithfulness, his seal, his oath, the blood of his Son, all these are engaged in a promise.

9. Consider your relation to God. He is your Father; Christ teaches us to begin with this. This is a strong support to faith, and Christ makes this use of it, to encourage us to pray, and pray in faith: Matthew 7:7-8, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you,’ &c. There is the promise. The argument whereby he would persuade us to believe the promise in praying, see Matthew 7:9-11. The Lord is ready to give to them that ask, as the most indulgent father to the best beloved child; nay, more ready, much more ready: ‘How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!’ Matthew 7:11. He is much more ready to give the greatest favours, than earthly parents to give the least. That which is good things in Matthew, is the Spirit in Luke 11:13. And what greater gift than the Spirit? There are many things may hinder earthly parents, poverty, or covetousness, but nothing to hinder God, he has infinite treasures and a large heart; he can give whatever we ask, ‘The earth is the Lord’s,’ &c.; and he is more willing, as much more as heaven is above earth.

10. He gets glory by hearing prayer. We do not only glorify him by praying, as I shewed before, but he glorifies himself by answering prayer, Psalms 50:1-23. The Lord gets by giving, gets that which is of more account with him than what he gives. It is his interest to grant as well as ours to receive. If the Lord should reject our prayers, he would reject his own honour.

11. Consider the success of others, how effectual the prayers of God’s ancient people have been; this affords great encouragement.

(1.) You never find any prayer wholly denied. In all the Scripture, not one example of a faithful prayer without a gracious return. ‘He never said to the house of Jacob, Seek my face in vain.’ Those instances which seem to contradict this do confirm it. David prayed for the life of his child and prevailed not, but his prayer was answered in that the Lord gave him another child, honourably born, and rarely endowed. Moses prays that he might take possession of Canaan, he was not heard as to that particular, but the Lord gratifies his prayer with a miracle, shews him what he desired in a miraculous way, commits the conduct of the Israelites to a dear relation of his, his servant Joshua, and, instead of the earthly, translates him into the heavenly Canaan, where Moses will acknowledge it was the sweetest return of prayer he ever had experience of. Though on earth he complained the Lord would not hear him, yet there he does praise the Lord for so answering his prayer. And if the Lord did never deny prayer, will he begin now?

(2.) He usually gave more than was prayed for: Psalms 21:4, ‘He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.’ So to Solomon, 1 Kings 3:9-13. Abraham prays for one, God gives many, by Hagar, Genesis 17:1-27, Sarah, Keturah, Genesis 25:1-34. David desired one thing, Psalms 27:1-14; he gives that, and withal a kingdom, dominion, glory. Jacob seems to desire nothing but for safety and necessity, bread and raiment, and to return in peace; but the Lord adds plenty to safety, brings him back with great substance and a numerous issue: Genesis 28:20, ‘If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give

me bread to eat, and raiment to put on.' There is his vow, his desire. See his return, Genesis 32:10, 'I went over this Jordan with this staff, and now I am become two bands.' And if the Lord will give more than is prayed for, sure, may faith say, he will give as much. The Lord is not less bountiful now than in former times; his ear is not straitened nor his hand shortened, his ear is as open to hear, and his hand as open to reward.

(3.) Prayer procured greater things in former times than any you have now occasion to ask. It wrought miracles, and that may be ascribed to it which the apostle attributes to faith, Hebrews 11:33-35; faith in prayer, faithful prayer. This, as handled by Elias, was the key of heaven, which he thereby opened when and how he pleased, James 5:17-18. Prayer preserved Daniel in the midst of devouring lions; the opening of his mouth did shut theirs. This brought Jonah out of the midst of the sea, out of the belly of a whale, safe on shore. This revoked the sentence of death passed on Hezekiah, caused the sun to go backward, and brought an angel from heaven to destroy Sennacherib's host. This ruined an army of ten hundred thousand, and made them fly and fall before Asa, 2 Chronicles 14:12. It drew out the Lord's hand, destroys Jehoshaphat's enemies by their own hands, arms them against themselves, and ruins them without his help, 2 Chronicles 20:1-37. This brings light into a dungeon, an angel from heaven into a prison, breaks off chains, and opens iron gates, Acts 12:5-7, &c. Did it work miracles in former times, and will it not procure ordinary mercies now? Is it less effectual? Does the Lord less regard it, or love us?

(4.) He heard his ancient people not only for themselves, but for others; for those whom he would not hear praying for themselves; for unbelievers, for the most abominable of sinners; and that not only for one, or few, but for whole cities, whole nations; Abraham for Abimelech, a heathen, a prince in whose territories there was no fear of God. The Lord tells him this, Genesis 20:7, and he was as good as his word, Genesis 20:17. How often did he hear Moses for a whole nation in high rebellion against God! Even in the height of his fury he appeased him. Nay, he hears Abraham for five cities, the most abominable that were to be found on the earth, Genesis 18:23-33. He makes six motions for the Sodomites, and the Lord rejects not one. He condescends, even to astonishment. We may think it had been wonderful if the Lord had but yielded to the first, to save five whole cities destined to destruction, if there had been in them but fifty righteous persons; but so prevalent is prayer, as the Lord yields to save five cities for ten men, Genesis 18:32. Now if the Lord will hear his people for others, will he not hear me for myself? If he would hear them for heathens, rebels, idolaters, Sodomites, will he not hear me in covenant with him, justified by him, obedient to him, approved of him?

Obj. But does not the church complain: Psalms 80:4, 'O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?' Lamentations 3:8, 'When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.'

Ans. This may be misapprehension; think the Lord angry when he is not; or when not at their prayers, but at their sins. Zion complains, 'The Lord had forsaken,' &c., but the Lord convinces her it was a mistake, Isaiah 49:14-16. They thought the Lord denies because he delayed; think him angry, because he did not answer presently; whereas delay itself is sometimes a gracious answer, a sign of love rather than anger. To bestow mercies when petitioners are unfit for them, is to answer prayer in anger; to defer till then is love. Their eyes may be so fixed on the particular desired, as to take no notice of whatever other is returned.

12. Consider your own experiences, how many times God has answered your prayers formerly; that will be a great encouragement to trust him for time to come. Those that have tried God, are inexcusable if they will not trust him. His word is a sufficient ground for faith in prayer; but experience, withal, should exclude all doubting. This should both encourage to pray and believe. David made this use of it: Psalms 116:2, ‘Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.’ Those who know what it is to enjoy communion with God in prayer, and make conscience to pray frequently and fervently, must needs have many experiences of sweet returns. It may be you have been afflicted in conscience, and by crying to God, found comfort, as David, Psalms 116:1-19; or in doubts and perplexities, ‘I cried to God, he resolved me;’ or in wants and necessities, and ‘he supplied me;’ or in fear and dangers, and ‘he delivered me;’ or in trouble and affliction, and ‘he supported and relieved me,’ and sanctified it to me; or under temptation, buffeted by Satan, and ‘his grace was sufficient for me;’ or assaulted with some strong lusts, and ‘he subdued them, and strengthened me;’ or very desirous of some blessing, and ‘he bestowed it on me.’ Now faith should argue from these experiences, The Lord has heard me formerly, and why should I doubt but he will hear me now? He is the same God still, and prayer is as prevalent, as acceptable. My person and services were unworthy then, and this did not hinder, therefore it will not now, Psalms 6:9. Paul’s faith grows confident from former experiences: 2 Timothy 4:17, ‘The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me,’ &c. There is his experience. See what inference his faith makes, 2 Timothy 4:18, ‘The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work,’ &c. So David, 1 Samuel 17:34-37. In like manner we should conclude, because the Lord has heard me so frequently, so freely, so graciously, notwithstanding all my failings, weaknesses, unworthiness, therefore I will believe he will hear me still, he will answer me for time to come.

13. Limit not yourselves, nor the Lord, to the particular desired. You may pray in faith, though you be not confident that the very thing desired shall be granted; for if you apprehend that this is the only way to pray in faith, you will neglect other ways. And since this particular confidence is but required sometimes, you will but pray sometimes in faith, whereas this is always required. To prevent this, consider there are divers acts which faith may put forth in prayer, any of which, in its season, will make the duty a prayer of faith.

(1.) Sometimes determinately; or, if the word be not too bold, peremptorily. Faith may so act when you pray, being in covenant, for things absolutely necessary for God’s glory and your salvation, those things which have a necessary connection with these. So you may ask in faith so much of temporal or spiritual blessings, as without which you cannot honour God, or be serviceable in your callings, and be confident of receiving them.

Or, when the Lord promises peremptorily and absolutely, faith is to keep proportion with the promise. If he promise absolutely, we may believe absolutely that we shall receive: so Hebrews 13:5, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ He promises peremptorily; so we desire he would not forsake us, and believe we shall be heard in this determinately: so John 13:1, he says absolutely, ‘Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.’ So we may pray he would love us with an everlasting love, and believe that he will hear us in this particular: so Romans 6:14, ‘Sin shall not have dominion over you.’ Or when he promises conditionally, but has made you partakers of the condition; for then it is equivalent to an absolute promise: so Mark 16:16, ‘He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.’ If he have given faith, you may pray for salvation, and believe that he will hear, i. e., he will save: Proverbs 28:13, ‘He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall

have mercy.' If he have enabled you to confess and forsake your sins, in judgment, affection, and practice, you may pray for and expect to find mercy. So Matthew 5:1-48, if you mourn, you may pray for comfort, and believe you shall receive it.

(2.) Sometimes indefinitely. That is, when you believe your prayer shall be heard, though faith define not, i. e., pitch not upon any particular way, how, or when, or in what kind. He may be sometimes said to pray in faith who believes his person and prayer shall be accepted, though faith expect not a particular answer. This has place when the promise is indefinite, when a mercy is promised under a general notion, without defining the way, time, manner, kind, when, and how, or in what it shall prove a mercy to me: so Romans 8:28, 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.' If you pray that such an occurrence or dispensation may work for good, and believe that it shall in general, though you be not confident that it shall do it in such a manner, time, way, degree, yet you may pray in faith: so Isaiah 3:10, 'Say to the righteous that it shall be well with him.' If you pray it may go well in every condition, and believe it shall, and you shall receive a suitable answer: so Joel 2:32, 'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered.' Though ye believe not ye shall be delivered at such a time, in such a manner, by such means; yet if in general ye be confident of deliverance, ye shall have it.

(3.) Sometimes disjunctively. Believe not precisely that you shall receive this you pray for; but either this, or some other; something as good or better in reference to God's glory and your happiness; this is sufficient when you are not certain whether that you pray for be best for you; I say not, whether it seem, but whether it be. In this case, it is not required you should believe determinately that you shall receive what you pray for, but disjunctively, either this, or some other. In such a condition was Paul: Php 1:23-24, 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.' When you are in such a strait you may pray for what you apprehend to be best, but not believe you shall be heard in that precisely; but either in that, or some other thing better or equivalent; so in praying for riches, posterity, deliverance, and indeed all things that are in their own nature, or to you, indifferent; you may desire riches, &c., but it is not necessary you should be confident that God will make you rich; but either do this or something as good.

(4.) Sometimes conditionally. We are to pray for nothing but what is commanded or promised; and the things we are to pray for are held forth in the word with two sorts of conditions, some annexed to the promise, some to the thing promised. Spiritual blessings are conditional, because sometimes conditions are annexed to the promises, whereby God engages himself to give them. Now when he has already wrought the conditions, we may pray in faith for them absolutely, as before. When the conditions are not wrought, then we should for the conditions themselves, not for the blessings conditionally: as Matthew 5:6, that we may hunger and thirst after righteousness; and Revelation 2:10, that we may be faithful unto death. Temporal blessings are conditional, because conditions are annexed to the things themselves, and they are such as these: if it seem good, if it be thy will, if it be for thy glory, if it be for my soul's good. Temporal favours are to be asked in faith, but faith must act conditionally. The like is to be observed about the removal of afflictions, and vouchsafing of spiritual favours that tend to our well-being: faith in asking these must be acted, but acted conditionally, and with submission. An example we have in David, a man strong in faith and much in prayer: 2 Samuel 15:25-2, 'If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord,

he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.' And in Christ himself, his faith acted conditionally: Matthew 26:39, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.'

14. Labour to remove those discouragements which hinder the exercise of faith in prayer, or weaken it in its actings.

(1.) Great discouragement is, jealousy that the Lord has not heard you formerly. If you entertain such conceits that God has denied, rejected your petitions formerly, you may be apt to fear he will, or may do so for time to come. Such fears and jealousies are as worms at the root, or as a palsy in the hand of faith, deprives it of strength and stedfastness; they are as storms, which unsettle, shock faith, and make it waver as a wave of the sea, ver. 7. This must be removed, as inconsistent with that confidence which the Lord expects in all that approach to him. To remove it, consider, the Lord may answer your prayers when you take no notice of it. He has many ways to answer our petitions, whenas we ordinarily take notice but of one; and if the return come not that way, we conclude there is none, and thereby both wrong the Lord and ourselves. We may think he does not hear, we are not answered, when he both hears and answers us. Take notice how many ways God may answer your prayer, and you will see much more reason to conclude that he granted all, though you did not observe how, than that he ever denied any.

[1.] Prayer is answered when it is accepted, though there be no other effect of it visible. Prayer is not in vain, if the person be accepted, and the service approved. Do you think it is nothing to please God, to do that wherein his soul delights, to offer that which ascends to him as the odour of a sweet smell? Is it nothing to obey God, to honour him, to give a testimony to his glorious perfections? Is it nothing, to be admitted to such sweet intimate communion with God in such a familiar way, to speak to him as a man to his friend, as a child to his father? Suppose you should reap no other benefit by prayer, is not here as much as will amount to an answer? If you will not measure the return of your prayers by lower inferior advantages, these are the most blessed returns. It should be more desirable in your account to please him, than to be happy yourselves. His glory should be more valuable than your salvation, or all the means that tend to it. And such society with him should be esteemed the first-fruits of heaven. Yet these are the privileges of every accepted prayer; and therefore, if it be accepted, though it obtain nothing more, it is abundantly answered.

[2.] He sometimes makes prayer an answer to itself, answers when you are praying: Isaiah 65:24, 'While they are yet speaking, I will hear;' not only hears, but answers, answers the prayer by enabling us to pray, Daniel 9:20-21. While Daniel was speaking in prayer, an angel was sent in answer to his desires. You will judge this is a sweet return. But how much more is it for the Holy Ghost to be sent into the heart, and thereby to have powerful assistance, comfortable enlargements, heavenly affections, and vigorous exercise of graces; to have the soul winged with holy affections, to fly into the bosom of Christ; to have heaven as it were opened, and the veil withdrawn, that the light of God's countenance may break out and shine upon the soul! These are the greatest, the sweetest of spiritual blessings, and infinitely transcend all outward enjoyments, Psalms 4:6–8. Well then may they be accounted most blessed answers.

[3.] He sometimes answers prayers by discovering the defects of prayer, convincing his people of those failings which might make them fail of being answered; discovers the defects of prayers, and the sinfulness of them, formality, lukewarmness, unbelief, carelessness, sloth, irreverence, hypocrisy, self-seeking, or what else may render their prayer offensive. If prayer obtain this, to have such sins, and the evil of them discovered, it is a great advantage, a great mercy; and if it obtain so much, sure it is not unanswered.

[4.] It is a gracious answer sometimes to be denied. You account it a good answer to a petition when you have that which is better than the things desired; but when you desire that which is not good, the denial is better than the grant. The denial is a mercy, the grant would be a judgment. So it was with David: he was importunate for the life of his child; but was it not better for him that the Lord granted not its life, since it would have been a living monument of his ignominy, wherein every beholder might have read both his shame and heinous sin? The Lord is merciful oftentimes in denying outward blessings, worldly enjoyments, to his children; denies them plenty of temporals, lest it should bring leanness into their souls; denies them health, that their souls may prosper; denies comfort in dearest relations, by making them cross and uncomfortable, lest they should steal away the heart from himself. These denials are great mercies, and therefore sweet returns of prayer.

[5.] He sometimes answers, by bestowing only some degree of the thing desired, not the whole. The Lord answers Moses's prayer, by giving him a view of Canaan, not the full possession. Those who pray for increase of grace are answered, when the Lord draws out the heart in stronger desires after it. Desires after grace are a degree of grace. If the messenger of Satan, against which Paul prays, were some corruption, his prayer was answered, not totally, so as to be freed from assaults, but in some degree, so as to have power sufficient to resist. The prayers of God's people for the destruction of antichrist are answered in some degree, in that the impostures of that man of sin are discovered, and so many nations fallen off; many hate her, though make her not desolate.

[6.] He may hear the prayer, though he do not answer it presently. Delay is no denial: prayer is sure to be heard, though the Lord sometimes seems slow in granting what is prayed for. Delay is sometimes a mercy. He never defers, when it is seasonable to grant: 2 Peter 3:9, 'The Lord is not slack, as some men count slackness;' i. e., as though he had altered his purpose, forgot his promise, or careless to accomplish either. He deferred in mercy, in long-suffering. He is not slack, though he may seem so to us, ver. 8. The promise was of the day of judgment, the coming of Christ, which is the prayer of the church, Revelation 20:4. Quickly, because as soon as ever it is seasonable, he will come instantly, not defer one moment. As soon as it will be a mercy: Luke 18:17, 'Shall not God avenge his elect, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.' Stay long, and yet speedily. He stays that we may exercise faith in prayer, Hebrews 10:35, &c. Christ prayed for his enemies, and was answered after his resurrection. Stephen prayed for his persecutors, and answered after his death in Saul's conversion. How long did God's ancient people pray for the coming of the Messiah, and the primitive Christians for good magistrates, all the faithful for the ruin of antichrist, and the primitive martyrs for vengeance against their persecutors? Revelation 6:10. Prayers are seed, though they as it were lie under ground; talents laid up in heaven for improvement. One talent in prayer will be improved to ten in its return. Though the answer be as a cloud in your days, it may cover the heavens for your

posterity, and rain showers of blessings. The last times will be times of greatest mercies, because the times of so many prayers, many answers are reserved for them. There is therefore no reason to conclude you are denied, because not presently answered.

[7.] He may grant the mercy desired, though not to the person for whom it is desired. He may answer your prayers by bestowing that on another which you desire for yourselves. So Moses was answered; he desired himself might conduct the Israelites into Canaan; the Lord appoints a dear relation of his, Joshua his servant, to be their conductor, and provides better for Moses; or he may bestow that upon yourselves which you desire for others; so he answered David, Psalms 35:13; his prayer returned into his own bosom. The Lord will not suffer prayer to be in vain for hypocrites, for such were these, Psalms 35:11-12; or by bestowing it upon one as dear to thee as he that is prayed for. Abraham desired the promise might be accomplished in Ishmael, the Lord fulfils it to Isaac. Isaac intended and desired the blessing might fall upon Esau, the Lord bestows it on Jacob; and what David desires for his first child by Bathsheba, he grants to the second, to Solomon; the apostles desired the benefits of the Messiah might principally be the portion of the Jews, the Lord vouchsafes them to the Gentiles. There is no reason to conclude he denies, because he answers not as to the individual.

[8.] He answers by granting something else in lieu of what is desired, though he bestow not the same thing. He answers if he grant something as good, something better: Jeremiah 45:5, ‘Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey.’ It was better for Baruch to have his life where he went, than to enjoy a plentiful estate where he would have no security of his life. God seldom or never denies the particular desired, but he gives something as good or better, in one or all these four respects.

1st, In kind. When we pray for temporals, he gives spirituals. The apostles desired Christ would rule as a temporal king; he uses them as his instruments to erect a spiritual kingdom. They desire outward preferment, to sit at his right hand or left in worldly pomp; he assures them of spiritual and eternal glory, they should sit upon twelve thrones.

2d, In reference to the rule of goodness, his own will; which being summè bona, that which is agreeable must needs be best. That is ■ριστον, which is Τ■ Θε■ ■ρεστον. That is best for us which pleases him best. If he make not a return according to our wills, yet always according to his will; and that being the rule of goodness, that which is conformable to it is best for us.

3d, In reference to the great end of all we pray for, God’s glory. If he give not the very thing desired, yet he will give something that will tend more to his glory; and that which most conduces to it is best; not only in respect of God, but us, for our chief happiness consists in his glory; the more we honour him the more is our happiness, and that is best, sure, which makes us most happy. That is a sweet answer to prayer, when he gives that which is better than what we desire.

4th, In reference to the particular end of your desire. If he give not the mercy desired, yet something that will as much advance the end for which you desire it. And if you have your end for which, what you aimed at, you have your desires, for the means is not otherwise desirable. As if you desire a blessing that you may live contentedly; if he bestow not that, but another mercy that will afford as much or more contentment. You desire an alteration of your condition, that you may

live more contentedly; if the Lord do not alter your condition, but change your heart, so as to make it contented with your present state, though he do not raise your condition in respect of riches, credit, as high as your desires, yet if he bring down your heart and desires to your condition, so as to be therewith fully satisfied and contented, he gives that which is as good or better than what you desire, and so returns a sweet answer to your prayers. Or if your desires pitch upon some particular means to subdue a lust, though he grant not, yet if he offer another, which is as or more effectual to subdue that lust, he grants what is as good or better. Or if you desire the removal of some affliction, that you might with more liberty and cheerfulness serve the Lord, though he remove it not, yet if he enable you under that affliction to serve him with as much cheerfulness and enlargement of heart, he grants your request, and answers your prayers.

2. Discouragement is sense of unworthiness. A humble soul will be apt to say, How can I believe the Lord will hear me who am so vile, not only in respect of the common condition of mankind, being but dust and ashes, a worm, less, worse, but also being more than ordinary sinful, having often profaned this ordinance, and abused former comfortable returns; and in respect of my condition in the world, being so mean and contemptible, as I cannot be confident of access to men of any extraordinary note in the world; how much less can I be confident of acceptance or audience with the great and holy God? To remove this, consider,

(1.) The Lord never heard any that either were really worthy, or did account themselves so. All that ever had access to, and audience with God, have been really, and in their own esteem, unworthy. The Lord requires not that his people should bring any worth with them to commend their prayers to him. The want of personal worth did never hinder the Lord from answering prayer. Therefore no reason to be discouraged for want of that which is neither necessary nor ever was present. No flesh is justified in his sight.

(2.) The more unworthy, and withal the more sensible of it, the more hopes of answer and acceptance. This is so far from being any just impediment to faith, as it should rather encourage it; for Scripture and experience tell us it is both the Lord's gracious disposition and practice to do most for them who are, or seem to themselves to be, most unworthy: 'He fills the hungry,' Luke 1:53, Luke 1:48, but 'casts down the mighty,' Luke 1:52. He pronounces them blessed who are poor, Matthew 5:1-48; calls not many wise and noble, 1 Corinthians 1:26-28; seeks that which is lost, Luke 6:19-20; saves sinners, the chief of them, 1 Timothy 1:15; invites beggars, sends out his servants to fetch them, Luke 14:21, Luke 14:23; those who have no money, no worth, worth nothing, Isaiah 55:1-13; pities those whom no eye pities, Ezekiel 16:6; condescends lowest to those who are lowest. He takes pleasure in it, he gets honour by it. Hereby is the freeness, the riches of grace made more conspicuous, infinite mercy appears more merciful.

Consider but the different demeanour and success of the Pharisee and publican as to this duty, and it will put it past doubt. Consider what self-confidence and conceitedness in the one, what humility and sense of unworthiness in the other: Luke 18:10-15, 'This man went away justified, rather than the other.' Justified, i. e., pardoned, accepted, answered. Rather, i. e., exclusively; he was justified, and not the other. The reason is observable: Luke 18:14, 'For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' Sense of unworthiness should rather strengthen than discourage.

(3.) Prayer and praying in faith is not only a privilege, but a duty; and is any one unworthy to do his duty? If it was only a privilege, unworthiness might be some plea to keep off sinners from meddling with prayer or acting faith, but since it is a duty, you cannot with any reason, cannot without absurdity make use of it to discourage you. What, are you unworthy to obey God, to do what he commands, to do as he requires? The very conceit of this is absurd; men would laugh at such a plea; God will be far from accepting it. Would you take it well from your servant, if he should neglect to do what you command under pretence that he is unworthy to obey you? Yes, you would count it a jeer, you will think him idle, and foolish too in finding no better excuse for his idleness. The case is alike in reference to God; we are unworthy to receive, but not to obey. There is no show of reason why this should be a discouragement.

(4.) Though you be unworthy to be heard, yet Christ is worthy; it is he that undertakes to present your petition, and procure an answer. Believers, when they are found praying, they are found as Paul, Php 3:9, 'not having their own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, that which is of God by faith.' Faith makes Christ yours, and so his righteousness yours. It unites to Christ as to your head: Caput et membra sunt quasi una mystica persona. When the Lord looks on you he finds you having Christ's righteousness, and that is enough to make both persons and prayers righteous, to cover all unworthiness in either that might hinder acceptance. Though Christ communicates not his merits, so as we can deserve anything, yet he communicates the efficacy and benefits of interest in his merits, so as if they be not ours they are for us; he deserves, he is worthy that we should be heard.

3. Discouragement is weakness of prayers. A humble soul will be apt to say, I am not only unworthy, but my prayers are weak; much unlike to the prayers of God's people formerly, accompanied with many infirmities, deadness of heart, straitness of spirit, formality, distractions. To remove this, consider,

(1.) You may mistake, and think your prayers weak, when they are strong. The strength of prayer consists not in anything outward, not in expressions either by word or tears, not in outward gestures or enlargements. It is a hidden, an inward strength. Those may be sometimes the signs, but never the sinews. Men may judge of its strength by multitude, vehemency, or patheticalness of expression; but 'the Lord seeth not as man seeth; man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart,' 1 Samuel 16:7. Man's judgment differs far from his; man may judge that weak which he judges strong. The strength of prayer lies in the heart, in the motion of the affections, and the exercise of graces; and above all affections, in zeal; above all graces, in faith. Faith and fervency is the strength of prayer; faith principally, and fervency but as it springs from faith. All affectionateness without this is not prevalent, not powerful. Cut out of faith, and you cut out of the strength of prayer; for though it be the most prevalent exercise on earth, and has power both with God and men, yet without faith, it is like Samson deprived of his locks, Judges 16:17. The great champion of Israel, his strength went from him, and he became weak, and like another man. So prayer when without faith it becomes weak, and like those bodily exercises which profit not. You should not be discouraged from believing, because your prayers are weak, but rather he hereby persuaded to exercise faith that your prayers may be strong.

(2.) Examine whether those weaknesses be voluntary or involuntary, whether through unavoidable infirmity, or carelessness, sloth, and negligence. If they be voluntary, prayer is weak, and you

willing and content it should be so; if slothful, and will not stir up yourselves to lay hold on God; want strength, because you will not exercise it, will not summon up spiritual forces of affection and graces to follow after God, then I confess your condition is sad, and full of sin and discouragements. So long as you continue thus slothful, the word affords little encouragement. You must pray, if you would be heard, not pray as though you prayed not. You must cry, if you would be answered; offer up strong cries. You must follow hard after God, if you would find him; lay hold on him, and stir up all your strength to do it, if you would enjoy him. But if these weaknesses be involuntary, i. e., if you bewail, mourn for them; if they be your burden and affliction; if you long, thirst, breathe after more strength; if you earnestly endeavour to shake off these distempers, and be diligent in the use of all appointed means to gather more strength to your prayers; this mourning, longing, endeavouring are signs the Lord will not take notice of your infirmities, will not charge your weaknesses upon you, nor impute them to you; they shall not hinder the Lord from hearing and answering, nor should not hinder you from believing. In these cases, the Lord accepts the will for the deed, 2 Corinthians 8:12, answers and rewards weak prayers as though they were strong. He stands not so much upon the quantity of your strength, but that he will accept the sincerity of your endeavours. He will look upon you and reward you, not according to what you are, but would be. He that has but a little strength, and puts it all out in prayer, shall more prevail than he that prays with much strength comparatively, if he do not pray with all. This is plain from Christ's testimony of the widow, Luke 21:3. Her two mites was more than twenty talents cast in by one that had an hundred. The Lord is so gracious, he will accept of a little from those who cannot do much, better than of much from them who can do more. He despises not the day of small things, takes special notice of a little strength in Philadelphia, Revelation 3:8. There is no reason, therefore, to be discouraged from weaknesses, if not voluntary.

(3.) If you be weak, labour to pray in faith, that you may be strong. This should rather be a motive, than a discouragement. Would you think him reasonable who, being weak, would neglect or refuse nourishment, because he is weak? He should rather receive it, and has more need to do it, that he may be strong. So here. To act faith in prayer, is the best way to get ability and strength to pray powerfully. Faith draws together both domestic and auxiliary forces, stirs up the strength of the soul, and withal engages the strength of Christ; and they that wrestle with that strength shall surely prevail. The efficacy of the head is divided into the body, by means of the union betwixt head and members. Now it is faith that unites to Christ; he who has all power in heaven and earth dwells in our hearts by faith, it makes his strength ours. The ancients, through faith, 'out of weakness were made strong,' Hebrews 11:34; not only strong in battle, to prevail against the armies of the aliens, but strong in prayer, to prevail with God. If you would be strong in prayer, you must pray in faith, that your weaknesses may be hereby scattered, infirmities put to flight. These should not drive you from your confidence, but engage you to be confident, since this is the only way to grow strong.

4. Discouragement. My prayers are not only weak, but sinful. The weakness is too voluntary; slothful, and too willing to be so, loth to stir up myself; lukewarm, and shake it not off; pray as though grace were asleep, and my soul in a slumber.

Ans. I must suppose that, though there be much sinfulness and weakness in your prayers, yet there is something gracious, else there can be nothing spoken that will afford the least encouragement; though much corruption, yet something spiritual; though much of the flesh, yet some workings of the Spirit; some actings of grace, though in a low degree; some desires after

God that are sincere, though weak; some motions toward Christ, though slow and feeble; some apprehensions of the Lord, though distracted and hindered with other impertinencies; some heat, so much as argues the soul alive to God, though in a slumber; though much of sin, yet something of holiness. This supposed, take what I have to say in this case in two propositions.

(1.) So far as your prayers are sinful, you can expect no answer; God will not reward, cannot approve the sinfulness of prayer.

[1.] Sinful prayers, as sinful, are all one in God's account as other sinful acts. And the wages of these are death; no other reward can be expected for these but this; expect rather he should punish than answer. It is true these or other sins are pardoned, through the satisfaction of Christ, to those that repent and believe. You must repent for the sins of those prayers, and pray that the Lord would pardon them, and then believe he will pardon; and this is all faith is to expect in this case. Christ never purchased anything, nor did the Lord ever promise anything, to prayers as they are sinful. You cannot expect God should answer or reward them as such; it is infinite mercy that he will pardon them. Gracious acts, as such, will be rewarded; but as sinful, it is well if they be pardoned.

[2.] Though the Lord pardon, yet he may, and usually does, correct his people for them. They will not be rewarded; all that Christ procured for them is pardon, nor such a pardon as will exempt them from smarting sufferings. He does visit sinful prayers with stripes. Though he pardon, yet he may chastise severely, Psalms 99:8. It is madness, a hellish imposture, to think God is as well pleased with us acting sinfully, as graciously. He rewards this, he will not pardon that without satisfaction of infinite value; nor so, but he will manifest his displeasure by afflicting.

[3.] Though these afflictions tend to good, yet the way is grievous. They tend to good to believers, as it is promised, Romans 8:1-39. It is good for them that are afflicted. So it is good for one in a lethargy to be cupped, for one whose wounds are gangrened to be cut, lanced, cauterised. These are good in these cases, but grievous in themselves. Were it not better to be in health, to want wounds, than to need such cures, to be in such a condition, when nothing will be so good as that which is so grievous? It is madness to think it is not better to shake off sloth, than to pray so as we can expect no answer, so as we must pray for pardon of prayers and bring afflictions. Prayers as sinful must not be answered, may be pardoned, will be chastised for the good of believers, but in a way that is grievous, and in itself no way desirable. You see what we must expect from prayers as sinful.

(2.) So far as the prayer is gracious, there is encouragement. For,

[1.] The Lord will accept, and in some way or other answer, a prayer in any degree gracious, though there be much corruption or weakness in it. That prayer where grace is acted, though weakly, and in which the Spirit assists, though less powerfully, is more or less acceptable. For, 1, grace is the work, the gift of God, Deus coronat dona sua. He accepts, rewards his own gift, wherever it is. And the work of the Spirit is well pleasing to him, though its attendants be offensive; he can discern and separate wheat from chaff, gold from dross. 2. He will not quench the smoking flax. Heavenly, spiritual heat is pleasing to him, though it flame not, though nothing but smoke be visible. He takes notice of a little strength in Philadelphia, Revelation 3:7-8, and promises much to that little. 3. If the mixtures of corruption and weakness be bewailed and repented of, they are

pardoned. If the righteousness of Christ be applied by faith, this will be a satisfaction for those offences; and if the Lord be satisfied, what can hinder him from answering? Offences not imputed, are in effect no offences; and the Lord, satisfied, will be as gracious as though he had not been offended.

[2.] When there is much of corruption and little of grace in a prayer, though the Lord may answer, yet ordinarily, if not always, the answer is not so full, speedy, comfortable, satisfying, nor perceivable. Though the Lord pardons the sins and failings of weak prayers, yet he may, and often does, afflict for them; and part of the affliction may consist in the quality of the answer. The Lord often proportions his answer to our prayers; slothful prayers have slow answers, &c. Experience bears witness to this, and David observed it, Psalms 18:1-50. He tells us the Lord answered him: ver. 6, 'He heard my voice, my cry came before him.' He tells us how he answered him: ver. 20, 'The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.' Though he answer not propter, yet secundum preces: though not for the holiness, fervency, affectionateness of our prayers, yet according to the holiness, &c., of them. Though they be not causes why he answers, either meriting, as papists, or moving, as ignorants conceive, yet they may be qualifications to fit us for, or presages or signs of, gracious answers. They may qualify, aliud est de causa agere, &c., aliud de quantitate, as Gregory. Though they do not procure, yet they may prepare, dispose, and fit, the soul for receipt of an answer. When the Lord will open his hand to bestow a bountiful answer, he enlarges the heart to seek it, and withal to receive it: see it in Daniel 9:1-27. A dead, lukewarm heart would not prize spiritual mercies, could not make good use of temporal blessings. When the Lord will give an answer of a better nature, he puts the heart into a better temper. They are signs of a gracious answer. Bernard says of works, they are futuræ responsionis præsagia, comfortable signs of a comfortable answer; occultæ predestinationis judicia, arguments that the Lord intends, and is resolved to deal bountifully. When the heart is shut, it is a sign the Lord intends to shut his hand, Matthew 7:2. According to the measure of our prayers, the degrees of grace and affection exercised in them, God measures out his blessings in answer to them. So it is ordinarily. He that sows sparingly must reap accordingly. He that prays but little, and prays not well, has no reason to expect large or gracious returns.

[3.] Since the Lord is so gracious as to accept, and in some degree or other answer weak and sinful prayers, and to own that which proceeds from grace and his Spirit in them, though accompanied with such corruptions as might provoke him to reject them, and punish you for them, hence you have encouragement to believe the Lord will answer them, and to expect the returns thereof; and you will have good warrant to do this, if you do that first which he requires. If you exercise repentance, i. e., bewail the sins and weakness of your prayers, abhor yourself for giving so much way thereto, and resolve to endeavour, with all your strength, in the use of all appointed means, to avoid them for time to come; if you exercise faith, i. e., rest upon Christ for pardon of those provocations, apply those promises which offer pardon, and lay hold on that righteousness of Christ whereby he has satisfied the Lord for those offences; this done, you may, nay, you ought, to believe that the Lord will not only answer your prayers for time to come, but to expect returns of prayers past.

3. Use. For examination. Try whether we pray in faith. It is a work of great importance; for if ye pray not in faith at all, it is a sign ye have no faith; and then ye are under the law, cut off from Christ, exposed to the curse, liable to eternal wrath. What is hell but abiding wrath? If ye have

faith, but act it not in prayer, you deprive yourselves of the benefit of this ordinance, Matthew 7:7; prayer is the conduit-pipe appointed by God to convey all the blessings of the upper and lower springs to the children of men; but if the passage be obstructed, it will be useless, of no advantage to you. Want of faith is a dangerous obstruction; this will hinder the passage of all mercy; not a drop of the wafer of life will be conveyed by prayer without faith. Therefore there is great reason to examine; and to help you, take some characters.

(1.) Backwardness to pray is a sign you pray not in faith. He that believes he shall have whatever he asks, freely, without upbraiding, will be ready and forward to ask upon all occasions. If you did believe, you would omit no opportunity to address yourselves to God this way; you would not neglect it in your families, in secret, in public: those who omit it, undervalue it, make no great account of it, spend whole days without it, count it a burden, say, What a weariness is it! take no pleasure, no delight, come to it as a task, cannot be said to pray in faith.

(2.) Carelessness in praying. Prayer is a blessed engine, which, being carefully managed by faith, will procure all mercies that you need, for time or eternity; never made use of it in vain; if you did believe this, you would not be so negligent in prayer, but would stir up yourselves and diligently improve all your might in prayer. Those who pray only with their lips, draw near only with their mouths, make it only an exercise of the body, and suffer their hearts and thoughts to wander without control, pray as if they prayed not, do not pray in faith; if you prayed in faith, you would observe the condition of such a prayer, one of which is fervency. Where lukewarmness, indifferency, formality, distractions are tolerated, faith is not exercised.

(3.) Perplexity and solicitousness after prayer. This was a sign Hannah prayed in faith, 1 Samuel 1:1-28, because, though she spake out of the abundance of her complaint and grief; yet, after, her countenance was no more sad. Faith is expressed by casting our burden upon the Lord; he that groans and is oppressed under a burden, when it is laid on another is at ease; he that acts faith in prayer casts his burden upon God; therefore, after such a prayer, the oppressed soul will be at ease, ‘return to its rest;’ no heart-dividing cares molest it: ‘Be careful for nothing.’

(4.) Is the promise your encouragement in prayer? Does this draw you to pray? does this quicken you in praying? does this encourage to expect a return after prayer? do you plead the word? do you urge the promise? Then it is faith. Thus the people of God have done in their prayers of faith; so Moses, Numbers 14:17-18; and Solomon, 1 Kings 8:23-26; Nehemiah 1:8; so David, Psalms 119:25, Psalms 119:28, Psalms 119:58, Psalms 119:65, Psalms 119:76, Psalms 119:116. Do you plead the word of promise, Though I be unworthy to be heard, yet the Lord is worthy to be honoured; and it is not for thy honour to neglect thy word; though I can do nothing to engage thee, yet thou hast engaged thyself, and the Lord will be true to his engagements; though nothing be due to me but wrath, yet the Lord hath made this mercy due to me by his promise, therefore I will expect it; the Lord will not detain what himself has made due; though I forget my promises and resolutions for God, yet the Lord will not forget his covenant; it is his attribute, ‘a God keeping covenant;’ and though the Lord may deny me, yet he will not deny himself? Does the faithfulness and righteousness of God encourage you to ask and to expect an answer? Do you plead these, as David frequently, ‘Deliver me in thy righteousness,’ Psalms 119:40; Psalms 143:1; though my unrighteousnesses do testify against me, yet the Lord is righteous from everlasting to everlasting; and is it not a righteous thing with the Lord to do what he has said? Though I am unfaithful, and

have dealt falsely in the covenant, yet my unfaithfulness cannot make the faithfulness of God of no effect. The Lord has promised, and faithful is he who has promised, who also will do it; thus to conclude, thus to act upon the promises, and upon the righteousness and faithfulness of God engaged in the promise, is the work of faith; and the prayer where such actings are found, is of faith; where the promise raises the heart to hope, and hope quickens it to more frequency, more fervency in prayer.

(5.) Can you submit to the Lord's time for an answer, believing that your prayer shall either be answered now or hereafter, when it is best for you? This is enough to denominate your prayers. Faith is a submissive grace; it will not prescribe to the Lord, nor limit the Holy One; it will acknowledge him to be both κ■ριος το■ δο■ναι κα■ το■ π■τε δο■ναι, as Chrysostom, both Lord of what he gives, and of the time when he will give it; sometimes the Lord answers presently, Genesis 24:12-15, Daniel 9:1-27; sometimes 'the vision is for an appointed time,' Habakkuk 2:3; and then, 'though it tarry, we must wait for it;' so do those who live (who pray) by faith, ver. 4. It is uncertain to us when the appointed time is, whether now or hereafter: 'It is not for us to know the times and the seasons,' Acts 1:7; so Christ told his disciples when they were a little too peremptory as to a present answer: 'Wilt thou at this time?' &c., 'It is not for you to know,' &c., and withal commands them to wait, ver. 4. Faith will be content to act upon what God has revealed; it is unbelief that pries into God's secrets: faith will be content with God's time; it is unbelief would confine the Lord to our time: 'He that believes makes not haste;' he will stay God's leisure, refer himself for the time to him who knows what time is best; it is unbelief that is so hasty, must have it now, or not at all, as that wretch, 2 Kings 6:33. It is sufficient, ordinarily, to constitute a prayer of faith, to believe the Lord will answer, either in our time or his, either now or hereafter; either at present, or when it will be more seasonable, more a mercy; and to rest satisfied with this; if faith act thus in prayer, you pray in faith.

(6.) Are you persuaded the Lord will give either what you desire, or what is better? Do you rest in this, that you shall have what you ask, either in kind or in an equivalency; that the Lord will satisfy your desires, either as to the letter of your petition, or as to the intention of it? Do you acquiesce in this, that the Lord will answer you, either according to your will, or according to his will; that he will give either what you think best or what he thinks best? Do you believe you shall be heard, either ad voluntatem, or ad salutem? as Augustine; that he will give either what you desire, or what is better than the thing you desire? if so, you pray in faith.

It is a great mistake to think you pray not in faith, unless you believe the very particular shall be granted which you ask. Faith acts in a greater latitude, hath a larger sphere, it reaches as far as that providence which orders the returns of prayer; faith acts for an answer, according as the Lord is wont to make answers. Now this is clear in Scripture and experience, that the Lord doth answer, not only by giving the thing desired, but by vouchsafing something else, as much, or more desirable: Acts 1:1-26, 'Wilt thou restore the kingdom?' &c., ver. 6; this was it they desired, a temporal kingdom. He gratifies them not in this, yet grants that which was much better: ver. 8, 'Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me,' &c.; and as faith is not confined in such narrow bounds, so it will not confine the Lord to them, it will not limit the Holy One of Israel. To limit the Lord is to tempt him; and to tempt God is an act of unbelief, that unbelief whereby the Israelites provoked God in the wilderness, Psalms 78:41; this is censured under the notion of unbelief, Psalms 78:22; it was from their unbelief that they limited

God. They were not contented with manna, though angels' food, that which the Lord thought best for them; they must have flesh too; they must have flesh or nothing, Psalms 78:18; their lusting was a peremptory desire, an issue of unbelief. We may judge of the nature of this desire by the quality of the answer; if it had been a desire of faith, it had been answered in mercy; but the Lord answers them in wrath, Psalms 78:29-31. Ad voluntatem auditi sunt Israelitæ. He gave them their own desire; since they would not be satisfied, unless they had that very thing which they desired, they had it indeed, but they had the wrath of God with it. The Lord does not answer the desires of faith in this manner; they are of another strain; they will be satisfied either with what is desired, or with what the Lord counts better. It is unbelief that must have that which is desired, or nothing; faith is not so peremptory. When we pray for things not absolutely necessary, or not comparatively necessary, i. e., not so necessary, but something else may be more necessary, we may pray in faith, though we believe not that the particular we desire shall be granted; it is sufficient in these cases, if we believe the Lord will either vouchsafe that, or something else which he knows to be more convenient: and therefore if your faith act accordingly in prayer, it may be called a prayer of faith.

(7.) Can you suspend your hopes of an answer upon a condition, upon such conditions as have warrant and approbation in Scripture? Faith acted conditionally is enough, in some cases, to constitute a prayer of faith. Abraham prayed in faith, yet his prayer runs in a conditional strain, Genesis 18:29-30, Genesis 18:32; so Solomon, 1 Kings 8:35, 1 Kings 8:44, 1 Kings 8:47; so Christ himself, Luke 22:42. The apostle mentions a conditional confidence, 1 John 5:14. The confidence is, that he will hear when we ask; the condition is, if we ask according to his will; or, which comes to the same issue, if we ask what is good for us, all things considered, for what is good for us is according to his will. In case, then, you are uncertain what is according to his will, if he have not absolutely manifested, by command, promise, or other equivalent that what you desire is that which he wills, either in substance or circumstance, or in case you are uncertain whether that you pray for be absolutely good for you, or so good, but something else may be better, in these cases, when you believe that what you pray for shall be granted, if it be according to his will, or if it be best for you, you pray in faith; no more is required.

Augustine gives this rule for regulating our prayers as to temporals, and it holds in spirituals, when there is that uncertainty now spoken of: Quando petitis temporalia, petite cum modo, ask them with restriction, i. e., conditionally, illi committite, ut si profit, det; si scit obesse, non det, refer it to him to give if it be good, to deny if it be hurtful, quid autem obest, quid prosit, novit medicus, non ægrotus; submit will and wisdom to him.

Before we conclude, it is requisite to resolve some cases.

1. Since it is necessary that those who would receive must pray in faith, i. e., must be confident and assured that their prayers shall be answered, what can they expect who want assurance, who (as to their own apprehensions) have not the grounds of this confidence? How can they be confident of this privilege, who are full of fears and doubts that they are not in that state on which this privilege is entailed? How can they pray in faith, who fear they have not faith? How can they believe their prayers will be accepted, who see no ground to believe that their persons are accepted? This is the case of those who, being in or newly past the pangs of the new birth, have the seeds of faith, but not the evidence. Faith is in its infancy, not grown up to that maturity as to

know itself. Such walk in darkness, and see no light; have no light to discover that God is their Father, that the promise is their portion, that Christ intercedes for them, or that the Spirit intercedes in them. What support can these have in reference to the success of their prayers? This may be the case also of such who have had assurance, but have now lost it; who are in that sad condition as they have occasion to invert the apostle's expression, that they were sometimes light in the Lord, but now they are darkness; their former evidence is blotted, former light clouded, the Spirit of God suspending his assuring and evidencing testimony, either for trial or upon some provocation. The question here will be, What encouragement and support such may have as to the issue of their prayers? can such pray in faith? or can they pray so as their prayers shall be granted?

Ans. A faith of dependence may constitute a prayer of faith, where assurance is wanting; and therefore those who, through the weakness of faith, or through the withdrawings of God in time of desertion, are destitute of assurance, may yet pray in faith, if so be they exercise this faith of dependence. To open this a little, a faith of dependence, as but a may be, God may answer; a faith of assurance has a will be, says, God will answer. That says, Probably the Lord will hear; this says, Certainly the Lord will hear. Jonathan went out against the Philistines in the strength of that faith we express by depending or relying upon God, and it rose no higher than thus, 'It may be,' 1 Samuel 14:6. Now, faith thus acted in prayer makes it a prayer of faith. But to resolve this case more fully and clearly, I shall endeavour four things.

(1.) To shew that this relying on God for answer is sufficient to make a prayer of faith, that this faith of dependence is enough in some cases. And thus I proceed. It is this faith which justfies a sinner. The person being justified is accepted; the person being accepted, the prayer is accepted, and so will be answered. A sinner is not justified by assurance, but by an act of dependence or relying on Christ; for he is justified by the first act of faith, when he first believes. But assurance is after the first act of believing, Ephesians 1:13. The Spirit's sealing, which causes assurance, is after believing; upon which he is justified, person and prayers accepted. A faith of dependence, without assurance, is sufficient to render the prayer acceptable and capable of an answer. And therefore this relying, acted in prayer, makes it a prayer of faith. Besides, this faith is sometimes all that is required, and all that is expressed, in those prayers which have been graciously answered, Joel 2:12-14. The prophet directs them how to address themselves to the Lord. Faith is necessary in all such addresses, yet all the faith whereby they made this address is in those words, 'Who knoweth?' &c., which amounts to no more than this faith of dependence. It is no more than this, It may be the Lord will return and repent, &c., Jonah 3:9. That faith, in the strength of which they were to send up those mighty cries, goes no farther than a may be, Who can tell? &c.; yet this prayer prevailed, Jonah 3:10. So that it is clear from hence, that a faith of dependence, acted in prayer, will prevail with God for an answer, and make it a prayer of faith.

(2.) I will shew the objects upon which this faith is acted, and by which it is supported, and how it is to be exercised on them in the cases propounded. The objects to which I will be confined at this time are three.

[1.] The name of God. The Lord directs those that are in darkness to this object, Isaiah 50:10; and there is enough in this name to encourage and support the weakest, and to silence all his fears and doubts as to the success of his prayers. See it declared, Exodus 34:6-7. Here is firm footing for that faith which is so weak and small as it cannot be discerned by him that hath it. It is said of

Abraham, that he ‘staggered not through unbelief,’ Romans 4:20; and the reason is, because he had firm footing for both feet. He that stands but upon one leg may easily stagger; he that is persuaded that God is able, but not willing, or willing, but not able, his faith stands but upon one leg. But Abraham was persuaded of both: the promise, that persuaded him God was willing; his power, that persuaded him he was able; both expressed, Romans 4:21. Therefore his faith having ground for both feet, stood sure and stedfast; it staggered not. Now the name of God affords as good ground for faith; there is that in it which may persuade a doubting soul that God is both able and willing. ‘The Lord, the Lord God;’ Heb., ‘Jehovah, Jehovah El.’ The strong God; he that has his being of himself, and gives a being to things that are not. This shews he is able, able to give a being to all you want or desire, though they are to be brought out of nothing; able to make thee pray, and able to make all desirable returns to thy prayers, nay, ‘above what you can ask or think.’ And that he is willing, the rest of his name shews, ‘merciful, gracious,’ &c. He is merciful, and misery is a proper plea for mercy, and am I not miserable? He is gracious, and grace expects no motive from without; free grace will move itself; nor will it be stopped by any hindrance within me. Unworthiness cannot hinder, for then it is most grace when it rests in the most unworthy; and am not I such? Long continuance in sin cannot hinder, if broken off by repentance, for he is long-suffering; no, nor the abounding sinfulness of sin, for he is abundant in goodness; no, nor the infinite multitude and variety of sins, for he forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; nor the huge number of petitioners, he keeps mercy for thousands. And though the doubting soul cannot in prayer plead his truth (another letter of his name) in reference to the covenant, as not knowing his interest in the covenant, yet he may plead it in reference to the declaration of his name; as sure as God is true, so sure he is merciful and gracious, &c.

[2.] The free offers of Christ. The Scripture abounds with them; I will but instance in one: John 6:37, ‘All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.’ That which faith principally eyes in Christ for the success of prayer, is his intercession, his office as advocate. Now, though a doubting soul dare not rely upon Christ as one that is his advocate, yet may it rely on him as one that offers to be its advocate. He professes that he will in no wise refuse any that will retain him. Christ, may the soul say, prayed for his enemies, for those that were murdering him, and may he not then intercede for me? It is true I have been an enemy, but oh how do I hate myself for that enmity! I have now laid down arms, and now, though I can do little for him, yet I resolve never more to oppose him, though I perish. And since he was so gracious, as to pray for his murderers, who knows but he may intercede for me? And further, Christ prayed not only for those who did actually believe, but for those who should afterwards believe, John 17:20. He prayed for those who then had no faith when he prayed. And is not this thy case, poor doubting or deserted soul? Is not this the worst thou canst make of it? Canst thou say anything worse of thyself than this, I do not believe, I have no faith? Well, then, seek to Christ, rely on him, as one that prayed, as one that intercedes for unbelievers; and hereby thou wilt shew thou hast faith, and thy prayers will be answered, as the Lord useth to answer prayers of faith.

[3.] The general promise; such as are not restrained to those qualifications and conditions, which the dark soul apprehends to be out of its reach; such as that, Hebrews 11:6, ‘He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;’ Joel 2:32, ‘Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered.’ The doubting soul may thus reason. There was nothing in man could move the Lord to make these promises, and there is nothing in man can hinder him from performing them when and

where he pleases. And who knows but he may perform them to me? It is true I have neglected Christ formerly, oh but now I resolve to seek him indeed. And though I be not certain that he will be found of me, yet I will seek him early, seek him first, before all others, seek him principally, above all others; who knows but I may at last find him? He has been found of those that sought him formerly; he has been found of those that sought him not; and will he not be found of me that seek him?

(3.) The acts of this faith, in which it is exercised, and by which it may be discerned.

[1.] A renouncing of all supports and refuges, but Christ. See it in returning Ephraim: Hosea 14:3, “We will no more rely on Assyria, nor trust in our armies of horse.” So the soul will no more rely on his own wisdom and righteousness, on his own works and performances. When he comes to pray, he will not ground his confidence on what he doth, or what he is, or what he is not, as the Pharisee; he perceives these to be but a refuge of lies. And though he become hereby destitute and helpless, and has not thus much to comfort him, that God is his Father, yet here is his support in this orphan state, ‘In thee the fatherless find mercy.’

[2.] Submission. A depending soul will be content with anything, if the Lord will but own him, if Christ will but smile, entertain him. This is visible in the returning prodigal, Luke 15:18-29. To my father; there is faith. Though thou hast dealt with me as a Father, yet I am unworthy to be called a son, unworthy to be entertained and employed as a son. Lord, let me be anything, so as I may have a being in thy house; let me but come under thy roof, and I will be content though I have no other usage, respect, reward; the meanest office in thy house is too good, only let me not be shut out of doors. The woman of Canaan, though she followed Christ with such strength of faith and importunity of prayer, as he admires her, yet so submissive, she will be content with crumbs, anything that has relation to children, though not the relation itself, yea, though it be but the crumbs that fall from the table, Matthew 15:22. So 2 Samuel 15:25.

[3.] Acceptation. He will yield to any terms, so as the Lord will but grant his chief desires. Tell him, if he will have Christ, and follow him, he must forsake all; he embraces the motion, he says, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation. He says with Mephibosheth, Nay, let him take all, if my Lord will return to my soul in peace. Tell him, if he will inherit the land of promise, he must come out of Egypt, he is content, he will not leave a hoof behind. All his lusts shall go, if Christ will but come, small and great, secret and open, pleasant and profitable; his Zoars, his little ones, shall be turned into ashes; his Herodias, his pleasant beloved sins shall be divorced. The best and fattest of the cattle, his profitable and gainful sins, shall be put to the sword, with the rest of the children of Amalek; his secret idols, those that are hid in the stuff, shall not only be buried, but, as Moses with the calf, ground to powder. Tell him, if he will be joined to Christ, he must forget his kindred and father’s house, his former old acquaintance and conversation; he is satisfied, so as the King will delight in his beauty, so as Christ will but take pleasure in him. Tell him, if he will have Christ as an intercessor, he must submit to him as a king; Oh, says he, if the golden sceptre may be but holden forth, I will submit to it for ever. Tell him, if he will have the Spirit of Christ, he must have him as a Spirit of grace, as well as a Spirit of supplication: he yields with cheerfulness; he looks upon holiness as garments of wrought gold, that which will both enrich and beautify him; the sanctifying work of the Spirit is acceptable to him, as well as the sealing work. Tell him, he that will name the name of the Lord with acceptance, must depart from iniquity: he answers presently,

‘What have I any more to do with idols?’ This Accepting Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, upon gospel terms, is called faith, John 1:12.

[4.] Appropriation. Coming unto Christ, stretching out his soul to lay hold on him, opening his heart to embrace him, flying upon the wing of desire to draw near him. Thus faith is expressed by ‘drawing near,’ Hebrews 10:22. Though he cannot draw near with full assurance of faith, yet with a full sail of affection. By ‘embracing the promise,’ Hebrews 11:13; though he cannot embrace the promise, as having received it for his present portion, yet he embraces it as seen afar off. By laying hold, Hebrews 6:18; though he cannot lay hold of Christ as his treasure and possession, yet on the hope set before him. By ‘coming to Christ,’ John 6:35; I am unworthy to come near him, yet he is worthy to be obeyed, and he commands me to come. Though I be not sure he will entertain me, yet there is no way but ruin if I come not. He invites me, and who knows but he may receive me? I have none else to come to, the world I have renounced, and to come to it is to run upon the sword of an enemy; my lusts I have forsaken, and to return to them is to run back into ruin. There is none but Christ, none but Christ, my soul can come to for refuge. And lo he calls me, why, ‘Behold I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord.’

[5.] Resolution. Being come, he resolves to continue there. If he die, he will die at his feet. If he perish, he will perish with Christ in his arms. If justice seizes on him, it shall slay him at the horns of the altar. Nothing shall fright him from his hold. Come death, come hell, I will not let thee go. Nay, the more he is afraid, the faster he clings. ‘What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.’ ‘Though he kill me’ (as he may justly), ‘yet will I trust in him,’ yet will I hold him fast; and those that find me dead, shall find my heart, my hands fastened upon Christ. And as nothing shall fright, so nothing shall persuade him to leave his hold. He answers all, as Ruth did Naomi: Ruth 1:16-17, ‘Whither thou goest, I will go,’ &c.

[6.] Expectation. Being thus resolved to cleave to Christ, he expects something from him. Though his hopes be weak, his hold is strong. There is a hope before him, though he apprehend it not in him, which he lays hold of. Although he cannot come to the throne of grace with that full assurance of hope which the apostle mentions, though he arrive not there with full sail, yet he has a sweet breeze of probability, enough to keep him in motion, and hold his head above water, and this may support him in the mean time: Psalms 9:18, ‘The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.’ Though it may stick upon the fiats, and dash now and then against the rock, yet it shall not perish; or though it may seem to perish for a time, yet it shall not perish for ever.

(4.) The special encouragements which this faith may have, in reference to the success of prayer.

[1.] This relying upon God, engages him to answer, and the Lord will not fail his engagements. If one rely upon a great person for a favour, and have encouragement from him so to do, it will not stand with his credit and honour to disappoint him; much less will the Lord fail those whom he has encouraged to depend on him. He is tender of his honour. If such a soul come to him, and tell him, Thou hast invited me to fly to thee for refuge; I have none else to defend me, I have renounced all other dependencies; if thou fail me, I perish; he that thus flies to the Lord for refuge, shall find in due time strong consolation. Christ will not deliver those up to justice, who fly to him for sanctuary.

[2.] Christ highly commends this faith of dependence, seems to admire it, and to be extraordinarily taken with it: Matthew 8:8, ‘Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.’ Here is no more

expressed than a faith of dependence; if there be any assurance, it is but a half assurance, that which respected the power of Christ, not his willingness, no intimation of that. So Matthew 15:1-39, of the woman of Canaan. Christ beats her off there from all assurance; that which she asked was not proper for her: ‘It is not meet to cast the children’s bread to dogs.’ Nor was he sent for this purpose. He leaves her no ground for assurance, yet by this faith of dependence she clings to him, pleads with him, urges him so far till he yields, till she prevails, and she prevails as far as she will. See here the power of this faith put forth in prayer, it can prevail with Christ for the obtaining of all we desire.

[3.] The obedience of one that has but a faith of dependence in seeking God is in some respect more excellent than theirs who have assurance. For a child that has his father’s smile and love to be affectionate and obsequious is no great matter; but for one whom his father does not own, who knows not that he shall have any share in the inheritance, [to] be obedient and affectionate, this is excellent and rarely ingenuous; so for one that is assured of the love of God, that walks in the light of his countenance, and knows heaven is his portion, to be much in seeking God, and waiting on him, is not so much, but for him who sees nothing but frowns in the face of God, and has no assurance of any reward for his attendance on him, to be much in prayer, eager in following him, diligent in waiting on him, this is obedience of a rare ingenuous temper, and cannot but be highly acceptable in the sight of God. For one to say as the martyr, Though I know not that Christ loves me, yet will I die, be burned for him. Will not the Lord value such an affection? will he not reward such? will he not make sweet returns to such prayers?

[4.] He that has this faith of dependence has really interest in all the privileges that attend assurance, though not in his own apprehension. This faith justifies the person, and the person being justified, the prayer is accepted. This gives an interest in the covenant, and he that is in covenant has right to all promises. This gives interest in Christ, and he that has that has interest in his intercession, his Father’s love, his Spirit’s assistance; and what more is required to make prayer successful? If prayer be accepted, it will be answered, though he apprehends it not, if the Lord be engaged by promise, if Christ intercede, if the Spirit assist.

2. Case. There is a confidence to be found in unregenerate men in their addresses to God. We see too many are confident as to their state that they shall be saved, and they may be as confident as to their duties that they shall be accepted, as to their prayers that they shall be heard when they pray for salvation. As nothing is more dangerous, so nothing more common than such presumptions. And they are so high and strong, as it is one of the most difficult works of gospel ministers to demolish and level these confidences, to beat sinners out of them. This is one of Satan’s strongholds, wherein he secures natural men against the assaults of law and gospel tending to reduce them, and bring them to surrender and yield themselves to Christ upon gospel terms. Such confidence we see in the Pharisee, Luke 18:1-43. And the prophet declares against it in the degenerate and profane Israelites, Amos 3:9–11. Here the question will be, how the confidence of faith may be known and distinguished from this presumptuous confidence, how a true believer may discern that his confidence in approaching to God is not the presumption of hypocrites, and how presumptuous sinners may be convinced that their carnal boldness is not the confidence of faith? that so the prayers of faith may be distinguished from the prayers of presumption and carnal confidence.

Ans. The confidence of faith in prayer differs from this presumptuous confidence in its rise, grounds, attendants, and effects.

(1.) In its rise. The carnal man arrives at this confidence he knows not how. If we should say to it, as the master of the feast to him that wanted the wedding garment, ‘How camest thou hither?’ he can give no satisfying answer, he can give no rational account how he came by it, he has had it ever since he can remember, ever since he was accustomed to pray. He attained it with ease, it cost him nothing; it sprang up in him as a mushroom, on a sudden, without his care or industry. Whereas the confidence of faith is not in an ordinary way so soon, nor so easily, nor so insensibly attained. Believers can many times remember their carnal confidence was cast down by the spirit of bondage, and that their spiritual confidence was not raised but with difficulty, and by degrees; it was a work of time and labour, like the casting down of mountains and the filling of valleys. The work of law and gospel too were little enough to effect it. After the convictions of sin and wrath, their own vileness and unworthiness had made a valley in their spirits, had undermined their mountain of presumption which stood so fast, and had laid them low and vile in their own apprehensions, it was a work of difficulty to raise their souls to this confidence. They found fearfulness and confidence struggle in their souls, as the twins in Rebecca’s womb, Genesis 25:22; a strife as betwixt Pharez and Zara, Genesis 38:1-30, which would get out first; doubtings and fearfulness putting out the hand before this confidence could break forth, and the soul in the mean time, as it were, in travail.

(2.) In the grounds. Presumption has either no ground at all, or else it is raised upon nothing but the sand; in some it springs from their natural temper, they can be bold and confident with men, and they will be so with God; he may complain of them as of those, Psalms 50:21, ‘Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself.’ Their apprehensions of God differ little from those they have of men, and so they make as bold with him as they do with their familiars. They sometimes ground it upon their prayers, especially if they be long and often in this duty, they think they oblige God thereby, and conclude something is due to them from God upon this account, and accordingly they expect it. Hence it is that when the returns do not answer their expectations, they are ready to expostulate with God, as though he did them wrong, like those, Isaiah 58:2-3. Sometimes they raise it upon the same foundation with the Pharisee, Luke 18:1-43. They are not so bad as some, and they do more good than others, and therefore are confident they shall fare well at God’s bands. But now the confidence of faith is to be found in those who are most bashful and modest as to their natural constitutions, when once they are renewed and fortified by the power of grace. Christ and the promise is the ground of this confidence. They rest not in their prayers, nor any part of their own righteousness; they know that all their shreds put together will make no more than a menstruous cloth, a garment both ragged and loathsomely bespotted. This is occasion of shame and blushing, they can have no confidence to be seen in such a woful habit. They count all their prayers, abstinences from sin, and actual righteousness but loss, look on them all as lost, and have no confidence to be found anywhere, in anything, but in Christ, Php 3:1-21. But what the grounds of it are I have given a large account before.

(3.) In the attendants. Confidence of faith is accompanied with,

[1.] Reverence; a filial and a holy fear of God. The apostle, who so often exhorts the faithful Hebrews to draw near with boldness, with confidence, with full assurance of faith, brings it

attendant with it: Hebrews 12:28, ‘Being confident we shall receive,’ &c. Let us hold fast this confidence, and thereby we shall be enabled to serve God with reverence. Hope (often put for faith and confidence) is joined with fear: Psalms 147:11, Psalms 5:7, ‘In the multitude of thy mercy, there is confidence,’ &c. A believer is sensible of his own vileness, and apprehensive of the majesty and holiness of God, low thoughts of himself, and high thoughts of God. These thoughts impress upon the soul an awful respect of God, fill it with reverence, and an ingenuous dread lest any action or word should pass him in this duty not beseeming such a majesty, that might be in the least offensive or dishonourable to him, as we see a child is then most afraid to offend his father when he is nearest him. The presumptuous have a good conceit of themselves, but low thoughts of God. The Pharisee was an emblem of such. In his prayer, he is more in praising himself than praising God. Or if upon any occasion their thoughts of God be raised, yet so slight and powerless, as they leave little or no impression upon the heart. The higher they rise in these speculations, the weaker is their influence; as the stars, we see, they are so high they give little light. Their apprehensions leave no awe or dread of God upon their hearts Or if there be any impressions of fear, yet it is a fear of smarting and suffering from him rather than of displeasing or dishonouring him; as slaves, that would not dread the displeasure or disparagement of their master, but that they are afraid of stripes and blows.

[2.] Resignation of his will and wisdom to the will and wisdom of God. He will be content with God’s time, his way, his measure, his will, as to the answer of his prayers, and all the circumstances thereof. But presumptuous confidence must have what he desires, or nothing; when he expects it, or not at all; in that way and degree he looks for it, or else it is not worth the having. It is a proud stiffness of spirit, his will must be the rule to measure his receipts, his wisdom must be judge what is best; these must not veil nor lower to the will and wisdom of God. He is like a sturdy beggar, that must have what he asks, or else you must look for ill language from him. If the Lord will not punctually gratify his desires, he has hard thoughts of him, murmurs and repines against him, as you see in the Israelites all along under their conduct by Moses. True confidence is like the ground of it, Christ; a tender plant will bow and bend to the will and at the pleasure of God, but counterfeit confidence is like a sturdy oak, or a dry stick, that will break rather than bend.

(4.) In the effects. Confidence begets,

[1.] Fervency. We see by experience, where there are hopes of attaining, they will quicken up to eagerness in pursuing. A due confidence of receiving will make a believer vehement and fervent in asking. The apostle makes a prayer of faith to be a fervent prayer; James 5:1-20, that which is a prayer of faith, James 5:15, is described to be a fervent prayer, ver. 16. And Elias, who is given as an instance of one praying in faith, and his prayer is there expressed by this character of fervency, James 5:17, προσευχ■ προση■ξατο; according to the letter it is, ‘he prayed in his prayer,’—a form of speech, it is usual with the Hebrews, to express vehemency; he prayed vehemently. True confidents pray their prayers, others do but say their prayers.

If a man desire a thing above him, and have hopes that he may reach it, he will stretch out himself to do it. This hope, this confidence of attaining what we desire of God, will make our prayers to be a stretching out of our souls to God, according to the import of that expression, Acts 12:5, προσευχ■ ■κτεν■ς, an extended prayer was made, a prayer wherein the soul was extended and stretched out to God. That prayer which springs from this confidence is a soul-labour, the travail of

the soul; the heart is in labour while it is in prayer. But that of the presumptuous is but lip-labour, a labour of the outward man, a bodily exercise; the heart and affections are cold, dead, without lively motion. Or if there be any heat, life, fervency, in them, it is but at some times, and for some things. There may be some eagerness at some times, as when they are under some strong convictions, in some imminent danger, or under some sharp affliction; 'in their affliction they will seek me early.' Then diligently, at other times carelessly. Or they may be eager for some things, for temporal blessings, for outward deliverance. They may howl upon their beds for corn and wine, but not for holiness, not for power against endeared lusts; they pray for these, like Augustine before his conversion, as if they were afraid to be heard. Or they may be affectionate in some parts of prayer. There may be some heat and importunity in petition when their necessities of outward things are pressing, Isaiah 26:16. They poured out a prayer; their hearts, as though they were dissolved by the ardency of desires for deliverance, ran out in their petitions. Oh but what melting was there in their confessing and bewailing sin! what heat and affectionateness in their praises of God! No; when such are to offer a sacrifice of praise, there is no fire on the altar, no heat nor ardour of affection; no fire from heaven, at least nothing but strange fire, such as their own interests and concernments kindle.

*Daniel 6:1-28 ** This Sermon appears to be unfinished.—Ed. OF DYING IN FAITH These all died in faith.—Hebrews 11:13. The apostle having in the former chapter exhorted them to persevere in the faith, in this he explains the nature of it. 1. Describing it by some properties, Hebrews 11:1-2. Confirming the description by examples of the faithful in general, Hebrews 11:2, particularly of Abel. Hebrews 11:4, Enoch, Hebrews 11:5-6, Noah, Hebrews 11:7, Abraham, Hebrews 11:8-10, Sarah, Hebrews 11:11-12, and gives au account of their faith in four particulars, Hebrews 11:13. 1. The continuance of their faith: died; as lived by it, so died in it. 2. The object of it, the promises. 3. The acts of it: (1.) see; (2.) persuaded; (3.) embraced. 4. The effect of it, an acknowledgment they were strangers. From the first, Obs. The elders died in the faith.

1. In the profession of the faith. They held fast the truths of God to the death. They denied not, they made not shipwreck of faith; they suffered not Satan or his instruments to cheat them of it; exchanged it not for fancies, delusions; did not apostatise, fall from it, as was prophesied of many in the last times; made not their opinions subservient to carnal interests; did not tack about, not carried about with every wind. Judgments firmly anchored in truth could ride out foul weather, bear up against storms.

2. In the state of faith. As they lived, so they died believers. Having begun in the Spirit, they did not end in the flesh. They kept faithfully the Spirit's παρακαταθ■κη. They lost not the habit of faith; suffered it not to decay, languish; but strengthened it, bore on towards perfection; that when their outward man decayed, faith increased, and was strongest in the greatest weakness, in death.

3. In the expression of faith. The genuine expression of faith in God is faithfulness to God; and they were faithful unto the death. Though sometimes in the place of dragons, yet did not deal falsely in the covenant; endeavoured to perform the conditions of it, to walk before God in uprightness. Deal faithfully in the covenant, when do what is promised, answer engagements, as intent upon repentance and new obedience.

4. In the exercise of faith. Though the other be true, this seems most proper. As they acted faith in their life, so in their death. Their life was the life of faith, as Paul, Galatians 2:20. Faith had an

influence into every act of their life. Natural acts, Sarah conceived by faith, and was delivered, Hebrews 11:1-40; civil acts, Abraham sojourned, Hebrews 11:9; spiritual acts, Abel sacrificed by faith, Hebrews 11:4; ordinary acts, Abraham's travel, Hebrews 11:8; extraordinary, Noah's building an ark, Hebrews 11:7. What they did, they did by faith, i.e., depending upon Christ for strength, believing the promise for assistance and success. And from the considerations of God's nature, attributes, providence, and their experiences of his goodness and faithfulness, did whatever they were commanded, went wherever they were called, expected whatever was promised. Thus they lived, and thus they died in faith, with confidence that God would perform what he had promised, even after their death, to them or theirs. Those that were begun to be performed in their lives, should be perfectly accomplished in or after their death; and those that were not at all performed before, should be fully accomplished after. God had promised to Abraham the land of Canaan, and heaven which that typified, and the Messias the purchaser of it. Abraham died in faith, that is, went out of the world confident that he should be admitted into heaven, Hebrews 11:10, and that his posterity should inherit the land of Canaan, and that the Messias should proceed from his loins. He saw the day of Christ, and that sight, strengthened by faith, made the day of death a day of joy, a gladsome day. Died in faith, i.e., in expectation of the performance of promises.

Use. Let us endeavour to imitate the ancient worthies; so to live by faith, as we may die in it. There can be no scruple of endeavouring an imitation here, since their example is commended to us by God, Hebrews 11:2. Paul exhorts, Php 4:8, 'Whatsoever things are of good report,' &c. He that dies in the faith dies honourably, comfortably, happily.

1. Honourably. He honours God, and God honours him. A strong faith does honour God at any time, Romans 4:20, sure then in death, since faith has then the most discouragements. How the Lord honours faith, we need go no further for instance than this chapter, where the apostle, by special instinct from God, makes honourable mention of faith and the faithful, and leaves an eternal monument thereof to all posterity. Thus shall it be done to the men who honour God, whom God will honour; their memory shall be blessed, and all generations shall call them so. When they are dead, and turned to ashes, rather than they shall want a testimony, the Lord will give one from heaven, a sufficient vindication against all the slander of the world. And who will put dishonour upon these whom the Lord will honour?

2. Comfortably. Faith and joy are mutual causes. Where strong faith, there is strong consolation in life or death. When faith ebbs, joy ebbs; a spring-tide of faith brings a strong stream of joy. Where there is πληροφορ■α π■στεως, full assurance of faith, then the soul is carried with full sail into the bosom of Christ. A weak faith does but creep into heaven, strong faith gives an abundant entrance.

3. Happily. 'He that continues faithful to the end, shall be saved.' It is he who must hear that ravishing welcome from the mouth of God, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' and must receive a glorious crown from the hand of Christ; 'Be thou faithful unto death,' &c. Faith enters with triumph into heaven, it conquers all opposition; 'This is your victory whereby ye overcome the world, even your faith.' It conquers Satan; the shield of faith quenches his darts, conquers sin, conquers death, jam deventum est ad triarios; it disarms him, and then enters heaven with a triumph, 'O death, where is thy sting?' Given victory through Christ. What we have through him, we have by faith in him.

Directions. 1. That you may live and die in the faith of Christ, in the faith once delivered to the saints, i.e., in the truths of Christ; that you may be constant and immoveable, not tossed to and fro, not carried away with the error of the wicked, the prevailing delusions of the times; that you may not be carried down the stream of error, the waters which the dragon vomits, Revelation 12:15; take this golden rule: ‘Receive the truth in the love of it,’ 2 Thessalonians 2:10. If you would continue in the truth, and have the Lord establish you in it, love the truth for itself, and love it above all inferior respects whatsoever. He that loves, espouses the truth only for some sinister advantages, out of custom, for applause, to avoid censure, &c., when these cease, will divorce the truth, and embrace any error that will comport with these respects. This is the great reason of the unfaithfulness of these times; why do many relinquish, disclaim those truths, which they formerly held, maintained, professed? Why, they did not love the truth for itself, but for some base respects; they never were in love with the beauty of truth, but only its garb, its dowry; and therefore when error comes in a garb more pleasing to carnal minds, with a dowry more advantageous to their base hearts, these wantons will entertain the truth no longer, but embrace error, a strumpet in room thereof. He that loves truth only for applause will embrace error when it is more plausible. He that loves carnal pleasures more than truth, will be ready to entertain those errors that will grant a toleration. He that receives the truth only, or principally, because it is generally received, will change his opinion when the times change. Nay, if a man’s carnal heart were not apt to fall out with truth, yet the Lord is so much in love with it as he will not suffer those to be blessed with it, who will not love it for itself, who prostitute it to base respects. He gives such up to strong delusions, &c.

2. That you may live and die in the state of faith, get into that happy state. Get faith rooted and grounded in your hearts, and then you are sure: ‘Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.’ You can neither live nor die without faith. While ye live without faith you are under the sentence of condemnation, and if ye die without faith, death will lead you to execution. Be not deceived, think not that to be faith which is not; think not you have faith, because you believe the word of God is truth, and what it reveals concerning God, and Christ, and holiness, and happiness, is true. This is faith indeed, but such a faith as the devils have; such a faith will be no advantage either in life or death; it will distinguish thee from an infidel, but not from an unbeliever. That faith which is saving, which receives testimony from God, &c., is such a faith as will make you willing to embrace Christ both as prince and Saviour; willing to obey him, as to be saved by him; to be sanctified as well as justified; that worketh by love, purifieth the heart, brings forth the fruits of the Spirit. This is the faith by which ye must live, in which ye must die, if ye will die happily, comfortably, &c. That you may attain this faith, be diligent in attending upon the word. This direction is the apostle’s, Romans 10:14, Romans 10:17. It is the word that both begets faith, and nourishes it. Those that neglect the word (it is evident to me) care not how they live, nor how they die.

3. That you may live and die in the expression of faith; i.e., that you may not deal unfaithfully in the covenant; consider how horribly wretched such unfaithfulness is. Those that use to deal unfaithfully with men, lie, or forswear, to get some advantage, there may be some temptation to this; but he that deals unfaithfully with God, deals unfaithfully with God to undo, to ruin himself. There is no advantage in the world to be got hereby, to tempt a man to it; the sin is desperately wicked and inexcusable. He that deals unfaithfully in the covenant does God a high displeasure,

that he may damn himself. What do ye, when you neglect faith, repentance, &c.? what tempts you to it? what advantage expect ye?

4. That ye may die in the exercise of faith, (1.) learn to live in the exercise of it. The more faith is acted, the easier it will be to exercise. Those who are strangers to the life of faith while they live, will find it a strange work to act it when they die. If you exercise it not now, it will in an ordinary way be impossible to act it then. The way to die in faith is to live by it. Learn now to live in a continual dependence upon God, to trust him with all you have, for all you want, to rely on him for supply of wants, assistance in duties, success of endeavours, strength to resist temptations, subdue lusts, bear afflictions, a blessing on your enjoyments. Walk always leaning upon God; so the word ■■■■ imports; depend on him, as the child upon the mother's breast; by the attractive power of faith, draw out of his all-sufficiency whatever you want. The life that you live, let it be by faith, &c., and then your death will be like these worthies'; and this may be writ upon your monument, at least it will be writ in heaven, 'These all died in the faith.'

(2.) Treasure up the promises in your hearts, in your memories. No such treasure as this. You will find riches a vain thing in that hour, they cannot deliver from death; but faith acted on the promises will both support in it, and deliver from it. These you will find the best cordials, sweeter than manna, the bread of life. That soul can never faint that feeds on them. Faith supports the soul when death assails, and these support faith; they are the staff of bread; if faith feed on them, they will nourish it into strength, such strength as will break through the terrors and pangs of death in a triumph. Let not the promises lie neglected, as though of no use. Choose out those that are most pertinent, those that will support in the conflict, and raise your expectation of approaching glory.

(3.) Clear up your evidences for heaven. While your title is dark, faith will be weak. How can ye be confident of the eternal blessings of the covenant, while ye have no assurance that you are in covenant? How can ye with confidence go out to meet the bridegroom, when ye know not whether ye have oil in your lamps? Oh then give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Till that be sure, faith will scarce find any firm footing, and so stagger and waver. Examine yourselves whether in the faith; give no rest to yourselves till ye know ye have interest in him, who through death has destroyed him that had the power of death, Hebrews 2:14-15. You can never be confident ye shall depart in peace, till ye be assured that Christ is your salvation. When you have cleared this evidence, endeavour to keep it clear. Sin blots it, guilt is a blur in the evidence. If you avoid not these in your lives, you will scarce read your evidence at death, and then faith may be nonplussed and to seek, when most [you] need it. Endeavour to keep a good conscience always, in all things, towards God and man, that so you may have the testimony of God and of your conscience on your deathbeds: as 2 Corinthians 1:12, 'That in simplicity and godly sincerity you have had your conversation.' Oh, such a testimony will be a great encouragement to faith, when all outward encouragements fail.

(4.) Lay up experiences. The remembrance of experiments of God's mercy and faithfulness in your lives will be a sweet support to faith in death. God's people have made good use of experiences to this purpose; David, Paul, 2 Timothy 4:18. Faith from such promises* will draw sweet conclusions. The Lord has delivered me from the dominion of sin, and the cruelty of Satan, therefore he will deliver me from the power of death. The Lord has given me the first fruits of heaven while I lived, he will give me a full harvest of glory after death. OF LIVING AS STRANGERS And confessed that

they were strangers.—Hebrews 11:13.

You have here an account of the life and death of those faithful servants of God, the patriarchs. Of their death, ‘These all died,’ &c.; of their life, ‘Strangers and pilgrims.’ That they thus died, we have God’s testimony, ‘These all,’ &c. That they thus lived, we have their own confession; they were strangers all their life, they were faithful to the death, and are thus recorded as examples to the people of God in all ages, that they may thus live, thus die.

Obs. Those that would die in the faith, should live as strangers and pilgrims. For explication I shall shew, 1. What it is to die in the faith; 2. What to live as strangers. For the first, it is to die as those ancient people of God did: 1. In the profession; 2. In the state; 3. In the expression; 4. In the exercise of faith, of which before. For the second, I shall first shew the ■τ■, secondly, the π■ς. The people of God in all ages thus lived. Jacob professeth it to Pharaoh, both of himself and his fathers, Genesis 47:9. The Lord himself, in the following age, styles all the Israelites thus, Leviticus 25:23. But they were not settled in Canaan, and that might be the reason. No. After it was given them as their inheritance, when they had possession of it, and had continued in possession some hundred years, in David’s time, yet does he profess this of himself and all his fathers, Psalms 39:12. But it may be David spake this when he was under persecution and in banishment, when he was hunted as a partridge, &c. No; it was when he was established upon the throne of Judah and Israel, when he had conquered all opposers abroad and at home, as it is evident, 1 Chronicles 29:15. Nor was this the condition of God’s people under the law only; no other is their state under the gospel. The apostle writes to them under this notion, 1 Peter 2:11. That it is so is evident; but in what respects are they so?

Ans. They are strangers and pilgrims:

1. In respect of their station, the place of their abode. While they are in the world, they are in a strange country; while they are present in the world, they are far from home. The world is a strange country, and their habitations in it, how much soever their own in civil respects, are but as inns in that journey homeward. The land of promise was but to Abraham a strange country; his dwelling there was but a sojourning, so far was he from thinking himself at home, Hebrews 11:9. The world is a strange country to the people of God, and the men of the world are men of a strange language, strange customs, strange laws, far differing from that of their own country. A strange language, the language of Ashdod. To hear God’s name profaned, his people reproached, holiness vilified, miscalled; to hear unclean, unsavoury, revengeful language; to hear men wholly taken up with discourse of the earth, and earthly things, oh this is, or should be, strange language to the people of God; there is no such word ever heard in their own country. While in the world, they are amongst a people of a strange tongue, strange customs and laws too, such as were never enacted, nor had place in their own country. To neglect the worship of God in public, in their families, to make provision for the flesh, &c., to lay up treasure on earth, to neglect God, their souls, eternity, these and such like are customs of the world; and they think it strange (so common is it) that God’s people will not run with them, 1 Peter 4:4, not swear, be drunk. A people of strange doctrines, Hebrews 13:9; strange vanities, Jeremiah 8:19; of a strange God too, 2 Corinthians 4:4. He is their lawgiver; the course of this world is according to his laws, Ephesians 2:2. The laws of their own country have no place here: the law of faith, love, self-denial, loving enemies, &c. Such a country is the world to the people of God, a strange country; and in this respect they are strangers.

2. In respect of their design, their motion, it is still homewards. This strange country likes them not, nor they it; they are travelling towards another, that which is, that which they account, their home, that better country, that heavenly country, that city prepared for them, that city whose builder and maker is God. Thus these faithful worthies, Hebrews 11:14, they that say, i. e., that confess, &c., do plainly declare, Hebrews 11:16. That heavenly country is the place of the Lord's abode; and because he is their God, this is their country, their home. This they look for, Hebrews 11:10, this they seek, Hebrews 11:14, this they desire, Hebrews 11:16; their expectations, their affections, their endeavours are for heaven, when they are like themselves. While they are present in the world, they are absent from home. So their life here is in motion; they are in a journey; they are travelling homewards, and that is to heaven. This is their journey's end, the end of their pilgrimage; and till they come there, till they be at home in heaven, they are strangers.

3. In respect of their enjoyments. They are but accommodated here like strangers. Much would be a burden, a hindrance to them in their journey; they have more in hopes than hand. These worthies died, not having received the promises, i. e., all the good things promised: no, their richest enjoyments are at home; no matter for state and superfluities in a journey. They are not known in those strange places where they pass, no matter how they seem to strangers. Though they be princes, sons of God, heirs of a crown, their Father sees it best, safest for them, to travel in a disguise. No matter what strangers take them for, 1 John 3:2, what they now enjoy are but like the accommodations of an inn, enough for travellers. Their treasure, their crown, their glory is at home, their Father's house; till they come there they are strangers.

4. In respect of their usage. They are not known in the world, and so are often coarsely used. In this strange country they meet with few friends, but many injuries. See how the world used those of whom it was not worthy, Hebrews 11:36-38. Here is strangers indeed, and strangely used. No wonder if a stranger be jeered and derided; his habit, his manners, his language, is not conformed to the place where he is. Their habit, language, practices, must be after their own country fashion, such as become heaven: now this being contrary to the world, meets with opposition, scorn, reproaches, hatred. This was the portion of Christ, of his disciples, of his people in all ages; and this is the reason they are not of the world, they are strangers, John 17:14. If they have something that commands outward respect, it may be they will find some; but the hearts of worldly men are against them, John 15:18-19.

5. In respect of their continuance. Their abode on earth is but short. A stranger, a traveller stays not long in one place. Upon this account does David call himself and the people of God strangers, 1 Chronicles 29:15. They dwell but as Abraham in tabernacles, Hebrews 11:9, in tents, moveable dwellings, quickly, easily removed; no dwelling that has a foundation that is lasting, durable, till at home, ver. 10. Continuance on earth but a shadow, but a passage.

6. In respect of their relations. Their dearest relations are in another country. Their Father, their Husband, their Elder Brother, their dearest Friend, their Comforter, and the far greatest part of their brethren and fellow-members, are all in heaven. He that lives at a distance from his relations may well pass for a stranger.

Use 1. Reproof of those who profess themselves to be the people of God, and yet live not like his people; live on earth, as though earth was their home, and mind heaven as little as they mind a strange country; suffer their thoughts, affections, endeavours, to be so taken up with the earth, and

the things of it, as though the world were all the home they expect; instead of being strangers to the world, are strangers to the thoughts of, to the employments of, to the endeavours for heaven; rise up early, &c., to lay up treasure on earth, and lap up their hearts and souls with it. No wonder if these people be unwilling to die, since they must part from the world as one parts from his own country to go into banishment. They that thus live in the world cannot expect to die in the faith. Whose image and superscription do they bear?

Use 2. Exhortation to the people of God. You are strangers and pilgrims, oh endeavour to live as strangers. You expect to die in the faith, oh live then as you may so die.

(1.) Be not familiar with the world. Let the pleasures, the carnal interests of it, be strange things to you, 1 Peter 2:12. 'Be not conformed to the world,' Romans 12:2. If you count heaven your home, your country, disparage not heaven so much as to prefer the customs, the fashions, the practices, the language of the world, before those of your own country. To be ashamed to hold forth a heavenly conversation before the world, is to be ashamed of your own country, of heaven. Let your lives testify that you are citizens of heaven, that you are strangers.

(2.) Be patient under sufferings, under the affronts, reproaches, hard usages you meet with from the world. It is the portion of strangers. If ye were known, ye might expect better usage; but here you are strangers, you must put up wrongs and injuries. What folly for one in a strange country to seek to right himself? Expect no vindication till in your own country.

(3.) Be content with what things you enjoy. Though it seem small or poor, it is enough for a stranger. More would be a burden to you, and travellers should avoid burdens, if they long to be at home. The things of the world are cumbersome; they may make your journey tedious, and keep you longer from your desired home. Be content for a while; it is but a while, and you will be at home, and then you will find better entertainment, and more plenty.

(4.) Set not your hearts upon any thing here below. Remember, while you are on earth, you are but in an inn. What folly would it be for a traveller, who has far* home, to fall in love with, and fix himself in his inn? Such folly, or worse, would it be for you to fix on the world. Mind the things here below as in transitu; use them as though ye used them not.

(5.) Make haste home. Make no longer stay than needs must in this strange country. Make straight steps to your feet; disburden yourselves of worldly cares, projects, fleshly lusts, that weight that does so easily beset you. What you have to do here, do it with all your might, that you may be fit for home. Despatch, make haste; remember whither you are going, and to whom. Your Father expects you; the Bridegroom thinks long till you come, he that will delight in you for ever. You are but now contracted; the marriage will not be solemnized till you come home; and there he stands ready to entertain you, to embrace you in the arms of everlasting love. Hear how sweetly he invites you: Song of Solomon 2:10, 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.' Oh turn not aside into by-paths of sin and vanity. Look not back, close with sweet exhortation, Hebrews 12:1-2. Oh let the sight, the thoughts of Jesus, quicken your pace. And while you are absent in the body, let your hearts be at home, your hearts in heaven, where are your treasure, your joys, your crown, your glory, your inheritance, your husband. Oh, is not here allurement enough? This is the way to be at home while you are from home.

(6.) Be not too fearful of death. It is a sleep now; Christ's death did change the property of it? and will a pilgrim, a weary traveller, be afraid of sleep? When you are come to the gates of death, there is but one step then betwixt you and home, and that is death. Methinks we should pass this cheerfully, the next step your foot will be in heaven. How does it cheer the weary traveller, to think this is the last day's journey; to-morrow, to-morrow I shall be at my own home, with all my dear relations. There I shall have ease and rest, and many welcomes. Suppose this last be the worst, the most stormy day of all my journey, to-morrow will make full amends for it.

Now such a day is the day of death, the last day of a wearisome pilgrimage, and that which brings the stranger to his long home, into the bosom of God, into the embraces of Christ, unto all those joys and engagements that his own country afford, such as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, &c. This is partly the way to live as strangers, to live so as ye may die in the faith; and those that die in the faith die in the Lord, and those are blessed. THE EXCELLENT KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.—Php 3:8.

Here are the sweet strains of a gospel spirit, letting out itself in expressing a dear love to, a high esteem of Christ, and him alone; advancing Christ above all, giving him the throne, and making all competitors his footstool. The occasion of them we may find in the former verses, wherein I cannot let pass some sweet and raised expressions without giving you a taste, glancing at them by the way, that you may understand them, and the coherence of these with them. Some teachers there were amongst them who drove on a pernicious design to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel and dishonour Christ, by joining with him the works and observances of the law, in point of justification and salvation. To prevent the mischief of this unworthy medley, he gives them saving advice, which we may take up in four parcels.

1. To rest joyfully in Christ alone, to embrace him with delight, and rest satisfied in his righteousness, the all-sufficiency of his undertaking and performance for pardon and glory, ver. 1; and lest they should nauseate this doctrine as too often repeated and inculcated, he tells them 'to write the same things, to him was not grievous,' because most sweet and delightful, most necessary and profitable; 'to them safe.' They were in danger to be removed from him that called them unto the grace of Christ, unto another gospel. The repetition of this was necessary to prevent the danger; it was safe, i.e., saving; no doctrine saving but that which advances Christ alone, and preserves his glory entire in those points.

2. To beware of false teachers, those that adulterated the gospel, and made a medley of righteousness by works and faith, and bring in their ceremonial or moral observances to share with Christ, as partial grounds at least of their confidence and rejoicing. And he sets on this advice with sharp terms, as being tender of the glory of Christ, bitter and vehement against his co-rivals. He rebukes them ■ποτ■μως, cuttingly, sharply, videPhp 3:2. He calls them 'dogs,' those that did rend and tear the simplicity of gospel doctrine, and divide the glory of man's salvation betwixt faith and works; such as did bark out reproaches against the apostles and their doctrine delivered in its native purity and simplicity. It will be useful to observe here the different temper and carriage of this divine apostle in different cases. When things were indifferent, and less necessary and doubtful, farther from the heart of gospel truth and the great mystery of Christ, then who more mild,

who more indulgent? who more complying in things indifferent? He became all things, &c. In things doubtful, of less moment, he calls for meekness, forbearance, peace, love; he breathes nothing else but the mild spirit of his gracious Lord, Romans 14:1. But when opinions were broached that intrenched upon the glory of Christ, and tended to subvert souls, and pervert the gospel, why then the apostle is another man, a Boanerges; he seems to speak fire and thunder, mera tonitrua. No terms are bad enough, too bad for such seducers. Though they were cried up and applauded as the only pastors and shepherds, he calls them 'dogs.' They thought themselves the only patrons of good works, he calls them 'evil workers.' They would be thought the only legitimate children, he calls them 'concision;' to shew his dislike of their abusing and idolising circumcision, he gives it a by-name. So Hezekiah calls the brazen serpent (at first set up by God's appointment), when it was abused and idolised, Nehushtan, in contempt of that which was advanced to the dishonour of God, a piece of brass; or concision, cutting off. This advancing of circumcision into Christ's place tended to cut them off from Christ, from the church of Christ. It did not only occasion division amongst the members, but did tend to cut them off from the head; a ruining, destructive evil. Let us be followers of the apostle, as he followed Christ; learn when to be mild, and when to be zealous. (See Luther on Gal.)

3. He opposes to these seducers the examples of the apostles and faithful, to encourage them to cleave to that doctrine which advanced Christ alone, and renounced all things coming in competition with him, Php 3:3. As though he had said, Ye shall lose nothing by closing with this doctrine, and following us herein; whatever they pretend, we are the circumcision, we only are truly circumcised in the account of God. You reject not God's institution, he himself has laid it aside; you lose no privilege by it, we have that which these rites intended and held forth. We have it in Christ more perfectly, more excellently. They have the shadow, we have the substance. They have the outward rite, we have the spiritual benefit intended by it; we have it in a transcendent manner, in its growth and height. They, by sticking to the ceremony, keep themselves in nonage; we are heirs, and enjoy the substance of these ceremonies. We are circumcised in heart; Christ has cut off the foreskin of our hearts, the guilt and power of sin.

'Worship God in spirit;' we understand the spiritual sense of all rites, types, ceremonies. Christ is the truth and substance of them; in him we have all. We worship him, accordingly, in spirit and truth, and so by Christ's verdict are the only true worshippers, John 4:14. We place not worship in carnal observances, as they do. 'Bodily exercise profits nothing;' it is the heart and spirit that God requires, and this we give him. Follow their example. No worship without the spirit.

'And rejoice in Christ;' καυχ■μενοι, we glory in him. Let them glory in their carnal rites, ceremonial observances, legal righteousness, outward privileges, we will rejoice in Christ alone; nay, glory, exult, triumph in him. Joy in its strength is exultation, which is a kind of vaulting or leaping of the soul, yea, a leaping out of itself to its object. Their souls leaped for joy at the contemplation of the infinite fulness, all-sufficiency, glorious and transcendent excellency, of Christ. A man boasts when he is full of that which he thinks excellent. They counted it not only their happiness, but their glory, to have Christ, and Christ alone. They, with undauntedness and full contentment, set Christ against all that the false teachers could pretend to, all that could be offered in competition with Christ. He was the only ground of their joy and confidence. In him they exulted, triumphed, gloried, though they parted with all, lost all for him. See here Christians' temper.

‘No confidence in flesh;’ carnal rites, ceremonies, privileges, performances; of which after. These were not ground of joy, satisfaction, confidence; they relied not upon these for pardon, acceptance; expected not mercy nor salvation for these. Christ only, he alone was the ground of their confidence, rejoicing, exulting.

4. He enforces his advice by his own example. If there were any reason to glory, or be confident in carnal prerogatives, outward performances, he had as much reason to do it as any of them all, Php 3:4. He could boast of as many privileges, as much self-righteousness, as they that could most, which he shews in many severals, Php 3:5. 1. ‘Circumcised;’ the seal of the covenant, and thereby he was outwardly in covenant with God; a great honour, and that which entitled him to many privileges. 2. ‘Stock of Israel;’ of that nation which the Lord set apart for himself when he rejected all the nations of the earth besides. One of the ‘Israelites,’ to whom, Romans 9:4-5, belonged the adoption, &c. 3. ‘Of the tribe:’ as he was one of the most honoured people, so one of the most noble tribe, that of Benjamin; born, not of a bondmaid, but the patriarch’s beloved Rachel; a tribe honoured with the first of Israel’s kings, in reference to whom, it was like, himself was called Saul. He might have gloried in his nobility, born of a tribe, a family, which was not strangers to the blood-royal. 4. ‘A Hebrew:’ one of that honoured people, and noble tribe, in the most honourable way; not by affinity, but by pure descent both by father and mother. A proselyte’s offspring might be a Hebrew, but not a ‘Hebrew of the Hebrews,’ as he was. 5. ‘A Pharisee:’ one of the strictest and most honoured sects amongst them; those were counted eminently religious, both negatively and positively, &c. 6. Php 3:6, ‘zeal:’ as one of the most religious sect, so was he most zealous in that way of religion; not profane, careless, indifferent, but zealous and active, according to his judgment and conscience. 7. ‘Righteous:’ not eager only in persecuting those whom he counted enemies of righteousness, but righteous himself, in point of outward conformity to the law and institutions of God; so observant thereof, as he was ■μωμος, in the eye of men, and in his own account, ‘blameless,’ without spot; his conversation not stained with any gross sins; an exact man in his life and deportment, living answerable to his knowledge and judgment.

All these grounds of confidence the apostle had before he was converted, and if he would have been as vain-glorious as the false teachers, if he would have been injurious to Christ and his soul, might have rested here, and gloried therein as well as they; but far was he from this temper. He adds, Php 3:7, those things fore-mentioned which formerly he counted gain; thought to gain pardon, acceptance, salvation by them; now, since he knew Christ, he was of another judgment; now he counts them loss. He saw he had lost his soul, been a lost man for over, if he had rested on these for salvation, if he had made these the grounds of his confidence; and therefore Christ being made known to him as the only way to gain pardon, acceptance, life, he renounced his former privileges, his former legal righteousness. He would not lean upon these broken reeds, which might have let his soul fall into hell. He would have no more confidence in the flesh, but in Christ only, by whom he expected to gain that which in vain he expected from these.

Now, because this might seem a wonder and hard to be believed, that the apostle should renounce, cast away that which others counted their gain, treasure, ornament, their glory and confidence, that which they thought highly commended them, and made them acceptable in the sight of God, and glorious in the eyes of men; to procure the easier belief, to express further the height of his resolution herein, and the fixedness of his heart in what he had done, he affirms it again, and that with an asseveration, together with divers heightened expressions, ver. 8, ‘Yea,

doubtless,' &c. He did not only count them loss, but he had actually renounced them. It was not only his judgment, but his practice. He did not only count them loss, but dung, filth, excrements, when compared with Christ. He did not only thus account, thus renounce these things fore-mentioned, but all things, even those things that he had done and suffered for Christ, since he knew Christ. Not that he repented of what he had done or suffered, nor that he thought these would not be graciously rewarded, but in point of confidence, in point of justification. If he had brought these before God's tribunal to be accepted, pardoned, justified, saved for them, he had been lost, they would have proved the loss of his soul. God would no more accept of these as satisfaction for sin, or meritorious of eternal life, than he would accept of dung. And therefore in these respects he did that which the Lord would have done, he counted them loss and dung. He smelt a savour of death in those things which had been his confidence before for acceptance and life. And further, he adds the cause of this strange effect, 'The excellency of the knowledge,' &c. It was the discovery of Christ that wrought his heart to this temper. It was his view of a sinner's transcendent advantage by Christ, that made him account all these loss. It was the wonderful excellency of the knowledge of Christ, that made all these things seem as dung. When we are in the dark, we are glad of candle-light, and glow-worms will make a fair show in our eyes; but when the sun is risen and shines in his full strength, then candle-light seems needless or offensive, and the worms that glittered in the dark, make no better show than other vermin. So when men are in the state of nature and darkness, then their church privileges and carnal prerogatives, then their outward performances and self-righteousness, make a fine show in their eyes. They are apt to glory in them, and rely on them, as that by which they may gain the favour of God and eternal life. Ay, but when Christ appears, when the Sun of righteousness arises in the heart and discovers his excellency, his all-sufficiency, then a man's own sparks vanish; then all his formerly beloved and rich esteemed ornaments are cast off; then all he has, and all he has done, privileges and outward services, are loss and dung. None but Christ, none but Christ, for pardon, acceptance, life. This is the excellent effect of this excellent knowledge.

We may explain the other expressions hereafter. Now (that we spend not all the time in exposition), take from the cause this Obs. The knowledge of Christ is an excellent knowledge. There is a transcendent excellency in the knowledge of Christ.

Now to proceed most for edification in handling this truth, we will shew,

1. What knowledge of Christ is that which is so excellent. It is not every knowledge, nor every knowledge of Christ that is so. The devils, the reprobates, have, living under the gospel, some apprehensions of Christ, and so have the elect before conversion, which yet is not this excellent knowledge. That which is transcendent, is such as the apostle was, such for nature, though not for degrees. The Scripture abounds with characters of this knowledge, and it were easy to be large in describing it. But I shall confine myself to such as the apostle's discourse in these verses offers to us; and three we have in the text. That knowledge of Christ which is excellent, is,

(1.) Extensive; apprehends him in all those notions and respects wherein the gospel principally discovers him. Three words in this verse which the apostle uses, do comprise all or most of the rest, 'Christ,' 'Jesus,' 'Lord;' not only as Christ, but as Jesus; not only as Jesus, but as Lord. Apprehend what he is,

1st, In his nature and offices; these are included in the word Christ, i.e., the Messias, him whom the Lord anointed to be Mediator. Know him as God, as man, and what necessity sinners had of such a mediator; and so in his offices, apprehend what he is, as king, as prophet, as priest; what excellent and rich advantages flow from each of these into the state and souls of believers. What was the inducement which brought him under such engagements for sinners? The dimensions of his love. Ephesians 3:18-19, 'To know what is the height, length,' &c., we can, though we have no measure will fully reach the dimensions.

2d, In the intention and execution of his offices, that in the word Jesus, a Saviour, how he exercises these offices to bring about man's salvation. What saving acts belong to each office, and how to apply yourselves to every one of them for salvation.

3d, In the consequents of his offices, that is, dominion in Christ, subjection in us. We have both in the name Lord, Romans 14:9. Many will take notice of Christ as a Saviour, but not as Lord; but this is to take a view of Christ in an eclipse, to apprehend Christ without his crown. This is not to know Christ in all his discovered excellencies, and so is not the excellent knowledge of Christ.

(2.) Appropriating; so the apostle, 'Christ Jesus my Lord.' The marrow of the gospel, as Luther observes, is in these pronouns, meum, nostrum. He bids us read these with great emphasis. Tolle meum et tolle Deum, says another, take away propriety, and you take away God, take away Christ. To apprehend him yours upon good grounds, is the excellency of this knowledge. Christ is notionally known by the evil angels; they know he is a Saviour, a King, a Priest; but they apprehend him not with application as their Saviour, their Head, as a Priest and Mediator for them. But this excellent knowledge apprehends him, and propriety in him; my Lord, my Jesus, my Advocate, who intercedes for me; my King, who has writ his laws in my heart; my Prophet, who has turned my darkness into light, shining in my dark heart; my Sacrifice, who has loved me and washed me, &c.; my Head, who quickens and conveys holy quickening influences into me, ■μος ■ρως.

(3.) Effectual. Has a powerful efficacy both upon heart and life, both upon judgment, affection, and practice. We see it in the apostle; this excellent knowledge of Christ raised his esteem of him, possessed him with contempt of all things else, kindled his affections, ardent desires after him, intense delight in him, made him both active and passive for Christ: 'for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.' Where this excellent knowledge is, there Christ is exalted as the chiefest of ten thousand, as the highest excellency, as the richest advantage, as the sweetest enjoyment, as the only matchless beauty, as the most glorious object. Christ outshines all in his judgment, where this excellent knowledge shines. The greatest glory in the world is but as a glow-worm, compared with the sun in its noonday brightness; the choicest excellency seems base when Christ appears; the chiefest gain in the world is loss, when Christ is gained; the richest treasure is dung, when Christ's riches are displayed; the most esteemed accomplishment is vile, when the preciousness of Christ appears; all things put together which natural men, which the most judicious of them, do value and most prize, put in the balance with Christ, are then but vanity, and then apprehended to be lighter than vanity. Whatever the heart was set upon before, it leaves them, it shakes them off, and turns to Christ, and cleaves to him with unspeakable complacency and contentment. Did he before admire riches, or pomp and greatness, or honour and authority, or natural parts, a strong memory, or a good judgment, or a nimble wit, or a reaching head, acquired accomplishments or moral

honesty? Ay, but when Christ appears, he has the pre-eminence. He says to the best of these, when they would take his heart and judgment, Friend, sit lower; a worthier than thou must have this place. He that is higher than the heavens must have the highest place in my esteem, the chiefest room in my heart. If you will sit at Christ's feet, and minister to him, then welcome; but the throne is for Christ Jesus my Lord. It has a powerful efficacy upon the affections, to kindle desire, and raise joy in Christ, as the object transcendently desirable and delightful. He covets no gain so much now, but to gain Christ. He sees no righteousness now available, but the righteousness of Christ; he pants and gasps after this righteousness, as that only that can shroud him from revenging justice, and stand betwixt him and that righteous God which is otherwise a consuming fire to sinners. His chiefest desire on earth is to be found in Christ. He cares more indifferently in what state as to the world, in what condition soever the Lord find him, so he be found in Christ; cares not though he be found in prison, found covered with reproaches, found environed with afflictions, found naked as to his own righteousness, privileges, enjoyments, personal excellencies, so he may be found in Christ. This was the apostle's temper, &c. Christ is his glory, and the crown of his rejoicing; he exults, triumphs, glories in Christ, though he lose all for him. Even as a poor beggar discovering a rich mine or some vast treasures, is ready to leap for joy that he has found that which will make him rich for ever; he casts away his former rags, he despises his former poor and wooden furniture, for he has discovered that which will enrich him and make his condition plentiful; so the soul to whom the Lord has made this rich, this excellent discovery of Christ, he has found a mine more precious than gold, and larger than all the face of the earth; he casts off the menstruous rags of his own righteousness; his former accomplishments are now but as a beggar's furniture; his heart is full of joy; he says, Rejoice, O my soul; he says, Rejoice with me, O my friends, for I have found the pearl of great price; I have discovered the unsearchable riches of Christ, that which will make me rich and happy for ever: 'My lines are fallen,' &c.; 'Return to thy rest, O my soul.' So the apostle: 'We are the circumcision, and that rejoice in Christ Jesus.' And it has an influence upon his practice. If he have not, as the apostle, Ephesians 4:20, 'suffered the loss of all,' he is ready to do it when Christ calls for it. Whatever he cannot enjoy with Christ, he casts from him with indignation, casts to the moles. He renounces the profits of sin, abandons the pleasures of sin, lays aside the honour of his own righteousness, parts, gifts, performances, so far as would obscure the glory of Christ; is ready to lose all, that he may gain Christ, to part with everything, that Christ may be all in all.

(4.) Fiducial. It brings the soul to rest upon Christ and his righteousness alone, for pardon, acceptance, salvation, and to cast away all those rotten props, good nature, well meaning, harmless life, honest carriage, just dealing, church privileges, natural accomplishments, religious performances, upon which he relied, and made the grounds of his confidence before. Who more confident than Paul before he knew Christ? His being numbered amongst the people of God, his strictness in an outward way of religion, his zeal in the way of his conscience, his blameless conversation, were the things for which he thought himself sure of heaven. Here was his confidence; but when Christ was made known, to rest in these he saw was to trust in the arm of flesh, to lean upon a broken reed; and therefore, when the joyful discovery of Christ was made to his soul, he had no more confidence in the flesh, then he would not own his righteousness of the law as a ground of confidence: 'Not having,' &c. The soul that has this excellent discovery of Christ, will make nothing but Christ his confidence; despair in himself, how good soever he be, what good soever he has done, and only rely on Christ his righteousness.

(5.) Useful. He that has it studies to improve Christ, to make use of him for those glorious and blessed purposes for which he knows Christ is given, such as the apostle expresses, ver. 9, 10: to find the blessed advantages of his righteousness for pardon, acceptance, and right to glory, and that upon all occasions of doubting, all contracting of new guilt. ‘Power of his resurrection:’ lifting him up, not only out of the state of sin, but also above all pressures, incumbrances of life and the world, to seek those things that are above, and enjoy him who is exalted for, &c., and to be raised of him, and brought to him who is the earnest of our resurrection, the first-fruits of the dead. ‘Fellowship of his sufferings,’ in union and participation. To find by comfortable experience that Christ suffered in his stead, and to receive what he purchased by his blood, merited by his sufferings; and to find a compassionate presence and support from Christ in all sufferings for him, knowing, Hebrews 9:18-19.* ‘Conformable to his death:’ to find the power of Christ’s death killing sin, crucifying his heart unto the world and the world unto him, that so he may be crucified with Christ, but so die and suffer as he may reign with him. This is the notion, these the properties of that knowledge of Christ which is excellent.

2. Why is the knowledge of Christ excellent? in what respects? upon what account?

(1.) Because it is that knowledge which the most excellent creatures on earth, yea, the most excellent in heaven, did ardently desire, laboriously seek after, and which obtained, they rejoice and glory in. The most excellent on earth are the saints, Psalms 16:1-11, and amongst them, the most excellent were the patriarchs, the kings, the prophets, the apostles; and all these counted the knowledge of Christ their joy, their chief desire. So Abraham, John 8:56, he saw but the discoveries of Christ afar off, and he rejoiced; he saw but the dawnings of that day wherein Christ’s knowledge should shine in its strength and glory, and his heart was glad; a glimpse of this excellent vision, at many hundred years’ distance, filled him with joy and gladness. Moses preferred the reproach of Christ before all the treasures of a flourishing kingdom, Hebrews 11:26; and if sufferings for Christ were so precious in his esteem, what then was the knowledge of Christ’s sufferings for sinners? This was the great inquiry of the prophets, this was it after which they searched diligently, 1 Peter 1:10-11. They inquired, they searched, and searched again (it is twice repeated), and searched diligently; they searched for this as for hidden treasures. Oh how excellent was it in their account! Nay, both prophets and kings were ambitious of this as their greatest glory, Luke 10:23-24. Nay, the Lord Jesus himself rejoiced that the Lord would vouchsafe this excellent discovery to the unworthy sons of men, Php 3:21, ■γαλλ■ασατο, his spirit leaped within him for joy, that this excellent knowledge should be vouchsafed to sinners. Sure there was something transcendent, something exceeding excellent, in that which would occasion the Spirit of Christ to leap for joy within him, when he was in the condition of a man of sorrows. For the apostles, it is most visible in Paul, who was, while in darkness, a deadly enemy to Christ and the knowledge of him; but the appearance of Christ to him wrought a wonderful alteration. He was afterwards privileged above the rest, rapt up into the third heaven, and saw there visions of glory such as transported him, such as were past expression; but whatever glory he saw, he saw nothing that more affected his heart than the sight of Christ, than the excellent knowledge of his Lord Jesus. The excellency of this took up his heart, engrossed his affections, 1 Corinthians 2:1-2. He sought not excellency of speech or wisdom; his eye was so taken with the splendour of Christ’s knowledge, as nothing else seemed excellent to him. Some might expect, if of the like temper with divers in these times, that an apostle coming from the third heaven should have brought with him

some new glorious discoveries, some lofty seraphical notions, above the pitch of the other apostles' doctrine. But what brought he? Why, that which he preached. And what was that? He tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:23; and that not with wisdom of words, but in such a way as the wise men of the world counted it foolishness, 1 Corinthians 1:17-18. But was it thus indeed as vain men imagined? No; the preaching of Christ was the wisdom, the power of God, 1 Corinthians 1:24; glorious and excellent, if anything in God be so. A constellation of glorious excellencies appears in discoveries of Christ. Christ crucified, preached in plainness and simplicity, if the Spirit of God be a competent judge, is the most excellent, the most glorious discovery that ever was, that ever will be made to the sons of men on earth. And if this glory be hid, as it seems to be to those who expect something more new, rare, costly, nauseate the plain preaching of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.… Nor is this only the joy and desire of the most excellent on earth, but also of the most excellent creatures in heaven. The angels, though they enjoy the blessed vision of God, and are eternally happy in it, yet one sight more they earnestly desire, and that is of Christ the Mediator, as manifested in the gospel, 1 Peter 1:12. They stoop down, they stretch out themselves to pry into the things preached in the gospel, to know the mystery of Christ there manifested; and this was prefigured by the posture of the cherubims upon the ark, Exodus 37:9. Now, Christ was typified by the mercy-seat, and the name itself is ascribed to him, Romans 3:25; whom God has set forth to be ■λαστ■ριον, a propitiatory. Now, towards Christ was the face of the cherubims; they looked earnestly, they pried into the glorious mystery of God reconciled to man through the blood of Christ; their faces were towards it, their eyes continually on it; so wonderful, so excellent is it in their account, as they think it not below them to learn more of this by the discoveries made to the church, Ephesians 3:10. The Lord makes known the mystery of Christ to the church in the preaching of the gospel, and even the principalities and powers learn more of this mystery by the preaching of the gospel to the church. And how they rejoice in this knowledge, you may see by their deportment at the first appearance of Christ in the world, Luke 2:13. Sure that must be an excellent knowledge which the cherubims of glory, the principalities and powers in heavenly places, do so earnestly desire, do so greatly rejoice in, when they are less concerned in it than men in many respects.

(2.) In knowing Christ we know the glorious excellencies of God, John 14:7. The Father and Christ are so like, as he that knows the one knows the other also, sees the Son, sees the Father. This is so apparent, as Christ seems to wonder that Philip, who had seen him, should speak as though he had not seen the Father, John 14:8-9. He is known in the knowing of Christ, and seen in the seeing of Christ. Hence he is called 'the image,' Colossians 1:15,—that which represents, and in a lively manner holds forth to us, the infinite perfections of God; therefore styled, Hebrews 1:3, 'the character,'*—not a shadow of him, not a dead, superficial representation of him, such as pictures and portraitures are, but a living, express, subsisting, perfect representation. The similitude seems to be borrowed from a signet's impression, which represents all the sculptures and lineaments of the seal. But no similitude can reach this mystery; only this we learn by this expression, that as Christ is perfectly distinct from, so is he a full and perfect resemblance of the Father, of the same nature and essence with him, so that there is no perfection in the Father but the same is substantially in the Son, so that in knowing Christ we apprehend (as weakness will suffer) the excellencies of God; hence the glory of God is said to shine in the face of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:6, so that those who know Christ, thereby see the glory of God in the face of Christ. That knowledge, that light which discovers Christ, discovers the glorious excellencies of God, the brightness

whereof appears in the face of Christ. Nor is this only true of Christ as he is the Son of God, of the same nature with the Father, but also as he is Mediator. In the great work of redemption, the Lord caused his glory to pass before the sons of men. Never was there such a full, such a clear, discovery of God's glorious perfections, as was made to the world in Christ. In him we may see infinite power, wisdom, justice, mercy, holiness; glorious truth, faithfulness, unchangeabless; the glory of love, of free grace, of goodness; he even caused all his goodness to pass visibly before us in Christ, so that he who knows Christ knows all these glorious excellencies; ergo, &c.

(3.) It makes those that have it excellent, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; having preferred the gospel ministry before the legal ministrations, as far more exceeding glorious, he prefers also our state under the gospel before theirs under the law. They knew but little and darkly, the veil was before them; but we may know more, and more clearly, for the veil is taken away in Christ, ver. 16. So that now, as verse 18, in the gospel, as in a glass, we may with unveiled faces behold the glory of Christ; and so behold it, as it will work a glorious change in the beholders. As Moses by conversing with God seemed to be changed into the same image, from the glory of God with whom he conversed there passed some glory upon him, which shined in his face; so that, as verse 7, they could not stedfastly behold, &c. Even so by knowing Christ, and beholding the glory of God shining in his face, the soul is as it were changed into the same image, from glory to glory; i. e., from his glory there passes a glory upon the soul, as there did upon his face; but this is done by the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of holiness working in the soul those gracious qualities which are the beginnings of glory here, and the most glorious accomplishment of which created nature is capable, holiness being a conformity to, a resemblance of, the image of Christ, who is the Lord of glory. So that you see there is an excellent transforming virtue in this knowledge, it leaves a glorious tincture upon the soul, it assimilates the soul to Christ, in part here, and perfectly hereafter, 1 John 3:2. The seeing of Christ will make those that see him like unto him. Set a glass full in the sun, and you will see in it something like the glory of the sun, a bright, shining splendour, dazzling the eye of the beholder. Such a glory appeared with Moses when he had been with God; such a glory (though not visible) shines in every soul that is much with Christ, often viewing him, fixing his eye on him; and if the grossness, the incapacity of the subject did not hinder, they would be and seem more glorious; but hereafter this shall be removed, and then not only the soul but the body shall be like unto Christ, in Christ in glory, Php 3:21. Even as the moon, conceived to be a gross, dark body in itself as the earth is, yet when it is full against the sun (in opposition) we see in it some resemblance of the sun's glory; the lustre of the sun darted on it makes it seem a lightsome, glorious body like itself; even so will the enjoyment, the sight of Christ, glorify those that truly know him. So excellent is this knowledge, as it will make those that have it excel in glory.

There are four steps and degrees by which the Lord raises fallen man, now more vile and base than the beasts that perish, to the height of glory and excellency; and they are all ascribed in Scripture to this knowledge of Christ.

[1.] The removal of that which makes him vile, that which is his greatest debasement and deformity, that which renders him not only contemptible, but odious and loathsome, and that is the pollution, the filth of sin, wherewith the soul fallen from God is besmeared; it covers him as a garment, and it is a garment of filthiness, a covering of excrements, Zechariah 3:3. Man is sunk into the mire and clay, into the puddle of corruption, and there he sticks, no escaping for him by anything in the power of nature; that which works his escape is this knowledge of Christ, 2 Peter

2:20.

[2.] Partaking of the divine nature; one of the highest expressions in Scripture. Not of the essence and nature of God, but of holiness, the nearest resemblance of God that is to be found in anything created. It is the image of God, Colossians 3:10. The image of God stamped upon the soul of man in his creation, was by the fall broken and shattered, quite defaced. Now how is it renewed? He tells us, 'in knowledge.' Holiness is the image of God, as being a resemblance of him who is 'the Holy One,' &c., and so called the divine nature; and by this knowledge of Christ we come to partake of this: 2 Peter 1:3-4, 'All things that pertain,' &c., are given, but how? 'Through the knowledge of Christ.' Now what things are these that are thus given? He instances in two most considerable: 2 Peter 1:4, 'exceeding great,' &c., and 'the divine nature.'

[3.] Investing us with the righteousness of Christ; a privilege so high and glorious, as man or angel could never have expected it, never believed it, if the same mercy that vouchsafed it had not clearly revealed it; an excellency, in comparison of which the apostle counts all other excellencies as dung; in the apprehending of which consists the excellency of this knowledge which he so highly advances, as appears, 2 Peter 1:9. How we come to be invested with it, the prophet shews, Isaiah 53:11. We are justified by his righteousness; but how justified? By his knowledge. It is this fiducial knowledge that leads a man out of himself, and all confidence in the flesh, to rely only upon Christ, by which he is made partaker of Christ's righteousness.

[4.] Eternal glory. And then man is at the height, he can rise no higher; and hither he is raised by this knowledge of Christ, John 17:3. The knowledge of Christ is the light of life, the dawning of approaching glory. When Christ is first known, the day of glory breaks, and the more it increases, it shines more and more unto the perfect day, unto perfect glory.

Oh how excellent is this knowledge, that raises a man to such a height of glory, that invests him with so many excellencies!

3. Christ himself is most excellent, ergo, &c. We may conclude of the act by the object; the knowledge of the most excellent object is the most excellent knowledge, such is Christ's.

(1.) There is nothing in him but what is excellent. There is a mixture in all created beings; where there is something excellent, there is also something deficient. Search out the best accomplished creature on earth, and something or other will be found distasteful in it. The heavens, though they seem the most excellent of all things visible, and their excellency seems to be their lucidness and purity, yet in the Lord's sight even they are not pure, Job 15:15. Nay, the angels, though the most excellent of all invisibles, and their chief excellency be wisdom,—'wise as an angel,'—yet the Lord charges them with folly, Job 4:18. Those glorious creatures are conscious of something not fit to be seen by the eye of God; they cover their feet, Isaiah 6:2. Ay, but Christ he is altogether lovely; whatever is in him is excellent, nothing in him deficient, distasteful, imperfect; 'fairer than the children of men,' 'higher than the heavens;' so far transcends the angels, as they adore him, Hebrews 1:6, as infinitely below him; nothing in Christ but what is worthy of all love, all delight, all admiration, everlasting praises of saints and angels.

(2.) All excellencies that are in the creatures are eminently to be found in Christ. Take a survey of heaven and earth, and whatever you see that is truly excellent in any, in all things therein, look up to Christ, and you may see it transcendently in him. Whatever is truly amiable, desirable, delightful,

or admirable, whatever takes thy heart, if it be worthy of thy heart, look upon Christ, and there it shines in its full brightness. Every excellency that is scattered here and there in the creatures, are altogether in Christ; all the several lines of perfection and transcendent loveliness do all meet and centre in him.

(3.) All these excellencies are in him in a more excellent manner: perfectly, without any shadow of imperfection; infinitely, without any bounds or limits; unchangeably and eternally, they ebb not, they wane not, they are always there in the full, they alter not, they decay not. He is infinitely all excellencies, without variableness or shadow of changing. The angels kept not their first habitation, the heavens shall wax old as a garment, the glory of man is as the flower of the grass, but Christ is yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever, for ever altogether excellent.

(4.) Not only all that are in the creatures, but innumerable more excellencies than are in all the creatures together, are in Christ alone. Not only the creatures' fulness, but the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him, bodily, i. e., substantially, personally. Besides all that he has communicated to heaven or earth, there are unspeakably more excellencies in him than eye ever saw, or ear heard, or can enter into the heart of man to conceive, Colossians 2:9.

Oh how excellent must that knowledge be, whose object is so transcendently excellent!

Use I. Reproof, to those that despise, neglect the knowledge of Christ. If it be excellent in itself, and so in the account of God, so by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, so in the esteem of all that are excellent, then they deserve rebuke who despise it. But is there any Christian who despises the knowledge of Christ? Oh that most that bear that name were not guilty thereof, and worthy of this rebuke! Who they are, you may know by these two characters.

1. Those who are not diligent to get and increase this knowledge. Nothing excellent is attained without diligence, τ■ καλ■ χαλεπ,* knowledge especially. Those that think it not worth their diligence, despise it. If you thought it precious, you would search after it; if it were a treasure in your esteem, you would dig for it; you would carefully, constantly search the Scripture, for that is the mine where this treasure is to be found, that is the field where it is hid,—hid, not that it should not be found, but that it should be sought after. What a sad thing is it, that those who profess themselves Christians, should spend whole days, nay, whole weeks, without looking into, without reading, without searching the Scripture. The Lord has writ to us (as he complains), not only the great things of the law, but the excellent mysteries of Christ, the great things of the gospel, and these count them a vain thing. Do ye not count it a vain thing, when ye care not for looking into it? Say not ye are too busy. What, are ye too busy to know Christ? are ye too busy to be saved? or is there any possibility of being saved without this excellent knowledge of Christ? Say not you want time; alas! it is want of heart, not want of time; want of affection to it, not want of time for it, that keeps men from knowledge. That time which you merely mis-spend in idleness, or needless pastimes, or satisfying your unclean, intemperate, or worldly lusts, would be sufficient to get this knowledge. If ye counted it excellent, ye would redeem time for it. Say not, What needs so much knowledge, so much diligence? Those that think it excellent will never think they can have too much knowledge, or that it cost them too much diligence, Proverbs 2:2-4. No getting knowledge without crying to God for it, seeking diligently after it. Those that have not thus sought it do yet want it, and those that are not diligent to get it despise it.

2. Those that strive not to communicate this knowledge to others, to their relations, brethren, children, family. That which ye count excellent, ye will not withhold from dear relations. You would catechise, instruct your children and servants, you would be often instilling the principles of the knowledge of Christ into them; you would not let any one be ignorant that has relation to you, or abides with you. This was Abraham's commendation, and will be to all generations, Genesis 18:19. He would not only make them know the way, but command them to keep it. Those that would be found faithful must follow him; whatever Satan or a corrupt heart may tell thee, none shall come into Abraham's bosom but those that walk in his steps. Those parents that instruct not their children, they are like the cruel ostrich, Job 39:14-17, you bring them forth, but you leave them carelessly, to be a prey to Satan and every vile lust; you let their souls perish, and by this you shew that you are hardened; this is to use them as though they were not yours; this is the most woeful, the most unnatural neglect, not to care what becomes of their souls, to leave them to perish for ever; better they had never been born, than live without the knowledge of Christ. You would think her an unnatural wretch, that having brought a child into the world, would let it starve for want of nourishment. Why, those are more unnatural, more cruel, that bring not their children to the knowledge of Christ. 'My people perish for lack of knowledge,' says the Lord. Your children perish for want of knowledge, and you neglect to help. Oh consider, if they perish, at whose hands must their blood be required? Will it not be a sad thing, that children should appear against their parents at the tribunal of Christ! Oh these are they who gave me life, but they let my soul perish! Woe is me that ever they brought me into this world! through their neglect must I be tormented in that flame for ever! That ignorance in which they suffered me to live has brought me into this outer darkness! You that have the charge of families must give an account of them; not only for their profaneness, which you may restrain, but for that ignorance which you might remove. Oh bring not the guilt of their eternal ruin upon your souls! Oh that the Lord would give you hearts to resolve upon more care of the souls of your family, &c., to instruct them at home in a way of catechising, and to bring them hither to be instructed! And here I shall endeavour it by explaining the principles of the knowledge of Christ, in the most easy and familiar way. Oh that you would concur herein, and let it appear that the knowledge of Christ is excellent in your esteem! This is one of the greatest ornaments, this is one of the best provisions you can make for your children, to bring them to the excellent knowledge of Christ. But ignorance of Christ, in yourselves or them, is a pernicious evil.

(1.) This is to despise Christ, to contemn God, to contemn him in the most full expression of his love. The Lord, in revealing Christ to the world, made out the richest manifestation of his glory that ever he vouchsafed to the children of men; therefore to neglect the knowledge of Christ is to contemn God in the riches of his glory. What greater contempt of Christ than not to take notice of him?

(2.) This is a brutish sin. A man without knowledge is scarce a man; let him be what he will for other accomplishments, how comely, how rich, how noble, how powerful soever, if he want the knowledge of Christ, he is like a beast. It is not I, but the Holy Ghost that so terms him, Psalms 49:20. He that is in the world's account a man of honour, is in God's account, without this, little better than a beast. He deserves no more the name of a Christian that wants the knowledge of Christ, than an ape deserves to be called a man; he may have some resemblance of a Christian, as an ape has of a man, but without this he wants the soul, the life of a Christian.

(3.) It is a mother-sin, the root of all destructive evils. The two main cursed branches that spring from the root of bitterness, are unbelief and profaneness. No faith without knowledge, whatever the blind papists imagine, who are concerned to shun the light, lest their apostasy should be discovered. ‘Those that know thy name,’ &c. Psalms 9:10. These are so inseparable, as the Holy Ghost puts the one for the other, Isaiah 53:11. All your confidence without this is but presumption, no justifying faith, for that gives honour to God, and is of a saving virtue and efficacy to the soul; but confidence without knowledge is dishonourable to God, destructive to the soul. No benefit by Christ’s death, no partaking of his righteousness, without faith, and no faith without knowledge. Ignorant persons are apt to say, Christ died for me, and then what needs so much to do? Ay, but those that will live without the knowledge of Christ shall find that Christ died for none but those that know him; as for others, he never knew them, so far was he from dying for them.

It is the mother of profaneness. Why does drunkenness, uncleanness, so abound? Why, some have not the knowledge of Christ, they love darkness rather than light, and therefore their deeds are evil. If the Sun of righteousness did shine in their hearts, these works of darkness would never appear in their lives. Men have not yet learned Christ as the truth is in Jesus, for, Ephesians 4:21-22, every knowledge will not be effectual to restrain sin. We see that the air is not by the light of the moon preserved from stinks and unwholesomeness; it is the light of the sun does this. Whatever knowledge you have, if your lives be corrupt, you want the excellent knowledge of Christ. These vermin appear not where Christ shines. The grace of God, manifested in Christ, when it appears effectually unto men, it teaches them to deny ungodliness, &c. Where this ungodliness, this worldliness is, where there is not sobriety, godliness, there Christ has not yet appeared to purpose. You are yet in darkness, if these works of darkness be yet in request; nor is there any escaping out of these snares of the devil, but by the knowledge of Christ.

(4.) It is most contrary to Christ: he is light, and this is darkness; he is wisdom, this is folly. What communion has light with darkness? You have nothing to do with Christ while you know him not, nor will he have any thing to do with you. These are they to whom Christ will say hereafter, Depart from me, I know you not.

Contrary to the design of Christ. His sovereign end is his glory; therefore did he create the world, and manifest himself to his creatures, that he might be glorified. Now he can no other way be glorified by the creatures but by their acknowledging him to be glorious, and how can they acknowledge him who do not know him?

Contrary to his interest. He can have no soul-worship without this, no fear, no love, no desire. All these presuppose knowledge; non feruntur in incognitum. If there were none in the world but such as know not Christ, he would have no service in the world. This renders men unserviceable to Christ, to others unfruitful, such as cumber but the ground; it calls for the axe to the root, it brings forth nothing but briers and thorns.

(5.) It lays you under many dreadful threatenings. It is the occasion of the Lord’s controversy with a people, Hosea 4:1. A dreadful thing to have God contend against you; the issue of this controversy was the utter ruin of that people, Hosea 4:6. A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Do ye?. Are ye stronger? Oh, ye will say, he is merciful; ignorance is not such a sin, but mercy will pass by it; he that made us will save us; he will not damn his creatures for a little ignorance (thus will some be ready to say): but see how punctually, yet how dreadfully, the Lord answers, as

though he intended to meet with this objection, Isaiah 27:11. How contrary are God's thoughts to yours herein; that which they make their reason why they hope to escape, he alleges as the reason why they shall not escape; no mercy, no favour, no, not to those that he made and formed: that does not so much engage him for you as ignorance engages him against you. I add no more but that, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, than which I know not if there be any more terrible expressions in all the book of God.

(6.) Ignorance in this land is altogether inexcusable. Invincible ignorance does excuse in part, but all ignorance of those who have the use of reason, and enjoy the gospel, is wilful. If ye know not Christ, since there is light enough vouchsafed to discover him, it is because you will not know him. This is it which will render the condition of many amongst us more intolerable in the day of judgment than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Light is come, and men shut their eyes. If this land had been a place of darkness, where Christ had never appeared in his gospel, if it had been a shadow of death, where the light of life never shined, then the Lord's controversy with us had not been so great, then we might have had some plea to mitigate his indignation; but when he has made this land a valley of visions, when no nation under heaven has more means of knowledge, and yet gross ignorance continues amongst us, we are laid open to wrath without the least excuse to shroud us from it: 'If I had not come to you,' &c., John 15:22. Oh, sad condition, that we who have the word in our tongue, the gospel preached in season and out of season, and so many excellent discoveries for the opening and applying it, should make no other use of all this, but to leave us inexcusable! So will all that know not Christ be; they will not have a word to plead for their ignorance at the tribunal of Christ, because they might have known him, but that they were unwilling to know him, wilfully neglected it.

Use II. Exhortation. 1. To those that want it, Be exhorted to get it; 2. To those that have some degrees of it, Be exhorted to grow in it: Proverbs 4:5-7, 'It is excellent;' and this should be a sufficient motive to put you upon endeavours to attain it. Excellency is a powerful attractive to every spirit that is not debased, degenerated, and sunk below itself into the earth; why here is a transcendent excellency, this knowledge far exceeds all natural, all moral accomplishments whatsoever. The apostle, who was able to judge of things that are excellent, counted his highest privileges, his rarest endowments, dung in comparison of it. And as it is excellent in itself, so will it make you excellent in the esteem of God; but without it, whatever ye have besides, ye are vile persons. Oh, but how shall we get this excellent knowledge? What means shall we use to attain it?

Ans. 1. Be convinced of your want of the knowledge of Christ, be sensible of it, be humbled for it, bewail it in the presence of God. He that thinks he knows Christ sufficiently, when indeed he has not attained to this excellent knowledge, his case is desperate, his blindness is next to incurable, Proverbs 26:12. Far more hopes of one that knows not, and bewails his want of knowledge, than of him that thinks himself wise enough.

Ans. 2. Begin at the foundation, lay a good ground-work in the principles of the knowledge of Christ, otherwise you will but build in the air. This is the apostles' method, the first nourishment they tendered was milk, afterwards strong meat; he would not carry the Hebrews further till he had fully established them in the principles of the doctrine of Christ, Hebrews 6:1. This is one main reason of the woeful apostasies in our times; many professors never laid a good foundation, never were well grounded in these principles of Christ; because they are ordinarily taught in catechisms,

and learnt by children, they think this below them, trouble not themselves with them, and so these prime fundamental truths being never fastened and rooted by sound understanding in their judgments, they are easily plucked from them; and the foundation being gone, no wonder if all the rest easily follow. It is an easy matter indeed to say the words of a catechism, and to get some slight apprehension of these truths, but to have a clear and well-grounded knowledge of them is an excellency not below the highest professor on earth, indeed that which many never attain to. This you must endeavour if you would know Christ to purpose.

Ans. 3. Let the word of God be familiar to you. What is to be known of Christ is here to be learned, Colossians 3:16. Be much in reading the Scripture, it is Christ's advice to the Jews, John 5:39, ■ρευν■τε, search daily, search diligently, search as for a treasure, as for the pearl of great price, here it is to be found. Those that are strangers to the Scripture will be strangers to Christ. You may as well see without light as know Christ without the knowledge of the Scripture. Follow the Lord's advice to Israel, see how strictly, how punctually he enjoins this, Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Be much in hearing the word. Christ is wrapped up in the Scripture, here the covering is unfolded and exposed to open view, here he is set as crucified, &c. It is the Lord's ordinance, instituted for this end, to bring sinners to the knowledge of Christ, to open their eyes that they may see him, to unveil Christ that ye may behold him with open face. Whenever you read or hear, be sure to meditate; you must not think the Lord will work knowledge by a miracle, this is the means by which he makes it effectual, the knowledge of Christ will never be rooted in your souls without meditation.

Ans. 4. Make use of those who are already acquainted with Christ, 'Forsake not the assembling,' &c., Hebrews 10:25, Proverbs 13:20 and Proverbs 15:7. Turn your vain worldly discourse into inquiries after Christ. When you meet with anything dark, see whether the Lord has discovered it to others; when anything doubtful, seek resolution; let not the fear to bewray your weakness hinder you from propounding the doubts and difficulties you meet with.

Ans. 5. Be much in seeking God; beseech him to open your eyes, to remove the veil, to discover Christ more clearly; both advice and promise, James 1:5.

2. To those that have attained some degree of this excellent knowledge: Content not yourselves with present attainments, let this light shine more and more unto the perfect day; follow the apostle's advice, 2 Peter 3:18, grow in knowledge of the excellency of his person, the fulness of his satisfaction, the worth of his graces, the mystery of his will in the gospel, the sweetness of vision and communion with him, the dimensions of his love, the riches of his righteousness. For direction:

(1.) Make all your other knowledge subservient to this. Learn the heavenly art of making use of all other knowledge, so as to discover more of Christ, to make him better known. The knowledge of the world; when you discover anything vile, mean, worthless, useless, hence you may infer there is no such thing in Christ; so the world may be a foil to set off Christ, to represent him to your minds as purely, perfectly, transcendently excellent, as the darkness of a dungeon sets off the sun. When you see anything lovely, desirable, in the world, see Christ in it, this came from him, all lower excellencies dropped from this fountain; thence you may conclude there is infinitely more of this value in him. What are these sparks, these weak glimmerings, to the Sun of righteousness. The knowledge of sin; the more you see of its guilt, and pollution, and damnableness, the more you may discover of your necessity of Christ; of the wonders of his love, who would become sin for us,

who would bear our sins, &c., who would be wounded, of the value of his blood, of his righteousness, which could expiate and remove such horrid evil, and bring heaven out of such a hell.

Make such use of the knowledge of yourselves, of the creatures, of the Scripture, even those parts thereof that seem more remote from Christ; they all point at him, and will lead you to discover more of them, if you be wise to observe, and careful to follow their direction. I, says the apostle, 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul had much other knowledge, he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; he had improved it by his studies, his travels, his experience, but as he valued it not in comparison, so he cared not for it but in a subserviency to the knowledge of Christ crucified. As the light of grace shall end in that of glory, so the light of nature shall end in that of grace, that light which will discover more of Christ. Other things should serve and be made use of as vantage-ground to help us to a better prospect of Christ. Every advance in other knowledge should be to us as Zaccheus getting up into the tree that he might see Jesus passing by. Other light should serve us as a candle to find the jewel, the pearl of great price, and view it better; it should be as the opening of the window, or the withdrawing of the curtain to let in the sun, to let in more of this excellent knowledge.

(2.) Get nearer him, and keep near him; the nearer to him, the more full, and clear, and satisfying view you may have of him. Oh, live not at a distance from Christ, be not satisfied with such a temper of heart, such a performance of holy duties, such a manner of conversation as theirs who are far off from him! You will have but a dim sight of Christ at so great distance. Take heed of what may estrange you, take heed of neglects, unkindnesses; beware of sin, it is iniquity that separates, Isaiah 59:2; take heed especially of sins against light and love, there is more of offence in these, more of provocation, and so they will occasion greater estrangement, further withdrawings; and the more remote you are from Christ, the more you will be out of sight of him; your sight will not be' so clear, nor full, nor refreshing. Beware of sins against light; if you abuse it, if you disobey it, if you follow not the conduct of it, if you turn aside into by-paths when the light shews you the right way, if you stand still, or draw back when it is going before you, if you detain it in unrighteousness, so to use the light you have is the way to be left in darkness. If a friend hold you a torch, and you turn aside or demean yourself as if it were an offence to you, that might move him to knock it out, or leave you without it.

Beware of sinning against love. You may well think Christ will less bear this than other miscarriages. This will provoke him to depart, as the spouse found, Song of Solomon 5:6, and when he removes, the light is gone, and you will be at a loss for the sight of Christ. Christ, like the sun, is seen and discovered by his own light; but such miscarriages will raise clouds, or cause an eclipse, and you may see no more of Christ than of the sun in a dark gloomy winter day; nay, these may raise a dismal storm, wherein you may see neither sun nor stars for many days.

(3.) Fix your minds, the eye of your souls, upon him; let your souls be to Christ in the like posture as the cherubims were to his type the mercy-seat: 'Towards the mercy-seat was the faces of the cherubims,' Exodus 37:9. Let the face of your souls be still towards Christ, your eye often on him, as the angels, Matthew 18:10; that is not only their duty, but their happiness; and count it yours, for it is so. Such a vision of God does establish them in their blessed and glorious state, such a beholding of Christ will enhappy you with more of this excellent knowledge of him. Let the thoughts

of Christ be pleasing to you, let him be your meditation, and let your meditation of him be sweet, Psalms 104:34; that will be the way to have your eye fixed. We stay not in the sight of that which does not please us, a short view will be enough or too much; but a short view of Christ, a glance by some transient, fleeting thought, will not be enough to get much knowledge, to make any considerable discovery of him. The mind should stay on him, and view him well; and that it may stay there, it must be pleased with the sight, else it will be on and off, as soon off as on. Let no sight be so taking, so delightful, as a sight of Christ; then your minds will not be backward to dwell on him, as it dwells on that which it would study, and study thoroughly. Labour so to study Christ, that is the way to know him more fully, more thoroughly.

Study the excellencies of his person, the infinite advantage of his offices. What riches of wisdom and knowledge are held forth to you in his prophetical office, even all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Colossians 2:3; what riches of power and glory are offered you in his kingly office; what safety and protection in all dangers; what power and assistance in all services; what supplies and sufficiency in all wants; what encouragements and supports in all trials and sufferings; what victories and triumphs, after all conflicts with the world, with the powers of darkness, with the strength of corruption; what assurance this regal, this glorious office affords us, that in all these we shall be more than conquerors!

What riches of grace and compassion, of pardon and forgiveness, in his priestly office; what riches of holiness and glory he has purchased by his suffering, and is prevailing for by his intercession; what we gain by his sufferings, what we are redeemed from by his death, what we may expect from his appearing for us at the right hand of God, and ever living there to intercede for us!

View Christ all over, as those that would see something of all the dimensions of his love, which appear in all his offices, in the undertaking, in the performance of them: ‘The height,’ &c. Let your minds stay here, as those that have a mind to know what you can of that which passes knowledge; study Christ, as those who have the minds and souls of men principally for this end, that they might be employed upon Christ; you should dig for this as for hidden treasure. The mind is digging while it is studying; the more you study, the further you dig, and the further you dig, the more you will discover of this infinitely large and precious mine, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

(4.) Seek not the knowledge of Christ merely to know, that may be the end of a vainly curious mind; but seek to know him, that you may enjoy him more, that you may improve him better, that you may gain more heavenly and spiritual advantage by him, Matthew 13:45-46. A merchant that travels into other countries, his end is not to view the places, and the rarities of them; that he minds but upon the by; but his design is to meet with commodities, whereby he may get the advantage to raise an estate. Such should your design be, a labouring to get more acquaintance with Christ, not merely to see and know more than others,—that may be done for ostentation, or out of curiosity,—but to discover that which may make your souls rich unto God; that you may discern that in him which may make you willing to sell all to possess and enjoy him, to suffer the loss of all things to gain Christ. Press to get near him, as the woman in the Gospel, that you may find a healing, a sovereign virtue coming from him; labour to get into the light which discovers him, that you may be under his influences, those healing, quickening, strengthening, comforting influences upon which the strength, life, comfort, and activeness of your souls depends; that you may derive from him more spiritual life, sense, strength, refreshment, motion, and activeness; that

you may partake more of his riches, taste more of his sweetness; that you may adore, admire him more, and be more in his praises; that you may be engaged and enabled to honour him more, and serve him better, to do and suffer more for him; so to discover him, as to know the power of his resurrection, &c., Php 3:10, so as to be excited and enabled to follow after, Php 3:12-13.

(5.) Content not yourselves with light without heat. Let every spark of knowledge beget some spiritual and heavenly heat, let it kindle you into more zeal for him, more ardent desires after him, more flames of love to him, more fervour of spirit in seeking, in following him. If the light whereby you discover anything of Christ be not accompanied with spiritual heat, it will prove but a fruitless blaze, which will soon go out, and end in smoke, come to nothing or worse. Satisfy yourselves with no knowledge of Christ, but such as makes you in love with him, Song of Solomon 1:3. The apprehensions they had of Christ gave them a taste, a delicious relish of him, such as made them in love with him, sick of love. Let it raise you to such a heat of resolution as it did Peter, Matthew 26:35. Let it excite in you such desires as in David, Psalms 63:1-11, raise you to such a value of Christ as the spouse had, Song of Solomon 5:5-6, Song of Solomon 5:10, Song of Solomon 5:16. If it beget not heat of affection, it will not be like the light of the rising sun, which shines more and more, &c., but like a flash of lightning, which appears and vanishes in a moment, and often does more hurt than good.

(6.) Live up to the knowledge you have; that is the way to attain more. Let the light that shines in your minds shine in your lives. Imprison not the truth; so you do when it is in your understandings, but confined there so as the influence of it does not reach your conversations. This will provoke the Lord to leave you in darkness, it was the effect of this crime in the heathen; this was the cause of that darkness and those delusions amongst the papists, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. The pleasure they had in unrighteousness prevailed against the belief and knowledge of Christ and his truths, and rendered it impractical; so that though they knew his ways, they would not walk therein; though they knew the will of Christ, they would not do it, therefore he gave them up to be blinded by Satan. If you so abuse the discoveries of Christ, they will be rarely, sparingly vouchsafed; the Lord will not entrust you with more, but rather take from you what you have. But on the contrary, there is a promise to improve knowledge, John 7:17. If according to your knowledge ye do more for Christ, ye shall know more of him. If you follow the light, the light will follow you, you will have it in more abundance; but if you walk not answerable to your knowledge, if you contradict it in the temper of your hearts, or course of your lives, you take the course not to have it augmented, but to have less of it, or none at all. If a friend hold a light to you, and you will not follow it, that will not move him to add to it, or make it brighter, but rather to put it out. If the light whereby Christ discovers himself to you be not used for those purposes for which it is vouchsafed; if it do not lead you effectually to a fuller compliance with him, to an exacter conformity to him, to higher degrees of holiness, self-denial, mortification, contempt of the world; this is the way not to have the light increased, but rather extinguished.

(7.) Let humility keep pace with knowledge, and be of an equal and proportionable growth. If knowledge puff you up, take heed the light be not puffed out. Pride would be the attendant of knowledge, but it never thrives nor comes to good where this is not checked. It is such a weed as sucks away the life and sweetness of knowledge; it is not only an enemy to it in its own nature and quality, sucking away the moisture that should make it grow, but it provokes the Lord to blast it. He resists the proud, beats down that in which they exalt themselves, but gives grace to the humble,

inspires both mind and heart with more grace, gives both more holiness and more knowledge.

(8.) Make use of Christ's prophetical office. As he is a prophet, he is engaged to give the light of the knowledge of himself. He came under the obligation of this office for this end, that he might instruct his people by his word and Spirit, and lead them up to clear and effectual apprehensions of himself. Let this encourage you to labour for it, to seek him for it, to trust him for it. Endeavours succeed through prayer, and prayer prevails through faith.

II. Doct. Those that have attained the excellent knowledge of Christ will not think much to lose all things that they may gain Christ.

Explication. What by gaining Christ? What by all things? What by losing or suffering the loss of these all things?

First, To gain Christ is to get interest in him, and participation of him.

1. He gains Christ who gets interest in him, right to him, union with him; he who is joined to Christ, as members to the head, married to Christ in an everlasting covenant; he that has interest in his person, his offices, his righteousness, his sufferings, his intercession, his administrations, and that which is the spring of all this, his love; he that is interested in the affection, the love of Christ, the acts and expressions of it,—he has gained Christ.

2. He that partakes of Christ, the benefits of his purchase, all those spiritual and eternal blessings wherewith those that have interest in him are blessed; he that gets the graces and advantages of his mediatorship, of his offices, righteousness, sufferings, resurrection, &c., so as to have communion with him in all these, and a communication of all that he has procured, and bestows upon all that are his, he has gained Christ. To gain pardon of sin, right to eternal life, reconciliation with God, holiness in its life, power, exercise, increase, perseverance, the exceeding great and precious promises, high and glorious privileges, sweet and honourable relations which the gospel tenders, all things that are good in this life, the presence of Christ in every state, employment, the assistance of Christ in every service, acceptance through Christ of every endeavour, the joys and comforts of the Spirit, the foretastes of heaven, and a full assurance of actual possession; to partake of Christ in these respects is to gain him. This is that for which he, and all that know Christ with him, are ready to lose all. And if the worth and value of Christ, and these invaluable advantages by him, be duly weighed, it will seem no wonder that those who know him think not much to suffer the loss of all to gain him. But what are these 'all things?' The apostle gives us an account of them in this chapter, and elsewhere in his Epistles. By 'all' things we may understand his privileges, his accomplishments, his enjoyments, his righteousness too; much more all and every sin.

1. His privileges. He was born of a noble tribe and family, was one of the blessed seed, the seed of Abraham, had that blessedness sealed to him by circumcision, and so was outwardly in covenant with God, and numbered amongst his people. This he once counted a gainful, an advantageous privilege; but after he had attained the knowledge of Christ, he saw that without Christ this would not at all avail him, Php 3:7.

2. His accomplishments. He was a man of great natural parts, and he had raised, improved them by art and learning: he sat at the feet, i. e., was the scholar of Gamaliel, a great rabbi, a master in

Israel. He might have advanced his esteem amongst men by excellency of words and wisdom, but he wholly denied himself, and waived these, when there was danger thereby of obscuring the glory of Christ. He was content to lose the reputation of them, 1 Corinthians 2:1, 1 Corinthians 2:4. The like mind is in those who have attained not to make ostentation of their gifts.

3. His enjoyments. His credit, ease, plenty, friends, liberty, safety, he was willing to lose all for Christ's sake; he was content to be accounted as the filth and offscouring of the world, 1 Corinthians 4:13. His ease; in labours more abundant, in journeyings often, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings, 2 Corinthians 11:23, 2 Corinthians 11:27. The plenty and advantages of a good estate, 2 Corinthians 11:27, hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, choosed rather to serve Christ in such necessities, than to enjoy a plentiful estate without him. His friends, these became his enemies for Christ's sake; hence he was in perils by his own countrymen. Instead of favours he received stripes, and that often, 2 Corinthians 11:24. His liberty; in prison more frequent, bonds and afflictions, Acts 20:1-38. His safety; run the hazard of his life often for Christ, Acts 20:25-26. Those that are savingly acquainted with Christ are like-minded; rather lose anything than part with Christ.

4. His righteousness too. His exactness in outward observation of the law, his zeal in the way of his conscience and judgment, all his outward performances, how specious or plausible soever, he was willing to lose, to renounce these, in point of confidence. He knew, after he knew Christ, if he had relied upon these for pardon, acceptance, salvation, it had been to the loss of his soul. So in this consideration he suffered the loss of them; he was willing to renounce, to disclaim them as grounds of his confidence.

5. As for his lusts, all and every of those sins that he was formerly addicted to, he counts it no loss to part with them; they scarce come into this account. It was a thing without question not only with him, but even the false teachers, that he who would not part with every known sin could not gain Christ, could have no interest in him, no advantage by him.

Thus you see the effect of this excellent knowledge of Christ in the apostle. Whatever was sinful, he utterly rejected it; those things that were indifferent, he had either actually suffered the loss of them for Christ, or it was the purpose and resolution of his soul so to do, whenever the interest of Christ should require it. And the things necessary, he renounced them as to any confidence in them, for those purposes for which they were not sufficient. They were loss, of no value to him in this respect. But to open this more clearly, which is the

Third thing to be explained, viz., What is meant by losing all these things? To prevent mistakes in a matter of so great concernment, that no tender conscience, who has resigned itself up wholly unto Christ, may be perplexed or troubled at this truth, which, barely proposed, seems a hard saying. That none may misunderstand it, observe, that we may be said to lose all things to gain Christ in five respects.

(1.) In respect of utter rejection. Thus, in reference to sin, every one that will gain Christ must, every one that savingly knows Christ will, readily lose and freely part with every known sin. Till this be utterly rejected, Christ is never gained. There is not one word in Scripture that gives the least hope to any sinner of gaining Christ that will continue in any known sin. You utterly lose Christ, and all the benefits which sinners can expect from Christ, if ye will not part with every lust. No matter

how gainful, how advantageous soever it seem, you will, you must lose Christ for it, if you will not lose it for Christ.

(2.) In respect of submissive deprivation. This in reference to outward enjoyments. Every one that knows Christ, as the apostle did, will quietly submit, and be content to be deprived of his ease, credit, honours, estate, safety, friends, liberty, and life too, whenever Christ calls for them, whenever Christ requires this of him. But when does Christ call for these? Why, then he requires us to part with these, when these, or any of these, cannot be enjoyed without sin. When the case is thus, that either Christ must be denied, dishonoured, or otherwise offended, or else you must part with these enjoyments, he that will rather offend Christ than submit to part with them, shews that he does not effectually know Christ: Luke 14:26-27, 'He that hates not,' i. e., 'He that loves not me more than these,' as he explains it Matthew 10:37.

(3.) In respect of disposition and purpose of heart. He that savingly knows Christ, even while he does enjoy outward comforts, does heartily purpose and resolve to quit them whenever he shall be called to it, and in this regard may be said to lose them, because it is in his heart to do it whenever occasion is offered. The enjoyment of outward comforts, and the enjoyment of Christ, are not inconsistent; many times both may be enjoyed together. Christ does not always require every one that has interest in him actually to part with their earthly enjoyments, but he always requires a heart fully resolved to quit them, in case they cannot be enjoyed without the dishonour or displeasure of his Lord. The apostle, in his lowest condition, had always some or other outward enjoyment, at least his life; how, then, is he said to have suffered the loss of all things? Why, because it was the resolution of his soul so to do, whenever the interest of Christ called for it; and thus is every soul resolved that savingly knows Christ.

(4.) In respect of judgment and estimation; this in reference to all. So invaluable is Christ in his account, as all his enjoyments, accomplishments, privileges, performances, seem loss compared with him. They make a fair show in the dark before Christ is known, but when he appears and shines in the heart, these disappear, vanish into nothing. In respect of those ends for which Christ is given, those benefits which are gained by Christ, he makes no more account of these than a man does of that which he is sure he shall lose by. When these come in competition with Christ (as the false teachers set them), they will really prove the soul's loss, and so he accounts them. If a man should have offered to his choice a heap of dung or an inestimably rich jewel, if one should come and advise him to choose the dung rather than the jewel, Oh no, would he say, you offer me loss, the jewel is more worth than a world of dung. Thus was it with the apostle, all these were dung in his account; Christ was the pearl of great price; to have chosen them before Christ, was to have chosen loss before gain, and made a woeful bargain. Thus it is with each soul that, &c.

(5.) In respect of confidence and affection. He relies not upon his parts, privileges, righteousness, for pardon, acceptance, or salvation. He has no more confidence in these, he makes them no more the grounds of his rejoicing, as attainable hereby, than if he had them not at all, than if he had quite lost them. He knows, if he should rest upon these, expect to get pardon by them, or for them, he should lose by it, it would prove the loss of pardon and salvation to his soul. He has lost them as to any confidence in them, as to any rejoicing therein, as though hereby he might be saved; so the apostle, verse 3. And so every one that knows Christ, he will have no more confidence to gain the favour of God, and life by these, than in that which if he depend on he is

sure to lose by.

Thus you see in what respects they think not much to suffer the loss of all.

Reason 1. Because they know that they will lose more by any one of these things retained, not quitted, in the foresaid respects, than they can gain by them altogether. They know this is the way to lose Christ, to lose heaven, to lose their souls for ever. Any one known sin allowed and lived in, is enough to lose heaven, Galatians 3:10, and Galatians 5:21. Good reason not to think much to part with sin, &c.

Any privilege not quitted in respect of confidence, when we expect salvation by and for it, cuts off from Christ, Galatians 5:2.

Any enjoyment not parted with, when the honour of Christ calls for it, excludes the enjoyer from any benefit by Christ, Matthew 10:37-39. Nay, your own righteousness, your observance of the law of God, performance of the duties the Lord requires, if it be not quitted as to any confidence of obtaining pardon and life by and for it, makes Christ of none effect to you; you lose Christ by it, Galatians 5:4, if you look upon it as that for which God will pardon you, as that by which ye may be justified, &c. Great reason to suffer the loss of all for gaining Christ, since the retaining of any one would be the loss of Christ.

Reason 2. They know that all these things cannot be available to gain any saving benefit, and therefore good reason to quit them, that they may gain Christ, by whom only the benefits that accompany salvation are to be gained. If any of these can be imagined as available to attain saving blessings, it must be either covenant privileges or religious performances; the rest are in an utter incapacity for such a purpose, but both these are renounced as altogether unprofitable for this end, Galatians 6:15, for righteousness, see Galatians 3:10-11. If not justified, then not partakers of any saving benefit for salvation, and all the blessings that accompany salvation do depend upon justification.

Use I. By this you may know whether you have attained this excellent knowledge of Christ. Those that know him effectually will count all things but dung in comparison of him, cannot but be willing to suffer the loss of all for him. They have suffered the loss of all that is inconsistent with the enjoyment of Christ, they have renounced their sin, and all confidence in their own righteousness, in any privileges or performances, which those that are not indeed acquainted with him rest on as a sufficient support for pardon and life. They rely not on anything else for happiness or peace with God, and they are willing to suffer the loss of all, which they may lawfully enjoy otherwise, when it will be inconsistent with the enjoyment of Christ. They will count it no loss to part with their most endeared enjoyments in this world, when the keeping of them would part them and Christ, Matthew 13:35. Christ is this pearl of great price, a pearl of inestimable, of incomprehensible, of infinite value. He that has found him, that has effectually discovered him, and apprehends truly of what worth and value he is, he will sell all, part with all, as a man would part with all the farthings he has for an inexhaustible mine of gold; or as a beggar would part with his rags and poor function, that he may have the possession of a crown, and enjoy the riches and glory of a kingdom.

Use II. Exhortation. Shew that you know Christ, by being willing to suffer the loss of all for him. Make use of the knowledge of Christ to dispose you to this great but difficult duty, to be ready and resolute to lose all for Christ, whenever he calls you to it. If you know Christ indeed, there is

enough to induce you to it, even in those instances which may seem most intolerable and hardest to be digested. Let me shew this in one or two particulars.

1. As to your outward enjoyments and earthly possessions. To tell you, you must be ready to part with these, may seem an hard saying; it is so to those who are well accommodated in the world; it was so to him in the Gospel, who presumed that all the other commands of God he had observed, he fell off at this; when he was tried here, he left Christ, went away sorrowful, Matthew 19:1-30. But the apostle Paul had actually done it (as in the text), and so had the rest of the apostles, Matthew 19:27. And none are or can be the disciples of Christ indeed, none are Christians really, but such as are resolved on it beforehand, and actually do it when they are tried, when the honour and interest of Christ requires it, Luke 14:33. And those that know Christ effectually will see no reason to stick at it; for he has assured us, that to suffer the loss of all for him is no loss at all, how great and intolerable soever the loss is in appearance, yet really it is the greatest gain, the richest advantage. We cannot possibly make a richer, a more gainful improvement of what we have in the world, than by losing it all for Christ. How great a paradox soever this seem, Christ has assured us of it, and if we do not believe him, we do not know him, Matthew 19:29. You think it a good improvement of what you have, if you could gain twenty or fifty in the hundred, but what is this to gain an hundred-fold! You would think it a rich return of an adventure to double it or treble it; what is it then to double it more than forty times over? What merchant is there that would not venture all he has, nay, that would not throw his goods into the sea, upon assurance (as good assurance as he can desire), that for every pound he so loses he shall certainly gain an hundred? Why, Christ himself assures you of no less advantage by any thing you lose for him, and can you desire better assurance? or can you expect greater advantage? If you think not this advantage enough, if you desire more, he assures you of more, in the next world everlasting life; an hundred-fold here in this present time, and besides that, everlasting life hereafter, Mark 10:29-30. Now eternal life in the kingdom of glory is not only an hundred-fold more, but ten thousand times more, ten millions more, unspeakably, unconceivably more, beyond all computation than all you can lose for Christ. And will you think much to lose a pound upon assurance to gain many millions? You shall gain no less by suffering the loss of all for Christ, than if by the loss of a farthing you should gain ten millions; the advantage will be greater, vastly greater, beyond all proportion.

Yea, but what assurance is there of this? It is a gainful adventure indeed, beyond all in the world, if it were sufficiently insured. Why, you have the best assurance of it that the whole earth, yea, or heaven itself can give. Christ himself is engaged for it, he who is the mighty God, the faithful and true Witness, who has all power in heaven and earth to make it good; and heaven and earth shall perish, rather than one iota of his word shall fail and not be fulfilled. You shall sooner see the heavens fall, and the whole earth sink, than see the least failure as to the performance of his word. And this being so, certainly if Christ were known, if he were believed, if there were faith concerning this thing, to suffer the loss of all for Christ would be so far from being counted an intolerable loss, that it would be esteemed the richest and most advantageous bargain that we can possibly make for ourselves in this world. It would be so far from being feared and avoided upon unworthy terms, that it would be welcomed and embraced as that which is richly desirable.

2. Our personal righteousness, the best of it, holiness of heart and life, this must be quitted in some respect, and only in some respect. To speak or think of suffering the loss of all absolutely, is intolerable. A personal righteousness is in its own place transcendently excellent, and absolutely

necessary; without it we cannot be qualified for glory, we cannot be serviceable on earth, we can never come to heaven; without it we cannot honour Christ here, nor shall ever see his face hereafter, Hebrews 12:1-29. In these respects we must not think of suffering the loss of it, we must not lose it for a world, we lose heaven and our souls if we suffer it. But in point of justification we must quit it, i.e., we must not rely on our personal righteousness as a justifying righteousness. To quit it thus far will be no loss, for it is no loss to quit anything so for as it is not useful, how excellent soever it be otherwise. Now our personal righteousness is not useful to justify us before God against the accusation of the law of works; to quit it here, to lose it thus, is to lose nothing but a false conceit, a conceit that it is what it is not, and can do for us what it can never do. No person on earth ever had in himself a justifying righteousness. It is true if our first parents had continued in their primitive state, without sin, their righteousness would have justified them; but since their fall, sin entering into the world, and spreading over it, no man ever had in himself a justifying righteousness but the man Christ Jesus; no other personal righteousness besides can answer the demands of the law in a full, perfect, spotless conformity to it; none can satisfy for the transgressions of it, none can give a title to eternal life. This I call a justifying righteousness. The best personal righteousness of the most eminent saint on earth is no such thing, it can no more justify him than dung can feed him; how excellent soever it be for other purposes, it is not sufficient, it is not useful, for this, here it leaves us at a loss. On this account the apostle did suffer the loss of his own righteousness; if he was to appear before God, to be justified or condemned, he would be found not having his own righteousness, he durst not rely on that. Elsewhere, 1 Corinthians 4:4, and others, Psalms 143:2, they decline the consideration of their own righteousness in this knowing upon that account they could not be justified, the sinful effects of it would rather expose them to condemnation. But if we rely not on our own righteousness for justification, what righteousness is there to rely on? We shall be at a loss for a justifying righteousness. So the papists, so the Socinians and their followers, determine. But the apostle was otherwise minded, he knew where to find a righteousness fully sufficient for this purpose: ‘Not having his own righteousness;’ if he might be found in Christ, even in him who is ‘the Lord our righteousness,’ in him who is ‘made of God wisdom and righteousness,’ &c., who is ‘the end of the law for righteousness,’ ‘who was made sin for us, that we,’ &c. This is a righteousness far transcending any personal righteousness that sinners are capable of; yea, and that righteousness too which would have justified our first parents if they had not sinned, as being the righteousness of God, the righteousness of faith, an everlasting righteousness. It is a better, a more excellent, righteousness than that in the state of innocency would have been, if it had been perfected in respect of the subject, it being ‘the righteousness of God,’ so called verse 9, and not of man only. 2. In respect of the facility of obtaining, it is attainable by faith, and so described, ver. 9. Faith interests those in it who can neither personally satisfy for past disobedience, nor perfectly observe the law for the time to come. 3. In respect of its perpetuity, it is everlasting: Daniel 9:24, ‘Righteousness of eternity’ (Heb.). Adam’s righteousness, if it had continued a thousand years, might have been lost by sin; but this righteousness makes an end of sin, and so makes a justified state endless. Those that believe this effectually, need not think much to suffer the loss of all, that they may win Christ and be interested in his righteousness, so they may be found in him, not having, &c.

JUSTIFICATION BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the

righteousness which is of God by faith.—Php 3:9.

You have heard, verse 8, of the wonderful effect of Christ's excellent knowledge: 'For whom I have suffered.'

Here you have the end why he was willing to lose all, 'to be found in him.' The apostle cared not though he were found without all other things, so that he might be found in Christ. Hence

Obs. Those that have Christ desire above all things to be found in him; are willing to do, endure, to want, to renounce anything, all things; care not in what condition they be found, how low, poor, despised, afflicted, so they may be found in Christ.

Nothing needs explanation but this phrase, what it is to be found in Christ.

Now, this includes three things:

First, Spiritual intimacy in respect of union. A sinner cannot be found in Christ till he be in him. Union is necessarily presupposed, such an union as the Holy Ghost expresses by that of head and members, Ephesians 1:22-23; by that of root and branches. Hence Christ is frequently called a root, Isaiah 11:10, Revelation 22:16; by that of vine and branches, John 15:1. As the branches are in the vine, and thereby receive juice, strength, growth, fruitfulness, so is a believer in Christ; and the union is so intimate, there is such an oneness betwixt them, as both have one name; so much are they in him as they are him, are called Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:12. Now, this it is which is to be desired above all, to be in Christ, united to him, to be looked upon as one of his members, as implanted into him.

Secondly, Judicial account in respect of representation. Christ is a public person as Adam was, represents those that are his as Adam did, and what he doth or suffers in their stead the Lord accepts it as if they had done or suffered it. This acceptance I call judicial account, and this I take to be the principal import of the expression. Then are we said to be found in Christ, when the Lord accounts, accepts what Christ performed for his elect in way of satisfaction, as if they had performed it. Mind this notion well; for the greatest, the sweetest mystery of the gospel cannot be understood without it.

Christ is by the Father's appointment the sponsor of his people; he doth vicariam presentiam agere, they whom he represents are looked upon as present in him, and what he acts doth pass as though they did act it. In this sense did the apostle desire to be found in him, that Christ might be looked upon as his sponsor, and what he performed might be looked on as undertaken in his stead, on his behalf, and so set upon his account. The Scripture offers us this notion in divers expressions, in special, to instance in no more, when Christ is called a surety, a sacrifice, Hebrews 7:22; when the surety pays the debt, the bankrupt is discharged, as though himself had paid it. Every sinner since the fall is under a double obligation:

He owes the Lord both perfect obedience, and, through his default, the penalty due for disobedience.

Justice will not suffer any man to enter heaven till this debt be paid; nay, in default of payment, the Lord in justice is engaged to cast every sinner into hell, there to pay the utmost farthing.

Man has utterly disabled himself from paying either the one or the other; he can neither obey perfectly, nor satisfy for the least disobedience, and hereupon every son of Adam becomes guilty before God, and liable to eternal wrath, without the least hopes of recovery from and by himself; no more hopes of payment nor of freedom from the penalty than that a beggar should pay an hundred thousand talents. This is the forlorn condition of every sinner by nature. But now the Lord, out of infinite love to his elect, accepts of Christ, freely offering himself to be their surety, and to pay that for them which they were never able to pay themselves; and this he did by performing perfect obedience, which was the principal debt, and suffering death and the wrath of God, which was the penalty. Now this surety's payment being accepted for those that believe, they are discharged as though themselves had paid it. And this is it the apostle desires, that he might be found in Christ as his surety, that the Lord would look upon him in Christ satisfying in his stead, and would discharge him upon Christ the surety's payment. To be thus discharged for Christ is to be found in him. So Christ was a sacrifice, Hebrews 9:26, Ephesians 5:2, Isaiah 53:1-12.

Now the sacrifice was offered in the stead of him that brought it; there was actio vicaria, the death of the sacrifice was instead of the death of him that brought it, so that it passed as though the sinner had suffered in the sacrifice.

Thus, those for whom Christ offered himself are looked upon as though they had suffered in him, and in this sense should we desire to be found in Christ as in our sacrifice, as in our surety.

Thirdly, Real efficacy in respect of participation: when by virtue of his being in Christ a believer is secured from what he fears, and hath that procured for him which he most wants; when he hath in Christ acceptance to life, and by Christ is delivered from the curse and threatening of the law; when he obtains the blessings, as Jacob by being in his elder brother's garments, and escapes vengeance, as the malefactor by being in the city of refuge; these were typical, and very significantly shew us what it is to be found in Christ. To be found in him is to be covered with his righteousness, held forth in the notion of a garment, Isaiah 61:10, Revelation 19:8. Every sinner is full of uncleanness and deformity, the pure eye of God cannot behold him without loathing, nor will he admit any unclean thing into his presence. If he seek a covering of his own righteousness, it helps not, it is but as a menstruous rag, it adds to his uncleanness rather than hides it.

How then shall a wretched sinner stand in the sight of an holy God? Why, the Lord hath made provision; when the sinner returns as the prodigal, the Father bids bring out the best robe, he covers, he adorns him with this; he takes order with a returning sinner, as with Joshua, Zechariah 3:3-4. A believer puts on Christ, Galatians 3:27, Romans 13:14, Revelation 12:1. This is his robe, his garment, and when he is found in it, then he is found in Christ; his person, his services are accepted, the way to heaven is opened for him, the Father delights in him, and blesses him with spiritual, eternal blessings. So that to be found in Christ is to be found in his righteousness, and that the apostle explains himself, 'Not having,' &c.

Then for security from evil: to be found in Christ is as the malefactor to be found in the city of refuge. The man that had slain his neighbour casually was to fly to the city of refuge; if the pursuer overtook him before he was in the city, he had liberty to slay him without mercy; if he found him in the city of refuge, he was not to touch him. Thus here, every sinner out of Christ is liable to the stroke of revenging justice, but when he is found in Christ he is secure, justice then will not touch him. To be found in Christ is to be found as in the city of refuge.

Use. Exhortation. Oh that hereby you would make it evident that you have Christ, by desiring above all things to be found in him! Oh that the same mind might appear in you that was in the apostle, that you might desire it above all, and so desire it as to count all things dung! And indeed, whether you so account them or no, so they will prove. All your privileges, outward performances, earthly enjoyments, they will no more avail you than dung, they will render you no more acceptable to God than excrements, unless you be found in Christ. That I may a little enforce this exhortation, consider,—

Except you be found in Christ you are lost; your persons, services, happiness, and hopes of it, all are lost, unless you be found in him.

1. Your persons: it is as impossible that any person in the world should escape the wrath of God, out of Christ, as it was impossible any man in the old world should escape drowning, when the flood came and found him not in the ark; some of those perishing creatures might scramble up into some mountain or tree and preserve themselves a little while the waters are low, but they were all swept away ere long who were not found in the ark. So here, there is a deluge of wrath coming upon the world of unbelievers and obstinate sinners, and though some may think to escape by flying to outward duties, and relying upon their privileges and enjoyments, yet those are but a refuge of lies, there is no escaping for any but those that are found in Christ, the deluge of wrath will sweep away every sinner sooner or later that is not found in Christ.

2. Your services too are all lost: whatever you do in a way of religion, or in a way of charity, except you be found in Christ doing of it, it is lost, it will never be accepted. Do what you will, it is impossible to please God if he find you not in Christ, in whom only his people are made acceptable: ‘Without faith it is impossible to please God,’ Hebrews 11:6. Why? Because it is faith that brings a man into Christ, that faith which purifies the heart and life, that faith which runs to Christ out of deep seas of sin and wrath, that faith that will take Christ upon his own terms.

3. Your happiness, and hopes of it, are lost too: ‘There is no name under heaven,’ &c. The Lord blesses his people with spiritual blessings in heavenly places; but how? In Christ only, Ephesians 1:1-23. There is no enjoyment of happiness, there is no hopes of it, but for those that are found in Christ: ‘Christ in you the hope of glory,’ Colossians 1:1-29. Without Christ, without hope in the world. Those who anchor not within the veil, will see their souls and hopes wrecked together. In what condition soever you be found, if found without Christ, you are miserable. Though you be found in health, in plenty, in prosperity; nay, though you be found in a throne, if you be not found in Christ, there is no hopes of happiness, they give no rest. But what course shall we take to be found in Christ?

1. If ye will be found in Christ, you must not be found in your sins. You must not be found in love with any sin, you must not allow yourselves in the practice of any; you must hate it, you must depart from it, else there is no coming at Christ, no being found in him; these are utterly inconsistent, as light and darkness; you cannot be found in both at once. ‘What fellowship,’ &c., 2 Corinthians 6:1-18. Joshua’s filthy garments must first be taken from him, before he could be clothed with change of raiment. Lot could not possibly be in Zoar until he left Sodom. The manslayer, if he would stay in the place of guilt, where he had shed blood, could never be found in the city of refuge. It is as impossible you should be found in heaven while you are in hell, as that you should be found in Christ while you continue in sin. If any sin be so endeared to you by

pleasure, advantage, custom, or interest, that you will not leave it, you thereby abandon Christ, and can never expect to be found in him, or near him, unless only at his left hand. They do but delude themselves, if there be any truth in Christ, who hope to be found in Christ, and yet will be found in the love and ways of sin. It is a disparagement to Christ, for any to name him who will not depart from iniquity; and can such hope to be found in him? 1 John 1:6.

2. You must have no confidence in your own righteousness. The apostle joins these both in his doctrine and practice, 1 John 1:9. If you would be found in Christ, you must lay aside all conceits of any sufficiency in your own righteousness to justify or save you; those that lead you to this draw you from Christ. It was such conceits that kept off the Pharisees from Christ, and made it less feasible for them to be found in Christ than the publicans; and against this is that parable directed, Luke 18:9. This cut off the Jews from Christ and his righteousness: Romans 10:4, 'In the Lord have we righteousness, in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified,' Isaiah 45:24-25. But this self-confidence will make men say, 'We are lords,' Jeremiah 2:31. This makes Christ of none effect, discharges them from being found in him, or finding any advantage by him, Galatians 5:4. An expectation to be justified by conformity to, or observation of the law, tends to disannul and abolish Christ; such are fallen from the doctrine of grace, which doctrine teaches that we are justified freely by another righteousness, Romans 3:1-31. This renders the death of Christ a vain and needless thing, Galatians 2:21. Christ was obedient unto death, that we might have righteousness in him to justify us. If we can have such a righteousness by our observance of the law, he died in vain and to no purpose, we might be as well without him.

3. Put on Christ. He that will be found in him, must put him on, Romans 13:14. Desire the Lord to plant faith in your souls, for by this only is Christ put on. This is coming to him as to a city of refuge, John 6:1-71.

4. Walk in Christ, 1 John 2:6. Those only will be found in Christ who walk in the steps and ways of Christ; those ways of holiness, humility, self-denial, meekness, contempt of the world, activeness for God, wherein he walked, Ephesians 2:10; for those are neither the causes nor conditions of justification, either as begun or continued, yet they are the inseparable companions or effects of that faith by which we are justified at first, and by which our justification is continued.

'Not having my own righteousness,' &c. You have heard (1.) Of the dignity of the knowledge of Christ; (2.) Of the efficacy of it, it made him suffer the loss of all things; (3.) The end why he suffered, that he might win Christ, be found in him; (4.) The way how he would be found in Christ: [1.] Negatively, 'not having,' &c.; [2.] Positively, 'But the righteousness of the faith of Christ.' The negative expression is that which I shall now insist on; and that I may clearly ground a particular observation, explain,

First, What he means by righteousness. It is a conformity to the rule of righteousness, such a conformity as is found in man since the fall; and that either inward, in respect of the temper and motions of the soul; or outward, in respect of the actions of his life, religious or moral. He concludes all acts in his soul, or conversation, that had a show of righteousness, which seemed to answer the law of God.

Secondly, Hence he calls it that 'righteousness which is of the law,' because the law is the rule of righteousness; and any motion or act is more or less righteous, as it comes nearer to the law, or

less answers.

Thirdly, ‘His own righteousness.’ His own in opposition to that other righteousness, which he calls the ‘righteousness of faith,’ ‘of Christ,’ ‘of God;’ for though this was his too, as it is every believer’s, yet not in the same way. That which he calls his own; for this was his by personal performance, but that of Christ was not his personally; but in respect of God’s gracious acceptation, imputing it to him, accepting the performance of a surety for him, as though it had been his personally.

Fourthly, ‘Not having;’ that is, not having confidence in it, not relying upon it, as that for which the Lord will pardon, accept, save me. The gospel hath revealed another ground to rely upon for this, and had discovered the insufficiency of his own righteousness for this purpose; and therefore he renounced this in point of confidence, not otherwise. You must not think the apostle accounted a personal righteousness or observance of the law unnecessary, he endeavoured it in himself, he urged it upon others, to bring their hearts and lives to an accord with the law, the will of God; and pressed holiness, which is nothing but a conformity to the law, as that ‘without which no man shall see God.’

Thus far he retained his own righteousness as excellent in its own place; but he renounced it in point of confidence when it took the place of Christ’s righteousness; when it was urged as that which could justify, make acceptable in God’s sight, and give him a title to heaven. These are the privileges and offers* of the righteousness of faith; and therefore in this respect he disclaims his own legal, personal righteousness. Hence the

Third Obs. Those that would be found in Christ must renounce their own righteousness: they who have attained the excellent knowledge of Christ will not rely upon it, rest in it, or make it the ground of their confidence. The apostle in this respect counts it loss, calls it dung; and those that have truly learned Christ will be like-minded. Though personal righteousness, observance of the law, be necessary and useful in other respects, yet in point of confidence it must be renounced, it must in no case be relied on; it is commendable and advantageous in its own place, when made use of for those ends, and in that way which God requires; but if it be relied on, it may prove dangerous, pernicious; it will be found a broken reed, deceive the soul that puts confidence in it. The reason is, because personal righteousness of any man since the fall is defective, and comes far short of that righteousness which should be the ground of our confidence. That only may be relied on, 1, which fully answers the rule of righteousness; 2, which can give title to life; 3, which can make satisfaction for sin; 4, which can render us acceptable in God’s eye; 5, which will justify us in the sight of God: such a righteousness it must be. But now no man hath such a righteousness of his own as will do any one of these, and therefore it must in no case be relied on. To shew particularly, no man’s personal righteousness, take it at the best since the fall,—

1. Doth answer the rule of righteousness; for the law of God, which is the rule, requires perfect obedience, perfect both in respect of habit and act, both in respect of parts and degrees: but the best righteousness of any fallen man is imperfect; imperfect both these ways, therefore can scarce so be called righteousness; it is but a sinful and unrighteous righteousness; it is crooked, and comes not up to the rule; it is defective, unanswerable to the purity of the law: and hence the church acknowledges her righteousness is but as a menstruous cloth, Isaiah 64:6.

Four reasons:

Reason 1. Omnis justitia humana injustitia esse convincitur. All man's righteousness is detected to be unrighteousness, if it be strictly examined, James 3:2. There are many sinful flaws in all, in the best, in the most righteous. The apostle includes himself, 'We offend in many;' whereas, if we did but offend in one point, that would be enough to deface our righteousness, to make it another thing than the law requires; to denominate us guilty rather than righteous, James 2:10. He that transgresses but in one point, would by the sentence of the law be found guilty of all, rather than righteous, Job 15:15.

Reason 2. Obedience, if it be sincere and universal, it may evidence a title, but it can give none: 2 Timothy 1:9, 'He saves us,' i. e., gives a title to salvation; but how? 'Not according to our own works,' our own righteousness; 'but according to his grace in Christ.' If we had it, were entitled to it by our own righteousness, we had it not by grace; these are still opposed as inconsistent. If we had it in ourselves, we had it not in Christ.

Reason 3. It cannot satisfy divine justice, it can be no compensation to his laws and honour, violated by sin; it can be no vindication of his holiness and justice. There is that in our best righteousness which exposes us to more severity, and makes us further obnoxious to justice; that which may provoke him, instead of appeasing or satisfying.

Reason 4. There is that in it that may procure loathing, rather than acceptance, Habakkuk 1:13. There is a mixture of evil in our own righteousness, the Lord cannot behold it; but he will see iniquity in it, which his pure eye cannot look on with acceptance, Daniel 9:18. Daniel, and the people of God who prayed with him, ventured not to present their supplications for their own righteousness; they durst not presume to expect their prayers would be accepted for their righteousness, but for his great mercies. Those great mercies for which they presented their supplications, that they might be accepted, include Christ, through whose mediation and righteousness a way is opened for those mercies; and without which no sinners under the law, or under the gospel, would be capable thereof. It is not in ourselves, not in our own righteousness, but in Christ, that any are accepted, Ephesians 1:6.

Reason 5. As touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless, unspotted. But this was before conversion, no wonder if he did not expect to be thereby justified. Ay, but after conversion too, when what he had and did was from grace, he had no confidence in his own righteousness, that it would justify him, how exact, how eminent soever it was, Acts 23:1. His righteousness was universal, in all good conscience; it was sincere, it was before God that he thus lived; it was continued, uninterrupted; he had thus lived to that very day. But did he rely on this to justify? No, 1 Corinthians 4:4. He was not conscious to himself that he had been unfaithful or unsincere in anything, yet would he make no account that thereby he should be justified. Here is an evangelical righteousness, an unspotted, a sincere, an universal, a constant righteousness, an apostolical righteousness, of an extraordinary quality and degree, both as to the habits and acts of it, such as transcended that of the other apostles: 'He laboured more abundantly than they all, suffered more abundantly than they all;' yet was he not hereby justified. Now if such a righteousness could not justify, what personal righteousness can be found in the world that may be counted a justifying righteousness? Well might he lay it down as a general rule, Galatians 3:11, and Galatians 2:16.

It will be yet more evident, that our own righteousness cannot justify us, by two or three particulars.

(1.) Our own righteousness answers not the demands of the gospel, no more than those of the law, and so falls short of every rule of righteousness, and therefore cannot justify us with respect to any. The gospel calls for perfection as well as the law, it abates no degree of holiness which the law required, it allows us not to love God less, to fear, trust, serve him less than the law would have us. It is true, the gospel has pardon for imperfections, which the law had not; but we are as much obliged to perfection under the gospel, as under the law, and cannot be justified by that which falls short of what we are obliged to.

(2.) Our own righteousness cannot justify itself, much less can it justify us. It needs another righteousness to justify it, being many ways faulty; otherwise it is, and will be under the condemning sentence of the law, Psalms 130:3. If there be iniquities in our righteousness, it cannot stand in judgment, it cannot be justified, it needs another righteousness, by virtue of which it may have pardon.

(3.) It cannot justify us in our own consciences, much less can it justify us before God. There is no man's conscience, if it be not senseless, but will see something to be condemned in his own righteousness. Now God is greater than our consciences, he sees more therein that is worthy of condemnation, 1 John 3:21.

2. It cannot entitle any man to life, nor give right to happiness; this is evident from the former. The first charter man had for eternal life runs upon these terms, 'Do this and live;' that is, perform perfect obedience, and thou shalt have eternal life. It is only perfect righteousness, obedience, that gives a man title to heaven; whereas, that which is defective (as the best is since the fall) leaves a man under the curse, Galatians 3:10. There must be a better provision than man's personal righteousness, before he can be free from the curse, so far is he from procuring eternal happiness.

3. It cannot satisfy the justice of God, it cannot make a recompense for the least sin. Nay, suppose it was perfect, it is most imperfect: perfect obedience cannot satisfy for the least disobedience. 'O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies,' Daniel 9:18.

If a man could perform perfect obedience without sin, yet this being his duty, and that which he owes, this would not satisfy for any former sin; for the payment of one debt is no satisfaction for another.

4. It cannot render him acceptable in God's eye. The Lord will accept no man till satisfaction be tendered; this agrees not with his justice, and no man's personal righteousness can satisfy justice, as appears by the former. No man since the fall is or can be accepted upon his own account, and men's personal righteousness being stained with sin, is so far from rendering the performance acceptable, as the performance itself cannot be accepted without the mediation of a better righteousness than that of the law, of which here, Ephesians 1:1-23.

5. It cannot justify the performance before God's tribunal. The apostle clears this by his own example: if any man might expect to be justified by his own righteousness, he much more; for 'as touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless;' he lived in all good conscience towards God, &c. He was not conscious to himself of any gross misdemeanour or neglect: 'I know nothing,' &c., 1 Corinthians 4:4. He lays it down as a general rule, Galatians 3:11, and Galatians 2:16.

Use; of exhortation. If you desire the comfort and happiness to be found in Christ, take heed of relying upon your own righteousness. There are two ways whereby Satan leads the greatest part of the world to destruction. The one is, the open way of profaneness and ungodliness; the other is, the retired way of self-confidence. If that great enemy of souls cannot prevail with men to run with other* excess of riot, when he sees some through religious education, or common workings of the Spirit, to have escaped the gross pollutions of the world, he attempts their ruin another way, by possessing them with a conceit of the sufficiency of their own righteousness, tempting them to neglect Christ by resting in themselves. And though this way be fairer than the other, yet ordinarily it proves more dangerous, because those that are entered into it are not so easily convinced of it, and brought out of it; publicans and sinners are more easily brought to Christ than Pharisees. The word to which the apostle compares self-righteousness tells us thus much. He calls it σκυβ■λα, which is rendered to you dung; but some critics observe, the word signifies such costive excrements as the power of physic doth hardly purge out of the body.

It must be an extraordinary power that will work a man that is civilized, and hath the form of godliness, to deny himself, and renounce his self-righteousness; and yet nothing doth more cross the great and glorious designs of God in the gospel, nothing is more dishonourable to Christ, and more affronts him; nothing more dangerous to the soul of sinners, than to rely upon their own righteousness for pardon and salvation. And therefore, if you would not be found fighters against God in his most gracious contrivement of man's happiness; if you would not be contemners of Christ and the grace of the gospel; if you would not be found accessory to the destruction of your own souls, take heed of depending upon your own righteousness, take heed of making anything the ground of your confidence but Christ and his righteousness. And that you may the better escape this snare of the devil, let me discover those several dresses wherein Satan presents this self-righteousness, that he may the more easily entangle the more in a soul-deceiving confidence therein; and few that know Christ will find but they either have been, or are upon the borders of it, if not further in some of these by-paths.

1. Some rely much upon a natural righteousness, that which we call good nature; if others persuade them, or they can persuade themselves that they are of good dispositions, mild, candid, gentle, ingenuous, kind and peaceable temper, they rest here, and are apt to conclude, the Lord will not be so severe as to cast so good nature (though there be nothing more than nature in them) into hell.

2. Some rely upon a positive righteousness, and observance of some rites and circumstances in religion. They are baptized, and accounted members of the church, and partake of ordinances, and come under church order, submit to this or that form of ecclesiastical government, and adhere strictly to some outward observances prescribed by God, or perhaps received by tradition from their superiors or forefathers. Here they ground their hopes of heaven. This was part of the Pharisees' righteousness, and that in which their false teachers grounded their confidence, which the apostle here opposes, and overthrows elsewhere, when he tells us, 'The kingdom of God comes not by observation,' &c., Luke 17:29; Romans 14:17. And Christ raises it: 'Except your righteousness,' &c., Matthew 5:20.

3. Others rely upon a moral righteousness, because they have some care to observe the duties of the second table, because they are just, sober, temperate, liberal, love their neighbours, do no

man wrong, give every one his own; hence conclude they are sure of heaven. Whereas if this were a sufficient ground of confidence, we might conclude many heathens in heaven, such as never knew Christ, nor heard of the gospel. If such righteousness be sufficient, then Christ died in vain, as the apostle concludes to like purpose, Galatians 2:21.

4. Others rely upon a religious righteousness, their outward performances of some religious duties. Because they pray, and hear the word, and read the Scriptures, receive the sacraments, converse with those that are religious, and in some sort observe the Sabbath, upon this are confident that they shall die the death of the righteous, and it shall be well with them in the latter end. But even this support the apostle rejected as rotten; though he was one of the most religious sort among the Jews, and blameless as to his outward performance of religious duties, yet he durst not be found with this righteousness alone; he disclaims all confidence in it.

5. Others rely upon a negative righteousness. Because they are not so unrighteous, not such idolaters, atheists, not such apostates or heretics, not such swearers or Sabbath-breakers; because they are not drunkards nor adulterers, not murderers or oppressors, not covetous, proud, or ambitious, therefore it shall go well with them. This was the Pharisees', as in the parable; but it was far from justifying them, Luke 18:11, Luke 18:14.

6. Others rely upon a comparative righteousness, their being or thinking themselves to be more righteous than others, because they do more in a way of religion, of justice, of charity, than others who have like engagements; whatever their principles be from which, or the ends for which they do it, conclude for this they shall be saved. This is like that of the labourers sent into the vineyard early in the morning. They expostulate about their wages, as though they had deserved some extraordinary reward in having borne the burthen and heat of the day, Matthew 20:12. There is a sad intimation, that though these were called, yet they were not chosen, Matthew 20:16, Matthew 7:22.

7. Others rely upon a passive righteousness. Because they have suffered for the truth, being jeered, reproached, persecuted for some way of religion, therefore they are confident that for these sufferings they shall be saved and pardoned. But the apostle here sheweth the vanity of this confidence, for who had suffered more than he, who had suffered the loss of all things for Christ? He makes not his sufferings, but Christ, the ground of his confidence; he durst not be found, not in his sufferings for Christ, except he might withal be found in Christ: that he desired above all. Nor would he rest in anything but in Christ: 'Not having his own righteousuess;' he counts it loss so far as it was unuseful and insufficient, he counts it dung so far as it invades Christ's prerogative, so far as it would usurp the place and office of his righteousness; it was no better than dung when it would supplant and dishonour the righteousness of God.

(1.) Man being made a rational creature, and so made capable of moral government and obedience, he was necessarily subject unto God as supreme governor, who, that he might rule him according to his nature and capacity, gave him a law by which he was to be ordered in all things, and according to which he was to be judged. To enforce this law, he added a penalty in case of transgression, the import of which is this, that if he rebelled, he should be miserable here and hereafter, Genesis 2:17. To enjoin man not to eat of the tree of knowledge, to obey him herein and in all other particulars, he was obliged by the law of nature; and the penalty is death, which is elsewhere called the curse, Deuteronomy 27:26, Galatians 3:10.

(2.) Man transgressed this law. Our first parents disobeyed God, and we in them, Romans 5:12. Hereby the image of God, wherewith he was created in holiness and righteousness, was lost, and the nature of mankind universally corrupted, and all so inclined unto sin, that they sin actually as soon as they are capable of acting, and continue to sin while they are in the state of nature, and all are concluded under sin, Romans 3:9-10, &c. 'All are become guilty before God,' Romans 3:19. 'All have sinned.' This the apostle premises before he delivers the doctrine of justification, Romans 3:23. Thus it was with all the world after the flood, and so it was with the old world before, Genesis 6:5. All are sinners from the womb and from the conception, Psalms 51:1-19.

(3.) Sin being entered into the world, the Lord was concerned not to let it go unpunished. It is enough for our purpose, which is out of question, that it was the Lord's will and determination to punish all sin. But there seems to be a sufficient proof, that it was not from the mere pleasure of his will that he should be punished, but there was a necessity for it, from the nature and perfections of God, and from his relation to man as his governor, and from the law enacted as the rule of his government. The Lord is obliged, not only by his truth and unchangeableness, but by his wisdom, holiness, and justice, to punish sin. His truth engages him to it. He threatens it in his law, and if he will rule according to law, it must be inflicted. His truth is obliged for the executing of the threatening, and to make good what he had declared to be his resolution. His unchangeableness makes it necessary. He did determine from eternity to punish it. The event shews that it was eternal purpose, and the counsel of the Lord must stand: he is not as man. His wisdom makes it necessary. The end and designs of his law and government would be lost, his law would appear to be powerless and insignificant, his government would be rcndered contemptible, the authority of the one, and the honour of the other defaced, if sin is not punished. The holiness of God requires it. Sin is contrary to him; he hates it. If he will shew himself to be what he is, 'an holy God, of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity,' Habakkuk 1:13, it is necessary to shew his hatred of it by punishing it: Joshua 24:19, 'he will not forgive,' that is, he will punish, because he is holy, where, as in other places, the necessity of punishing is grounded upon his holiness.

If the Lord be necessarily an holy God, it will be necessary to hate sin; for hatred of sin is essential to holiness, and cannot be conceived or apprehended without it. Now to hate sin is velle punire, necessarily includes a will to punish it. It is essential to holiness to be displeased with sin. Now as the love of God is our chief reward, so God's displeasure is the chief punishment of it. If then it be not necessary that he punish sin, there will be no necessity that he be displeased at sin. It will be arbitrary to the holy God to be pleased with sin, if it be arbitrary not to punish it. We might conceive that he may as well be pleased with sin as displeased with it, which is intolerable to say or imagine.

Finally, His justice obliges him to punish it; for suffering is indispensably due to sin, and the sinner justly deserves it, and justice requires that everything, every one, should have his due, that every disobedience receives a just recompence of reward, Hebrews 2:2, Romans 1:32, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12. It is righteous with God to give to every one according to his work. An earthly governor cannot without injustice decline to punish the violation of righteous laws, unless in case he can otherwise secure the end of government. The ends of the divine government are his honour, the authority of his laws, and the good of his subjects. His honour and majesty must be vindicated, the authority of his laws (wherein the interest of the world is so much concerned) must be asserted; and sin, seeing it entrenches upon all, unless it be punished, how can they be vindicated or

asserted? And there is more necessity that a compensation be made to the laws and honour of the supreme Governor of the world, by how much his person and majesty is higher, and the dishonour greater, his laws more advantageous to the world. Here the necessity of a vindication by punishment rises higher, and appears to be greater in all respects.

It is true a private person or a magistrate, as to his own particular concern, may in some cases remit injuries, without any prosecution, he may do it as the offended party; but as a governor he cannot justly do it when the interest of government is concerned [in] it, and the public would suffer thereby. Now in reference to God, it is plain the universe would suffer if these rights of his sovereignty and honour were not vindicated, the assertion thereof tending so much to the good of the whole. And the Socinians confess that it is repugnant to justice for a private person to relinquish his right in case of some injuries, and the injury they instance in, viz., notorious defamation, is not more intolerable to man than sin is to God. And therefore to think it is not necessary for the great God to vindicate his rights by severity against sin is altogether unreasonable. In short, the honour of the divine perfections cannot be secured or vindicated unless sin be punished; therefore it is highly necessary that sin should not escape without punishment.

(4.) Since there is such necessity that sin be punished, and the Lord so highly concerned to inflict the penalty due to sin, either the sinners themselves must bear the penalty, or some other for them; if the sinners themselves must bear the punishment, no flesh could be saved, all mankind must be eternally miserable, for it is the penalty expressed by death and curse.

If some other bear the penalty for them, it must be such a person, and in such a way, that will be as satisfactory to justice, and as full a salvo to the divine perfections concerned in his law and government, as if the sinners themselves suffered it. The design of the law must be secured, and the ends of divine government attained, and the justice, holiness, truth, and wisdom of God vindicated and manifested, as much as if the penalty was inflicted upon the transgressors themselves.

(5.) It was Christ that undertook this, and the way wherein he effected it was by suffering in our stead. This is it which we are concerned to maintain; Christ suffered in our stead; for if he did not, the punishment due to sin is not inflicted (since his bearing the punishment due to our sin, and his suffering in our stead is all one), neither we nor any for us undergo it.

Thus sin, as to all that are saved, will go unpunished every way, and so the ends of government are neglected by the infinite wise and righteous Governor of the world, and the glory of his wisdom, truth, justice, and holiness are by himself exposed and left to suffer without any salvo. If we be saved in a way that will not secure the honour of the divine perfections, salvation will be effected in a way not consistent with the honour of God. But no salvation can be expected on these terms, and therefore either none will be saved by Christ, or else it is upon the account of his bearing the penalty of the law in their stead. But by Christ's suffering in our stead all is secured, justice is satisfied for them, sin hath its deserts, that which is due to it, and which justice requires should be inflicted for it; his holiness is demonstrated, for what clearer evidence, that he is of purer eyes than to behold it, that he perfectly hates it, than by punishing it in his own Son, when he appeared but in the room of sinners. His truth is manifested, when the Lord of life must die, rather than what the law denounced shall not be executed; his wisdom is no way impeached, the ends of

government fully attained, the law vindicated from contempt, the authority of the great lawgiver upheld, and the children of men deterred from sin, when the Son of God must suffer for it.

I need not here give an account of that abundant evidence we have in Scripture that Christ should suffer in our stead, only this in short: the several notions whereby his death is represented to us in Scripture, make it plain that he suffered and died not only for our good, but in our stead. His death is held forth as a punishment, as a ransom, and as a sacrifice. His death was a punishment: 'He was wounded for our transgressions;' he died for our sins; that is, he suffered what our sins deserved, that we might not suffer; and this is the very thing that we mean by his suffering in our stead. His death was our ransom, Matthew 20:28. He paid that in our behalf which justice required of him, and this is to pay it in our stead. His death was a sacrifice: he died that we might escape that death which was the penalty of the law transgressed by us. As the life of the sacrifice went for the life of the sinner for whom it was offered; this is to die in our stead, as the sacrifice died instead of the offender.

(6.) Christ's sufferings were accepted for us, and accepted as suffered in our stead. None who believe he suffered will question but his sufferings were accepted; nor will any deny that they were accepted as suffered in our stead, but those who against all evidence of Scripture deny that he suffered in our stead. (1.) The ground of his death and suffering; (2.) The end and design of them; (3.) Their full sufficiency for their end; (4.) The dignity and quality of the person suffering; everything, in a manner, which occurs therein tends to make this unquestionable among all Christians.

It was the will of the Father, expressed in the form of a covenant between Father and Son, that the Son taking our nature should thus suffer, Psalms 40:6-8, Hebrews 10:5. The Father promises that these sufferings should be accepted, Isaiah 53:10-11. The Son, upon assurance of the Father's acceptance, submits to the sufferings.

He suffered all that in justice was required, that way might be made for our acquitment. His sufferings were a full demonstration of his truth, wisdom, holiness, justice, yea, of his mercy too; the Lord was hereby every way transcendently glorified, and that which thus glorifies him must needs be highly acceptable.

He that suffered was not only man, but God, of the same essence, power, and will with the Father. His sufferings and blood was the sufferings and blood of him who is God, and therefore of infinite value, and so most worthy of all acceptance, such as could not in justice but be accepted. The Lord was herewith fully satisfied, and that which fully satisfied him was unquestionably accepted.

(7.) Since Christ's sufferings were accepted for us, it is undeniable that they are imputed to us (this is the conclusion which necessarily and unavoidably follows from the premises); for such acceptance of them for us, and imputation of them unto us, is the same thing. To impute Christ's sufferings to us, is nothing else but to accept them for us, as suffered in our stead. Hence, [1.] let me give some account why I express imputation by acceptance; [2.] to shew that they are the same thing, and nothing else meant by the one than by the other.

[1.] What others means here by imputation I express in these terms, accepting thereof as done in our stead, for us; but they are clear and proper (and help to state this point more advantageously), and to distinguish this from other sorts of imputation. Imputation in general is to account a thing to

belong to us. This general is specified and differenced by three severals, all here comprised, viz., the state of the thing imputed, the ground of the imputation, and the quality of what is imputed.

First, As to the state of the thing imputed, they are either ours, or not ours, personally. That is denoted in the words ‘for us.’ He endured it for us, not we for ourselves; and so the imputation of Christ’s sufferings is accounting of that to belong to us which is not personally ours.

Hereby it is distinguished from the imputation of things which are personally ours. Phinehas’s act was imputed to him for righteousness; it was his own act personally, Psalms 106:31; and so Romans 4:4.

Secondly, As to the ground of the imputation, that is here Christ’s suffering in our stead; that is the ground why his sufferings are accounted to belong to us. So the imputing of his sufferings is the accounting that to belong to us which he suffered in our stead. Thereby it is distinguished from those imputations which are injurious or groundless, from such also as have other or different grounds from these.

Thirdly, As to the quality of what is imputed; it is either good for us, or evil. The sufferings of Christ are good for us; that is denoted in the word accepted, and serves to distinguish of* the imputation of that which is evil. The imputation of that which is good is called the accepting of it for us, as the imputation of that which is evil is called the laying it to our charge, 2 Timothy 4:16; so that I express the imputing of Christ’s sufferings to us by the accepting thereof for us, to distinguish it from the imputation of that which is evil. To impute that which is evil to us, is to charge it on us; to impute that which is good to us, is to accept it for us.

Thus, as the imputation of evil to us is distinctly expressed by laying it to our charge, so the imputation of that which is good is distinctly and properly expressed by accepting it for us. Both the charging of the evil, and the accepting of the good, is the accounting it to belong to us, which is the common notion of imputation.

[2.] Hereby the other thing propounded is manifest, viz., that to impute Christ’s sufferings to us, and accept them for us, is the same thing. But let us clear it a little more. Take imputation in its full extent, and it is the accounting of a thing to belong to us, and dealing with us accordingly. These two things it includes, and it is all we mean by it. Now a thing may be accounted to belong upon several grounds; that particularly belongs to us which is done or suffered in our stead, which is the case before us. And in this case, to accept for us what is suffered in our stead, is to impute it to us; for to accept it as suffered in our stead, is to judge it to belong to us, and to deal with us answerably in respect to the advantages thereof; and this is all that imputation imports.

Thus, when a friend pays a ransom for a captive, if it be accepted for the captive, it is imputed to him; for to accept it for him, is to account it to belong to him, being paid in his stead, and to deal with him accordingly, by discharging him.

Thus, when a propitiatory sacrifice was offered for the sinner, the accepting of it for him was the imputing of it to him; for, being accepted in his stead, it was accounted to belong to him, and he had the advantage of it for atonement, Leviticus 1:4. He laid his hand upon the head of it, to signify that it was to suffer in his stead, and it made atonement for him; so that, being accepted, it was accounted to belong to him, and he fared according; atonement was made by it; where it is plain in

those sacrifices accepting and imputing are all one, and so they are expressed by Leviticus 7:18, where not to accept is explained by not to impute; aud there is sufficient warrant by accepting to understand imputing in other places where it is applied to sacrifices, Psalms 20:3, Isaiah 56:7.

Hereby it is clear, that to accept Christ's sufferings for us, as suffered in our stead, and to impute them unto us, is the very same thing; so that those who grant his sufferings are thus accepted for us, can in nowise deny that they are imputed to us, unless they will be so absurd as both to grant and deny one and the same thing; so ridiculous as to grant it in one expression, and deny it in the other, which doth express the very same thing. There are no small advantages I may expect from thus stating the question.

(8.) Hereby it appears that none can deny the imputation of Christ's death and sufferings but those who deny his satisfaction (and so subvert the foundation of the gospel); for since the imputation of his sufferings to us, and accepting of them for us, are one and the same thing, if they be not imputed to us, they are not accepted for us, as suffered in our stead. If they be not accepted for us, as suffered in our stead, he did not suffer in our stead; and if he did not suffer in our stead, he did not make satisfaction, for by satisfaction nothing is to be meant but the suffering the penalty of the law in our stead; so that this draws deep, and tends directly to undermine the foundation of Christianity. I would they who make bold to deny the imputation of Christ's sufferings, would shew us, things thus stated, how it is possible to secure his satisfaction. I am confident that Socinus himself, if he had not denied the satisfaction of Christ, would never have denied the imputation of it to us, as before explained; for even a Mahomedan hath so much respect for Christ, as not to deny but what he undertook in our stead was accepted of God as accomplished in our stead.

Let me say farther, that as the case is stated, we may force any who grant the satisfaction of Christ, to acknowledge the imputation of it, even those who oppose it so passionately, and are possessed with the greatest prejudices against it, if they can but procure leave of their prejudice and passion to use a little reason when they are masters of much; if they do but discern the true notion of the things in question, when it is clear and obvious; nay, if they but understand themselves and the matters they contest about, while some of them are ready to charge the clearest, the greatest lights of the protestant world with ignorance or inadvertency. That Christ satisfied for us they grant; no protestant, no papist, no Christian, none but Socinians question it. Well, if he satisfied for us, he suffered in our stead; if he suffered in our stead, his sufferings were accepted as suffered in our stead; if they were accepted for us, they are imputed to us, for we mean nothing else in the world by imputation but this acceptance. This they grant, and cannot but grant, and must yield the very thing we contend for, while they will have the world believe that they deny it, and write bitter discourses against it, as though they were in such a transport as not to understand what they do or say. That I do not misrepresent them will be hereby evident; ask dissenting protestants, such who have forsaken the doctrine of the Church of England, and of all reformed churches in this point, whether the righteousness of Christ be imputed to us? No, by no means, will they say; and some of them have the discretion to smut it with black invectives, as a dangerous doctrine, of I know not what pernicious consequence; well, but ask them again, Did Christ suffer in our stead? Was what he suffered accepted as suffered in our stead? This they will readily grant, as being maintained by the whole Christian world against the Socinians. The papists themselves will not have the face to deny it, how much, how satirically soever they write against the imputation of Christ's righteousness; now where is the reason and ingenuity of those men,

papists and others, when they presume so much upon the strength and the clearness of their reason? They grant the sufferings of Christ in our stead accepted for us, yet deny they are imputed to us, when the accepting of them for, and imputing of them to us, are the very same thing; they both grant and deny one and the same thing, only expressing it in differing terms; and these terms differing only in the sound, when in truth they are of one and the same import. This is not to deal like men of reason; it is no more reasonable than to grant that this is a living creature, but to deny it to be an animal; or to grant they have received twenty English shillings, but to deny they have received one pound sterling. The Socinians are more impious, and bid more defiance to the gospel, in denying the imputation of Christ's satisfaction, because they deny he made any satisfaction; but those are more repugnant to reason, who grant that he made satisfaction, but deny that it is imputed.

If they will use their reason, they must either fall into the detestable error of Socinus, and deny both, or submit to the doctrine of the gospel, and acknowledge both; both must stand or fall together; and both must be denied, or both must be acknowledged.

(9.) Hereby it appears that there is abundant evidence in Scripture for the imputation of Christ's suffering for us; there is as much ground to confirm and establish us in the belief of it, as there is for the most, the greatest points of the Christian faith; for truths that depend upon mere revelation, have more ground in Scripture. Those testimonies which are usually alleged and insisted on as direct proof thereof, are but a very small part of its confirmation; they are but, as it were, some few drops, in comparison of a full stream of Scripture, wherewith it is enforced: all those multiplications of divine testimonies, which prove the satisfaction of Christ, against the Socinian, are full evidences of the imputation thereof. For the satisfaction of Christ being proved, none can or will deny the Lord's acceptance of it; and so the imputation of it being the same thing with that acceptance, will be thereby out of question. So that all those sorts of scripture, almost innumerable, which signified that he suffered in our stead, are just proofs that his sufferings are imputed to us; all those texts which declare, he died for us; was delivered for our offences; that the Lord laid our sins on him; that he bare our iniquities; was wounded for our transgressions; was made sin; made a curse for us; that he gave himself, his life, a ransom for us; that he redeemed; bought us with a price; obtained redemption; that he was a propitiation, made atonement or reconciliation; made his soul an offering; gave himself a sacrifice; offered himself without spot, &c. These, and all of the same import, more than can be soon or easily reckoned up, do declare that he suffered in our stead, and so are sufficient proofs that his sufferings are imputed; for it being proved that he suffered in our stead, that his sufferings are imputed, i. e., accepted for us, must and will be granted without other proof. For it cannot be denied that Christ's sufferings are imputed to us, if they be accepted for us, because they are both one. It cannot be denied that his sufferings are accepted as suffered in our stead, if they were suffered in our stead. For none will have the face to question the acceptance of Christ's sufferings as they were suffered.

Therefore it being proved that Christ suffered in our stead, all is proved that can be denied; that which evidences Christ to have suffered in our room makes all evident which needs any proof in this question.

Now a great part of the Bible makes it evident that he suffered in our stead, and no less than all this evidence there is for the imputation of his sufferings, since it is carried by the same evidence

beyond all reasonable denial, and needs no other testimonies to clear it.

(10.) Hereby the vanity of what is objected against this imputation of Christ's sufferings will be manifest; to instance in two or three which are counted considerable.

[1.] It is objected, that the Scripture doth nowhere express the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us; it is not said anywhere in Scripture, that the death or sufferings of Christ are imputed to us. Be it so, that these very words are not found in any place in Scripture, yet the thing we mean thereby is found in hundreds of places, wherever we find that Christ died or suffered for us. Wherever we find any expressions signifying that he suffered in our stead, which any but the Socinian can see in all parts of Scripture, there the acceptance, or which is all one, the imputing of his sufferings, is held forth. For his sufferings and the acceptance thereof do so clearly and necessarily involve one another, that one of them cannot be apprehended or believed without the other; we cannot believe that he suffered, without believing that his sufferings were accepted, and so without believing that they are imputed, since they are the same thing.

Let me only add this, it is dangerous reasoning from the want of some words to the want of the thing; such reasonings may overturn our faith, and leaves us no gospel. If we must not believe the imputation of Christ's sufferings, because those words are not in Scripture (I mean in any one place together, for that they are not in several is not pretended), we must not believe the satisfaction of Christ, nor the merits of Christ, no, nor the incarnation of Christ, because those words are not in Scripture.

[2.] It is objected, that there is no evidence of this in the Evangelists, that Christ nowhere delivered this doctrine concerning the imputation of his righteousness or satisfaction, neither in his sermons nor private discourses with his disciples; that since Christ is faithful in the discharge of his prophetical office, this point would never have been omitted, if it had been necessary to be believed.

Ans. The premises discover this to be a great mistake; for Christ so delivered this doctrine in his sermons and discourses, as to leave nothing therein questionable. There is abundant evidence in the evangelists of all that need any proof in this matter. For as it is stated, nothing can be questioned, but whether Christ suffered in our stead. If this be not denied, all that we assert is and must be granted. Now there is full evidence for this from Christ's own words, in all the evangelists; and so clear, that none can avoid it, but those who, with the Socinians, shut their eyes. Let me point at some few: Matthew 20:28, 'Gave his life a ransom.' The same words in the evangelist, Mark 10:48. And so Matthew 26:28, 'This is my blood,' &c. That also, Mark 14:24, and Luke 22:19, 'This is my body,' &c.; the 20th verse, 'blood shed for' &c. So in the other evangelists, John 1:29, 'the Lamb of God;' John 15:13, 'laid down life for friends;' John 10:11, 'life for sheep.'

Now if we will understand these phrases, either according to the common usage of Scripture, or the common sense of mankind as to such expressions, the meaning of them must be, that Christ died and suffered in our stead. And this being proved by Christ's own words, recorded by the evangelists, all is sufficiently thereby proved that we intend. Nothing more concerning the imputation of his sufferings need any proof, because there is nothing of it that is or can be denied.

[3.] It is objected, that if Christ's sufferings be imputed to us, then we must be reputed to have suffered what he suffered, and then we must be accounted to have satisfied justice ourselves, and

consequently to be our own saviours and redeemers.

Ans. From imputation in the sense fore-explained, it cannot with any reason be inferred that we suffered personally, but only that Christ suffered in our stead. And from thence it cannot be inferred that we ourselves made satisfaction, but only that Christ in our stead satisfied divine justice. And so in short the foundation of this fallacy being removed, the rest of the consequences fall.

Thus much for the imputation of Christ's death and sufferings, commonly called his passive righteousness; the truth whereof I hope is rendered so plain and firm, that it cannot (as I said) be denied by any, but such as will deny Christ to be a Saviour and Redeemer in the style and sense of Scripture.

I proceed to the imputation of his active obedience, or, as it is called, his active righteousness. This, I confess, seems not of so great importance as the former, nor the denial of it of so dangerous consequences; for there are some who are zealous assertors of Christ's satisfaction, and walk with a right foot in other truths of the gospel, who take occasion to dissent here, and to declare it publicly; yet, because I apprehend it to be a truth of some moment to the honour of Christ and comfort of believers, and this discovered in the gospel, and in the text particularly, and asserted by the community of protestant divines, from whom I would not be tempted to straggle, and wish others would not upon slender grounds, especially in our present circumstances, wherein papists make so great an advantage of stragglers, and make it the matter of no little triumph, when they see any part of the common protestant doctrine deserted by its professors. Therefore I shall endeavour to make this also evident in the same method as I did the former, and hope to do it so as to satisfy dissenters; such, I mean, as dissent for want of evidence, or out of some sense that this truth is or may be abused; not those who oppose it out of ill design, or affectation of singularity, for in such there may be something too hard for light otherwise convincing.

First, Christ performed perfect obedience for us. He was born of a woman, and made under the law, for the same purpose, and on the same account, as the apostle signifies, Galatians 4:4. He was born of a woman for us, and not for himself, and so he was made under the law, substituted* to it for us, and not for himself. The Socinians will not deny, but that his obedience was for us, that is, for our good, only they will not have it meritorious for us. As they will have no satisfaction in his sufferings, so no merit in his obedience. But herein they are opposed by all sorts of Christians, both protestants and papists. The papists, who arrogate a meritorious excellency to their own obedience, how defective soever, cannot deny it to the perfect obedience of Christ. As for protestants, to instance only in such whose concurrence may be less expected, those who will not have Christ to have performed obedience in our stead, yet maintain his obedience was meritorious for us, both his obedience to the moral law, and to the law of Moses, to the special law of mediation. He perfectly fulfilled all that was required of him in the covenant of redemption, and so deserved what is promised in that covenant, the sum of which we have, Isaiah 53:1-12. And he perfectly fulfilled all that was required of man in the covenant of works (as to the substance thereof, and the duties common to all), and so deserved for us what was promised in that covenant, viz., to live.

Thus his obedience was meritorious, jure pacti, in respect of that covenant, whose conditions he exactly performed; but this is not all, it is but merit in a large sense, such as some divines will have

Adam’s obedience capable of, if it continued perfect.

Christ’s obedience performed for us was meritorious not only thus, but also jure operis, in respect of the value of the performance, the divine nature deriving an infinite value upon what the human nature performed in our behalf; so that on this account it deserved, and was truly worth the life and blessedness procured by it for us; they do acknowledge that it is infinitely meritorious.

Yea, those of our divines who are most reserved in asserting what is due to the active obedience of Christ, do grant that his obedience, in respect of the condescension of it, was meritorious. Now there was active obedience in condescending; it was his Father’s will that he should condescend, he complied with his will, so that there was condescending in every act, and thus there was merit in every act of his obedience.

Indeed, I should be sorry to find any protestant divines denying the merit of Christ’s active obedience, for thereby his whole undertaking will be divested of its meritorious excellency. If there be no merit in his obedience, there will be none in his sufferings; for penal sufferings, as such, do not merit, as is confessed on all hands, they are not meritorious but as there is obedience in them. And therefore if his obedience be not meritorious, there will be no merit in his sufferings, and consequently none in his whole undertaking. And his satisfaction will fall with his merit, for that only is satisfactory which is meritorious; so that, when there is no merit, there is no satisfaction. This then we may take for granted, as being generally acknowledged, that Christ fulfilled the law, performed perfect obedience on our behalf, so that it was meritorious for us.

Secondly, Christ performed perfect obedience in our stead, not only for us, for our good, but vice nostrûm, in our place or stead.

This, as to what I intend, is of more consequence than the former, and will clear the whole business before us, if we can but clear it. If we can gain this one point, we shall go near to carry all that we desire; and, if I mistake not, it may be easily done. Indeed, there are divers who stick at this, those who acknowledge that Christ’s obedience was for us, and that it was meritorious for us, will scarce grant that it was performed in our stead; but if they take notice what we mean thereby, they will not, they cannot stick at it. A duty is said to be done in another’s stead, when that is performed for him which he was obliged to do himself. As when one pays a debt for another which he himself was bound to pay, it is truly said to be paid in his stead. Or when one is obliged to do some work, but is some way or other disabled for it, another undertaking to do it for him, doth it in his stead. So Christ fulfilling the law for us, which we were obliged to have done ourselves, he truly and properly did it in our stead. This seems clear, past all denial; no more is required that it be done in our stead, but that what we were bound to do ourselves be done for us. That it was done for us, all grant; and that we ourselves were obliged to do it, none can deny. Nor can it be denied that he performed it for us but for that end for which we should have performed it, that is, that we might have life; so that he did for us what we should have done, not accidentally, but out of design; for it is acknowledged that his end and design in performing perfect obedience was to merit life for us, that is, purchase for us a title to heaven.

All that I find objected against Christ’s obeying in our stead is only this: if he performed obedience in our stead, we shall be thereby exempted from obedience ourselves, as his sufferings in our stead did free us from sufferings. But this which is alleged to enforce the objection serves to

dissolve it. By Christ's suffering in our stead we are freed from suffering anything for that end for which he suffered, that is, for satisfying of divine justice; so by Christ's obeying in our stead we are freed from obedience, for that end for which he performed obedience in our place, that is, that we might have title to life. For these ends for which he suffered and obeyed, it is not required of us either to obey or to suffer, for he alone satisfied justice by the one, and he alone purchased title to life by the other. For other ends we suffer afflictions and death, not to satisfy divine justice; and so for other ends we are as much obliged to obedience as if he had not obeyed for us, but not to purchase a title to life, not for that end. In short, I cannot see how those who will have Christ's active obedience to be satisfactory or meritorious for us, can reasonably deny that it was performed in our stead, since they must grant all that is requisite thereto; for no more is necessary that it be done in our stead, but that what we are obliged to do be done for us. That it was done for us they assert; that we ourselves were obliged to do it, they cannot deny.

Thirdly, What Christ performed in observance of the law, is accepted in all points as he did it. What he performed was accepted; what he performed on our behalf is accepted in our behalf; what he performed in our stead is accepted as done in our stead. This is clear and unquestionable, no Christian will deny anything of it. Those that make Christ to be what he is, that believe he is the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well pleased, which was declared by a voice from heaven, Matthew 3:7, that the Father is transcendently pleased, fully satisfied both with Christ's undertaking and the accomplishment of it; that believe the divine dignity and excellency of his person, and the infinite virtue of his performance; that it was the Father's will and pleasure that Christ should do this, and do it exactly in all points as he did, Hebrews 10:7; that the will and design of Christ in this was one and the very same with the will and design of the Father, John 5:30 and John 4:34; that it was a covenant and agreement between them that this should be thus done, and thus done should be accepted; that it was the pleasure of the Lord which was in Christ's hands, and that he had promised it should prosper and succeed, and be effectually accepted, Isaiah 53:10-11;—those that believe these severals, or any of them, cannot in the least doubt but his obedience was accepted for those persons, and in that capacity in which it was performed; will not question but if it was performed on our behalf, and in our stead, it is so accepted. A Socinian, I had almost said a Mahomedan, will not deny the acceptance of what Christ performed, so far as they admit his performance. There needs no more proof in the case, if so much as is premised be needful of a thing past denial.

Thus far we have gone upon clear and undeniable grounds; there remains but one thing more, and that must pass as clear as the rest with all men of reason, and be as far from being denied, and that is the conclusion.

Fourthly, Hence it follows, that the active obedience of Christ is imputed to us. This cannot be gainsaid, the former being granted. If Christ performed such obedience on our behalf, and that be accepted for us, then it must be imputed to us; for to be imputed to us is nothing else but to be accepted for us, as performed on our behalf and in our stead. Those who cannot deny that he performed this obedience in our stead, and that it was accepted for us, must grant that it was imputed to us, unless they will be so unreasonable as when they admit the premises to deny the conclusion.

I mean nothing by imputation but what is included in that acceptance which themselves grant. When a surety's payment is accepted on behalf of the debtor, it is imputed to him. If Paul had paid what was owing to Philemon, or satisfied for the injuries done him by his servant Onesimus, Philemon's acceptance of that payment or satisfaction on behalf of Onesimus would have been the imputation of it to him; for imputation here is nothing else but the accepting of what another doth for us, instead of that we should have done ourselves. I shewed this before by instances in such things whereby the satisfaction of Christ is held forth in Scripture, and gave you a plain text, where imputing and accepting are terms of the same import. Nor need I give any further account than I have done why I express imputation by acceptance, a term not so usual on this subject, only this,

Imputation in general is an accounting of that which is not personally ours to belong to us as if it were ours, or the setting it on our account; and thus either that which is evil, or that which is good, may be accounted to belong to us. When that which is evil, and* done by us, is set on our account, the imputing of it is expressed by charging it on us; so our sins are said to be charged on Christ, imputed to him: Isaiah 53:1-12, 'The Lord laid on him,' &c; laid them to his charge, imputed them to him. And this was the ground why our sins were set on his account, laid to his charge; it was because he became our surety, and undertook to suffer in our stead the punishment due to sinners; the Lord accepting of this substitution, is said to be made sin for us, 2 Corinthians 5:21, to impute our sins to him. He accounted our sin to belong to him, though he was not guilty of any sin personally. As in the other case, when that which is good, and performed by another, is accounted to belong to us, the imputing of it is expressed by accepting of it for us; and so his obedience is accepted for us, that is, imputed to us. And the ground why it is set on our account is, because he performed it in our stead and on our behalf.

Now, they who cannot deny but Christ's obedience was accepted for us, must grant the thing we mean by imputation; and who can give any rational account why they should decline the word? Those who see the definition belongs to it, why should they deny it the name? Why should not he who is a rational creature be called and pass in their account for a man? And further, those who cannot but allow the grounds of this imputation, viz., Christ's performing in our stead, I cannot see how they can reject that which clearly and necessarily results from it. For anything I can perceive, this doctrine, as stated here, cannot be opposed without offering some violence to one's reason. If I much mistake not, neither protestants nor papists can deny the principle upon which I proceed; and so there is hopes, that if the principles were sedately and impartially considered, there might be no longer a controversy among Christians.

Fifthly, Let me clear what I have insisted on from an exception which it seems liable to; and there is but one that I can discern, after I have looked carefully every way to discover what weakness there may be in it, or what inconvenience may follow from it; and it is this, If imputing of Christ's righteousness to us be the same thing with accepting it for us, then it must be imputed as soon as it is accepted, and it was accepted as soon as it was performed. It will hence follow, that we are justified at the death of Christ, and so we shall be justified before we believe, yea, before we have a being; whereas the Scripture speaks of no justification but only of believers, and will have none to be justified but by faith, in no wise without or before faith. This is the charge which the principle I insist on is subject to in appearance; but it is only in appearance, and may soon and easily be discharged.

It is true and evident in Scripture, that none are actually justified before or without faith; and whatsoever is inconsistent with this doctrine of the gospel cannot be maintained. But that principle which I insist on doth not at all clash with this evident truth; and this will be apparent, if you take notice, that the acceptance of Christ's obedience, active or passive, may be considered in two different notions. It is accepted as from him, and it is accepted as for us; it was accepted as from Christ, as soon as it was performed, but it was not accepted for us till we believe.

It was accepted absolutely as performed by Christ as soon as it was finished, as being the full performance of all that any law, or covenant, or justice did require of him, and being fully worth all that he designed to obtain hereby; but it is not accepted with relation to particular persons, for application to them, and to instate them actually in the privileges and advantages of it, till the terms agreed on in the covenant of redemption be fulfilled; that is, till they believe. I will endeavour to make it clear by this comparison: as if one undertakes to pay the debt of another, upon terms required of him who contracted the debt, when the surety pays the full sum that is owing, it is accepted as to him, but it is not accepted as to the debtor; he hath not an acquittance, a discharge, till he performs the terms agreed on; so here Christ undertakes to pay what we owe to the law, but it is required that we believe on him; that is the terms agreed on. As soon as Christ had performed all that was due, it was accepted as to him, no more was required on his part; but it is not accepted as to us, so as we should be actually acquitted, and receive the benefit of it, till we believe, and so comply with the terms agreed on.

Now it is acceptance as to us that I call imputation, and then Christ's righteousness is not imputed but to those that believe; and so there can be no occasion to infer from hence, that any are or can be justified before or without faith.

Sixthly, Hereby it appears evidently that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, and not only the effects of it. There are many that say, the righteousness of Christ itself is not imputed to us, but only as to the effects of it. The Arminians acknowledge that the righteousness of Christ may be said to be imputed to us, because he thereby merited that our faith or obedience should be accepted for our justification, as if it were, though it be not, a perfect righteousness. The papists grant that Christ's righteousness may be said to be imputed to us, because thereby he purchased, as other benefits, so inherent holiness, which with them is our justifying righteousness. The Jesuits, Vasquez, Bellarmine, and others, expressly own the imputation of Christ's merits or righteousness in this sense. So others among us grant that Christ's righteousness may be said to be imputed to us in this sense, and no other; but because he thereby purchased pardon of sin, and title to life, in which, they say, consists that righteousness which justifies us, they will have us justified not by a righteousness which Christ performed for us, but by a righteousness which by his performance he purchased for us. Not by his own righteousness, but by that which is the effect of his own.

All these admit not of any imputation of Christ's righteousness in itself, but only in its effects and benefits. But it is plain, by what is premised, that the obedience of Christ itself is imputed; for to be imputed to us is nothing else but to be accepted for us, as performed in our stead. But the obedience of Christ was performed in our stead, and is accepted for us, therefore his obedience itself is imputed to us.

Indeed, either the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us or nothing; for the effects of it, viz., pardon of sin, and title to life, &c., are not imputed to us, because it cannot be said with any tolerable sense, that right to life, or pardon of sin, were performed in our stead, or accepted for us as so performed.

Besides, that which is imputed to us is not personally or subjectively ours; but the effects of Christ's righteousness, our faith, our inherent holiness, pardon of sin, title to life, are ours subjectively and personally; we are the subjects of them, as we are not of that which is only imputed to us; and to say these effects of it are only imputed to us, is to deny all imputation of it. But I have hopes that the premises being impartially and duly considered, as they should be by the lovers of truth, none that are unquestionably Christians (for whether the Socinians be so is a question), will scruple to grant that Christ's obedience is itself imputed, since it cannot be denied but that it was performed in our stead, and accepted for us, as it was performed in the sense explained; and no more but this is intended when we say Christ's righteousness is itself imputed to us.

Seventhly, It remains that I should answer some objections that are made against the imputation of Christ's obedience. I shall take notice of two or three that are counted most considerable.

Obj. 1. If Christ fulfilled the law for us as our surety, and so we be judged to have kept the law perfectly by him, then we must be accounted never to have sinned, and so Christ's death will be needless, and many other consequences must follow.

Ans. The main consequent here, upon which all the rest are founded, is the same. If we be judged to have perfectly kept the law by Christ as our surety, then we must be reputed not to have sinned. The inference is to be denied, because plainly the Lord may account us to have kept the law by our surety, he fulfilling it in our stead, and yet judge that we have transgressed it as to ourselves. He may judge that we are righteous on Christ's account, and yet that we are transgressors on our own accounts. As on the contrary, he made him sin for us, that is, imputed our sin to Christ, when he himself never transgressed the law. Their inference would hold, viz., that we had never sinned if the law had been fulfilled by us personally; but it holds not at all, since it is only fulfilled for us by another. All that can be inferred is only this, not that we have not sinned as to ourselves, but that we sinned not in our surety.

They may as reasonably conclude, that because the bankrupt hath discharged the bonds, and paid all by his surety, therefore he must be reputed not to have been in debt, as that we must be esteemed never to have broke the law ourselves, because Christ discharged what the law required of us in our stead.

Obj. 2. Christ's death and suffering freed us from all punishment, both pain and loss, and so from the loss of heaven, and consequently procured for us a title to heaven; and therefore there is no need of his active obedience, that we may have a title, and so no need of the performance or imputation of it for this end.

Ans. Those who argue thus, do hold that his active obedience was meritorious, did deserve heaven for us, and so procured a title to it, will not have any to conclude from hence, that his death and sufferings were needless for that purpose; what they will answer to it, will answer your own argument. If they say that both his obedience and sufferings procured our title to heaven, we may

say so too, both are needful; and so the objection falls, and whatever account be made of it appears to be frivolous.

Indeed, we should not separate what the Lord hath not disjoined; the obedience and sufferings of Christ are not disjoined in themselves, in their virtue, or in their effects. Not in themselves: he suffered in all his obedience, and obeyed in all his sufferings, Php 2:8. There was obedience in all his sufferings, because he suffered in compliance with his Father's will, and there were sufferings in all his obedience, because his acts of obedience were acts of humiliation and abasement, all performed by the Son of God in the form of a servant. Nor in their virtue: his obedience was both meritorious and satisfactory, and his sufferings were both satisfactory and meritorious. His obedience was not only meritorious, but also satisfactory; if not as obedience, yet as it was penal. And his sufferings were not only satisfactory, but also meritorious; if not as they were great, yet as they were obediential. Nor in their effects: his sufferings could not have satisfied justice without his perfect obedience.

Because sufferings simply considered without obedience find no acceptance with God, his perfect obedience could not have procured for us a title to life; for we have no title to life by obedience, unless freed from condemnation by his sufferings.

Obj. 3. If Christ fulfilled and obeyed the law in our stead, so that his obedience be imputed to us, then we are not ourselves to obey or keep the law; the necessity of personal holiness is hereby taken away; it will be no more needful for us than it is to suffer personally what Christ suffered in our stead.

Ans. I said enough before to satisfy this; we are neither bound to obey and fulfil the law on that account for which Christ fulfilled it in our stead, as we are not liable to suffer on that account for which Christ suffered in our stead, &c. But because this consequence is importunately forced on us, however we disclaim it, I know not why, unless some be resolved to render this truth odious, right or wrong, let me add, That we are for a necessity of obedience and personal holiness indispensably in the highest degree, and for all its acts of necessity which they pretend to, who charge us with making it unnecessary; nor is there anything in this doctrine to hinder us from holding it to be so necessary as to our judgment, or from shewing it in our daily practice.

There are but two sorts of necessity which can be ascribed to things of this nature; and we maintain both, and that in a full and fair consistence with this truth. There is a necessitas precepti, the necessity of it as a duty indispensably required; and necessitas medii, the necessity of it as the means or way to salvation, without which it cannot be attained.

1. It is necessary as a duty; obedience, holiness of heart and life, is required by the law of God; the law of nature requires it of all, no less of those for whom Christ's obedience was performed, and is actually accepted, than of others.

It is enjoined by a law, whose obligation arises from our very nature and being, and is founded in the relation between God and man, as he is governor of intelligent creatures, and they subject to him, so long as they are such creatures, and he their ruler and superior; that is, so long as they are men, and he is God, they cannot but owe him absolute obedience in all things. Nothing can free us from this obligation, unless God and man cease to be what they are in themselves, and what they are as thus related to one another. To deny perfect obedience to be due from man is to deny him

to be man, and to deny it to be due to God is to deny him to be God. As it is impossible that we should be freed from this obligation, so it cannot be imagined that Christ should either dissolve or weaken it.

He came not to dissolve the law, but to fulfil it; his undertaking and performance was so far from taking off the obligation to obedience, that it strengthens, and adds more powerful enforcements to it, even all the constraints of his great love, that wonderful love which he expressed in dying and suffering so much for us. They are more justly charged with this who would charge it upon others; those of them I mean who will have the law requiring perfect obedience to be abrogated, and the obligation of it dissolved.

2. It is necessary as a means: holiness of heart and life is necessary as the way that leads to life, as the way wherein we must walk if we would arrive at it, Ephesians 2:10. Acts of holiness are the end why we receive new life, and are made new creatures; and this is the way wherein all must walk that will be saved by grace. There is no attaining of happiness, or arriving at the enjoyment or sight of God without holiness, Hebrews 12:14; no happiness without seeing the Lord; no seeing the Lord without holiness, without following it. We make holiness with the Scripture necessary as the way to life; ay, but you make it, they say, not necessary to procure a title to life; that is true; the Scripture doth it not, and we dare not do it. To make it not needful for that end is only to make it not necessary to supplant Christ and invade his prerogative. It is he, and he alone, that procures for us a title to life; this is all the necessity we deny, viz., the necessity of it to dethrone Christ and pluck the crown from his head, to usurp his purchase, honour, and office.

We leave them to do this who will shew themselves traitors to Christ, pretending a necessity of obedience and subjection to him.

Eighthly, Others rely upon an actual righteousness, some acts of righteousness, some good works, some deeds of charity. This is the foundation upon which many build their hopes of pardon and salvation in the dark darkness of popery; and notwithstanding the light of the gospel, many yet discover not the sandiness of it; though the Lord in the gospel doth confound this Babel and the builders of it, yet how many think to secure themselves thereby in opposition to what the apostle professes, Titus 3:4-6.

Ninthly, Others rely upon an internal righteousness, such as they fancy in their good meanings, intention, inclination; though their conscience tells them they do little or nothing for God, yet since they have the confidence to think they mean well, have a good mind to do something, are of a willing mind, though they want the deed, and when they sin, find some kind of remorse and inward sorrow for it, for this they conclude God will pardon and save them.

All these several rooms, and many more, hath Satan contrived in men’s own righteousness, and persuades sinners that they may be secure therein, and rely safely thereon.

Whereas, indeed, whatever refuge men fancy in their own righteousness, it will prove a refuge of lies, it will deceive and betray those that fly thereto.

1. They are but imaginary sanctuaries, they are none of God’s appointing; there is nothing in them to hinder revenging justice from proceeding against the sinner in a way of wrath and vengeance.

These are altars of your own erecting, though you fly to the horns thereof; nothing hinders, but the wrath of God may seize you there and proceed to execution, these can afford you no more security than the horns of that altar did to Joab, 1 Kings 2:28. If you stay here, the Lord will say to justice, as Solomon did to Benaiah, ‘Fall upon him, and slay him there.’ The apostle, though he had more reason to think himself safe in his own righteousness than others can have, yet he durst not be found there; the ‘not having,’ &c. He flies to another refuge, runs to Christ, desires to be found in him; ay, there is none but Christ, none but Christ, no other refuge, no other sanctuary, no other altar that can secure a sinner from the wrath and justice of God, but Christ and his righteousness; though the hills and mountains should fall upon you and cover you, yet could they not hide you from the wrath of him.

How high soever your righteousness be in your own opinion, the flood of God’s indignation will overwhelm it, and your souls with it, if you get not into this ark. To neglect Christ and his righteousness, and to rely upon your own, is to forsake the fountain of living waters, that fountain which is open for sin and uncleanness, that which can only cleanse you from the guilt and pollution of sin, and to dig broken cisterns, such is your own righteousness; take it in what notion you will, it will hold no water, there is no virtue in it to cleanse you from the least evil; your souls will perish if you stay here, rely on it.

If you will not trust in the righteousness of Christ only, and stay yourselves upon him, but rely on your own righteousness, as the prophet saith: Isaiah 50:11, ‘You kindle a fire, and compass yourselves about with sparks: you walk in the light of your own fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled.’ But what will be the issue? ‘This shall,’ &c. To lie down in darkness, for all your own sparks, in that darkness where there is eternal sorrow, where there is weeping, and, &c.

2. This is to oppose the glorious design of God in the gospel. His design there is to advance the riches of his grace and mercy; and how doth he advance it, but by pardoning and saving those who find nothing in themselves why they should be pardoned and saved. If I should write all those places which declares this to be the Lord’s intention, I should quote a great part of the New Testament; let two places suffice, Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:8-9.

Now this being God’s design, and he thus promoting it, those that rely upon their own righteousness, upon anything in themselves, for pardon and salvation, they cross the design of God, the most glorious design that ever he promoted in the world, they are herein found fighters against God, and fighters against their own souls too; for hereby you put yourselves out of that way wherein the Lord will only save and justify sinners.

3. This frustrates the death of Christ, it speaks the sufferings and bloodshed of Christ to be in vain. So the apostle, Galatians 2:21. If a man by a personal observance of the law may have a righteousness, by which or for which he may be justified and saved, then Christ’s death was to no purpose, he might have saved his pains and labour, the expense of his blood was needless. For why? Christ lived and died, obeyed even unto the death, that guilty sinners might have a righteousness for which the Lord might pardon and save them. But if sinners could attain such a righteousness by their personal obedience, as would entitle them to pardon and life, then Christ’s undertaking is to no purpose. He obeyed and suffered to effect that which might as well have been effected without him. And therefore, in vain did he assume our nature, in vain took on him the form of a servant, in vain was he made under the law, in vain did he suffer the wrath of God, in vain did

he shed his blood; it was to as little purpose as water spilt upon the ground.

Why, man might by his personal obedience obtain that righteousness which was the end or issue of Christ's undertaking, and wherefore then was all this waste? This is the language of your self-confidence. Dependence on your own righteousness, it makes Christ's undertaking to be in vain, and to no purpose.

Thus you see how trusting to your own, &c., is highly dishonourable to God, exceeding injurious to Christ, and evidently destructive to your souls. And what more powerful motive to dissuade you from it? But because this is a secret evil, is not easily discerned, hath such sly streams, such retired conveyances, as those that are guilty of it do many times think themselves innocent, let us in some few particulars shew wherein by an observing eye it may be discovered; and shew such streams of it as those may in part be guilty of, who for the main make Christ their chief confidence.

They bewray some confidence in their own righteousness.

(1.) Who look not up to Christ for strength to do the work of righteousness; who go about the duties they are called to, as though they were sufficient of themselves to do them, and think they can pray, hear, meditate, restrain sin, do acts of justice and charity, in a spiritual manner, without a special assistance from Christ to perform them, without hearty actual application of themselves to Christ for that assistance; whose hearts mutter some such things as those proud confidents speak out, of whom the Lord complains, Jeremiah 2:31; who depend not on Christ as him who only works all their works, who only can enable them to work them; as on him without whom they can do nothing; who in the sense of their own weakness to that which is spiritual, cannot speak from their hearts what the apostle professes, 2 Corinthians 3:5. Where there is not this continual dependence on Christ, there is some self-dependence, some relying on righteousness, a sufficiency in yourselves.

(2.) Who are not sensible of the worthlessness of their own righteousness; who look not upon their best acts, inward or outward, as a menstruous cloth. Who are apt to think there is something in their services, especially if plausibly and affectionately done, that may commend them to God, without any other mediator. If they pray with enlargement, or relieve those that are in need cheerfully, hear the word so as to be affected with it, &c., and think they shall be accepted for the work so done, which makes the work done, or the manner of doing it, the ground why they hope for acceptance, the heart least minds Christ in duties (as they think) well performed. Here is a visible appearance of confidence in your own righteousness. When apt to think the spiritualness or affectionateness of any performance could make amends for the other defects of it, as though upon this account the Lord would not take notice of other sinful infirmities in them. Those that observe their hearts, &c. The church was of another mind, Isaiah 64:6. And the apostle, 1 Corinthians 4:4, Psalms 143:2.

(3.) Those that think they oblige God by an act or work of righteousness; imagine anything they do can make anything due to them from the hand of God; ex. gr., think because they have prayed so fervently, so affectionately, therefore God is bound to hear them; because they have acted in this or that business so sincerely, so conscientiously, therefore God is bound to reward them. This argues too much presumption upon, too much confidence in, their own righteousness.

It is true, the Lord rewards the sincere obedience of his people, but his rewards are of grace, not of debt, freely bestowed, not due to them upon the account of what they do, Romans 4:4.

It is true also, he hath promised, but this makes him not a debtor to us, but to his own faithfulness. (Of this more in the next.) Gratis promisit, gratis reddit.* Promissio divina in sacris Scripturis non sonat in aliquem obligationem, sed insinuat meram dispositionem liberalitatis divinæ. Luke 17:10, we have done no more than we owe, and what can be due to us for paying our debts? Deus sine dubio præstabit quod promisit propter veritatem, non propter obligationem; quod si non præstet, mendax est, non injurius.

(4.) Those that pacify their consciences with what they do in a way of righteousness, without looking for further ground of peace and pardon. To clear it by an instance, the man is afflicted in conscience for sin, he goes and mourns for it, and prays for pardon; if he hereupon speaks peace to himself, as though for thus doing he shall be pardoned, he relies on his own righteousness. It is not for anything we can do, but for what Christ hath done and suffered, that sin is forgiven.

It is true, the sincere acts of faith and repentance, they are signs of pardon, but they are not the ground or causes for which the Lord grants pardon; even faith and repentance itself, in respect of their sinful imperfections, stand in need of pardoning mercy.

Thus you see the several appearances of self-confidence. Take notice of them, bewail them, get further out of yourselves, and your own righteousness, with the apostle, that you may be found in Christ, ‘not having, &c.’

‘But that which is through the faith,’ &c. The way how the apostle desired to be found in Christ is expressed:

First, Negatively: ‘Not having,’ &c., of which formerly.

Secondly, Positively: ‘That which is through the faith,’ &c. Explained in the following words: ‘The righteousness which is of God by faith;’ and this is it we shall now speak of. But before we proceed to fix upon the observation which these words afford, it will be necessary to inquire, what righteousness this is which the apostle desired to have? Why it is set forth in such terms in this verse? For the first, Whose righteousness is it?

He knew he must have some righteousness, else the Lord would never justify or save him, Exodus 34:7, Proverbs 17:15.

He had renounced his own righteousness as insufficient for this end; he terms it ‘flesh,’ Php 3:3, a word that ordinarily sounds ill in Scripture language; at the best he could with no more security rely upon it for pardon and life, than the ‘arm of flesh,’ which the Scripture terms ‘a broken reed,’ rather pierces than supports, rather hurts than helps a guilty soul, if relied on for this end. He counts it ‘loss,’ Php 3:7. He made account that confidence in this would be the loss of his soul, of his salvation; he should come short of pardon and life if he trusted on his own righteousness; for he counts it ‘dung,’ ver. 8, of no more value for procuring of pardon, acceptance, salvation, than dung is for procuring, purchasing of what we count most valuable. Thus, and in such significant, such vilifying expressions doth he renounce his own righteousness.

What righteousness then would the apostle have?

Why, the righteousness of Christ; there is no other imaginable; so the words, ‘That righteousness which is through the faith of Christ,’ bear the same sense as if they ran thus: ‘That righteousness of Christ which is through faith.’ Many other scriptures confirm this: Jeremiah 23:6, ‘The Lord, whose righteousness is ours;’ 1 Corinthians 1:30, how is he made unto us righteousness, but because his righteousness is made over to us, is made ours? Romans 5:18, ‘the free gift of righteousness,’ &c., Romans 5:19.

Now the righteousness of Christ is sometimes by the apostle called ‘the righteousness of faith,’ Romans 9:30, Romans 10:6, Romans 4:13; and sometimes ‘the righteousness of God,’ Romans 10:3, Romans 1:17, Romans 3:21-22. And because both these expressions are used in this verse, we must give some account of them, that they may be rightly understood before we go further. The righteousness of Christ is called the righteousness of faith,

First, Not because faith is this righteousness, but because it is made ours by faith. The reason is not because faith is this righteousness, as some novelists fancy; we need go no further than the words to prove this. It was the righteousness of another, not his own, that the apostle desired to have, but his faith was his own, inherent in him, acted by him, Habakkuk 2:1-20; fide sua.

Again, That righteousness which is through faith is not faith itself, but this righteousness is through faith.

Secondly, But because through faith applying, apprehending, receiving it, it is accepted for, imputed to believers, and so becomes theirs.

It is called the righteousness of God, not because it is that righteousness which is in God, but because it is the righteousness which is from God. When it is said God’s righteousness, you must not understand by it that righteousness which is essentially in God, for that is not communicable, we cannot have it, it can no way be made ours: neither by inherence, for this being God’s essence, hereby the creature would become God; nor by imputation, for this cannot be performed for us; and what is imputed must be performed. But it is called the righteousness of God, because it is of his appointing and bestowing. It is his appointment, it is his gift, he appointed Christ to perform it for us, he accepts of his performance in our stead, and so imputes it to those that believe. Thus it is his gift of righteousness.

Luther, the great vindicator of Christ’s righteousness, and free justification by it, from Romish corruptions, before his conversion did very much stumble at this expression, ‘the righteousness of God.’ The phrase which is the spring-head of all gospel comforts, when rightly understood, did terrify and affright the soul, while the scales of popish blindness were upon his eyes. Such mistakes may befall others, and that may be a sufficient apology for a larger exposition, but let this suffice. This righteousness was appointed, is imputed, bestowed by God, and therefore called ‘the righteousness of God.’

It is received, applied, made ours by faith, and therefore called ‘the righteousness of faith.’

It is inherent in Christ, and was performed by him, and therefore called ‘the righteousness of Christ.’ And now a clear way is made to the observation which I intend to insist on, which I shall deliver, and in it the mind of the apostle, and the sweetest mystery of the gospel, in these words:

Obs. Those that know Christ will desire above all things to have the righteousness of Christ; they will count all things loss that they may gain Christ's righteousness; those that will be found in Christ must have his righteousness.

Hence three points must be opened:

1. What is this righteousness of Christ?

2. How we may have it, how it becomes ours?

3. What is the use, what are the advantages of it, what makes it so desirable? and then come to the application. This doctrine of Christ's righteousness made ours being the principal doctrine of the gospel, and that which Luther called articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiæ, the article which being maintained, the church of Christ stands; being overthrown, the church falls, Satan, the great enemy of the church and gospel, hath set himself by all means to oppose it; he hath raised assaults against it on all sides, some denying it, some obscuring it, some perverting it, some through woeful ignorance and carelessness neglecting it. It is assaulted both on the right hand and on the left, both by seeming friends and open enemies of the gospel.

Therefore it highly concerns all that profess the gospel, all that will walk with a right foot in this principal and most comfortable part thereof, to be fully established in this present truth. And to this end I shall be longer in opening the particulars premised than usual, and yet shall endeavour to make the doctrinal part as practical and useful as may be.

1. First question, What is the righteousness of Christ which we must have?

Ans. 1. It is not his righteousness as God, not his essential righteousness; for that cannot be made man's, but man thereby will be made God.

Ans. 2. It is not his habitual righteousness; that is, those habits of holiness and righteousness wherewith the soul, the human nature of Christ, was endued by the Holy Ghost, by whose secret operation he was conceived. The reason which sways me (though some be otherwise minded) is this, that righteousness of Christ which is made ours must be performed by Christ for us. But the habitual righteousness of Christ was not his performance for us, but the Holy Ghost's performance in him.

Ans. 3. But it is Christ's actual righteousness; that is, his actual fulfilling the law of God, his perfect obedience thereby. For righteousness is a conformity to the rule prescribed; this rule is the law of God. This law hath two parts, the precept prescribing duty, the penalty or threatening in case of disobedience.

Now Christ was conformable to the law in both respects, both in doing what was commanded, which is called active righteousness, and his suffering what was threatened for our disobedience, which is called passive righteousness, though less properly.

Hence the effects of a perfect righteousness are sometimes ascribed to his active obedience, Romans 5:19.

Sometimes to his blood and sufferings; 'By whom redemption,' &c., and Romans 3:25. Hence he is said to be 'the end of the law,' Romans 10:3.

So, then, the righteousness of Christ is his fulfilling the law, by doing and suffering what it required for us. Thus the righteousness which we should have, &c.

2. Second question, How come we to have this righteousness? How can that which is Christ's become ours? In what respects may it be so said, &c.? It concerns believers to be inquisitive about this, because herein depends their title to the richest treasure that ever the Lord vouchsafed to the sons of men.

Ans. 1. In respect of substitution, Christ performed this righteousness in their stead; he performed for believers what they should have performed themselves, and this is properly to do a thing as a substitute, in the stead of another. Christ hath done and suffered for them what they themselves should have done and suffered. He did succedere in eorum locum,—he did it in their place. When Christ is said to die for, to give himself for, &c., his people, the words ■π■ρ and ■ντ■ rendered for them, the other doth always denote such a substitution, or a doing in their place; qui utriusque partis vicem apud alterum agit. Hence those titles given to Christ in Scripture, which speak him a common person, a mediator, one who supplies the place of either part to other. Christ supplies the place of man to God, and the place of God to man, that he might reconcile one to the other.

Now what he doth in the place of sustaining the persons of believers, that passes as though they had done it, as though it was their own performance.

Now when the surety pays a debt instead of the debtor, it stands in law as though it was the debtor's payment. So here, Christ fulfilling the law instead of believers, stands as though they had fulfilled, as though the performance was theirs. Hence that expression Romans 8:4: that fulfilling it in our stead, the righteousness of the law is hereby fulfilled in them.

Ans. 2. In respect of acceptation, when what Christ performed for believers is accepted of God as performed for them. If it were not accepted for them, the performance of it in their stead would not be sufficient to make it effectually theirs, but God's acceptation concurring, the righteousness of Christ becomes as much a believer's as that which is done by another can be. Acceptation is that which the Scripture, and our divines, according to Scripture phrase, calls imputation.

There is indeed, through the heat of contention, a great dust raised about this word, so as an ordinary Christian can scarce clearly see what it is, though it be of great consequence to apprehend it clearly.

I shall give you an account of it in these few and plain words, obvious to the meanest capacity.

Then doth God impute the righteousness of Christ to a believer, when he accepts of what Christ performed for him, as though he had performed it (not as having performed, but as though he had), as we say; then the creditor imputes the payment of a debt to the debtor, when he accepts of what the surety paid for him, as though the debtor himself paid it.

Answerably Christ is called the Surety, Hebrews 7:22. Our sins are called debts, sinners are the debtors, the law is the creditor: then doth the Lord impute the righteousness or satisfaction of Christ to a sinner, when he accepts of what Christ performed for the sinner in a way of satisfaction, as though the sinner himself had performed it. And by the light of this familiar simile a mean capacity may see a clear answer to the greatest objections brought against Christ's righteousness imputed. To instance,

(1.) If Christ's righteousness be ours, imputed to us, then we are saviours, we are mediators, as having a Saviour's, a Mediator's righteousness; and so Bellarmine. But hence it appears he may as well argue the debtor is the surety, because his surety's payment is accepted for him.

(2.) If Christ's righteousness be ours, then we are as righteous as Christ; so Bellarmine.

Ans. He might as well argue, the bankrupt is as rich as his surety, because his surety pays his debts.

(3.) If Christ's fulfilling of the law be ours, then we need not fulfil it; no need of our repentance or obedience; so some among us.

Ans. It is true, we need not fulfil it for those ends for which Christ fulfilled it, viz., to satisfy justice, to purchase heaven, &c. But in other respects it doth no more follow that we should not endeavour after repentance and obedience, because of Christ's fulfilling the law for us, than it follows from the surety's paying, the debtor needs express no thankfulness to the surety, nor sorrow for unnecessary contracting that debt, or diligence in his calling for the future. You see here the unreasonableness of what can be objected against this doctrine. Indeed, taking imputation in the sense fore-expressed, and none that acknowledge Christ's satisfaction, can with any colour of reason deny the imputation of his righteousness. However, the Scripture is clear. Romans 4:6, This righteousness can be no other than the righteousness of Christ, as aforesaid. As Adam's first disobedience is ours, to make us sinners, so is Christ's obedience ours (if believers) to make us righteous; but his first disobedience was ours only by imputation, and no otherwise doth it make us sinners; so Christ's obedience is ours by imputation, 2 Corinthians 5:21. Christ's righteousness is ours, as our sin was his; but our sin was his only by imputation, ergo his righteousness is ours by imputation, or that which is all one, by acceptation. That is the second way.

Ans. 3. In respect of participation. The benefits and blessed advantages of it, as if it were ours; so we have it equivalent, as much benefit by it as though it were ours never so much. That leads me to the

3. Third query, Of what use is the righteousness of Christ? What are the advantages of it, that it should be so desirable? What gain we by it, that we should lose all for it? Why come out of all, to be found in it?

Ans. I shall be the larger in shewing the usefulness, the blessed advantages of this righteousness, that Christ and his righteousness may not be so much neglected, as he is too much, not only by the men of the world, but even by such as have interest in him. That you may learn to esteem, highly prize and value this righteousness of Christ, see it desirable above all things, and apprehend the necessity of it, not only at first conversion, but every moment of our lives; not only in respect of these great concernments of soul, pardon, acceptance, and salvation, wherein the need of it is obvious, but also in every occurrence, every enjoyment, every undertaking.

Now this usefulness, necessity, advantageousness of Christ's righteousness, will be evident in many respects. We will reduce them to ten heads.

First, In respect of sin. By the righteousness of Christ, believers have the pardon of sin, and power against it: pardon of sin, continuance of pardon, sense of pardon; pardon by this righteousness performed, continuance of it by this righteousness presented, sense of it by this righteousness

applied. A sinner, whose conscience the Lord hath in mercy touched, awakened (as for secure sinners, they little regard Christ or his righteousness, or pardon by it), will be apt to say, Can, will the Lord pardon my sins,—mine, that are so many, so grievous, by which the Lord hath been so highly provoked, so exceedingly dishonoured? Against so much light, such means, such mercies, sins of such a deep die, so heavily aggravated, that cry so loud for vengeance? Can the Lord, or will he, pardon such sins, such a sinner?

Why, no; till he hath received a ransom, till his law and his justice be satisfied, the truth and justice of God will not permit him to pardon any sin; but when through the righteousness of Christ his law and justice is satisfied, then it is no more for the Lord to pardon them (though all the sins of all the elect from the beginning of the world were thine), than it is for a creditor to cease his suit against a debtor, when his surety hath fully discharged the debt. Christ's righteousness is the price of pardon, that which purchased it: Ephesians 1:7, 'In whom we have redemption,' &c. Redemption is freedom procured by a price paid, remission of sins is freedom from guilt, and the price by which it was procured is the blood of Christ, his righteousness, his passive obedience; this is the fountain where alone guilty souls can be cleansed, though sins be red as scarlet, Isaiah 1:18; it is but 'wash and be clean,' Isaiah 1:16; 1 John 1:7, Revelation 2:5. The righteousness of Christ is expressed by his blood, because that is the cost.

Oh, but though there be pardon through the righteousness of Christ, yet I have sinned since pardon, since conversion. All the love of the Father, of the Son, hath not restrained me from sinning against the sweet expressions of pardoning love, sometimes by apparent evils, dishonouring Christ and my profession itself, continually provoking him by sinful infirmities. The Lord may justly revoke his pardon, he may be weary of forgiving one who multiplies provocations; he may say, I will spare, I will forgive no more. Will the Lord continue to pardon one who doth little else every moment but offend him?

What can support a soul under such sad reasonings? Why, only the righteousness of Christ; this being continually presented by Christ, is the occasion of continued pardon: 1 John 2:1, Hebrews 7:25, 'Always making intercession.' Now what is his intercession, but the presenting of his righteousness, his will and desire that all his people may be pardoned and saved by virtue of his righteousness? So Romans 8:33-34. Pardon is everlasting, because the virtue of his righteousness is everlasting, Daniel 9:24. Whenever sin appears, there appears to cover it Christ's righteousness.

Oh, but saith the awakened sinner, though the Lord be so gracious as to pardon, and Christ's righteousness effectual to procure it, yet I want the sense of it; my conscience is still wounding, accusing me, the sting of it continues with pain and anguish in my soul. It is this blood sprinkled, that is, applied to the conscience, that speaks better things, Hebrews 12:24, which speaks peace. By this the heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, Hebrews 10:22, that is, from a guilty, accusing, terrifying conscience.

Oh, but though the Lord hath pardoned me, and given my soul the comfortable sense thereof, yet what will this avail me if I should still continue to provoke and dishonour him, if my lusts still prevail against me? Though the guilt be removed, yet the power and dominion of sin still continues. And, 'O wretched man,' &c., Romans 7:24-25.

Why, there is no deliverance but by virtue of this righteousness, Romans 6:14. Under the grace of the gospel, the foundation of which grace is Christ's righteousness.

God had never let out any gracious expressions to the sons of men after sin, had it not been through the interposal of Christ's righteousness: 'In all, we are more than conquerors;' but how? 'through him;' and what we are through him we are through his righteousness.

Secondly, In respect of your persons. Look upon any person as destitute of Christ's righteousness, and he is loathsome, accursed, abhorred, and woefully enslaved, and no redress for any of those miseries but by Christ's righteousness: no such loathsome deformity as sin. Hence in Scripture every soul, by reason of its natural sinfulness and corruption, is as loathsome in the eye of God as a toad or serpent is in our eyes; and how shall such loathsomeness become lovely? How shall such odious creatures be rendered acceptable? Only in Christ, that is, by virtue of his righteousness, Ephesians 1:6-7.

How shall such an unclean, polluted soul, become clean? Only by washing in the fountain of Christ's righteousness, Revelation 7:14. Every person out of Christ is under the curse, all the curses written in the book of the law are bent against him, Galatians 3:1-29. Not only thy sin, but thy person is cursed: 'Cursed is every one.' Nothing in heaven or earth can remove this curse, but only Christ's righteousness, Galatians 3:13. How was he made a curse, but by being obedient, even to a cursed death.

God is an enemy to every person destitute of Christ's righteousness; he hates him, his wrath is kindled against him, his indignation burns like fire against such a sinner, and will seize on him, and consume him to eternity, if nothing interpose between this wrath and a guilty soul; and nothing can effectually interpose but the righteousness of Christ, nothing can quench this fire but his blood. This enmity between the Lord and a sinner is only abolished by Christ's righteousness, Ephesians 2:15-16. The Lord would never be reconciled to a sinner but by the mediation of this righteousness; no peace for sinners but by virtue of Christ's undertaking, Colossians 1:20-22.

Every person without this is a woeful slave to Satan, a slave to the vilest thing in the world, to his own lust; no redemption from this slavery but by a ransom; no ransom will be accepted but only Christ's righteousness, 1 Peter 1:18-19. No way to bring such vile persons into a capacity of being the sons of God, except the Son of God would become a servant, and be made under the law, to fulfil the righteousness of it; and so he did effect it, Galatians 4:4-5.

Thus you see the necessity and usefulness of Christ's righteousness as to our persons; without it no acceptance, no redemption, no reconciliation, no adoption.

Thirdly, In respect of graces and qualifications. The very being, the implanting of grace in the soul, is from the righteousness of Christ. No spark of holiness had ever been found, had ever been kindled in the heart of lost man, had it not been procured by this righteousness, Hebrews 10:5. Other sacrifices God would not, therefore Christ took a body, that he might become a sacrifice; this was the will of God, Hebrews 10:9, and this was Christ's will too: 'By which will,' Hebrews 10:10. So Hebrews 13:12, we owe the very being of sanctification to Christ's righteousness in his blood. We may conclude of the rest of what the apostle speaks of faith, 2 Peter 1:1. Why so precious, but because the price of it was the invaluable righteousness of Christ; and 'like precious,' because the same price for all, Ephesians 1:3. What we have in Christ we have by virtue of his righteousness.

Ay, but when the soul is sanctified, and the principle of spiritual life implanted in it, what need then of Christ's righteousness? Yes, even then in many respects. The gracious heart, sensible of its spiritual condition, apprehensive of the weakness and defects of grace received, will mourn under them, even as worldlings mourn under outward wants and afflictions. Now the spring-head of redress in this case is Christ's righteousness; we owe not only the being, but the means of grace to his righteousness, 2 Peter 1:1. Through God, by the mediation of Christ; as no otherwise doth God multiply any blessings on us. But to what purpose is grace, or the means of it, if it be not exercised? And no acceptation of it, but by the virtue of this righteousness; for the actings of grace depend upon the influence and operation of Christ's Spirit; and the sending forth of the Spirit was the purchase of Christ's righteousness.

Nay, further, though grace, holiness, be the most excellent accomplishment, yet it is of itself a frail thing, and too weak for the opposition it meets with, if it were not supported with an almighty power; and how is this procured but by the righteousness of Christ? How is this continued, but by his continual presenting of that righteousness in his intercession? This made the apostle confident of his perseverance, Romans 6:14-15, Romans 6:17.

Thus you see the usefulness of Christ's righteousness in respect of grace, for its being, increase, exercise, perseverance.

Fourthly, In respect of our obedience and services, and that many ways.

1. That we have any power or will to tender any service or obedience unto God, it is from Christ's righteousness; therefore you find obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus joined by the apostle, 1 Peter 1:2. What the apostle saith of prayer, Romans 8:26, is true of all other duties. We are so far from being able to perform any duty spiritually, that we do not so much as know how to do it; it is the Spirit that helps our infirmities, and the assistance of the Spirit is the effect of Christ's righteousness, Galatians 3:14.

2. There are many failings and infirmities, such as are sinful, and cannot appear in the pure eye of God, in our best services. In every act of obedience we offend in many respects, in manner, measure, intention, and other circumstances: 'In many things we offend all.' Now what shall expiate these offences? Why, nothing is effectual but Christ's righteousness. This seems to be typified in the method of the legal service; the daily sacrifice, which was a sacrifice of expiation (to take away guilt), was offered before any of their other oblations. In vain had the rest been offered had not the Lord provided a propitiatory sacrifice, which by virtue of Christ, the Lamb without spot, thereby typified, did expiate the guilt of their other offerings. There is enough in our best sacrifices to condemn us, if the blood of Christ doth not cleanse, if his righteousness do not expiate them.

3. As they cannot be expiated, so they cannot be accepted but through the righteousness of Christ; if our services be not mixed with the incense, they will never ascend to God as the savour of a sweet smell.

Nothing can be well pleasing unto him but through the mediation of Christ, Hebrews 13:20, 21. Though we do the will of God, and do it impartially in every good work, and do it sincerely, be perfect in doing it, yet will not this be well pleasing in his sight but through Christ, that is, by virtue of his mediation and righteousness.

4. Our services can have no success, no reward, but through and for the righteouness of Christ: 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, ‘End in the Lord;’ that is, in respect of the Lord Christ; ‘through whom,’ he saith, 1 Corinthians 15:57, ‘we have the victory.’ Were it not in respect of him and his righteousness, all our labour would be without success, without reward; though we abounded in the work of the Lord, yet would it be in vain, but that through Christ’s righteousness he vouchsafes both blessed success and gracious reward.

Fifthly, In respect of the covenant of grace. The Lord hath not, will not shew himself merciful and gracious to the sons of men, but in a way of covenant.

All the favours and special blessings he vouchsafes to his people, are conveyed this way. That therefore to which the covenant owes its being, is that to which we owe all the blessings of this life, and that which is to come; and this is the righteousness of Christ, for the foundation of, admission into, the confirmation and perpetuity of this covenant is from Christ’s righteousness.

1. It is the foundation of the covenant of grace. The Lord had never more made any covenant with fallen man, had it not been through the mediation of Christ’s righteousness. And here Christ is called ‘the mediator of the covenant,’ Hebrews 12:24. The Lord having in the first covenant promised life eternal to man and his posterity, upon condition of obedience, man breaking this covenant, and dealing unfaithfully with God, exposed himself and his to eternal death, which was the penalty thereof; and eternal death we all had suffered, nor could the Lord in justice admit of any new covenant, without satisfaction given for man’s first treachery and disobedience; till then the truth and justice of God would not suffer him to have anything to do with man in a way of mercy, such as the covenant offers.

Man thus lying under the curse and sentence of eternal death, as utterly unable to make satisfaction for the dishonour he had done God, in breaking covenant made with him upon such advantageous terms, oh, Christ here interposes and offers, if lost man might be again received into favour, and have terms of mercy and reconciliation offered in another covenant, he would undertake and satisfy offended justice for man’s disobedience and treachery, for the unfaithfulness of all that believe. That he may not die eternally (saith Christ), I am willing in him to die for him; and for his obedience, the condition of life eternal, since he can never perform it, I will perform it for him; let my life go for his, and my obedience satisfy for his disobedience, I engage myself to do and suffer what justice and the law requires of him, so that he may be admitted to mercy in a covenant of grace.

Hereupon the Lord, through the mediation of Christ and his righteousness, condescends to make a new covenant. The covenant of grace and salvation, it was made through this mediation of Christ. He is called often the Mediator of the covenant, Hebrews 8:6, and Hebrews 9:15. So that of the apostle may be taken, Galatians 3:20.

Man was before his sin as one with God, joined in league, in covenant with him, no need then of a mediator. But sin set them at variance, raised dissension between them, and they could never be reconciled but by the interposal of a mediator. Christ was this mediator, who by his righteousness satisfied the offended God, brought God and man again together, and joined them in a league and covenant. So that you see the righteousness of Christ is the foundation of the covenant of grace, Christ hereby is all in all in the new covenant. Hence he is called the covenant, Isaiah 42:6, and

49:8.

2. Admission into covenant is by virtue of Christ's righteousness, Isaiah 53:10. Christ in performing this righteousness was 'a man of sorrows,' and his sorrows were dolores parturientis, the sorrows of one in travail, Isaiah 53:11. The issue of his travail was the children of the covenant. We have the expression, Acts 3:25, 'children of promise,' Romans 8:9, Galatians 4:28.

Now, how comes it to pass that Christ had such a seed, such a numerous issue, that so many became children of the covenant? The prophet tells, 'When thou shalt make,' &c. If he had not made his soul an offering for sin, that is, performed this righteousness, he had never seen this seed, none of the sons of men had been admitted into covenant. If thou and I be in the covenant of grace, if we be impaled in the bonds of grace and saving mercy, and so separated from the lost world, who are 'strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God,' &c., Ephesians 2:12, it is for the righteousness of Christ, it is because he made his soul an offering for sin.

3. The confirmation of the covenant is from Christ's righteousness. By this it is ratified, made sure, therefore Christ is called the surety, Hebrews 7:22. He made it sure on both hands. On God's part, because by fulfilling righteousness he removes whatever might hinder the Lord from performing the gracious contents of the covenant to believers. On man's part, hereby procuring whatever the Lord requires on their part in this covenant of grace. And because it is confirmed by his righteousness, therefore it is called the covenant, the testament in his blood; for it was the custom to make, dedicate, confirm covenants by blood, the blood of sacrifices; see Genesis 15:1-21. Hereon, Hebrews 9:18, the covenant of grace under the first administration was dedicated with blood; the ceremony you may see in Exodus 24:6, Exodus 24:8. Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons, which was so reserved to be sprinkled upon the people. By this blood was signified the blood of Christ, by the virtue whereof the covenant of grace is established between God and his people; and the dividing of this blood (half being sprinkled upon the altar, which did represent God, and half upon the people), signified that the performance of the covenant by both parties, God's favour and grace to his people, and the people's faith and obedience to God, were to be ascribed to the blood, that is, to the righteousness of Christ.

Whence also it is called the testament, Διαθ■κη, Hebrews 7:8-9. A will or testament is not in force till the death of the testator; it is that which makes it firm and inviolable. So the apostle, Hebrews 9:16-17. It is the death of Christ (in which his righteousness was completed) which so confirms the covenant as no men nor devils can alter or disannul it, Galatians 3:15. How was it confirmed? He tells us, Galatians 3:17, 'of God in Christ,' and how in Christ but as other testaments are, by his death. This it is which makes it firm and sure, the righteousness of Christ. If thou hast sure covenant, strong consolation in this covenant, it comes from Christ's righteousness, who makes it strong and sure.

4. The perpetuity of the covenant. It is not only made firm and sure for some time, but for ever, by Christ's righteousness. Hence it is called 'the covenant of salt,' 2 Chronicles 13:5. The reason is this, there is a virtue in salt to preserve things from corruption; so that by a covenant of salt is meant a stable, firm, and incorruptible covenant, a covenant of an everlasting continuance. And why it is so, the apostle's expression shews, Hebrews 13:20, 'an everlasting covenant;' because the blood of Christ, his righteousness, is of everlasting virtue.

Here is the greatest comfort, the strong consolation of God's covenanted people, the covenant between them and God (the great charter of all their peace, hopes, present enjoyments, and future happiness) can never be broken, never violated; all the blessings of it are to continue, not only like Joseph's blessing, 'to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills,' Genesis 49:26, but while the Rock of ages, the Rock of eternity continues, Isaiah 54:10. And why? Isaiah 54:14, 'In righteousness shalt thou be established.' It is founded upon that righteousness which is far more durable than the mountains.

It is this that bears up the people of God in all fears and assaults from hell and the world; when they are afflicted and tossed with tempests, here is their anchor both firm and sure, when it enters within the veil, when it fastens on Christ and his righteousness: 'Though the earth be removed, and the mountains, &c., yet the covenant of peace shall not be removed.'

It is true, Satan is a mortal enemy to this union between God and man in a way of covenant. It torments that envious, malicious spirit, to see man, made far lower than himself at first, now advanced to this glorious privilege of being in league, when himself is cast out. He set himself to break the first covenant, and then prevailed, as the lost sons of men found by woeful experience. That covenant had no such sure foundation, it was quickly broken. And now he employs all his craft, all his stratagems to disannul the covenant of grace. And why don't the gates of hell prevail against it? Why, it is founded upon a rock, upon Christ, upon his righteousness.

Besides, such is the weakness, the sinfulness, the unfaithfulness, the unstedfastness of the best that are now in covenant with God, such are their provocations, as the Lord might justly break with them, even with them that are most observant of covenant terms.

Nay, if there were nothing to continue the best of us in covenant but the observance of what the Lord therein requires of us, there would certainly be a breach; the holy and wise God must needs cast us out. What is it then that keeps the Lord and his people together, notwithstanding his justice and holiness, notwithstanding their backsliding and unfaithfulness? Why, it is Christ's righteousness only, this is the foundation of it which can never be shaken; take away this, and the covenant of grace, with all the hopes and happiness of believers, fall to the ground. But this continuing, by virtue of it the Lord is satisfied, reconciled, when he is angry, and ready to break with us; by virtue of this our revolting hearts are again turned unto the Lord, and our treacherous declinings pardoned; otherwise there would be no peace, no league, no covenant between the Lord and such creatures, no, not the least moment.

Doth not this affect your hearts (ye that believe), that the Lord will be your God to everlasting? that those great blessings you have by virtue of the covenant, are everlasting blessings, everlasting forgiveness, Jeremiah 31:33; and everlasting joy, Isaiah 35:10; everlasting salvation, Isaiah 45:17; everlasting life, John 3:16; everlasting love, Job 31:3; and everlasting kindness, Isaiah 54:8.

Doth not your hearts leap within you, when the Lord helps you to think on this in secret? Why, then, look to the rock from whence these everlasting blessings are digged, whereon this everlasting covenant is founded: look to the righteonsness of Christ. And if this everlasting happiness be dear to you, oh let this endear Christ and his righteousness to you! For therefore are the covenant and its blessings eternal and everlasting, because Christ's redemption is eternal, Hebrews 9:12; because his righteousness is everlasting, Daniel 9:1-27.

Sixthly, In respect of the promises: 1. Through Christ's righteousness they are made. 2. By it believers have interest in them. 3. For it they are performed to them.

1. Upon account of Christ's righteousness were all the promises made. The Lord, after the violation of the first covenant, had never made one promise to the sons of men, had it not been through the mediation of Christ's righteousness; all these 'exceeding great and precious promises' (the riches, the treasures of the saints on earth), they were made upon this account, given through Christ, 2 Peter 1:2-4. To instance in two of the greatest promises, wherein the Scripture is express, the promise of spiritual life, the promise of the Spirit, and the promise of eternal life. For the first, Galatians 3:13-14, 'the promise of the Spirit'; that is, of all the graces and comforts, all the light, life, and strength, all the assistances and influences of the Spirit; this promise, which is the all of the believer in this world, is given and received through Christ. And how through him? The 13th verse shews, viz., by his being made a curse for us, his subjection to the law, and fulfilling the righteousness thereof.

Here is all that concerns spiritual life promised through Christ, and so it is all for eternal life, Hebrews 9:15. It is received by means of death, which being the consummation and completement of Christ's righteousness, is ordinarily put for the whole. Therefore if thou hast ever been refreshed with the sweetness of a gospel promise, as those that are in covenant have one time or other found sweeter refreshment in a promise than in any outward comforts, and while their souls are in good temper, do feed on them with great delight.

If thou hast ever tasted how gracious the Lord is in a gospel promise, then let Christ and his righteousness be dear unto thee; for this is the spring, the fountain from whence all these streams of comfort flow, which are the great refreshment of believers on this side heaven.

2. By Christ's righteousness believers have interest in the promises, both those that are absolute and conditional. Nothing promised becomes due, nor is the Lord engaged to perform any promise, but by the mediation of Christ's righteousness. This is evident in absolute promises, such as that of the first grace, Ezekiel 11:19-20, Ezekiel 36:25-26. Now before this promise be performed, who can challenge interest in it? There is no qualification expressed to a promise, to one more than another. To whom then is it due? Why, only to those who are given to Christ, and for whom he hath given himself; only to those for whom he hath satisfied the law and justice, by fulfilling the righteousness required of him. To such only are these promises due; and hereby it is apparent it is Christ's righteousness which makes them due.

It is clear also in conditional promises; and let it be the more carefully observed, because herein is an ordinary mistake, not only of vulgar Christians, but of those who have their senses exercised to discern between truth and error. It is taken for granted, that the mercy promised is due, and the Lord engaged to perform the promise, when the condition or qualification annexed to the promise is in sincerity performed. Ex. gr., Since God hath promised to save those that believe, and pardon those that repent, it is concluded, when a man believes, salvation is due to him; when he repents, the Lord is engaged to pardon him, without looking further than those conditions, to that without which no mercy promised can be due, nor any promise engaging. It is true, he that truly believes shall be saved, and he that truly repents shall be pardoned; but these mercies are not due merely upon our believing and repenting, but upon another account.

I clear it thus: there are many sinful defects and imperfections in the faith and repentance of the best, and there is a curse due to every sin, even to every wilful imperfection, Galatians 3:1-29. The wilful defects of these qualifications are under a threatening. Now, both a blessing and a curse cannot be at once due to the same person, the Lord cannot be under two contrary engagements, both of a promise and a threatening, to the same person, at the same time. Therefore, though a man repent and believe, yet the mercies promised cannot be due to him, unless the curse due to the sinful imperfections of his faith and repentance be removed, Now it is Christ's righteousness alone that removes the curse, that takes off the threatening; and therefore it is his righteousness (not our qualifications, faith, repentance, holiness, obedience, considered in themselves merely), that gives us right to the mercies promised; without this, even all those gracious qualifications would leave us under the curse; so far are they from making the promise due, or engaging the Lord to bestow it. This deserves further enlargement, but I leave it to your own thoughts; the clear apprehension of it would clearly discover to you the freeness of grace in the promises, the worthlessness of man's best righteousness, and exceedingly endear the righteousness of Christ to us. There is no interest, no right to the promise, but through Christ's righteousness.

3. It is for Christ's righteousness that any promise is performed: 2 Corinthians 1:20, 'In him,' in him as mediator, and so by virtue of his righteousness, 'are yea,' &c. Yea always; not sometimes yea and sometimes nay, but always yea: there is constancy; and amen: there is faithfulness. In him, through his mediation, the Lord will constantly and faithfully perform his promises to all believers.

Indeed, if a wicked man, a worldling, &c., comes and inquires at these oracles, if he ask, as she of Jehu, 'Is it peace?' shall I have peace with God? will he pardon me? will he save me? the answer to him will be negative, not yea but nay; no peace, no pardon, &c. And why so? Because he that lives in sin is out of Christ, hath no interest in his righteousness; 'but every one that nameth the name of Christ departs from iniquity,' 2 Timothy 2:19. But let a believer come, one who hath given up himself to Christ in a way of faith and gospel obedience; let him inquire, Shall I have peace, grace, life, glory? the answer will be then affirmative, the promise to him is yea; and it is so constantly, 'it is yea and amen,' the Lord will be faithful in performing promise. The righteousness of Christ engages the truth and faithfulness of God to the performance of every tittle: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, before,' &c.

If thou hast had experience of the accomplishment of promises, thou owest this to Christ's righteousness; if thou expectest the performance of any promise, thou must depend upon Christ and his righteousness for it. That the promises are given, that we have interest in them, that they are performed to us, all must be ascribed to Christ's righteousness.

Seventhly, In respect of the law, and that in reference to all its parts, the precept, the threatening, the promise.

1. In regard of the precept. This requires perfect obedience, and that universally, in all things, of all persons, at all times.

It requires perfection both inward and outward, both perfect holiness of heart and perfect acts of lives, and that both for parts and degrees; a perfect observance of every precept, and that in the highest degree. It is not a good intention or meaning, or a sincere resolution, nor a conscionable endeavour, nor a bewailing of imperfections and failings, that will satisfy the demands of God's

righteous law. That calls for absolute perfection, and that from all persons, both regenerate and unregenerate, both of those that are in the covenant of grace, and those that are under the covenant of works, and this always, from the moment of man's creation to eternity. This is essential to him while he is a reasonable creature, to be perfectly subject to God as creator; and being essential to him while he is a reasonable creature, he cannot be freed by any dispensation from his obligation to perfect obedience.

Well then, when the Lord comes to demand what is due to him, when he calls for such obedience as we owe him, alas! what can we answer him? He requires that every act of our hearts and lives should be perfectly holy; and there is not one act since we had a being that comes near what he requires, though at first we had power to do it. We owe him an hundred thousand talents, and we cannot bring him the value of one farthing upon the account of perfection. Where then shall the best of us appear? what shall we plead? or how shall we satisfy his righteous demands? Why, if Christ's perfect obedience be not accepted, if his righteousness doth not here satisfy for us, we are utterly cast, we are eternally lost, as will appear further in the second.

2. In regard of the threatening: 'In the day thou sinnest, thou shalt die.' Death is the wages of every sin, death temporal and eternal. The law entails the curse of God upon every sinner, and exposes him to the everlasting wrath of the almighty and eternal God, Galatians 3:10. Secure sinners, though under the heaviest part of this curse, weigh it no more than the wind. But one who is under the spirit of bondage, as all must be more or less before they receive the spirit of adoption, will hear those words as thunder and lightning from the presence of an incensed God; they will smite his soul with trembling and affrightment. Alas! is the curse and his eternal wrath due to every sin? Oh then, how woeful is my condition! What wrath is due to me, who am guilty of more sins than I have lived hours, moments in the world! Oh how shall my soul bear the burthen of that wrath that is heavier than the hills and mountains, and will sink me into the lower hell! Oh how shall I abide with devouring fire! how shall I dwell with everlasting burnings!

Why, there is no remedy, saith the word, nothing but curse, and wrath, and hell for thee, for any sinner, except the Lord's justice be satisfied; and there is nothing will satisfy him but a righteousness of infinite value, nothing but the righteousness of Christ. Get interest in this. Christ's righteousness must be fully imputed to thee, or else wrath and hell must be thy portion for ever. This method the Lord ordinarily uses to awaken secure sinners, to bring them unto Christ; therefore the law is called the schoolmaster, Galatians 3:24; and happy that apprehension of wrath that is thus effectual.

Here is the usefulness of Christ's righteousness. No sinner in the world ever was, or ever shall be, freed from the wrath of God and curse of the law, but by the virtue of this righteousness.

3. In regard of the promise of the law, 'Do this and live,' that is, perform perfect obedience, and thou shalt have eternal life. This perfect obedience was the way to life under the law, and if the gospel shew not another righteousness, it is the way still.

Now Christ, when he was interpreting the law, tells us, 'One jot or tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.' So that unless perfect obedience be fulfilled, it seems there is no life to be had under the gospel, Matthew 5:17. Nay, the apostle, when he is proving justification by faith only, which seems quite to repeal the law in this point, Romans 3:28, answers this very objection:

ver. 31, ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid,’ saith he; ‘yea, we establish the law.’ So that it seems the way to heaven by perfect obedience, which the law prescribed, is not contradicted by the gospel, but established. No eternal life now without perfect obedience. But you will say, Alas! if it be so, then no flesh shall be saved, for perfect obedience in man’s fallen estate is impossible. See here then the necessity of Christ’s righteousness. It is indeed impossible for man, though a believer, but not impossible for his surety, Christ; so the apostle tells us, Romans 8:3-4, ‘What the law could not do,’ &c. The law could not bring any to life, because of man’s inability to satisfy its demands. Christ was able to do it, and he did it, performed all that the law requires, ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh, that the righteousness of the law,’ ver. 4, that we, being unable to fulfil it ourselves, might have it fulfilled in us. So that the gospel doth not contradict the law, but favourably expounds it. Whereas it might be taken thus, Do this in person, and live, the gospel expounds it thus favourably, Do this (if not by thyself, yet) by thy Surety, and thou shalt live. So that the doctrine of the gospel is not contrary, but subservient to the law. The righteousness of Christ turns the law into gospel to a believer, and of a doctrine full of dread and terror, renders it the most acceptable message that ever was brought to the world. The law, which stands as the angel with a flaming sword, to bar all flesh out of paradise, when the righteousness of Christ is applied, it becomes an angel to carry every believer into Abraham’s bosom; Christ’s righteousness added, it loses its name, and we call it gospel. The way in both seems to be the same for substance; perfect obedience is requisite in both. They differ in the circumstances of the person performing this obedience. In the law it was to be personal, in the gospel his surety’s performance is sufficient.

However, if there be any terror, dread in the law, Christ’s righteousness removes it; if any grace, comfort in the gospel, Christ’s righteousness is the rise of it. Take away Christ’s righteousness, and the gospel can give no life; take it away, and the law speaks nothing but death; no life, no hope of life without it, either in law or gospel.

Eighthly, In respect of the ordinances. The enjoyment of them, the sanctifying of them, the presence of God in them, and the efficacy of them, are for and from the righteousness of Christ.

1. The enjoyment of ordinances: they are the gift of Christ, the purchase of his righteousness, 2 Peter 1:3. All things that pertain to godliness are given through the knowledge of Christ; that is, through faith in him, faith that lays hold on his righteousness, particularly the seals of the covenant; they are the signs of the New Testament in his blood; the ministry of the word, the great ordinance for the begetting and increasing of godliness. This is the purchase, the gift of Christ, Ephesians 4:8, Ephesians 4:11. These are the gifts of his triumph, and what he gave in his exaltation he purchased by his humiliation. The apostle ascribes both his office and ability to execute it unto Christ, Romans 1:5.

2. The sanctifying of the ordinances is from Christ’s righteousness, by virtue of his blood. So polluted are we by sin, and such is the defilement of sin within us, that everything we touch, or meddle with, or make use of (even the holy institutions of God not excepted) are unclean unto us, except the blood of Jesus makes them clean to us, and makes us clean in the use of them. To signify this, the Lord prescribed in the law that ‘almost all things should be purged by blood,’ Hebrews 9:22. ‘Both the book and the people, both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, were sprinkled with blood,’ Hebrews 9:19, Hebrews 9:21; sprinkled with blood, that they

might be purged, whereby was typified the virtue of Christ's blood to sanctify not only our persons, but also the ordinances we make use of. And therefore, when we go to the ordinances, we should be apprehensive of a necessity of Christ's righteousness in the use of them; look up to the blood of sprinkling for its sanctifying virtue to remove that defilement, whereby we pollute the ordinances, whereby they become unholy, unhallowed, unclean to us; else nothing is pure, nothing sanctified to our use.

3. The presence of God in the ordinances is only vouchsafed through his righteousness. The presence of God, which is the life and comfort of them, cannot be enjoyed but in and through Christ, the mediation of his righteousness. A sinner cannot draw near to God, nor will the Lord draw near to him, till he be found in Christ's righteousness. He is a consuming fire to a sinner out of Christ, he beholds him afar off, he cannot endure to come near him, not in the use of his own ordinances, where he draws nearest to his people, nor can a sinner draw near to God. Those that are out of Christ have no interest in his righteousness; they are far off when they seem to draw near unto God; there is no access to him but in the blood of Jesus, Ephesians 2:13. While without Christ, they were not only without God in the world, but without God in his ordinances; they were always strangers, God took no notice of them, but now in Christ Jesus, &c., through him only they have access, Ephesians 2:18-19. The Lord will converse with them as a man with his friend, his familiar, he will use them as children, as friends, they are then the household of God. But it is in Christ's mediation, of his righteousness; he saith to us, as Joseph to his brethren, Genesis 43:5, 'Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you;' no seeing God's face, except Benjamin, except Christ, the Son of his right hand, the Son of his love, be with us, and we in him. If ever thou hast seen the face of God in his ordinances, if he ever have vouchsafed himself, if ever he hath unveiled himself and caused his glory to pass before thee, if ever thou hast seen light in his countenance, that light which is better, sweeter than life, it must be ascribed to his righteousness; if ever thou expectest the comfortable, enhappying manifestations of God to thy soul, thou must depend on Christ and his righteousness for it.

4. The efficacy of the ordinances is from Christ's righteousness; all the spiritual use and strength, all the peace and comfort, all the growth and fruitfulness, all the light and heavenly refreshments, all the blessings and blessed advantages found in any or all the ordinances, flow from this fountain, that are effectual for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, &c. It is the gift of Christ, Ephesians 4:12-13. No blessing can be expected from God, except we come as Jacob, in the garment of our Elder Brother, except we be found in Christ's righteousness; if the Lord hath made the word effectual to turn thee from darkness to light, to convince, enlighten, comfort, quicken, strengthen, encourage thee, &c.; if he hath made thee joyful in the house of prayer, satisfied thy soul with marrow and fatness, made the Sabbath thy delight, a day of refreshment from his presence; if in the use of ordinances thy secure conscience hath been awakened, blind eyes opened, hard heart melted, cold affections inflamed, thy soul raised to a spiritual and heavenly temper.

Ninthly, In respect of outward enjoyments. By Christ's righteousness believers have a spiritual right to a comfortable use of spiritual advantages by, and sincere improvement of, these temporal enjoyments.

1. A spiritual right to them. Another kind of right than unbelievers have; those that are strangers to Christ may have a civil right to what they lawfully obtain and enjoy, and such a right as is grounded on the laws of men; and so far as the Lord approves of these laws, so far they have them by divine approbation, and he approves of laws tending to the good of mankind. A civil right they have; but no spiritual, evangelical right, for that is grounded upon the covenant of grace, which hath its being from Christ's righteousness.

Now believers, who have interest in the righteousness of Christ, have hereby a spiritual right to temporal blessings; they have them jure promissionis: 'Godliness hath the promise,' 1 Timothy 1:8; it hath the promise, and all the promises are in Christ yea. Jure donationis:2 Peter 1:3; 1 Timothy 6:17; 'Through the knowledge of Christ,' 1 Timothy 6:2. Jure emptionis: Christ hath purchased these for them, his righteousness was the price, 2 Corinthians 8:9; though it be true of spiritual riches, yet the context leads us here to include outward enjoyments; and the same warrant we have to understand Php 4:19.

Christ is the heir of all things, and none can come to this spiritual right but by being found in him; and those who are found in him hold their enjoyments in capite, their right is derived from their head, Christ. Hence, 1 Corinthians 3:22-23, 'If you be in Christ,' he yours (for the interest is mutual), then 'all is yours,' by the best, the noblest, the surest title under heaven.

Besides, wicked men, by their treason and rebellion against the Lord and his Christ, have forfeited all they enjoy, and deserve to be deprived of all temporal enjoyments; the Lord may most justly (though men cannot) take his forfeiture.

You will say, the best have forfeited all and deserve to enjoy nothing. It is true, but observe a vast difference herein, even believers have forfeited, but the ground of the forfeiture is removed; their sin is pardoned, and satisfaction made by the righteousness of Christ, which is a just stop to the seizure; so that it is a righteous thing with the Lord to continue them in the enjoyment of all things good for them. Why? They have forfeited, but Christ hath satisfied; they have lost all, but Christ's righteousness hath purchased all good things for them, Romans 8:32. How shall he not for him give us all things, who gave himself for us, that all things might be freely given us.

2. Comfortable enjoyment. Strangers to Christ have the use of these things, but cannot be properly said to have the enjoyment; they seem to be masters of them, but indeed they are servants to them; possessors as to outward use, but slaves as to their inward affections; they serve them while they seem to dispose of them; they do not dominari, but servire; have not the command of, but are enslaved. Nor is their use truly comfortable; they may fancy comfort, but their comfort is but a fancy; it flows from another fountain than can be digged in earth; true, solid comfort is the portion of those only who have the righteousness of Christ for their portion.

These may look upon every temporal enjoyment as a token of everlasting love, as a pledge and earnest of eternal glory; and both these, because they may receive them as the purchase of the blood (of the righteousness) of Christ; ay, here is the well-spring of comfort, the fountain of that comfort which is better than life. Oh what comfort is it to taste the sweetness of Christ's love in every enjoyment! when we can say, 'Christ loved me, and gave himself for me,' that I might enjoy these blessings! Oh how will this raise the value of every common mercy! Christ's righteousness which was performed, the highest expression of his love, purchased this for me!

Upon this account is that of the psalmist true, Psalms 37:15; he that hath but food and raiment, hath in this respect more than he that hath the Turkish empire, or the gold of the Indies; he hath more ground of comfort in his little than they in all.

Alas, what comfort can they take in any enjoyment if they are but apprehensive of their condition; the fatter their pastures are, the fatter will they be fed for slaughter.

What pleasure will a malefactor take in the things that continue his life till the day of execution?

He that is not in Christ is condemned already; for anything thou knowest, this day shall thy soul, thy life, be taken from thee; and then whose shall these things be? what comfort in them? No comfortable enjoyment of the chiefest outward comforts, without interest in Christ's righteousness.

3. Spiritual advantage. Strangers to Christ seldom use these things lawfully, much less spiritually; and where there is no spiritual use of them, there can be no spiritual advantage by them; if the Lord hath made a distinction between thee and others in the use and improving of these things that are common, so that thou canst reap spiritual advantage from temporal enjoyments, even this must be ascribed to Christ's righteousness.

If they are as cords to draw thy heart up to God and tie thee to him; if they endear Christ to thy soul, and engage thee more to love him; if these drops make thee thirst after the fountain, where there is more sweetness, in much more abundance; if they raise thy esteem of heavenly enjoyments as more valuable; if they provoke thy zeal for his honour, who gives thee experience of the riches of his bounty; if they strengthen thy faith to expect greater things from him, who will not let thee want the less; if they engage thee to lay them out, to improve them as a good steward, for the honour, for the service of him who entrusts thee with them; if they encourage thee to serve him with cheerfulness and gladness of heart in abundance of all good things; if the Lord bless them to thee so as thy soul prospers the more for this outward prosperity;—if thou gettest these or other spiritual advantages by them, without which they are not blessings, even this thou owest to Christ's righteousnsss; for when temporal enjoyments are thus spiritually improved, their property is altered; they are in effect spiritual blessings, and such wherewith we are only blessed in Christ, Ephesians 1:1-23.

4. Secure improvement. If you improve them so as to avoid the snares which Satan conveys into every outward comfort. Since sin entered into the world, all the things of the world are full of snares; whatever we use, whatever we see, nay, what we do but imagine, though we neither see nor enjoy it, is apt to ensnare us.

There are snares in our beds, snares on our tables, snares in company, snares in solitariness, snares in riches, credit, pleasures; everything apt to entangle us in sin, pride, security, licentiousness, neglect of God, our souls, eternity, &c.

Those that are strangers to Christ lie miserably entangled in these snares; so they live, die, perish. Hence these outward things prove not blessings but curses to them, as the Lord threatens, Malachi 2:2.

Now if any of you escape these snares, if you have been delivered out of them, if you do not perish in them, this must be ascribed to Christ's righteousness, Galatians 1:4. Why is it evil? because it is so full of sin, so full of snares. How are we delivered from it? by Christ's giving himself for our sins;

that is, by Christ's performing this righteousness for us. The Lamb's company, Revelation 14:1-20, are said to be redeemed from the earth, Revelation 14:3, that is, the defilements of the earth, Revelation 14:4; to redeem is to deliver by payment of a ransom; so are we delivered, and the ransom is the blood of the Lamb, the righteousness of Christ.

Tenthly, In respect of afflictions and death, upon divers accounts:

1. Those afflictions which befall believers are not punishments, it is to be ascribed to the righteousness of Christ. A sweet privilege, &c. That is a punishment which is inflicted for the satisfaction of justice. A father corrects his child, not to satisfy the law, which is the intent of a judge. Under this dreadful notion must those that are excluded from Christ's righteousness receive their sufferings, they are inflicted by a Judge for satisfaction of offended justice; and because they can never fully satisfy, they must ever suffer, sometimes here, always hereafter; but he that is found in Christ's righteousness, shall never be found under the stroke of punishment. Whatever he suffers there is no revenge in it, no intention thereby to seek satisfaction; the sting of affliction is gone, the bitterness of death is past, Christ's righteousness hath disarmed, hath sweetened, the sharpest sufferings; the Lord requires no satisfaction of them, and therefore he inflicts no punishment on them. And why? Because the righteousness of Christ hath fully satisfied offended justice on their behalf, and it is not agreeable to justice to demand satisfaction twice; and when the Surety hath fully satisfied for the offence, he will not require satisfaction also of the offender, Isaiah 53:5. The sufferings of believers are not to wound, but to heal them; when this Head hath been wounded even to satisfaction, he will not wound the members also. On that account their afflictions are the chastisements of a father, not the revenges of a judge; to reclaim the offender, not to satisfy for the offence. Christ's righteousness hath done that in abundance, nothing now can be laid to their charge; no ground of punishment, since all their sins have been punished in Christ, ver. 6. A believer may say upon another account as Christ did, John 18:11, It is but a cup, and it is a Father's cup; how bitter soever it seems, it was love that mingled it; and it is given me, it is a gift, a pledge of love, the gift of a friend, of a father; not the wounds of a judge, of an enemy. It is not a deadly potion, as given to a malefactor who is sentenced to death, and must die to satisfy law and justice. Christ took this cup out of my hand, and drank it up all in my stead, even the dregs of it; though the bitterness of punishment, of penal, cursed death, was in it, he left not a drop of this nature for me to drink. That which is reserved for me is a draught of physic, a medicinal potion; how bitter, how distasteful soever it seems, the design of it is health and life. From Christ's righteousness it is that the most afflicted condition of a believer is more happy, more desirable than the most prosperous estate of the ungodly; affliction is with the people of God to be chosen rather than the pleasures of sin. The bitterest things that befall Christ's people are more desirous* than the sweetest enjoyments of sinners, the very pleasures of sin. Oh the wonderful virtue of Christ's righteousness! were it not for this, every suffering would be a foretaste of hell, and the first-fruits of eternal sufferings, a spark of those everlastings burnings. The sufferings of finite unbelievers on earth, and the sufferings of the damned in hell, differ but in degrees; they agree in common nature of punishments, both for satisfaction of revenging justice. If thou beest not in the same condition, if thy sufferings are not the beginnings of hell on earth, it is because of Christ's righteousness.

2. Hence it is also that the sufferings of believers are mitigated; the Lord inflicts nothing but in that proportion which he knows is best for them, Isaiah 27:7-8.

If Christ's righteousness be thine, no reason to fear the bitterness of sufferings, he will not put one drop into thy cup, but what is necessary for thy soul's health; no other end but this, or what may be assigned to this. No reason to fear his hand will lie too heavy on thee; thou shalt not feel one stroke, one scourge more than what will tend to cure thee. No reason to fear the king of terrors, the dreadfulness of the last enemy; thou shalt not endure one pang more in thy last agony but what will tend to thy good. Why so?

It is hard to believe this, faith hath need of some ground to support it. Why, here is the reason: if the Lord should inflict more than what is good for thee, it would savour of revenge; but Christ's righteousness hath left no place for revenge, revenging justice did satisfy itself fully upon Christ, while he performed this righteousness; if this be thine, it hath left nothing for thee but mercy and love; this shall be the portion of thy cup, even when it seems most bitter; that deadly mixture and wrath he drank himself.

3. The blessed fruits of afflictions are from Christ's righteousness. If this be thine, thou shalt want nothing but what thy soul would be a loser if it did not want it, thou shalt suffer nothing but it would be far worse for thee if thou didst not suffer it.

Wonderful things are spoken in Scripture of the happy issue of sanctified afflictions. It is a riddle indeed to flesh and blood, such as Samson's to the Philistines: 'Out of the strong comes forth sweetness;' and honey is found in the carcass of devouring afflictions. You will never expound this but by consideration of the righteousness of Christ, of whom Samson was a type. It is this that sweetens the water of Marah; like Elisha's salt, so heals them as there remains no more death nor barrenness in them, 2 Kings 2:21. If thou hast had David's experience, and canst say—. And if by this thy iniquity hath been purged, thy heart estranged from the world, learned to love the appearance of Christ, if hereby thou art made partaker of his holiness, if they have brought forth in thee the peaceable fruits of righteousness, even these are the fruits of Christ's righteousness, who having answered all other ends of such sad dispensations by his own sufferings, hath left no other end why his people should suffer, but that their souls might thereby prosper; no other end but this, or what may be reduced to this. You may see other effects of suffering in others: Revelation 16:9, Revelation 16:11, 'Men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God: and they repented not to give him glory.' Who were these? They were the enemies of Christ; though they seemed to profess him, had no share in his righteousness, and so had no better issue of their sufferings.

4. Strength to bear afflictions. Support under sufferings is from Christ's righteousness: Php 4:13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me;' this doing includes both acting and suffering, as appears, Php 4:12. Strength to bear up in every condition is through Christ, and we have nothing through Christ but by virtue of his righteousness. That believers can suffer with patient submission, with contentedness, comfort, and courage, as becomes the dependents of Christ, it is from his righteousness. Not only strength to suffer, but to conquer in suffering, is from Christ, as Romans 8:37. 'In all these things,' see what they are, Romans 8:35. When they seemed to be killed, they conquered, and triumph when they are led as sheep to the slaughter, Romans 8:36. Hell, and death, the king of terrors, and the thrones of darkness, the devouring lion Satan, and the raging world of persecutors, are under the feet of believers, while they seem to be oppressed by them; they do more than conquer when they seem to be captives. And how comes

this to pass? He tells us: ‘Through him,’ &c.; and therefore through that which was the highest expression of his love, the fulfilling this righteousness for us, this is it which raises a believer even in his lowest condition above the height of a triumph, makes him more than conqueror.

Thus I have at large shewed you the usefulness of Christ’s righteousness upon a manifold account, so that you can scarce meet with or think of anything in this world or the other but may endear the righteousness of Christ to you, provoke you highly to esteem and demonstrate the necessity of it. The uses are,

First, Of confutation and reproof. If it be so, as hath been declared, here is a just reproof of those who profess they know Christ, yet neglect, oppose, deny his righteousness. It is strange that any who enjoy the gospel should be herein guilty, but this shews the woeful depravation of man’s mind since the fall. Such is the corruption of it, as rather than it will yield to the revealed truths (when they cross the interests of men, and their pre-engaged apprehensions), men will deprive themselves of the richest treasure which ever the Lord discovered to the world.

We have too many instances in this case:

1. Those who deny the end of this righteousness, deny the satisfaction of Christ, as doth Socinus and his wretched followers; hereby in effect denying the righteousness itself, and rendering it of no value; for if it be not satisfactory, it is not meritorious. Sure nothing can be procured of mercy until satisfaction be tendered to offended justice; and if neither merit nor satisfy for us, of what use is it? of what value? why should the apostle so highly esteem it as to suffer the loss? &c. Surely these men are not led by the same Spirit which guided the apostle, who so much disparage that which he so highly prized.

2. Who deny the sufficiency of it. So the papists, who, as though Christ was not sufficient to satisfy justice and procure eternal life, join their own fond merits and satisfaction with that of Christ’s righteousness; as though man’s own righteousness could be either satisfactory or meritorious, which are the prerogatives and sovereign virtues of Christ’s righteousness alone.

Far was the apostle from apprehending any such worth in his own righteousness (and sure he was not behind any of the papists), when he styles it flesh, and loss, and dung; when he disclaims it expressly, is afraid to be found in it, in any, save the righteousness of Christ.

3. To deny the participation of it, deny that it is imputed to us; as do the Arminians, with both the former. What this imputation is, I have shewed before; and thence it may appear how unreasonably they deny it to be imputed to believers, who grant it is accepted for them; since imputation is nothing but the acceptation of it declared and pronounced in the gospel.

I would fain know how that which is neither in us nor performed by us can be ours otherwise than by imputation. Either they must grant it is imputed, or deny that we can have it. If so, what made the apostle disclaim all, suffer the loss of all, that he might have that which is impossible he should have?

4. Those who deny the righteousness of Christ in effect, though they confess it in words, live so unacquainted with it as though they did not acknowledge it; are such strangers to the use and improvement of this righteousness, as if there were no such things.

Many there are who disclaim popery in words, and yet are too like papists in undervaluing the righteousness of Christ; many who rely not on it alone for pardon, acceptance, and life, who set up their posts by God's post, and join their own righteousness with the righteousness of Christ, if they leave any place at all for this. Their good meaning, honest dealing, religious duties, or works of charity, must share with Christ in the honour of procuring for them pardon and life. Here they rest. And this is too common, and the grounds of it seem to be pride and ignorance; the motive, corruptions* of our minds and hearts. Such pride there is in every man by nature, as he will have something of his own to commend him to God; he will not be beholden to another for his salvation. He is loath to think himself so vile as that he hath nothing, or can do nothing, that may help him to pardon and life. That self-denial, self-abhorrence which the gospel requires, is quite contrary to nature; and if there be nothing but nature in thee, thou wilt never attain them. This pride is it which keeps multitudes (who yet think themselves humble enough) out of that way of life which is revealed in Christ. This is it which is the great enemy of the honour of Christ in his righteousness, and so deeply is it rooted in man's nature, as nothing but an almighty power can pluck it up. Those weapons must be mighty through God that cast down these high imaginations.

Another ground is ignorance. Men are not well acquainted either with Christ or themselves, for if they know, yet do not effectually lay it to heart; they consider not what perfection and exactness the law of God doth indispensably require of them; they consider not into what misery every act of disobedience sinks their souls; they consider not how impossible it is, by anything they have or can do, to free themselves from this misery; they consider not that Christ's righteousness is only sufficient to do it. And thus they go on in the dark, neglecting Christ and their souls, till he sends his Spirit with power and evidence, to convince them of sin, of wrath due to sin, of misery by reason of wrath, of their absolute necessity of Christ to free them from this wrath. Till you have lively apprehensions of these things, Christ's righteousness will be of little value; and so it is with a great part of those who daily profess the gospel, which is a lamentation, and will be for a lamentation.

Secondly, The second direction is, Be apprehensive of its necessity. In other cases, we need no other motive to raise our desires of a thing, than the apprehension that it is absolutely necessary for us. The righteousness of Christ is of absolute necessity, and that in the weightiest concernments; it is absolutely necessary for thy life, for thy soul, for thy salvation. And that appears briefly in three particulars.

1. Nothing but this can answer the law of God. This requires perfect obedience of all that will have life, perfect righteousness under pain of death. Now no man in the world can perform such obedience, can produce such a righteousness. It is only to be found in the man Christ Jesus. Either thou must be found having this righteousness of Christ, or else there is no life for thee; else there is nothing but death for thee, and that as sure as God is true and unchangeable.

2. Nothing but this can satisfy the justice of God. It must be a righteousness of infinite value that satisfies justice, for sin is against an infinite majesty, and therefore the injury is infinite; the satisfaction must be answerable to the injury, and therefore it must be infinite. But no righteousness, no satisfaction is of infinite value, but only that of Christ. Therefore thou must be found having Christ's righteousness, or else justice will press thee to death, justice will cast thee into hell, justice will there exact the utmost farthing, justice will have satisfaction on either, from the

offender or his Surety. If thou hast not interest in Christ's satisfaction, to tender it unto justice, justice will require of thee in person; and because thou canst never fully satisfy, thou must ever suffer.

3. Nothing but this can justify a sinner. There can be no justification without a perfect righteousness, for where there is imperfection there is some guilt, and the righteousness of God will never justify a guilty person, Exodus 23:7, Proverbs 17:15.

Now where must this perfect justifying righteousness be had? Thou hast no such of thine own, Isaiah 64:1-12, nor can any men or angels afford it thee. The angels have no more than will justify themselves, and fallen man hath not so much, Job 15:14.

Either thou must have this righteousness of Christ, or else thou canst never be justified, and without justification no salvation: Romans 8:30, 'Whom he justifies, them also,' and them only, 'he glorifies.'

If, then, salvation be necessary for thee, then thou must count the righteousness of Christ necessary; and if that be to be desired above all things, which is absolutely necessary to salvation, then is Christ's righteousness to be desired above all things.

Thirdly, The third direction is, Labour to get an interest in it. We are apt to esteem those things which are our own, and this esteem will make us desirous to continue in possession of them. So that the way to raise our esteem and quicken our desire after this righteousness of Christ, is to get interest in it. Make this your business and your great design, to get an interest in it; and mind this as the one thing necessary, 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and this righteousness of him,' Matthew 6:1-34. 'Seek it first,' that is, primarily, before all, and principally, above all. It is a preposterous course to seek the things of the world first and most, and this after, with less care, less affections. This is the way to lose both, both heaven and earth, both the glorious things above, and the comforts of all enjoyments below. Make sure of this, and all is sure: 'All these shall be added.'

Now the way to obtain this righteousness we may find out in this phrase by which it is here expressed, 'The righteousness of God through faith.'

First, It is the righteousness of Christ; and therefore, if we would obtain it, we must renounce our own righteousness, for these two are opposed by the apostle in point of confidence. If we rely upon our own righteousness, we disclaim the righteousness of Christ; and if we rely on Christ's righteousness, we must disclaim our own. If these two could be joined, the apostle would not divide them; but he professes, 'he would be found in Christ, not having,' &c., 'that he might have that which is,' &c. Be convinced, then, of the insufficiency of your own righteousness. It cannot satisfy justice, it comes far short of what is required, it cannot make amends for the least sin, it cannot entitle you to heaven, it cannot justify you in the sight of God: 'By the deeds of the law,' &c., Galatians 2:16. Since it is thus insufficient, rely not on it for what it cannot perform, depend not on it for pardon, acceptation, or life; think not your praying and being sorry for sin, or works of charity, is that for which the Lord will pardon or save you, Titus 3:5. The like of justification, adoption, acceptance. Be convinced no righteousness that you have, no works of righteousness that you do, will make any satisfaction for sin, or procure you any title to glory.

If you place your confidence herein, you cut yourself off from Christ and his righteousness, Galatians 5:4. Your own must be renounced, or else there is no hope of the righteousness by faith; renounced, I say, not in respect of performance, but in respect of confidence. The works of righteousness must not be omitted, neglected; this was not the apostle's practice nor intention; he saw the necessity of these in himself, he urged them upon others; they are commendable, yea, necessary in their own place, for those ends, and in that way which the Lord requires; to testify your submission to God, to express your thankfulness for gospel mercies, to honour him, adorn your profession, evidence your sincerity; for this and such like ends there is an excellency in them, a necessity of them. But in respect of confidence you must renounce them; perform them you must, but when you have performed them, you must repose no more confidence in them than if you had performed nothing at all. 'When we have done all, say,' &c., Matthew 17:10. Your own righteousness is good in its own place, but when you rely on it you misplace it; and a good thing out of its own place may prove a dangerous evil. What more necessary and useful than fire when it is confined to the chimney? Put it in the thatch, you know it will prove a dangerous, destructive evil. So here, righteousness confided in is a good thing out of its place, and so it may prove pernicious; it will exclude you an interest in, and benefit by Christ's righteousness; and therefore, in point of confidence, you must renounce it, if ever you would partake of Christ's righteousness. The ground hereof is signally expressed by the church, Isaiah 64:6. Not righteousness, this or that act, but righteousnesses; not some, but all put together; let no rags, a rag will not cover you, it is not a garment; stretch it as you will it cannot so hide your nakedness but some of it will appear; your own righteousness cannot cover your guilt or pollution from the eye of God, it is a rag, there are many rents and holes in it, many defects and sinful imperfections in all, even the best. It is a rag, that which you have cause rather to be ashamed of than glory in, that which can neither secure you from extremity of heat or cold. It cannot secure you from the wrath and justice of God, it leaves you exposed thereto, it is not therefore to be trusted to.

Nay, filthy rags, not only defective, but polluted, and filthily polluted; if the Lord observe it there is no standing in his sight; it needs another covering to hide its filthiness from the pure eye of God, and nothing can so cover it but Christ's righteousness; it must be cast off in point of confidence before we can put on Christ. Those that will be found in it cannot be found in Christ: it is the Lord's method to strip a sinner of his own rags before he put on him the best robe, Zechariah 3:3-5. The apostle observed this method: 'Not having,' &c. The way to Christ's righteousness is renouncing your own. If you would rejoice in Christ Jesus, in the participation of his righteousness, you must have no confidence in the flesh.

Secondly, It is this righteousness which is of God. He ordained it, he appointed Christ to perform it; he accepted it performed, and imputes it, gives it believers; it is his gift, Romans 5:15-19; and therefore if you would have it, you must ask it of God. Go, then, take to you words, desire it of him in all humble importunity. To beg for this as for life, pray as Rachel for children, Genesis 30:1. Give me Christ, give me his righteousness, or else I die: I die spiritually, I die eternally; nothing less can satisfy revenging justice, every hour ready to destroy; can appease that curse that burns like fire against me; can deliver me from wrath to come; can preserve me from going down into the pit. Oh give me this, or else I die, I perish eternally! Heaven and earth cannot save me without it; my soul is lost, my condition is desperate; I am undone for ever, if the Lord deny me this. Oh, this calls for your strongest cries! Life or death, and that of soul and body, and that to eternity, depends on it.

Beg for it, as you would beg for life; say, nothing but this can procure me pardon of sin, can render myself or my services acceptable in his sight, can give me the least grounded hopes of heaven. If my hopes were only in this life, I am of all men most miserable. Why? Without Christ's righteousness I am without hope; this life cannot be comfortable, and there is no hopes at all of eternal life. If thou deniest this, I am of all men most miserable; I may be happy without worldly enjoyments, but all things in the world cannot make me happy without this. And therefore, however thou disposest of me in the world, whatsoever thou deniest me, Lord, deny me not this. I can be happy without riches and abundance, as was Job and Lazarus; happy though reviled and reproached, so was Christ, so was his disciples; happy and comfortable in prison, so was Paul and Silas. Oh, but I cannot be happy without this; all the riches, places, honours on earth, will leave me miserable, if I be left without this; so I should be rich and increased so with goods as to stand in need of nothing, yet if I want this, I shall be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. If I had all things else that heart can desire on earth, yet what would all this avail me without Christ's righteousness! What profit in riches, while I have them with the wrath of God! What comforts in honour, while I am a son of perdition, a child of wrath! What sweetness in pleasure, while I am hastening to everlasting torments! Oh, miserable comforts, miserable enjoyments are these, whilst Christ's righteousness is not my portion!

Lord, however thou dealest with me in outward things, whatsoever thou takest from me, whatsoever thou deniest me, oh, deny me not Christ, deny me not interest in his righteousness! Thus follow the Lord with strong cries, lie at the Lord's feet, cast thyself at this throne of grace, resolve to give the Lord no rest till he gives thee Christ and his righteousness.

Thirdly, It is a righteousness through faith. The righteousness by faith here, and elsewhere a righteousness of faith, and that because it is made ours by faith. It is the righteousness of God, because his gift; the righteousness of faith, because faith is, as it were, the hand by which we receive this gift. Hence believing and receiving are all one in Scripture, John 1:12. If you would have Christ's righteousness, you must have faith. But here mistake not that for faith which is not faith, an ordinary but dangerous mistake, when Satan persuades men they have Christ's righteousness, though they have it not, by persuading them they have justifying faith, when they have no such thing.

Think not you have faith because you believe the word of God, and what he there reveals is true. This is not justifying faith; this is no more than devils may have. Think not it is an easy thing to believe; those that think so know not what faith is. A man, whilst in the state of nature, can no more believe of himself, and receive Christ's righteousness, than a dead man can stretch out his hand to receive meat, for natural men are dead in trespasses and sins.

Those that say they have faith ever since they can remember, know not how they came by it, may suspect they never had it at all. It is an almighty power that works faith in a sinner, and there is a wonderful change wrought in the heart when faith is there planted, a change answerable to the greatness of that power that works, answerable [to] such a power as raised Christ from the dead, for such a power is requisite to work faith, Ephesians 1:19-20.

Observe the way, the method, which the Lord ordinarily uses in working that faith which receives this righteousness.

He convinces the soul of sin, sets his sins in order before him in its sinfulness, heinousness, aggravations, and desert; of the wrath of God due to him for sin, and his misery by reason hereof, so as his conscience is affected, his soul burthened therewith; he discovers Christ, his excellency, all-sufficiency, and the absolute necessity of him. He had heard of this before, but now sees them; his present apprehensions of these things differ as much from his former, as those of a quick-sighted man differs from his who is blind.

He hereupon quickens his desires after Christ, begets in him hungering and thirsting after his righteousness, such as a famished man after meat.

He persuades the heart to accept of Christ upon his own terms, makes it willing, resolute to abandon every known sin, how dear soever, and to walk in every way of holiness, how strict and precise soever he hath judged it formerly, how much soever it be hated or derided by the world. And in the deep sense of his misery and lost condition, by reason of sin and wrath, and the insufficiency of all things to deliver him, but Christ only, he inclines the soul to cast itself upon Christ for pardon and life, and to rest upon him as the only refuge from wrath and misery; the soul lays hold, rests upon Christ, even as a drowning man lays hold on a plank and stays himself thereupon from sinking; this is that faith which receives Christ's righteousness, and this you must believe if you would partake of it.

Fourthly, Be diligent to improve this righteousness of Christ. We little value or desire those things whose use and virtue we know not, and the virtue of a thing is not fully known till it be improved and made use of. Labour to improve the righteousness of Christ, and then the sweet and blessed advantages of it will be known effectually; for hereby you will know them experimentally, and an experimental knowledge hereof is the most effectual means to raise your apprehensions of it, and draw out your desires after it. For further directions I intended to shew how Christ's righteousness may be improved for the encouragement, increase, and exercise of every grace, of love and zeal, of humility and self-denial, of hatred of sin and contempt of the world, with many more. I intended also to shew how you may improve it in every duty, enjoyment, occurrence, and undertaking; but if you forget not what I have formerly delivered in many particulars concerning the usefulness and advantage of Christ's righteousness; if you conscientiously make use thereof accordingly, there will be no need of further directions herein; and lest I should seem to stay too long upon this subject, thither I must refer you.

I shall now only insist upon one particular, or rather two in one, but that which will be instead of many; and this is to shew you how we may improve it in praying and believing, for the strengthening of faith and your encouragement to pray in faith.

These two are as it were the life, breath, of a quickened soul; that which it lives upon is Christ and his righteousness, Galatians 2:20; he that can pray and believe needs want nothing, this will fetch him rich supplies in abundance; the treasury is Christ's righteousness.

He needs fear nothing, this will scatter all occasions of fear, Christ's righteousness will be his security.

He is a Christian indeed that is much in prayer and strong in faith; these two must be joined, for faith is best experienced in prayer, and prayer is most effectual when in faith, James 1:5-6.

These are the two great attractive faculties of the new creature, they draw into the soul all that virtue of Christ's righteousness which is communicable; these are the ways, the means to make the utmost improvement of the righteousness of Jesus. And which is here most considerable, nothing affords more encouragement to improve this righteousness by faith and prayer than this righteousness itself. As the best way to improve this righteousness is by praying and believing, so the greatest encouragement to faith, to prayer, is from this righteousness; this strengthens the hands of faith, this suggests arguments to make the soul earnest, affected, importunate in prayer; this answers all objections, removes all discouragements that might dishearten the soul from praying, or hinder the acting of faith in prayer.

Let me shew this more particularly, that you may see the way herein to improve Christ's righteousness.

(1.) A humble soul, sensible of his spiritual condition, and the weakness of his best services, will be apt to discourage himself with such thoughts as these. Alas! my prayers are weak, if I could pray with such fervency, such enlargements, such affections, such importunity as other servants of God have done formerly, and some I see are wont to do now, then I might be encouraged to pray, and to expect an answer of my prayers; but my prayers are so weak, faint, imperfect, as there is little hope they should be regarded, little hope they should prevail.

Ay, but consider, though thy prayers be weak, yet the plea of Christ's righteousness is strong, this hath a voice which the Lord hears, though we take no notice of it; nunquam tacet, &c.

It speaks better things than the blood of Abel, Hebrews 12:24. The weakest prayer, enforced with the righteousness of Christ, is more effectual, more prevailing than that which seems strongest, if Christ's righteousness be neglected; if Christ should now, as in the days of his flesh, send up for thee strong cries, with tears and sighs, thou wouldst not doubt, whatever thy weakness be, but he would prevail for thee; why, the righteousness of Christ presented to the Lord now in heaven, doth as effectually speak for thee (if a believer), as if he did now pray for thee with sighs and tears. There is a more powerful plea in the blood of Christ than there could be in his tears: and that is as fresh in the Lord's remembrance, as if it were now, as if it were every hour shed for thee; it ever pleads, and therefore he is said for ever to make intercession; and canst thou doubt that this plea ever joined with, always enforcing thy prayers, will not prevail? Oh what encouragement is here to faith in prayer from Christ's righteousness!

(2.) Secondly, Oh but my former sins are great, my provocations many, and when I come to pray, nay, would believe the Lord will hearken, then I fear my sins may come into remembrance, may meet my prayers at the throne of grace, and this dashes my hopes, sinks me into distrust and doubtings. My sins cry louder than my prayers, and what hope then my prayers should prevail? The Lord's ear is not straitened. Methinks I see my sins spreading themselves as a thick cloud about the throne of grace, so as my prayers cannot come near.

Ay, but to remove this, consider there is a virtue in the righteousness of Christ to scatter thy sins as a thick cloud. Let faith carry with it the righteousness of Christ to the throne of grace, and thou wilt see thy sins vanish as a mist before the sun, and this is applied by and to a believer, and presented by Christ in his behalf, his sins shall never more be had in remembrance; nay, he will cast them into the bottom of the sea. So that thou mayest say of them as it is said of Pharaoh and

the Egyptians, ‘Those that ye now see, ye shall see them no more.’ Christ’s righteousness will be continually presented on purpose to nonsuit sin and Satan. When this is applied, though sin appear in judgment and plead against the believer, yet it will certainly be cast, Romans 8:3. Christ, by virtue of his righteousness, is the most powerful advocate, he always hath the judge’s ears and heart, and that cause will always be found righteous that Christ’s righteousness is engaged in; it is impossible it should miscarry. To bring this with faith to the throne of grace, and then whatever sins yours have been, you may plead there with confidence to prevail; hence triumphant challenge of the apostle, who otherwise was as sensible of his sins as any, Romans 8:33; your sins may outcry your prayers, but they cannot outcry the blood, the righteousness of Christ.

(3.) Thirdly, Oh but I am unworthy, how can I expect the Lord should take notice of such a worm? there seems no more reason the great God should regard my prayers than that he should regard the crawling of a worm, or take notice of the regardless motion of dust or ashes; I am less, I am worse than these, sin hath made me more unworthy.

Ay, but though thou beest unworthy, yet Christ is worthy; though there be no worth in thee, yet there is worth enough in Christ’s righteousness; though thou and thy services be found too light, lighter than vanity, yet put Christ’s righteousness in the balance, together with thee and thy prayers, and then they will be current, acceptable, without question.

If thou be found in Christ, then look not on what thou art simply in thyself, but what thou art in him; now he hath made thy lust his, and his righteousness thine, no matter then for thy unworthiness since he is worthy; say, Most unworthy am I, O Lord, but worthy is Christ; and so the angels and saints cry with a loud voice, Revelation 5:12.

Now, as he is worthy to receive all this for himself, so he is worthy to obtain, to receive all good things for his people; if thou beest found in him, having his righteousness, his merits, his worthiness will be as available for thee though thou beest most unworthy; thou shalt as easily obtain what thou prayest for as though thou wast worthy to receive it; though thou art the vilest of slaves by reason of sin, yet believing this, by this righteousness art made a king and a priest to offer up spiritual sacrifices, &c.

(4.) Fourthly, But I fear the Lord is not willing to grant what I pray for. Ordinarily there seems to be no doubt of the Lord’s power, but that which most weakens faith and discourages the heart in praying is fear, or doubting that the Lord is not willing. Here is the greatest discouragement a believer meets with, Galatians 4:5. But the righteousness of Christ removes this, hence thou mayest persuade thyself the Lord is most willing, most ready to grant what thou desirest; for if thou be found in Christ, and if thou ask what is good, what is necessary for thee, the righteousness of Christ hath purchased this for thee; now, will the Lord be unwilling to put thee in possession of what Christ hath purchased for thee? You cannot imagine him unwilling here, except you will think him unjust, unrighteous.

Besides, the relation wherein Christ’s righteousness instates thee may persuade this; hereby thou standest in that relation to God as a child to his father, Galatians 3:26. Now, will a father so gracious, so indulgent, be unwilling to afford his child what is good, what is necessary for him, when he asks it affectionately, begs it with all importunity? It is Christ’s own argument, Matthew 7:9-11.

(5.) Fifthly, Oh, but it is a great request I put up; if it were a small matter, I should with more confidence look to have it granted, but in this case, here is more ground for doubting. For answer, no more ground at all; the righteousness of Christ satisfies this on a double account.

[1.] If the Lord hath given thee Christ and his righteousness, he hath given thee the greatest mercy that can be given or received; if he hath given thee the greater, mayest thou not with confidence ask the less? He that thought not Christ himself too much for thee, will he stand with thee for a small matter? The greatest is small compared with Christ, Romans 8:1-39.

[2.] Is this great thing of more value than Christ's righteousness? No such instance can be given. Why, then, it was bought for thee by Christ's righteousness, this was the price of it; and if it be purchased for thee, can the greatness of it hinder the Lord from giving it to thee?

(6.) Sixthly, Oh, but there are many provocations even in my prayers, much deadness of heart, much unaffectedness, much indifferency and lukewarmness, much self-seeking, and many distractions, much backwardness to it, dulness in it, weariness of it, &c., and many other provoking evils. Those that observe the temper of their hearts in spiritual duties, and take an account of their ways and walking with God, will find cause to bewail the sinfulness of their best prayers; and Satan, he takes an occasion hereby to assault their faith, and discourage from expecting any gracious returns to such offensive petitions. How can this offering (will he suggest) ascend up as a savour of a sweet smell unto heaven, when there is so much corruption in them? But for answer: If these sinful imperfections be bewailed, and the blood of Christ applied by faith for pardon, then they are pardoned; and what sins are pardoned can no more hinder the answer of prayer (if good) than if they were not committed. The prayers of believers appear not in the sight of God simply as they come from them, they are presented by Christ; their petitions are, as it were, offered by his hand, and his righteousness presented with them; if the sin appears, the satisfaction is at hand too, and how then can the appearance of sin be prejudicial? See this comfortably set fort in Romans 8:3-4.

It was the priest's office to offer incense, and this angel that here offers is the High Priest of heaven, the Lord Jesus; he offers the prayers of the saints, they ascend before God out of the angel's hand, and needs must they be accepted from his hand, whatever they be in themselves.

Nay, further, he offers them with much incense, or, as it is in the Greek, he adds much incense to them; that is, he adds his meritorious and satisfactory righteousness, for incense was a type of his mediation. The prayers that ascend up with this incense must needs be the savour of a sweet smell, must needs find gracious acceptance and sweet returns.

Thus you see how this righteousness may be improved to strengthen faith, and remove all discouragements in praying, to answer all objections that may occasion any doubt of gracious returns. And by this one instance you may judge how advantageous it would be to the rest. Oh that the comfort and precious advantages which arise from the improvement of this righteousness might be effectual to raise your thoughts of it, and quicken your desires after it, so as ye might be willing to suffer the loss of all things, &c.

MEN BY NATURE UNWILLING TO COME TO CHRIST Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.—John 5:40. The Lord Jesus having miraculously cured an impotent man on the Sabbath day, the unbelieving Jews are so far from believing in him, that they blaspheme, persecute, and

reproach him as a profaner of the Sabbath, John 5:16. Christ hereupon makes an apology for himself, and proves by unanswerable arguments, that his act was no violation of the Sabbath, to John 5:31. But the Jews, full of malice and unbelief, were apt to object, that the weight of his own arguments lay upon his own testimony, and a man's testimony of himself in his own cause is not counted valid or credible, John 5:31. But though this objection have only place amongst men (whose testimony of themselves is not satisfactory and convincing), and cannot be made use of to weaken the testimony of Christ, who was more than man, no less God than man, yet he so far yields as to waive his own testimony; and for confirmation of what he had delivered, produces variety of testimonies against which there could be no just, nay, no plausible exception; and he alleges,

1. The testimony of John, John 5:33, which you see, John 1:7, and this he makes use of, not out of any necessity in respect of himself (who being God, and truth itself, needed not the witness of man to testify of him), but out of respect to them, with whom John's testimony was more valid than his own of himself; for John was a burning and shining light, he came both with evidence and power, such as was not altogether ineffectual upon these hardened Jews, John 5:35.

2. The testimony of miracles, this was a real witness. If they could not hear, they might see a testimony, the miraculous power of Christ testifying the truth of his doctrine, and so confirming that he was God, and sent of God. This was the testimony which the Jews required as that wherein they would rest satisfied: 'What sign shewest thou?' John 5:36.

3. The testimony of the Father: John 5:37, 'The Father which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me;' not only by wonders on earth, but by a voice from heaven, Matthew 3:16-17. But if ye will not acknowledge that ye have heard his voice, no more than ye have seen his shape, yet there is a further witness that ye cannot, dare not deny; and that is,

4. The testimony of the Scripture, John 5:39. Moses and the prophets, even all that have been from the beginning of the world, they testify that I am the Messias. Now as to the rest, so to this he subjoins an application, and that by way of complaint, John 5:40. Though the Scriptures testify that life is to be had only in the Messias, and though they testify that I am the Messias, in whom only life is to be fouud, 'yet ye will not come to me,' &c.

Wherein three things are observable: 1. Men's misery out of Christ; they are off from him, dead without him, unwilling to come to him. 2. Men's happiness in Christ; they that find him find life, the sentence of life as to justification, the principles of life spiritual as to sanctification, the comforts of life temporal as to their present enjoyments, the joys of life eternal as to their future condition. 3. Christ's resentment of man's condition; he complains of it, it grieves, it troubles him; he vents his grief to a sad complaint, 'Ye will not come to me.'

Each part affords some fruitful observations, and from man's misery we may collect two very useful doctrines:

I. Doct. Men by nature are far from Christ.

II. Doct. Men without Christ are unwilling to come unto him.

I. For the first, men by nature are far from Christ. This is clearly implied. What need of coming to him, but that they are at a distance from him? All, every man by nature is so, the Lord speaks this

of the Jews, and the apostle witnesses the same of the Gentiles: Acts 2:39, ‘The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off;’ the like, Ephesians 2:13, Ephesians 2:17. The Jews were nearer in respect of some privileges and enjoyments, but far off in respect of spiritual saving improvement of them. The prodigal is an emblem, a lively representation of both, both Jew and Gentile. We departed from our father’s house in Adam, and till the Lord convert us, we, as he, dwell in a far country, at a great distance from Christ, far from him in respect of knowledge, union, participation, converse.

1. In respect of knowledge. Far from knowing Christ savingly, effectually, experimentally; far from apprehending such excellency in him as to count all things dross and dung in comparison of him; such necessity of him as to part with sin, self, the world, and all for him; such all-sufficiency in him, as to be content with him in the want, in the loss of all; far from clear knowledge of Christ, as a poor prisoner, locked and bolted in a dark dungeon is far from seeing the light of the day, or as a man stark blind is far from seeing the light of the sun; so, and far more than so, is a natural man from seeing Christ; shut up in darkness, under the power of Satan, having the eyes of his mind blinded by the God of this world, that he cannot see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2. In respect of union. He is far from being united with Christ, from being one with him; wedded to sin, glued to the world, and unwilling to be separated, and so far from Christ, because there can be no contract betwixt Christ and the soul till there be a divorce betwixt the soul and sin, the soul and the world. No league with Christ till the covenant with hell and death, with sin and the world, be broken. Far from faith, which is the bond of this union, shut up under unbelief, and a gravestone laid upon the soul, which nothing can roll away but an almighty power; far from marriage-union with Christ, even as a child yet unborn is far from the hopes and comforts of a conjugal life and union; so far are men from Christ, who are yet in the state of nature, not regenerated, not born again.

3. In respect of participation. As far from union with the person of Christ, so far from partaking of the benefits of Christ; far from pardon, being yet under the sentence of condemnation; from adoption, being yet servants of sin, and slaves to Satan; from reconciliation, being enemies to Christ in their minds through wicked works; from sanctification, the old man keeping still possession with a strong hand, and the interest of the flesh and the world prevailing in the soul; from heaven, there is a great gulf betwixt him and heaven, a gulf deep and large, no passage possible by the act or power of nature. Far from enjoying any of the benefits of Christ’s purchase, as he that is in the Indies, without ship or boat, is far from enjoying any comforts or accommodations here with us.

4. In respect of converse. A stranger to Christ, far from communion with him; a stranger to his thoughts, Christ is not his meditation; his heart is not with him, his affections not on him, his inclinations not towards him, his desires not after him, his delight not in him, his designs not for him; he lives not to Christ, acts not for him, walks not with him; Christ is in heaven, and his heart is on the world. As far as heaven is from earth, so far is a natural man from Christ.

Use. See here the misery of every man by nature, far from Christ, and consequently near to hell and Satan; and since man is always in motion, the longer he continues out of Christ, the further he wanders from him. While you are in the state of nature, till ye be converted, till ye be regenerated

and born again, till ye be translated out of that state wherein ye were born, wherein ye have lived, this is your condition, ye are far from Christ. Oh sad state, if ye were sensible of it! There is something of hell in this condition, far from Christ! It is heaven to be with Christ, it is his presence that makes heaven glorious, it is his presence enjoyed that makes heaven happy; but to be far from Christ, is to be in hell upon earth; to be far from Christ, is to be in the suburbs of hell; when Christ is farthest off, then is hell opened. What is hell, but the state farthest from Christ? And now if this be your state, if ye be far off from Christ, why there is but a step between you and hell.

Oh the misery of this condition! If natural men were not possessed with a spirit of slumber, if they were but sensible how miserable this condition is, they would scarce sleep, or eat, or count anything comfortable, while they are in it.

While far from Christ, you are far from comfort, happiness, hopes of either; you are far from the dearest friend, the sweetest relation you can desire in the world; far from being rich, however you are provided in the world, for Christ is the only treasure; far from comforts, however ye solace yourselves in things below; all your springs of comfort are in Christ. Dig where you will, bitterness will spring up, no pure comforts; while far from this fountain, far from happiness. Christ is the foundation of all happiness. Ye may delude yourselves with fancies, but you will find it really true, till ye be near to Christ, you are far from happiness, ay, and far from hopes of happiness; without Christ, without hope; far from Christ, far from hope: Christ, where he is, is the hope of glory, Colossians 1:1-29. Ye are far from heaven, far from glory, far from hopes of glory, while ye are far from Christ.

Oh then, never rest in this condition, make haste out of the state of nature, never be at quiet, till ye be converted, born again; till ye feel the power of Christ's Spirit drawing your souls off from sin and the world, till then ye are far from Christ.

II. Doct. Sinners are unwilling to come to Christ. It is evident in the words, Christ complains of it, and he never complains without cause. If this were not so, Christ should wrong them, his complaint would be groundless.

Nothing more true than this, and yet nothing less believed. Indeed, every one will acknowledge this in general, but come to particulars, and inquire, Art thou willing? &c. And you shall scarce find one man that bears the name of a Christian, but he will confidently tell you, he is not only willing to come, but is already with him; even as it was with the Jews, so it is now with most Christians. Those of the people whom the apostle calls Jews outwardly, if one had told them they were unwilling to come to their Messias, they would have looked upon it as a groundless slander, as a most intolerable reproach. What, not we who make it our daily prayer, who live in continual expectation of him, who desire nothing more than to see him in the world? What more false than that we should not be willing to come? And yet nothing was more true; for when Christ the Messias was really in the world, they were so far from coming to him, as they would not receive him when he came to them: 'He came to his own, and they received him not.' So it is with those amongst us who are Christians outwardly. What, are not we willing to come to Christ, who call upon his name, and are called by his name, and expect salvation only by him? This seems a most uncharitable, groundless charge; and yet there are but few (of all that many that profess Christ) that do, or will really come to him; and they are apt to be most confident who are farthest off. They are his own, those who bear his name, to whom Christ comes, and yet they will not receive him: it is the

generality of those who are called Christians of whom Christ may complain, ‘Ye will not come to me.’ They will not come to Christ for spiritual life, they will not come to him at all for the life of holiness and sanctification; and though they seem willing to come to him for pardon and heaven, for judicial and eternal life, yet they are unwilling to come to him even for these in his own way; and as good sit still as not come in Christ’s way. He that will walk in his own way towards Christ, he goes from him, not to him. Nothing more clear in Scripture and experience than this, else what needs so many invitations, so much importunity, Isaiah 55:1, Revelation 22:1-21. What needs he cry aloud unto them, Proverbs 1:20, but that they are unwilling to hear? What need he send so many messengers? What need so many entreaties and persuasive arguments, 2 Corinthians 5:20, but that unwillingness is not easily removed? What needs he come himself to call them? Matthew 18:11. Why does he wait so long, and stand without knocking, Revelation 3:1-22, if there need be no if, but that men are unwilling? What need so many commands to come, so many threatenings if they do not, Luke 14:24, so many expostulations for not coming? What need he take the rod, and whip them home to himself, but that they are loath to come, fair means will not prevail? Why does he weep and sigh at the obstinacy of sinners? Luke 19:41-42. To conclude: What needs an almighty power to draw sinners unto him? Are not they unwilling that must be drawn to it?

You see, it is as clear in the Scripture as the sun, that it is so. Let us inquire why it is so, and who they are that are unwilling, that every one may know what to judge of himself in this particular; and both these we shall shew with one labour.

1. Many think they are already come to Christ, when indeed they are far from him. They conceive they are come far enough, and therefore are unwilling to come farther, so they sit down short of Christ, and are not willing to come to him. What is the language of men’s hearts but this, We profess Christ, are baptized in his name, hope to be saved by him, submit to his ordinances, hear his word, call on his name, and who then can say that we are not come to Christ? And whereas, alas, many go farther than thus, and yet live and die without Christ, and so far from him as he knows them not; and so he professeth to the foolish virgins, and to those, Matthew 7:1-29. Did not Judas, did not Simon Magus do all this, and more than this? which yet is all that most can allege to prove they are come to Christ. Do you come to Christ as a Saviour to deliver you from the wrath to come? It is well; but if ye go no further, ye go but half the way to Christ. If you will come home to Christ indeed, you must go to him, not only as a Saviour, but as a Lord; not only to receive pardon from him, but to be ruled by him; not only to be saved, but to be sanctified; not only for happiness, but for holiness too, for Christ is both or neither; and if ye come for one and not for the other, indeed you come not at all; you do but delude yourselves with thoughts that you are already come; Christ will have as much cause to complain of you as of the Jews, ‘Ye will not.’

2. Many do not fully apprehend their necessity of Christ. And if they think it unnecessary, no wonder if they be unwilling. But what ignorant wretches are they, you will say, who think it not necessary? Oh that the greatest number of those that profess Christ were not such! A little search into the thoughts and ways of men, will discover that there are multitudes who did never thoroughly apprehend what necessity there is of Christ. Are there not such, who when they sin, think it enough to be sorry for it, to ask God forgiveness, or to be more careful for the future? Do not some think they make amends for sinning by doing some good work, or falling upon some religious duty after it? Is not this ordinary, even amongst the better sort of ordinary Christians? (for some miscreants there are who run on in sin without any remorse at all). Now what necessity of

Christ do they apprehend, who can thus satisfy their consciences? Do such duly apprehend, that the least of those many millions of sins which they are guilty of, deserves eternal torments? that the justice of God is engaged to inflict those torments for every sin, though it be but a vain thought or idle word? that justice can never be disengaged from thus punishing such sin, till it be fully satisfied? that nothing can satisfy justice for the least, but that which is of infinite value? that none in heaven or earth can offer this to justice, but only Jesus Christ? If these were truly apprehended, which are the sure truths of the gospel, you would be far from thinking to make amends for the least sin, though you should fast, and pray, and weep for it to all eternity.

There is none but Christ, none but Christ, can satisfy for the least sinful motion that ever was in thy heart. Oh, if men believed Christ thus necessary, they would not only go, but run, but fly to him. You would not work, nor sleep, nor eat in quiet, till you were sure that Christ had satisfied for your sins. Sure when men sin, and are not disquieted; or, if they be, yet can quiet their consciences with anything in the world but the application of the blood of Christ, they see not their necessity of Christ, they are not yet come to him.

Further, are there not such who believe they shall be saved because they mean well, and do no man wrong, and give to every one their own, and now and then serve God in some religious duties? They think God is more merciful than to damn such harmless, well-meaning people. Why, but if you can come thus to heaven, what need is there of Christ? Sure you never were convinced of your necessity of Christ, and then it is evident enough you are not yet come to him.

Besides, are there not many who see no need of regeneration, of an universal change in their whole souls? who, if they can restrain their lusts, see no need to endeavour the subduing them? think their natures sufficiently sanctified, if the corruption of them break not forth in gross sins; think the outward performance of religious duties sufficient; see no need of so much zeal, faith, fervency, delight, and spiritualness, and aims at God in the performing them; think it enough if their conversation be honest and civil, though it be not spiritual or heavenly? If these be not the thoughts of most, let your consciences, let your former or present experiences judge. And if it be thus, what need is there of Christ for regeneration or mortification, for exercise of grace or holiness of life? Alas! it is plain here are no due apprehensions how necessary Christ is in all these respects, but here are clear evidences that such never yet came to Christ, no, nor ever yet were willing to come; for since they think it unnecessary, they cannot but be unwilling. Christ has yet cause to complain of such, ‘Ye will not come to me.’

They that are come to Christ indeed, have been led to him by the sense of their necessity of him. When sin has wounded the conscience, they fly to him as the wounded, dying man in the wilderness to the brazen serpent; they make haste to him, as the fainting hart hastes to the waters, panting after them.

They know a change in their lives without a change in their hearts, will but leave them as painted sepulchres in God’s eye, and none can change their hearts but Christ; therefore they come to him for sanctification. They know it is to little purpose to restrain sin, except it be subdued; and Christ being only able to subdue their lusts, they come to him for strength. They know outward performances are but the carcase of religious duties: the soul of them is the exercise of grace in them; therefore they come to Christ for quickening grace. They know a civil conversation is not enough to adorn the gospel: there is need of Christ to make them spiritual and heavenly; therefore

they come to him for it. They know when they have done their best, and put forth their souls to the utmost in holy services, yet they are but unprofitable servants: there is enough in their exactest performances to damn them, and kindle God's displeasure against them; therefore when all is done, they run to Christ for acceptance. Those who never saw these things necessary, nor their necessity of Christ for those ends, were never yet willing to come to Christ.

3. Many are too busy to come to Christ, they have not leisure for such a journey; some busy in following their sports and pastimes; some eager in pursuing their unlawful pleasures; some wholly taken up with the cares of earth, have their hands, and hearts, and heads, so full of the world, as there is little or no room to think of coming, that must be laid aside till more leisure. If Christ call, they bid him have patience, or come another time, when sickness, or old age, or death approaches; then it may be they will think of it, at present they must be excused, they cannot come.

You have the temper of these men plainly represented in that parable, Luke 14:1-35. The Lord sends to invite many to the marriage-feast, but they all with one consent make excuse. One is too busy about his farm, he must be excused; another is taken up with his marriage, he cannot come; another is employed about his oxen, he must be excused. Thus it is with most to whom the Lord sends the gospel, they are too busy to be saved, too full of employment to mind Christ or their souls.

Though Christ invite them again and again, though he lift up his voice and cry aloud to them in the ministry of the word, yet such a noise does the world make in their ears, they do not hear Christ; he speaks to stocks and stones, no more are they moved by his invitations. Or if there be any resemblance in them of living creatures, the deaf adder is their emblem. which stops his ears though the charmer charm never so wisely.

Though Christ weep, as we read he did in the Gospel, to see such wretched unkindness unto him, and such strange cruelty to their own souls, yet they regard not; their eyes are so fixed upon other things, that though Christ be held forth to them as a man of sorrows, yet they mind him not, they hid their faces from him.

Though Christ knock at the door of their hearts, and stand there knocking from Sabbath to Sabbath, by his word and Spirit, yet they are so taken up with entertaining the world and their lusts, as they have no leisure to mind him; knock he may, and stand knocking till his head be wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, yet they will not open. Or if his importunity make them listen, yet usually he gets no other answer, no other return than this, We are not now at leisure, trouble us not now; come another time and we may hear thee. Oh brethren, is not this the language of those delays wherewith ye put off Christ from time to time? Oh take heed lest he who now complains, but ye will not hear, be provoked to turn his complaint into that dreadful threatening, Because ye will not come to me for life, ye shall die in your sins. And that leads me to the

4. Many will not part with that which keeps them at a distance from Christ. They will not part with sin to come to Christ, and there is no coming to him without turning from that; these two are the opposite terms of this motion, &c. Now this is the condition of most that hear the gospel, they have one sin, if not more, which they cannot endure to part with. If Christ and my sin may be joined

together, says the sinner, then with all my heart I will accept of Christ's invitation, I will come to him; but if there be no coming to Christ without parting from my sin, oh this is a hard task, a hard saying, I know not how to live without my sin; and thus he leaves Christ. This is the fatal rock upon which millions of sinners have shipwrecked their souls, and lost eternal life and Christ together. They are wedded to sin, and will live separated from Christ rather than be divorced from their lusts, for there is no enjoying of these together. It is as possible to reconcile light and darkness, or join heaven and hell together, as to join sin and Christ together in one soul; the ways of sin, and the way to Christ, are as far distant as heaven and earth. You may as well expect to have your bodies both in heaven and earth at once, as to have your souls act sin and come to Christ together; no serving of these two masters. Now, because there is no coming to Christ without turning from sin, and most have no mind to part with sin, hence Christ has cause to complain of so many, 'Ye will not come unto me.'

5. Many are possessed with prejudice against Christ, as represented in the gospel, and offered in the ministry of it; and this prejudice renders them unwilling to come to him. This was that rock of offence at which the Jews stumbled, and so fell short of Christ; they expected another kind of Messias than Christ appeared to be when he offered himself to them; they looked for a Messias in the garb of a temporal monarch, to reign amongst them in worldly glory, and to subdue all nations to them by the force of secular power, and to make their country the head of the world's empire. This appears in that petition of the mother of Zebedee's children. Nay, the disciples themselves were possessed with this conceit, as is manifest by their question, Acts 1:6, 'Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' Now, Christ not answering their expectation, but appearing in the form of a servant, disclaiming all secular jurisdiction, and professing that his kingdom was not of this world, that he came not to rule, but to minister, not to reign, but to suffer, hereupon the carnal Jews were filled with prejudice against him, rejected him, hid their faces from him, and would not come to him as the Messias.

Thus it is now with the carnal professors of the gospel; because Christ answers not their expectation (though not the same, yet altogether as groundless as that of the Jews), therefore they entertain prejudice against Christ as represented in the gospel, and so they will not entertain Christ; they are unwilling to come to him; they expect a Saviour that should let them live quietly in their sins, and be indulgent to them in their sinful, voluptuous, licentious courses, and yet should bring them to heaven when they can live in sin no longer. But now, when the gospel represents Christ as one who requires strictness and holiness in all his followers, who calls for mortification and estrangement from the world in all that come to him, who tells them they must suffer any evil rather than sin, and take up the cross if they will have him for their Christ; when the gospel offers a crucified Christ, one whom nothing will please but that holiness, purity, strictness, which the world scorns and derides; one whom tribulation, persecution, reproaches, will attend in all his followers; hearing this, presently they are offended, prejudice seizes on their souls; This is not the Christ, say they in their hearts, that we expected; this is a Christ of some preciser men's setting up; we will not come to him for life. The Lord, who is the searcher of hearts, knows and sees such secret motions as these in the hearts of most who bear the name of Christ, but will not own him, close with him, as the gospel offers him, but separate Christ from holiness, from sufferings, from which he is not separable. Thus you see why so many will not come to Christ, and who they are.

Use 1; of information. See here the wretchedness of man's nature, take notice of it, and let it be particularly applied. Every man, Jew and Gentile, pagan or Christian, is by nature unwilling to come to Christ; and oh what wretchedness is this! Ye are all by nature far from Christ, far from happiness and life; we are all, till converted and regenerated, in the jaws of death, in the gulf of miseries; all spiritually dead, and the sentence of eternal death passed upon us. The Lord has awarded this heavy sentence not only in the law, but in the gospel, John 3:18, John 3:36. And as we are thus miserable, so are we unable utterly to free ourselves from it. Nay, all the powers in heaven and earth cannot revoke this sentence, cannot draw us out of this misery; none in heaven or earth but Christ; and yet, though our life and death be in the hands of Christ, though our eternal happiness or misery depend upon our coming or not coming to Christ, yet we had rather die and perish than come to him for happiness; rather die in our sins, than come to him for life.

Christ has now, or has had formerly, cause to complain of every one, Thou wilt not come to me, &c. And if Christ have such cause to complain of us, what reason have we to complain of ourselves. Oh the wretchedness of this my nature! oh the desperate depravedness of this heart, that has been, nay, that is, may most say, so unwilling to come. Oh what woeful, what hellish perverseness lodges in this soul, that will use so many excuses, put him off with so many delays, nay, give him plain refusals, when he invites thee, beseeches thee, urges thee with all importunity to come to him for life! I cannot part with my sin, says one, and there is no coming to him without parting from it. I cannot endure that holiness, that strictness (nor none of my companions), says another. I shall be jeered, derided, forsaken, and Christ will not endure me without it. I am well enough as I am, says another; I thank God I am no drunkard, adulterer, extortioner, &c., and what need I go farther? I have time little enough to provide for myself and family, says another; I cannot spare time for prayer, self-examination, mortifying duties, as Christ requires. I may come hereafter, says another; at what time soever I repent and turn to him, he will receive me, and there is time enough before I die. Thus men put off Christ with such pleas and excuses as the devil and their corrupt hearts suggest. And what need is there of any other argument to prove that our natures are desperately wicked above all expression! Such an averseness is in them unto Christ, as you will rather die than come to him. Nor fear of death, nor desire of life itself, can make men wiling to come to Christ. Christ himself could not prevail with many sinners to make them willing, though he preached divers years together, and made this the chief scope of his sermons, and spoke so to this purpose as never man spake, yet all that he could say or do was not effectual with the greatest part of those that heard him. Hence he concludes his sermons sometimes with complaints, sometimes with tears, Luke 13:34, Matthew 23:37. So few did he prevail with, as he expostulates in the Prophet as though they were none at all, Isaiah 53:1, applied to this purpose, John 12:37-38, and elsewhere, Isaiah 65:2, and Isaiah 49:4. Such obstinacy did Christ meet with against himself, and such will his messengers meet with. This is a lamentation, and will be a lamentation, and oh that every one would lament the wretchedness of his own nature! and then the servants of God would have less cause to weep in secret that Christ's message is so fruitless. We abhor toads and serpents, and such creatures, who seem to be made for the mischief and ruin of others; how much more should we loathe our poisonous mischievous natures, which, by their obstinacy against Christ, shew we are worse than these, as tending not only to the mischief of others, but are obstinately bent to ruin themselves. We abhor the devil for making it his work to devour souls, but are not our natures, till renewed, worse devils to ourselves, being more unwilling to come to Christ for life than Satan is desirous to push us on in the ways of death? May ye not

find a toad, a serpent, a devil, or that which is as bad in this respect, in your own bosoms? Oh, bewail the rebellion of your natures against Christ, be ashamed to say or think that you have good natures. And if there were nothing but this, it is sufficient to confound this conceit, and to make you ashamed and confounded for it. You are by nature unwilling to come to Christ, had rather die than come to Christ for life.

Use 2. Examination. Since sinners, for* the greatest part of men are unwilling, it concerns every one of you to try whether ye be in the number of those who are not willing; that is a most undoubted truth, if that be such which truth itself speaks, and yet who is there that believes it as to himself? It is not easy to determine whether it be more difficult to persuade men to be willing, or to persuade men that they are unwilling to come to Christ. All will easily assent to this in general, sinners are unwilling, but come to particulars, and ask, Art thou unwilling? and most will deny it, and with detestation; I was willing to come to Christ ever since I heard of him; he is unworthy to live, unworthy to be counted a Christian, that will not come to Christ; thus will every one be ready to answer. And as this is an evidence that these confidents never yet came, so it is one great impediment that hinders them from coming. The way to remove this dangerous obstruction in your way to Christ is to be convinced of your unwillingness, and the way to get this conviction is to put yourselves upon serious trial whether ye be willing or no; and this is the intention of this present application, to direct you how to know this.

If ye be willing to come to Christ, you are already come, for there is nothing stands betwixt Christ and a sinner but this unwillingness; as soon as you are willing, you are with him.

Now, whether ye be come to Christ, ye may upon serious trial know by these particulars. Those that come to Christ,

1. Are sorry that they were so long ere they came to him; they know when they were without Christ in the world, they remember when Christ strove with them in his word, by his Spirit, and they resisted, as others do; but now, being by his almighty power drawn to him, they know by experience what they lost by living without him, they are sensible how they provoked and dishonoured Christ by slighting his invitings, neglecting his entreaties, resisting his motions; this is their grief, their sorrow; so it was with the prodigal when he was come home to his father, the first thing that bewrays itself is grief, remorse, for departing from, neglecting to return to him: ‘I have sinned,’ &c. Their unkindness pierces them, that they kept Christ so long out, that they suffered him so long to stand knocking at their hearts, striving by his Spirit, beseeching them in his word, yet they excluded him, closed their hearts against him. Oh, says the soul, what a wretched rebel was I, who, when Christ stretched out his hands all the day, I refused; when he called, entreated, I would not answer; when he drew me, I resisted! Oh, what love, what indulgence, what kindness was this! and what wretched unkindness was mine! This melts the soul into sorrow. Oh, how happy might I have been long ago if I had yielded to his motions! What a wretch was I, to choose rather to feed on husks than to be entertained with the pleasures of a father’s house, than to feed on those delights which communion with Christ affords. If this be your temper, it is a good evidence you are come; but those who say they never were unwilling to come to Christ, they came to him ever since they can remember, have reason to suspect they are not yet come.

2. They are acquainted with the way to Christ. Those that have walked in that way do know it by experience, they have clear, distinct discoveries of the multitude and heinousness of their sins,

have been apprehensive of the wrath of God due to them for their sins, have been sensible of their misery by reason of sin and wrath, even as a man sinking under a burden is sensible of the weight thereof; have been hereupon convinced of an absolute necessity of Christ, even as the man pursued for slaughter under the law saw his need of the city of refuge, so as he must die if he did not without delay get into it; felt their hearts drawn out in ardent desires after Christ, so as their souls could say of Christ as she of children, Give us Christ, or else we die; and upon this have been drawn to consent to take Christ upon his own terms, to part with all the Lord requires, submit to all he enjoins, undergo all that he will inflict, so as he might enjoy Christ; cares not what he want, so as he may have him; cares not what he lose, so he may gain him. This is the way whereby the Lord brings sinners to Christ. If ye know this way by experience, you are come to Christ indeed; but if strangers to it, you are not come.

3. They have a high esteem of him. While the soul is afar off, as all are by nature, he sees little of Christ, and enjoys less, and his esteem of Christ is answerable; he is apt to ask, ‘What is thy beloved?’ sees no such beauty nor comeliness in him but that other things may have his affections, tastes no such sweetness in him, but that the pleasures of sin are as delightful; and no wonder, for he is at a great distance, and so cannot see and taste that which is afar off; but when he is come to Christ, he sees such beauty and excellency in him as darkens all outward excellencies, makes them seem dross compared with Christ; so did Paul when he was found in him, Php 3:1-21, σκ■βαλα, those things which he formerly admired were now not counted worthy to have place in thoughts or affections; he cast them out, as more fit for dogs than for that heart which had entertained Christ.

Now the soul wonders at his former blindness, that he could see so little of excellency in Christ, when there is (as now he sees) so infinitely much, now he tastes that the Lord is gracious. He had heard of him before but by the hearing of the ear, and his apprehensions were suitable, such as a blind man has of the sun when he hears a discourse in commendation of that which he never saw; but now his eye sees him, and his eye affects his heart, and his heart is filled with admiration of him, as the chiefest of ten thousand, as fairer than the children of men; worthy of all his love, if his heart could be all turned into love; worthy of his highest thoughts, if his thoughts could be raised to the pitch of the angels; worthy of all his praises, if his lips could speak nothing but praises to all eternity. Who is like to thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, in beauty, in all transcendent excellencies! wonderful in love, in sweetness, and all delights! Thus does he esteem Christ, who is come to him. Those who are so taken with vain delights, sinful pleasures, as they can forego the sweetness of communion with Christ, or know not what this is, who dare usually sin away Christ’s favour for worldly advantage, shew they esteem him not, are not come to him.

4. They are in a new condition. He that comes to him, comes, as it were, into a new world; ‘old things are passed away, all things are made new.’ He finds such a change, as a man who has lived many years in darkness finds when he is brought into the light; so it is expressed, Colossians 1:13. He has new thoughts and new affections, new companions and new employments, a new heart and a new life. ‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;’ can say as Augustine, Ego non sum ego, I am not the man I was. If no such inward and outward change, you are not yet come to Christ.

5. They walk with Christ. That is the end of their coming; formerly they had fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, now their fellowship is with the Father and with the Son; formerly, they had their conversations in the world, now their conversation is in heaven, now they know what it is, as Enoch, to walk with God; communion with Christ is no mystery, experience has made them acquainted with it, their mind is with Christ, he is their meditation, their thoughts are of him, they prevent the night-watches, and when they awake, they are continually with him; their hearts are on Christ, he is their love, delight, desire; the bent of their wills is towards him, and so carried with strong inclination, they live to him, act for him, aim at him, depend on him. If it be not thus with you in some degree, you are not come to Christ.

6. They are at a greater distance from sin and the world. For this motion is betwixt these terms, it is a passage from sin and the world to Christ; as when they lived in sin they were at a distance from Christ, so when they are come to Christ they are at a greater distance from sin; as when they were wedded to the world they were separated from Christ, so now when they are married to Christ, they are divorced from the world, they are estranged from it when acquainted with him; crucified to them when alive unto Christ.

7. They have renounced their own righteousness. So Paul, Php 3:9, ‘And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.’

Use 3; of exhortation. Then it is the duty of all that the Lord has persuaded to come, to endeavour to persuade others, to strive against this unwillingness in their several places and relations. You that are entrusted with children, &c., have the charge of servants, you that have any dear friend or relation, who you suspect are yet far from Christ, oh use all means, motives, to persuade them to come to Christ, strive against it in yourselves, and in all with whom you converse; this is a common duty, but the special charge of it lies upon ministers; it is their office, they are sent and authorised by Christ for this purpose, 2 Corinthians 5:19-20. Now that I may discharge this trust, let me propound some motives and inducements, which, through the concurrence of God, may be effectual to make you willing, and these drawn from—1, necessity; 2, advantage; 3, equity; 4, danger.

1. Consider what necessity there is. You cannot look upon anything, but, if duly weighed, will convince you of this necessity. Look upon heaven or hell, upon this world or the world to come, upon present enjoyments or future hopes, upon mercy or justice, upon the word of God or his works, look upon what you will, you may see an absolute necessity to make haste to Christ; look upon heaven that is shut up against you; upon hell that is set open to swallow you, till you come to him who has the key of David, &c.; look upon this world, there is nothing will afford you comfort; upon the world to come, there is nothing but endless torment; here nothing but a world of vexatious vanities, hereafter nothing but a world of eternal miseries, till you come to Christ, who is a World of comforts here, a world of blissful enjoyments hereafter; look upon present enjoyments, they are all cursed; upon future hopes, and they are all blasted, till you come to Christ, by whom the sinner’s curse is slain, and his hopes revived; look upon mercy, that cannot save you; upon justice, that is engaged to destroy you, till you come to Christ, in whom mercy is magnified, justice satisfied; look upon the word, that does nothing but threaten you; upon his works, they are nothing but the executions of God’s threatenings upon you, till you come to Christ, who makes all the word

of God as sweet expressions of love, as a promise, and all the works of God acts of mercy. But more fully thus, till you come to Christ.

(1.) You are under the power of Satan. You are his children, his members, his vassals. The interest of Christ and Satan divide the whole world: there is the world of sinners, and Satan is the god of this world; there is the world of believers, and Christ is the king of this world. Till ye come to Christ, ye belong to Satan really, however in word ye may disclaim him; he that is not with Christ is against him, joins with his mortal enemy, fights under Satan's colours against Christ and his interest, even when he thinks he does Christ service; so Paul before his conversion.

Till ye come to Christ, you are under the power of darkness, you are one of the kingdom of Satan; he rules you, works in you, tyrannises over you. You are in more grievous bondage to him, than the Israelites under Pharaoh, for it is soul-slavery, a bondage that you are not sensible of, that you will not believe, though the Lord in Scripture aver it over and over. Hence this coming to Christ is described by a turning from Satan, Acts 26:18. If sinners perceived their slavery, they might seek to escape; Satan, to make sure work, deals with you as the Philistines did with Samson, he puts out your eyes. Thus woeful is your slavery; your souls are enslaved, and slaves you are to the worst of tyrants, to Satan, till ye come to Christ. Oh is there not necessity to haste out of this condition! Had you rather serve Satan in cruel bondage, than come to Christ for liberty? rather sit in darkness, in the confines of hell, under that hellish taskmaster, than come to Christ for redemption, and be partaker of the glorious liberty of the sons of God?

(2.) You are under the guilt of sin. You have done nothing but sinned since ye came into the world; every of your thoughts, words, deeds, have been sins against God. And of all these numberless millions of sins, not one of them is pardoned, nor ever will be pardoned, till ye come to Christ; there is as much guilt lies upon every of your souls, as is sufficient to sink a soul into hell, and not the weight of one dram that can be removed, till ye come to Christ. Oh you cannot long bear up under such a burden; there is but a cobweb life betwixt you and sinking. If you make not haste to Christ to lay the burden on him, it will certainly press you down into the lower hell. All your sins are in continual remembrance with God: they are set in the light of his countenance, they are in his eye as writ with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond; this handwriting will never be cancelled, these sins will never be blotted out of his remembrance, except you come to Christ; all the dishonour, injuries, affronts you have offered the Lord, will be continually in his eye, till ye come to Christ to interpose. Oh what need is there to make haste! As you have lived, so ye will die in your sins.

(3.) You are under the wrath of God. He is your enemy: the Lord of hosts is his name; his anger is kindled against you. He is angry with the wicked every day; his indignation burns like fire; he loathes your persons, he abhors your services; all you do adds but more fuel to that flame which will scorch you here, but will burn to the bottom of hell, except ye come to Christ to quench it; it is he only that has slain this enmity, it is he only that has brought you righteousness. Oh fly out of this condition, as you would fly from everlasting burnings! Make haste to Zoar; look not back till ye come to the mountains, lest you perish by fire from heaven, lest the wrath of God consume you; your sins have kindled it; it burns so as none can quench it but Christ only. Oh look upon this warning as that message from heaven to Lot's family! Your natural condition is a Sodom; if you slight this warning, as Lot's sons-in-law, Genesis 19:14, you will certainly, like them, be consumed

in the iniquity of that state. God has prepared Christ, a Zoar for the safety of his chosen ones; and now hear the Lord speaking by me, as he spake to Lot, Genesis 19:17, Escape, poor sinner, for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in this condition; escape to the mountain, fly to Christ, lest thou be consumed.

(4.) You are under the curse, Galatians 3:10, Deuteronomy 29:19. All the curses of the law are levelled against you, all the threatenings of the Lord fall heavy on you, till ye come to Christ; there is not one word in all the book of God that speaks the least comfort to a sinner out of Christ; you cannot strike the least spark of hope out of any expression in the word of God, till you come to Christ; whatever curses and threatenings you meet with, they are yours; whatever comforts or promises you meet with, you have no more to do with them than with your neighbour's inheritance. The word is the last will and testament of God in Christ, wherein he has left every man his portion, his legacy. Now look this will over, from the first line to the last, and you will find nothing bequeathed to you in this condition but a curse. Oh sad legacy! Esau lift up his voice and wept, yea, and cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, because his father did not leave him a blessing equal with his brother Jacob, Genesis 27:34, Genesis 27:38. But how would Esau have cried, have wept, if his father had left him nothing but a curse! Why, this is all the inheritance of those who will not come to Christ; they have no other portion by this will but the Lord's curse. If you will have any better portion, you must come to Christ for it; if ye will inherit the blessing, if ye will be heirs of the promise, ye must be adopted in Christ; till then, the curse, the threatening is your inheritance. Oh make haste out of this cursed condition, fly to Christ, who has borne the curse, and purchased title to the promise, for all that come to him!

(5.) The justice of God is engaged to destroy you. As sure as God is just, all that come not to Christ must perish. Observe it, the mercy of God, infinite mercy, cannot save you, except you will come to Christ, for the justice of God must be satisfied before any sinner, any offender can find mercy; and none can satisfy justice but Christ, and he satisfies for none but those that come to him. God will never be so merciful as to violate his justice. Now, God would be untrue, unfaithful, unjust if he should spare, if he should save, any sinner that comes not to Christ. If you think God will be merciful to you (unless ye come to Christ, and upon his own terms, so as to forsake sin, renounce your own righteousness, and give up yourselves to holiness), you make an idol of God, and conceive not of him as he is, but represent him to be a God according to your own fancy and likeness, an image of your own forming, not the true God. God will cease to be God if he save a sinner that continues in sin, and will not come to Christ. Justice stands betwixt heaven and every sinner, there is no entering there till justice be satisfied; if you come not to Christ who tenders it, the Lord will require satisfaction at your hands, and you must pay it in hell to the utmost farthing. This is your condition, mercy cannot save you, justice will seize on you, except ye come to Christ; and is there not need to make haste? But though a man without Christ (may some say) be thus miserable in respect of his spiritual and eternal state, yet there is some comfort for him in respect of his temporal estate, he has many outward enjoyments wherein he may solace himself. No; even in these, which are his only support, he is miserable. For,

(6.) His outward enjoyments and accommodations in the world are uncomfortable, unsanctified, accursed. Nothing is sanctified to an unbeliever, Titus 1:15; and if not sanctified, then not blessed; and if not blessed, then accursed, and so they are in all they enjoy, Deuteronomy 28:15-16, &c. Outward things are indifferent in themselves, but are to be judged blessings or curses by their rise

and issue. If they proceed from the love of God, and tend to the spiritual good of the enjoyers, they become blessings, otherwise they prove curses. And so they are to those that will not come to Christ; the Lord gives them in anger, and when they are lost, he takes them away in his wrath; and when they are continued, they are continual snares, harden them in wickedness; they abuse them as provisions of lust, use them as occasions of sin, and so aggravate their condemnation; and hereby treasuring more wrath against the day of wrath, instead of laying up a good foundation for the time to come; and so bear an impression of wrath with them all along, in their beginning, increase, continuance, departure. Thus it will be with you and all your enjoyments till ye come to enjoy Christ. But if their condition without Christ be so sad and lamentable, how is it (may some say) that they live in so much mirth and jollity? Who more pleasant usually than sinners without Christ? It may seem strange indeed, yea, an astonishment, especially for those that live under the gospel; but consider one instance, and the wonder will cease. Have you never seen distracted men in Bedlam or elsewhere? They laugh, and sing, and dance, as though no men were so happy as themselves, no condition so pleasing and comfortable as theirs. And why are they so merry in such a sad state? Alas! they know not what their condition is, they are beside themselves, and are not sensible what they are or do. Thus it is with sinners out of Christ, they are just like the prodigal, of whom it is said, when he thought of returning to his father, ‘he came to himself,’ Luke 15:17; implying that before he was willing to return, he was beside himself. And so is every sinner, while he is unwilling to return to Christ he is beside himself. No wonder if he be so full of mirth when his condition is so sad and lamentable. Alas! he is a distracted soul, he has lost his senses, all spiritual sense; he knows not, he is not sensible, what he does, nor what his soul’s condition is, and this is the height of a sinner’s misery without Christ; though he be miserable beyond apprehension, yet he is not in the least apprehensive how miserable he is. And this shews what necessity you have to come to Christ, even such need as a distracted man has of an expert physician. Till ye come to Christ, ye are, in a spiritual sense, beside yourselves. And if these considerations draw you not to Christ, it will be an evident symptom of this madness. Till you come to Christ, you are under the power of Satan, the guilt of sin, the wrath of God, the curse of the law; justice is engaged to destroy you, and so engaged as mercy cannot save you; nor can any outward enjoyment afford you the least true comfort. Oh, then, if ye be not quite without sense of your miserable condition, make haste to Christ, resolve to close with him upon his own terms; give no rest to your souls till ye come to Christ and find rest in him.

2. The advantage. As the necessity should force you, so the sweet and precious advantages you will gain hereby should allure you to come to Christ. As soon as you are with him, all the fore-mentioned miseries will instantly vanish.

Come to Christ, and he will free you from the power of Satan, he will knock off those fetters wherewith Satan has loaded your souls; he will judge the prince of this world who does now tyrannise over you, tumble him down from his throne, and make him your footstool. Ye shall be no longer slaves of Satan, but the sons and daughters of the Most High; this shall be your honour, your liberty: ‘If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed,’ John 8:36.

Come to Christ, and he will free you from the guilt of sin, he will tell your souls, himself has borne your iniquities on his body upon the tree; those sins that come now in remembrance before God shall be remembered no more; they are now before God’s face, but then they shall be cast behind his back; they are now open to his view, but then they shall be covered. Come to him, he has

loved you, he will wash you from your sins in his blood; come to him, his name is ‘Jesus, he will save his people from their sins.’

Come to Christ, and he will make your peace with God, he will slay that enmity which is betwixt the Lord and your souls, he will quench that wrath which threatens to consume you; though he seem now to be all in a flame against you, yet then will he say, ‘Anger is not in me;’ that cloud of displeasure will be scattered, and the light of his pleasing countenance will shine on your souls.

Come to Christ, and there shall be no more curse; all the threatenings shall be turned into promises; then you may look upon threatenings without dread or terror; Christ has satisfied them, you may draw the sweetness of a promise out of them. Then you are in covenant with God, in the covenant of grace; and all the promises are so many articles of that covenant which the blood of Christ has sealed to be yours.

Come to Christ, and then justice itself will be your friend; that which stood before as a cherubim at the way of paradise, with a flaming sword to keep you out of heaven, will then be your security, and conduct you thither. He that comes to Christ has as much security for his happiness from the justice as from the mercy of God; Christ has engaged both for all that come to him, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7.

Come to Christ, and then all your outward enjoyments will be comforts, blessings indeed, sweetened by the love of Christ, sanctified by the blood of Christ, ordered by the wisdom and power of Christ, to make your lives truly comfortable and serviceable here, and happy and glorious hereafter. Death will be no more in the pot, nor fly in the box of ointment, when you are in Christ. When Moses had cast the tree which the Lord shewed him into the waters of Marah, the bitter waters immediately were made sweet, Exodus 15:25. When Christ mixes himself with your enjoyments, their bitterness is past, they then become sweet and comfortable indeed. Nay, your very crosses and afflictions shall then be sweeter than the sweetest enjoyments of sinners without Christ. ‘All things,’ Romans 8:1-39; these shall work for your good, spiritual, eternal, whereas their prosperity shall tend to their ruin; you shall have cause to rejoice and be exceeding glad when men persecute you, &c., whereas they shall have cause to mourn and lament, even when their corn, wine, and oil increase. These are some of those sweet advantages that you reap by being willing to come to Christ. And oh that the Lord would persuade you to be willing, that you would go hence with resolutions never more to give Christ occasion to complain, ‘Ye will not come to me,’ &c.

Particularly, the advantages you will gain by coming to Christ I will reduce to three heads: union to, communion with, participation of Christ. Come to Christ, and you shall be

(1.) United to him, one with him. This is Christ’s aim in inviting you, this he desires, this he prays for, John 17:20-21. He invites you, not to your prejudice or disparagement, but to make you happy and glorious; and whereby can you become more happy and glorious, than by being one with him who is the King of glory, the spring of happiness? What greater glory can a poor worm aspire to, than to become a member of Christ, to be a member of that glorious head which is advanced in heavenly places, far above all principality, &c., Ephesians 1:20-21. And what greater happiness than flows from this union! When you are come to Christ, you are as near, as dear to him, as any members of your bodies are to yourselves, Ephesians 5:29-30. Then not only your souls, but your

bodies, are members of him, 1 Corinthians 6:15. And though this union be mystical (not gross, carnal, you must not so conceive of it), yet will it interest you in as much love and tenderness from Christ as though it were corporal. Christ has given a real demonstration of it; he loved his mystical body, the members of it, more than his own natural body, more than any, nay, more than all the parts and members of it; for he gave his natural body, and exposed it in all parts, to wounds, and tortures, and death, rather than his spiritual members should suffer their deserts. Now when we give one thing for another, that for which we give it is more loved and valued than that which we give for it. Even so Christ shewed, by giving himself for his people, that he more loved, more valued them than he did his own body. This will be the sweet issue of your coming to Christ, you will hereby become one of his members, he will be no less tender over you than of his own body. Of what part is any man more tender than his eye? Come to Christ, and the Lord will count you as dear to him as his eye, as the tenderest part of it, 'the apple of his eye,' Zechariah 2:8.

Come to Christ, and you shall be admitted to such union with him, such a relation to him, as will not only engage his tenderness and love, but his joy and delight. You are now the bond-slaves of sin and Satan, but come to him, and he will espouse you to himself, 2 Corinthians 11:2. You are now in league with hell and death, but come to him, and he will join you to himself in an everlasting covenant, a marriage-covenant, that shall never be broken, nor you ever divorced. Now you are loathsome in his eye, by reason of the pollution of sin, but then shall the King, the King of glory, greatly desire your beauty, Psalms 45:11. Even when ye see cause to loathe and abhor yourselves, yet then shall ye be the joy and delight of Christ: 'As the Bridegroom rejoiceth,' &c., Isaiah 62:5. Now you are forsaken and cast off, but then you shall be the Lord's Hephzibah, his Beulah, his spouse, his delight, ver. 4. Now you are viler in his account than the vilest creatures, than the beasts that perish; then you shall be as a crown of glory, a royal diadem, ver. 3; and though ye be now blind and lame in a spiritual sense, poor, deformed, miserable, and naked, enough to discourage any apprehensive soul from expecting such wonderful love, such glorious privileges, such a high relation, yet is there no just cause of discouragement, if ye be but willing to come to him. He looks not you should bring with you a portion, or beauty, or parts, or relations: all that Christ requires is but your consent; consent but to come, and the match is made, your Redeemer will be your husband, Isaiah 54:5. The love of the most affectionate husband in the world will be nothing, compared with the love of Christ to those who are willing to come to him. Hence Christ's love is made the pattern of conjugal love, Ephesians 5:25. The copy here, when best drawn, comes far short of the original; the love of the conjugal relation is but a shadow of Christ's love, Ephesians 5:32. Thus shall it be done to the man who will come to Christ. And is there nothing of all this that will make you willing to come to him?

(2.) Communion with Christ. That communion which, when perfectly enjoyed, is the height of happiness in heaven; and as vouchsafed here, is the beginnings of heaven on earth; a privilege to have it with angels; such communion as is betwixt head and members, such as is betwixt dear and intimate friends. No such distance, estrangement between Christ and you as formerly, but a blessed intercourse, a sweet intimacy, a holy familiarity. He will walk with you, you converse with him; he will confer with you, you may speak to him, Ephesians 3:12. He will visit you, and you may have some access to him; he will feast you, and you may entertain him, Revelation 3:20.

Oh what an high privilege is this! Are you not willing to come to Christ upon such terms? He will admit you to speak to him, as a man to his friend. You may empty all your grievances into his

bosom, who is merciful and gracious; you may ask counsel of him in all straits, who is the ‘wonderful Counsellor;’ you may desire supply of all wants of him, who has all power in heaven and earth to supply, and is as willing as you can desire, John 15:17. Oh what is it to have Christ dwelling in you, walking with you, communing with you, speaking to your hearts, leading you as it were by the hand in all your ways, bearing you in his arms when you are weak, guiding you by his eye when you are to seek, lifting you above difficulties which you cannot else overcome, standing by you when all forsake you, supporting you in all pressures, comforting you in all tribulations, arming you against assaults; in a word, to have an all-sufficient Saviour to be all in all to you, in a way of sweet communion, and this for ever, John 6:37. This, even such communion does Christ offer you, if you be but willing to come to him.

(3.) Participation of him. Come, and you shall partake of all that Christ can communicate, and man can receive. Satan and sin will promise much to stay you from him, but though they promise more than ever they perform, yet they cannot promise so much as Christ will really give. Upon condition you will come, you shall have all that Christ can give you, and what cannot he give, who is Lord of heaven and earth, and has the disposing of all in both! You shall have all that heart can desire, Job 6:1-30, provided you desire nothing but what is good for you, nothing but what is truly desirable; you shall have all. All what? you will say. Why, all that Christ is, all that he has; all that he has done, and is doing, and all that he has suffered: all these, so far as they are communicable, and you capable; all this, if you will but come for it.

All that he is. Is he God? He will be your God, and this is infinitely more than if I should tell you, that all the kingdoms of the earth shall be yours. Is he man? Then you shall know that he was made man for your sakes, that he stooped so low as to become man, that he might raise you to the enjoyment of God. Is he Mediator, God and man in one person? Then you shall find that he is your Mediator, for your sakes to take up the differences betwixt God and your souls; he was both, that God and you might be at one. Is he a king? Then you shall know that for this end he came to the kingdom, that you might be advanced, and he might be the ruin of your enemies. Is he a prophet? Then you shall find him to be your prophet, to let you know the mind of God, and teach you the way to life. Is he a priest? Then it will appear it is for your sake, that he might be a sacrifice for your sins. In these respects principally the Scriptures declare to us what Christ is, and in all these he will be yours, if you be willing. If this be not enough, here is more than all this: come to Christ, and you shall have

All that he has. Christ, I told you, will marry those that come to him, and this shall be the dowry, all that he has, which is communicable to the creatures; all those riches which the apostles calls unsearchable, Ephesians 3:8. That which is his shall be yours, he will withhold nothing that you are capable to receive; his righteousness is yours, Romans 5:18. Christ’s own robe shall cover you, Isaiah 61:10. Then you need not be afraid or ashamed to stand in the sight of God, this robe will hide all your deformities; whereas they that want it will call to the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, rather than appear before him who sits on the throne. His holiness, the ornament of his human nature, and the resemblance of his divine excellency, John 1:16, hence called the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:1-21; his peace yours, John 14:27; the peace of Christ shall be yours, and that is the peace of God, Php 4:7; his joy, John 15:11 and John 17:13, their joy is the joy of the Lord; his glory, John 17:22, the glory wherewith Christ as man shall be glorious in heaven, those that come to him shall partake of hereafter; his kingdom, those who upon Christ’s

invitements will come to him on earth, shall hear that sweet invitation of Christ hereafter, Matthew 25:34, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you,’ &c.; the same kingdom where Christ reigns shall be your inheritance hereafter, Luke 22:29-30; his throne, Revelation 2:21; those that come at Christ’s invitation shall not only be admitted to his table, but to his throne; not only sit, but reign with him, 2 Timothy 2:12; the poorest sinner that will come to Christ shall be crowned with royal majesty, and reign gloriously with Christ for ever and ever;—all these are yours if you will come to Christ. And is there no power in all these to make you willing?

Nay, further, more than all this,

All that he has done is done in your stead, or in your behalf, or for your advantage; all that he did on earth, and all that he is doing in heaven, it is all for those, and only for those, that come unto him. His observance of the law yours. You will then find, that ‘he was made under the law, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in you,’ Romans 8:34. That shall be as available to entitle you to eternal life, offered in that first covenant, ‘Do this and live,’ as if you had perfectly done it in person. His miracles yours, i. e., for you to ascertain the truth of that doctrine, of those promises, which are your evidences for all the happiness you can expect here or hereafter. His prayers yours. They shall be as effectual for you as if he had prayed for you by name, or as if he were now on earth to pray for you, John 17:20. And oh how precious, how invaluable is interest in those prayers! His resurrection yours. Those that come to Christ are risen with Christ, Colossians 3:1. Then you shall know that he rose from the dead, that you might be raised out of the grave of sin, to sit with him in heavenly places, Ephesians 2:5-6. His ascension yours. Then you shall find he ascended to prepare for your entertainment in heaven, to make ready those mansions of glory where you shall mutually enjoy one another to all eternity, John 14:2-3. His intercession yours. As he lived on earth to act for you, so he ever lives in heaven to make intercession, Hebrews 7:25. No plea shall be admitted against them, he stands to rebuke any that will attempt it, Zechariah 3:1-2. No service of theirs rejected in heaven, he offers them with his own hand; and lest sins and failings should appear, he interposes his merit, righteousness, satisfaction; this is that incense mentioned, Revelation 8:3, which turns all their imperfect offerings into the smell of a sweet odour. Oh what comfort is here for those that are come! What encouragement for those that are not come to resolve upon it! Nay, more, His present administrations. Not only all he did on earth before his ascension, and all he does in heaven since he left the earth, but all he does on earth when he is in heaven; all his dispensations are with respect of them, and for singular advantage to them, though they take no notice of it, though it seem so much of another tendency as they can scarce believe it, Romans 8:28. ‘All things,’ none excepted; ‘called,’ those that answer his call, come when he calls. Nay, further, not only all that he did on earth, all that he does in heaven and earth, but

All that he suffered shall be yours, as much for your advantage as if you had suffered them in person. Did he endure poverty? It was that you might have the riches of glory, 2 Corinthians 8:9. Did he live in the form of a servant? It was that you might obtain the adoption of sons. Was he forsaken? It was that you might be eternally owned. Was he slandered and condemned? It was that you might be absolved and justified before God’s tribunal. Did he weep? It was that you might rejoice. Did sorrow oppress his heart? It was that everlasting joy might be upon your heads. Was his soul burdened with wrath? It was that you might be freed from that burden. Was he wounded? It was that your languishing souls might be healed. Was he made sin? It was for you, that you might be made the righteousness of God. Did he bear the curse? It was that you might inherit the

blessing. Was he scourged? It was that you might be embraced in the arms of everlasting love. Was he crucified? It was that you might be crowned. Did he bleed and die? It was that you might live and reign for ever and ever.

Come to Christ, and you shall know this so assuredly as if an angel from heaven were sent to tell it to you. But if you will live in sin, if all this move you not to part with all to come to Christ, you shall have neither share nor lot in anything that pertains to Christ; if, when Christ has made known to you these great things of the gospel, and when he has offered you his unsearchable riches, you continue obstinate in your evil ways, and confident of your good estate, while strangers and enemies to him in your minds through evil works, why, then, these glorious discoveries are as a vain thing to you, it is a sign the Father has not given you to Christ, for 'all that the Father hath given him will come to him;' it is a sign the offers of sin are more prevalent with you than the offers of Christ, and that 'the god of this world hath blinded your minds,' &c., 2 Corinthians 4:4; but if hereby you resolve to deny yourselves, renounce your sins and come to Christ, then all these glorious riches of Christ shall be your portion. Conclude with Deuteronomy 30:19, here is set before you a curse and a blesssing, sin and Christ; set before you life and death, sin with death, if ye continue in sin, ye shall die; Christ and life, if ye come to Christ, ye shall live. Oh then, come to Christ, and ye shall have life! choose him, and your souls shall live!

3. The equity of it. If there were neither necessity nor advantage, yet since it is most equal to do this which Christ requires of you, even this should be a prevailing motive. The equity appears in these particulars,

(1.) Ye lose nothing by coming to Christ. If ye were invited to your loss you might then refuse, there would be some excuse to make your delays and refusals more plausible, but ye can be no losers; gain you may much, infinitely much, but ye can lose nothing; all you get by this journey will be clear gains. But shall we not lose our sins? Must we not part with our dear, gainful, delightful lusts? True, you must part with these; but if you did duly apprehend what sin is, and believe what the Lord in Scripture speaks of, you would never count it a loss to part with any sin whatsoever. Sin is your misery, the spring of all that you count miserable; Satan and the world could never injure you were it not for and by sin, it is sin that is the foundation and complement of your misery. Now, is it any loss to part with misery? Does Christ offer you loss when he would have you come to him upon condition you will part with your misery?

Sin is your fetters, your dungeon; hence the state of sin is set forth in Scripture as a state of darkness and bondage, these are the chains wherein Satan keeps you captive. Now, will a poor captive think he loses anything by leaving his prison and shaking off his fetters? No more can you lose by parting with sin to come to Christ.

Sin is your sickness, your soul's consumption: hence the prophet expresses the sinfulness of Judah in these terms, Isaiah 1:5, 'The whole head is sick;' hence freedom from sin is promised under the notion of healing, Hosea 14:4, implying sin is the soul's disease. Now, is it any loss to part with a disease? You lose no more by parting with sin than a languishing consumed man loses by parting with his sickness; and will you refuse to come to Christ rather than part with this?

Sin is the wound, the plague of your souls. The more sins the more plague-sores; for sin is that which is called 'the plague of the heart,' 1 Kings 8:36. By reason of this, the prophet says, there

was no soundness in his people, nothing but wounds, &c., Isaiah 1:6. Now, is it any loss to part with the plague? is it any loss to be cured of a mortal wound? This is all that Christ would have you lose, and will you refuse him rather than part with it?

Sin is your ugliness, your deformity, that which makes your souls loathsome, Proverbs 13:5. Why loathsome, but because wicked? Every creature is lovely in God's eye, but this whom sin has polluted and putrified; it is sin that is your loathsomeness. Now would any woman that stands upon her preferment think it a loss to part with a loathsome deformity? This is your case: Christ would have you come, that he may espouse you; he requires no other terms than that you would be willing to part with your deformity; and will you lose Christ, rather than part with your loathsomeness?

Sin is your poison; so it is called, Deuteronomy 32:33; James 3:8, 'Full of deadly poison;' what is that but full of sin? If the tongue, much more the heart, for that is the spring of sin; being full of sin, it is full of deadly poison. This then is your condition: there is a deadly poison working in your bowels, working in your heart; it will certainly be your death if you do not void it; and this is all you lose by coming to Christ, only part with your poison, be willing to vomit up that which will otherwise ruin you. And will you love your poison more than Christ?

Sin is your frenzy and madness. The prodigal, till he was coming to his father, came not to himself. This is all Christ would have you part with. Will any but a madman be unwilling to be rid of his madness? It may be you slight these things now, and have quite other apprehensions of sin; but you will find it no better, you will apprehend it to be much worse than I have represented it; much worse, either here, or when it will be too late, if you persist. I beseech you, consider the day is coming, when you must stand before Christ's tribunal, to give an account of this very thing, why you would not part with sin, why you would not come to Christ. Will you then say, you thought better of sin than now you find it? But Christ will tell you, you heard what sin was from his mouth, from his messengers; you heard it was your sickness, your plague, your poison, your deformity, and yet you would lose me rather than part with it, you would prefer your plague and poison before me, offering you life and glory. Oh how glorious will the justice of Christ be in sending such sinners to hell, who will not have one word to plead more for themselves why they should not perish! How justly may he say to them, 'Depart from me,' who will not hear for all he can do or say, who will not here come to him, who will not part with the plague to come to him, who prefer their fetters and frenzy, their diseases and deformity, before Christ!

If Christ required you to cut off your members, there might be some plea, but it is only to part with your wounds; if he should bid you pluck out your hearts, &c., but he would only have you part with the plague of your hearts; if he should bid you abstain from meat for ever, then you might have something to plead; nay, but he would only have you abstain from poison: and then judge you, are not Christ's ways equal? Does he require you to come upon any unreasonable terms? Oh no. Even those that must perish for their refusals, as all must that will persist refusing, will be forced to confess that it was the most equal thing in the world that Christ desired, when he bade them leave their sins to come to him.

(2.) He waits till you come. The great God stoops so low as to wait upon sinners, Isaiah 30:18; he waits as one ardently desiring the motion, the return of sinners to himself, and shall he wait in vain? He stands willing to entertain you. If there was any fear not to be admitted, there might be

some plea for not coming; but he never rejects a returning sinner, he never did, he never will withdraw from them, or shut them out from himself, provided they come when he invites them. There is a time, indeed, when sinners shall not be admitted, but that is hereafter; when sinners have worn out his patience, and rejected his offers and entreaties, till there be no remedy; but 'now is the accepted time,' the time when you may be accepted: 'To-day, if ye will hear his voice,' and come to him, you shall undoubtedly enter into his rest. He that now resolves to come needs not doubt of entertainment, John 6:37; no matter what you have been, or what you are, how sinful, how unworthy, resolve but to come, this shall not hinder; he never did, he never will, cast out a returning sinner; he will not do it in anywise, upon any terms and considerations whatsoever: If you come when he calls, he will in nowise cast you out. And so he waits for your coming, waits industriously, waits patiently. He waits so as he uses all means to draw you to him. He speaks to you by his providence, he woos you by his word, he sends his messengers to invite, to entreat, to beseech you to come, he puts words in their mouths by which he would have them woo you, he suggests arguments to their minds by which he would have them persuade you, he assists them by his Spirit to manage these persuasions, to enforce these arguments, so as they may prevail, or leave you inexcusable; he sends these to you, when he neglects others; he sends them early and late, he sends them, and sends by them to you, rising up betimes, because he has compassion on you, 2 Chronicles 36:15; he bears with the disrespects you put upon his messengers, though they reflect upon himself; and though you refuse to hear, and be weary of hearing, yet is not the Lord weary of waiting, not weary of entreating; and when others or yourselves would put away the word, and break off this treaty for reconciliation, yet the Lord maugres all provocations, continues it. Oh the wonderful indulgence of Christ!

Nay, he comes himself, he leaves not himself without witness as to the vouchsafement of his presence; your consciences can tell, you are convinced, though not persuaded; he 'stands at the door and knocks;' he stretches out his hands to you, you see him held forth by the gospel in a posture ready to receive you, and when you take no notice, he calls, he lifts up his voice and cries to you; he calls to you over and over, Come, come, come unto me, Matthew 11:1-30, &c.; and thus he waits with patience, he waits whole days, all the day long; he stands day and night till his head be wet with the dew; nay, he waits whole years, 'These three years have I come, expecting fruit,' &c., 'Forty years long have I been grieved with this generation,' &c.; and when all this will not do, he breaks forth into sad complaints, and laments their wretched disregard of himself, and woeful cruelty to their own souls: 'Oh that thou hadst known,' &c., 'O Jerusalem,' Psalms 81:13; 'Oh that my people had hearkened unto me!' But then, if any sinner listen unto him, and be willing to come, why this is his joy, his delight; in this Christ rejoices, and heaven rejoices with him, Luke 15:7-10: Christ does, as it were, say to the angels, as he to his friends and neighbours, Luke 15:6, 'Rejoice with me;' this poor sinner was given me by the Father, he was mine by eternal purpose, but he had lost both himself and me, and now, after much seeking, I have found him, he is returning to me: 'Rejoice with me,' &c.

Oh if you will come to Christ, you will make Christ glad, you will make heaven rejoice! All this is clearly exemplified in the next parable of the prodigal: 'When the prodigal was yet a great way off, his father met him.' The son comes but towards his father, but the father runs towards an unworthy child; the son is ashamed of himself, his father had compassion on him; he stands accusing himself, his father falls on his neck and kisses him; he confesses his offence, his father never once

mentions it; he expects to fare like a servant, but is entertained as the most beloved son; the father provides him a robe, a ring, a feast, and entertains him with great joy: ‘For this my son,’ says he, ver. 24, ‘was lost, and is found,’ &c. See here, poor sinners, how you shall be entertained if you will return to Christ, even as the father entertained his prodigal son; he will run and meet you, he will have compassion on you, he will never upbraid you, he will fall, as it were, upon your neck and embrace you; he will think nothing too good, too fine, too costly for you; he will rejoice, and call others to rejoice with him for you. The Lord thinks it meet to rejoice and be glad: Luke 15:32, ‘This my son was dead, but he is come to me for life: he was lost, but I have found him.’ Oh how equal, how more than equal, is it to come to Christ, since he is so ready to meet you, since he will so joyfully entertain you.

4. The danger. And this is exceeding great, whether you consider the sin or the punishment; not to come to Christ is a most grievous sin, and will be most grievously punished; a heinous sin. For not to come Is murder; and which is more, soul-murder; and which is more, wilful murder of your souls. You know the cry of murder is louder than the cry of other sins, it is a loud crying sin; but soul-murder is more grievous, and cries louder for vengeance than that of the body, inasmuch as the soul is more precious and permanent than the body; but wilful murder is this sin in its highest exaltation of guilt and heinousness. Now you wilfully murder your souls if you will not come to Christ; for why does he invite you? he bids you come for life. Now if you will not come, you will not have life, you are resolved to die in your sins; you wilfully put away the life of your souls, and so murder them. Nor does it hinder that sinners are already dead in a spiritual sense: for to prevent life, is murder in the sight of God, as well as to take away life; those that wilfully procure abortions are as guilty of murder as those that cut the throats of their children. And this is the case, by refusing to come to Christ, you prevent the life of your souls; and this is as much murder as if one should deprive his soul of spiritual life after she is quickened. Here is an Italian cruelty indeed, to murder a soul, yea, and wilfully too. What means has Christ used to make you willing to come for life, and ye would not! what arguments have his messengers used to persuade you to come for life, and ye will not! what remains then, but if you perish, the blood of your souls will be upon your own heads? None else can be accused, of none else can your blood be required, Ezekiel 33:8-9; if you come to Christ, you may have life, but you will not; you may escape death, but you will not. If so, are you not then the death of your own souls? do you not wilfully murder them? Oh tremble at the apprehension of such a crime! and you that are afraid to shed the blood of others, imbrue not your hands in the blood of your own souls; as you would avoid the guilt of self, of soul murder, come to Christ, that you may have life.

Dangerous, in respect of the severity of Christ’s proceedings against this sin.

(1.) If you will not come to Christ, he will come against you, either in a severer way to reclaim you, or utterly to destroy you. This he threatens to Ephesus in case she returned not from a partial backsliding, Revelation 2:5; if you will not come when Christ calls, he will make you smart for it; so he warns Laodicea, Revelation 3:19; if he love you, he will whip you to himself rather than quite lose you; if the word prevail not, Christ will take the rod; if you will not hear, he will make you feel what it is to neglect him. Wise parents that are afflicted with rebellious children, if no other means will reclaim them, will rather send them to the house of correction than suffer them to come to the gallows; be sure of it, if the word move you not, Christ will sharply correct you, rather than let you perish, except you be castaways.

Manasseh was an obstinate sinner, he little regarded what the Lord spoke to him by his messengers, while he was in prosperity; but the Lord took another course with him, he gave him into the hands of the Assyrians, who bound him with fetters, and led him captive, and then he bethought himself of returning to the Lord, 2 Chronicles 33:1-25. The prodigal was resolute in his evil ways till he was almost starved, but want brought him first to himself, and then to his father. The Lord can take a course to starve you out of all the strongholds of sin, that hold out against Christ, and detain you from him; and if he take any pleasure in you, this course he will take, if the word prevail not. When Joab would not come to Absalom, he fired his corn-field, and that brought him. Look to it, if the Father hath given you unto Christ, he will not lose you; if fair means will not prevail, he will take another course; if your hearts be so much on any enjoyment, as it hinders you from Christ, he will find a way to take it from you; therefore if you would enjoy what he has vouchsafed you, come to Christ, that is the way to secure it; better you should not have anything left you in the world, than that anything in the world should keep you from Christ. As Christ has cords of love, so he has a rod of iron; if you break his cords, he will take his rod; such a rod, as if mercy manage it, it will bruise you, but if justice wield it, it will dash you in pieces; though you belong to him, he may bruise you. David's fall cost him broken bones; but if you are not his, the weight of it will grind you to powder; had you not better come to Christ at a word, than force him to take his rod, put him upon a severer course?

(2.) If you will not come to him, he will depart from you, and you know not how soon. Christ may wait long, but he will not wait ever; his patience will have a period, and thou knowest not how suddenly as to thy self. If thou now refuse, may be Christ will depart this instant; and when he is once gone, then woe to thee for ever, Hosea 9:12. Thou mayest hear his word, but it shall never profit thee; though it be spoke to thy ear, he will never speak to thy heart; then though thou call, yet will he not answer thee; though thou cry unto him, yet he will not regard thee, no more than thou wouldst formerly regard him; nay, he will 'laugh at thy destruction, and mock when thy fear cometh,' Proverbs 1:1-33. This will your sad estate be when Christ is gone, and it is your refusals that provoke him to depart. When Jerusalem would not come to him, would not be gathered by him, what follows? Matthew 23:37, immediately to their would not he returns, 'Behold your house is left unto you desolate,' Matthew 23:38. Why desolate? Not only because of those desolating judgments that were to follow, but because of Christ's departure, which was their forerunner; so he adds, Matthew 23:39, 'Desolate, because ye shall not see me there.' Ay, that place is desolate where Christ walks not, where he is not seen and enjoyed, whatever other company frequents it. And how many places that enjoy the gospel are left desolate in this respect? Their refusals have occasioned Christ's departure. The gospel does not convince, convert, persuade, it prevails not. Why? The people have sinned away Christ's presence. And then, though the gospel be sent, yet it is sent in wrath; for such a time we read of, when it is sent, not to heal and convert, but to harden and make blind, Hosea 6:9-10. This is the issue of refusing to come when Christ calls, and oh woeful is their condition to whom the only ordinary means of life is turned into the savour of death.

These are the sad effects of Christ's departure, and it will not be long ere he depart if ye still refuse him; though he be long-suffering, he is not ever-suffering. The spouse herself delayed but a little to admit Christ, and presently he was gone, Song of Solomon 5:2-3, Song of Solomon 5:6. Make haste then before it be too late; now you enjoy the light, come to Christ while you see the way, walk in the light while ye have the light; when Christ is gone, darkness comes, and he that walks in

darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. Now Christ stands and knocks, make haste and open to him; ere long he will not stand, he will not knock any more; now he seeks to you, if you will come, he will be found of you; if you put him off, you may seek him, but never find him more: 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;' but ere long this time, this day will be no more; now he invites, entreats, beseeches you to come. Oh that you would answer with the church, 'Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God!' Now he speaks, 'To-day, then, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, lest he swear in his wrath you shall never enter into his rest.'

(3.) If you will not come to Christ now, you shall not come to him hereafter. This was the sad issue of the Jews' refusal, John 7:33-34. Thus will it fare with all refusers; Christ will say to them, I sought you, and you would not be found of me, therefore now, though you seek me, you shall not find me; I came to you in my word and ordinances, by my messengers, by my Spirit, but you would not entertain me; sin and the world was more welcome than myself, therefore I will be gone, I will leave you; and whither I go, you shall not, you cannot come: I go to my Father, my abode will be henceforth in heaven, but you are joined to the world and your lusts; enjoy what you have chosen, me ye shall not enjoy, where I am, ye shall not come. Oh sad doom! Whither will wretched sinners go, since they must not come where Christ is! Now ye please yourselves with sin and outward enjoyments, but sin shall then be your torment, and all your delightful enjoyments shall then be consumed before your eyes; no joys, no hopes of any then, but in Christ (that which you will not believe now, your eyes shall then see); but when these are gone, Christ will be gone too, and whither he goes, ye shall not come. O forlorn sinner, 'thine own wickedness then shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: then thou shalt know and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God,' Jeremiah 2:19. Forsaken of all comforts in the world, and forsaken of Christ too! Oh woeful condition! This is it that your refusals lead to. If ye will not come to him, he will be gone; and whither he goes ye shall not come; if ye will not have Christ now, ye shall not have heaven then; if you say, We will not have this man (so holy, so strict, so severe against sin, so jealous of our compliance with the world) to rule over you now, why, you shall not rule, you shall not reign with him then. His kingdom will not be open for all comers, only for those that come to him here. Those that will not come now, must then go. Go whither? Why, go from Christ. Oh dreadful word! Go from Christ! There is hell in this word; yea, and then obstinate sinners will find it so. Christ now says, 'Come,' that is the voice of his love, of his gospel; ay, but if ye now refuse, Christ will change his note, ye shall hear other words from him; he that now says 'Come,' will then say, 'Go,' get ye hence, 'Depart from me, ye cursed;' you would none of me, my ways were too straight, too holy, too solitary; my yoke was uneasy, my burden too heavy in your account; well, now I have nothing to do with you, depart from me into everlasting burnings; get ye hence from me to the devil and his angels; to him ye came, to him ye shall go; from me ye departed, and now ye shall depart from me for ever; since you would not believe, now you shall feel what it is to prefer sin and the world before me. Go to the gods that ye have served, feed on the fruit of those lusts that ye have loved; get ye to him whose suggestions you would rather obey than my invitements, this is the doom of all that will not come, Matthew 25:41.

(4.) If ye will not come to Christ, ye shall not have life. This is the sense of the words, no life but in Christ, no partaking of life but by coming to Christ; if ye will not come to him for life, ye shall die in your sins, die spiritually, die eternally. No life at all, nothing but death, without Christ, without coming to Christ; if you will not come to Christ, why then bid adieu to Christ and life together, for

they can never be parted; if ye will not come, ye shall die; if ye will come, ye shall live.

Obs. Those that come to Christ shall have life. It is clearly implied, the scripture is in nothing more express than this, 1 John 5:12, as Christ professes that he is life in himself, John 14:16, so is he life to his people, to those that come to him, Colossians 3:4. But how come they to have life by Christ, but by believing? John 11:25, and believing is coming, John 6:35. But what life is this?

All that the Scripture compriseth in this word life, all that is opposite to that death which Adam brought into the world, Romans 5:1-21. For as the first Adam was the original of death in its full extent, so is Christ, the second Adam, of life in its utmost latitude; of life spiritual, eternal, yea, and of natural too; if not in its being, yet in its well-being. For though the two former be principally intended, yet must not the other be excluded, since it is a safe and received rule to understand Scripture in the largest sense, where there is no reason to restrain it. But the Jews were alive naturally when Christ thus spoke to them; what need was there to come for that which they had already? may some say. It is true, they had natural life in its being, but not in its well-being; they, and all, must come to Christ for that, or want it. Natural life without Christ is as good as no life; non est vita vivere, sed valere; it is the welfare of life that is life indeed, and this men get by coming to Christ, another kind of life natural than natural men partake of, in respect of the tenure, blessing, comfort, usefulness, tendency of this life, without which better not live than have this natural life.

1. Those that come to Christ shall have another kind of temporal life.

(1.) In respect of its tenure. Until sinners come to Christ, they hold their life only upon common providence, that is their title; but believers they hold their lives by virtue of the covenant of grace, and that is the most sweet and blessed tenure in the world, 1 Timothy 4:8. They have the promise of life, the Lord gives them a title by covenant; now covenant-mercies are the chief, if not the only mercies. Sinners out of Christ live as a condemned malefactor under a reprieve; sentence of death is passed, only the judge's patience suspends the execution. Such is the condition of a sinner's life; he is only suffered to live, he owes his life to the Lord's patience, he lives but by permission; ay, but he that is in Christ has his life by gift, a gift of love and free grace, not common patience, but special mercy gives him life, 1 Corinthians 3:22, and life among the rest. Until Christ be yours, even this temporal life is not yours upon covenant terms, not yours by virtue of special mercy and distinguishing love. Before your lives can thus be yours, Christ must be yours, you must come to him, or else want life while ye have it, want it upon those blessed and gracious terms.

(2.) In respect of the blessing of life. Life is not a blessing special but by Christ. Sinners out of Christ, as they are cursed when they die, so, while they live, the curse cleaves to their life, as the leprosy to Gehazi. It leaves not their natural life till they leave their natural condition, and come to Christ. Your temporal life is an accursed life till ye come to Christ; so it is from the womb to the grave, Deuteronomy 28:18. As soon as life is received, the curse is conceived, and expires not till the sinner comes to Christ, who became a curse, that those who come to him might be delivered from it. Life is a blessing in itself, but sin turns this blessing into a curse; and till sin be taken away, the curse continues, and guilt is not removed till the soul move to Christ; then, and not till then, does life become a blessing, when the sinner comes to Christ.

(3.) In respect of the comfort of life. Natural life can never be truly comfortable while the sinner lives out of Christ. He has the possession of life, but not the comfort of life, till Christ make it

comfortable: Psalms 87:7, ‘All my springs are in thee.’ Christ is the only spring of comfort in the world. Sin, at its first entrance into the world, made all other springs dry, and ever since, all the earth, and every part of it where Christ is not enjoyed, is a dry and thirsty wilderness, where there is no water, no drop of comfort. It is true sinners think their lives comfortable, but their comforts are but fancies, at least unhallowed comforts, such as will be bitterness in the end. If their coming to Christ prevent not, even their chiefest delights will end in the greatest bitterness. They will see (what now they are far from believing) that their mirth is but like the mirth of madmen. If they knew their condition, their joys would be turned into sorrow and astonishment. The Lord is in Christ the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. As all comforts are in him, so not a drop of comfort comes from him but through Christ; and none is conveyed through Christ to any but such as come to him. The fountain is sealed to all other sinners, 2 Corinthians 1:3; there is not the least ground of comfort in your lives while ye live without Christ. The comfort of life, which is indeed the life of our lives, is only from Christ, only for those that come to him.

(4.) In respect of the usefulness of life. Of what else* is the life of a sinner living without Christ? Serviceabler, indeed, it is to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, serviceabler it is to Satan to increase his subjects, and strengthen his kingdom; but how is it serviceable to God? how useful for promoting those great ends for which it is vouchsafed? In these respects it is of no use, renders the sinner a vessel in which the Lord takes no pleasure, as being unfit for his master’s use. Indeed the Lord serves himself of sinners, and overrules their lives, so as to force honour to himself out of them, but otherwise of their own accord they are unserviceable and useless. A sinner’s life without Christ is a talent hid in a napkin; the Lord of it gets no advantage by it; it serves to bring the sinner under the doom of an unprofitable servant. Of what other use is it? Your lives without Christ are as lamps without oil; if ye make not haste to Christ to light them, you will fare as the foolish virgins; the bridegroom may pass by, and shut you out of the marriage-chamber, shut you out of heaven for ever. The usefulness of your lives depend upon your coming to Christ; then only will they become serviceable, ‘vessels unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work,’ 2 Timothy 2:21. What Paul says of Onesimus, Philemon 1:11,—‘Which in time past’ (viz., before he came to Christ) ‘was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me,’—may be said of the life of every sinner before he comes to Christ. He is unprofitable to Christ, to his church, to his family, to his relations; not spiritually useful to any, no, nor to himself; a burden of the earth, one that cumbers the ground; barren himself, and keeps others barren; is fruitful in no respect, except in the unfruitful works of darkness; but when he comes to Christ, then serviceable to the Lord, to his people, &c. Oh, what is an useless life worth! Why, it is not worth the having, the desiring. If you would have your lives worth either, come to Christ; that is the way to make them useful; the usefulness of them depends on this.

(5.) In respect of the tendency of life. Natural life in a sinner without Christ tends to death; it is always as Jordan, running towards the Dead Sea. The tendency of it is to lock up the sinner faster in the grave of spiritual death, to roll more stones to the mouth of that woeful sepulchre, that he may be more sure of eternal death. The tendency of this life is deadly. Ay, but when he comes to Christ, his life tends to spiritual life and peace, to glory and happiness, to the glorifying of God, and being glorified with him. Christ turns the current.

Thus you see that natural life, in all respects wherein it is truly desirable, depends upon coming to Christ. Till then, this life is little better than death; and the sinner, while he lives without Christ, is, as the apostle speaks of our living in pleasure, 1 Timothy 5:6, ‘dead while he lives.’ And so was the prodigal, till he came to his father; he was frolic, merry, active, lively enough in his own ways; but when he was not himself, his father, who could better judge of his state, took him for a dead, a lost man: ‘This my son,’ says he, ‘was dead,’ &c. And herein, as otherwise, he was an emblem of a sinner out of Christ; how merry, jovial, lively soever he be in the ways of sin, he is as a dead man in the Lord’s account. Natural life does then become truly life when a sinner comes to Christ, and those that come shall find it so in the premised respects.

Thus in these respects temporal life is from Christ. Now,

2. Spiritual life is from him in all respects. Those that come to him, and only those, shall have spiritual life from him, both a life of righteousness and holiness.

(1.) A life of righteousness. That is it which the apostle calls, Romans 5:18, ‘Justification of life comes upon all men.’ Not all and every man, but all that come to him, all that are his. As condemnation came upon all that were Adam’s, death came by Adam’s sin, justification to life by Christ’s righteousness; that to all that were in Adam, this to all that are in Christ, all men being in Adam, and death threatened in case he should sin; ‘In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,’ Genesis 2:17. He sinning, the sentence of death passed upon him, and all his posterity in him; so that all men by nature are dead men in law, they are condemned already, John 3:18. Now the sentence of God’s condemning man to death being most just and righteous, it is irrevocable, and so death unavoidable. Christ then, seeing God’s justice could not be salved nor satisfied without death, was willing to suffer the death threatened, and this he suffered for those, and only those, that come to him. Wherefore a sinner coming to Christ, when he finds in the law the sentence of death awarded against him, it is true, may he say, the sentence is most righteous; death is due to my sin, but Christ has suffered that death; he died in my stead, and God looked upon him dying for my sin as though I myself had died for it; and death being suffered, the law is satisfied, and I am absolved; I am in Christ, come to him, and there is no condemnation to such, Romans 8:1-39. The Lord himself has justified me, as having suffered in Christ what justice required, and therefore now nothing can be laid to my charge, according to Romans 8:33-34. Can any charge me that by law I am condemned to death? No, ‘it is God that justifies me.’ He absolves me, ‘who is he then that condemneth?’ But how can this stand with the truth and justice of God, who has peremptorily passed the sentence of death against thee, and said, ‘In the day thou sinnest thou shalt surely die’? Why, very well, for Christ has died in my stead; so he adds, ‘It is Christ that died.’ Thus by Christ’s sufferings and righteousness comes the justification of life to those who come to Christ. Hence the favour of God, Psalms 30:5, Psalms 63:3.

(2.) A life of holiness. This is life in Scripture phrase. Hence, when a sinner is translated out of the state of nature into the state of grace, he is said to pass from death to life, 1 John 3:1-24. When he first receives the principles of holiness, he is said to be born again, John 3:1-36, and the progress in holiness is called a new life: Romans 6:4, ‘newness of life,’ after the Hebrew phrase, who put the abstract for the concrete, newness for new, &c. This life is from Christ, and those that come to him have it from him in these respects:

[1.] Principles of this life. The seeds, the habit of grace, every perfect gift, comes from above, as all light comes from the sun; but how do these gifts come from him? By, or in whom are they conveyed? The apostle tells us, Ephesians 1:1-23, in Christ. When the soul, coming to Christ, has union with him, it is united to the fountain of life. Christ is that to the soul which the soul is to the body; accordingly it is expressed, Galatians 2:20, 'Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Even as we may say, the body of a man lives, yet not the body, but the soul lives in it, by virtue of its union with the soul; so a believer lives, yet not he, but Christ lives in him; and the life that he lives is by virtue of his union with Christ, by faith uniting him with the Son of God. No life of grace, no seeds, no principles of it, without coming to Christ, without union with him; those that come to him shall be united with him, shall be replenished with these principles.

[2.] The increase of this life. This is from Christ, John 10:10. Justification and glory are not capable of addition or diminution, cannot be said to decay or abound; it must be meant of the life of holiness. As Christ lays the foundation, so he carries on the building; both the being and increase is from him; even as animal spirits (upon which the life, and motion, and sense, the vital acts of the body, depend) are conveyed in abundance by the several parts through the whole body, from the head, so from the head Christ (it is the apostle's similitude, which he uses more than once, Ephesians 4:15-16). All that tends to the growth of Christ's body is conveyed from the head to the several parts and members, compacted together for the better conveyance of this lively influence to the whole. And this is by and 'according to the effectual working of Christ in every part,' according to its capacity, and hence arises the increase thereof, which he expresses by the same resemblance, Colossians 2:19. From Christ the head, all his members, mutually united amongst themselves, and unto him, as it were by joints and ligaments, have nourishment ministered, so as they increase with the increase of God, i. e., with an exceeding great increase; according to the property of the Hebrew tongue, much followed in the New Testament, who, when they would express the exceeding greatness of a thing, they add the name of God unto it: Psalms 80:11, goodly cedars, ■■■■ ■■, the cedars of God; so Psalms 36:7. Righteousness, as the great mountains, ■■■■■ ■■; so Song of Solomon 8:6. So here, the spiritual nourishment which he conveys to those who come to him, are one with him, tends to make their increase, their growth in grace, an exceeding great increase; to him we must go if we would grow in grace, if we would have this life in more abundance. If we would not be guilty of the back-slidings, barrenness, non-proficiency, for which the Lord has a controversy with the professors of our times, we must come to Christ for it; it is he that causeth all grace to abound, it is of his fulness that his people receive grace for grace.

[3.] The acts of this life. The exercise of holiness, as the habit is from him, so is the act; it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do; both the inward motion, to will, and the outward expression, to do, is from him. If a man have never so much strength, yet if he sleep, he acts not, till he be stirred up; if a man have never so much grace, if he be not acted, excited by Christ, if he have not a special assistance from Christ's Spirit, he cannot, he will not exercise it. We see many sanctified, as having the principles of holiness implanted in them, yet few acts, little exercise of it in their conversation; why? They neglect Christ, rest on what is received, depend not on him for special assistance to act them, and draw grace into exercise. Independency in acting is God's prerogative: Php 4:13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' He wanted not habitual, but actual strength, without which we can do nothing, with which a weaker Christian can outdo a

stronger: 2 Corinthians 3:5, ‘Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.’ What sufficiency was wanting? Why, Christ’s special help, to move, act, determine holy principles; without which, not sufficient for a good thought; if we would have the lively, vigorous actings of grace, we must come to Christ; if we would not have the principles of life received to lie unactive in the soul, as though they were dead, we must come to Christ for this life; he has it for those who come.

[4.] The continuance of this life. Though ye have received it, and that in abundance, and exercise it accordingly, yet without Christ, grace itself would die and expire; it is he that keepeth our soul in life, Psalms 66:9. The continuance of this life depends upon Christ’s intercession and acting for us; he tells Peter, Luke 22:32, ‘I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.’ And every one that comes to him is included in this prayer: John 17:15, ‘I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but deliver them from the evil;’ from those evils that are destructive to life, and threaten the death of the soul. In order hereto, he strengthens them to resist those assaults, those blows, which would else prove mortal; he enables them to oppose corruption within, and Satan and the world without, so that they are in all these ‘more than conquerors.’ But how? ‘Through him that has loved us,’ Romans 8:37. He keeps them in his hand, else they might be plucked from him, life itself plucked from them, John 10:26. Spiritual life in all these respects is from Christ, and those that come to him may have it of him.

3. Eternal life is from Christ. Those that come to him shall have eternal life, in respect of title, hopes, and earnest here, and possession hereafter.

(1.) Title to eternal life. Adam in his integrity, and we in him, had a right to eternal life, the promise of God was our patent, but sinning, and failing in the condition, he, and we in him, utterly lost all title to eternal life; nor can any son of Adam, out of Christ, lay any claim to it. But the Lord Jesus Christ has bought a new title for those that come to him. It cost him dear indeed, the price was his blood, but all that come to him shall have it freely; he bought it for this end, and therefore heaven is called a purchased possession, Ephesians 1:14. The patent is renewed, another title is acquired. But for whom? Those only that come to him; none else have right to it: Revelation 22:14, ‘Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.’ What commandments are those upon which this right is suspended? Why, the first and chief commandment is, that we come to him, and if there be any other, it depends upon this; when this is done, Christ gives a sinner right to the tree of life.

(2.) Hope of eternal life. A lively hope, an assuring hope, a well-grounded hope, such a hope as makes it so sure as though we were in possession. Hence believers are said to be already saved, Ephesians 2:8, Titus 3:4. But salvation is yet to come; how are we then said to be already saved? The apostle tells us: Romans 8:24, ‘By hope.’ But whence comes this hope? See 1 Timothy 1:1, Colossians 1:27. Christ is the foundation of this hope, and to them only who come to him, 1 Peter 2:4, 1 Peter 2:6. Those alone shall not be confounded. Those who hope for heaven, and yet are so much in love with sin as they will not come to Christ, and yet will hope for heaven, shall find their hopes delusions, and thereupon, as men who beyond all expectation meet with great disappointments, shall be confounded, their hopes shall make them ashamed. That hope which makes not ashamed, is the hope of those who have fled to Christ for refuge, to lay hold on him, the hope set before them, Hebrews 6:18-19. This is the anchor of the returning soul; it will secure him

in all storms, for it is both sure and stedfast, it is firmly and deeply fixed, and that in a sound bottom too: it entereth into that within the veil, the bottom where it is fixed is heaven, figured by the holy of holies, which was separated from the body of the temple by the great curtain or veil. He anchors in heaven who comes to Christ, who is entered there as his forerunner; he may safely ride out all storms, and is sure to arrive where his forerunner is landed, even in heaven.

(3.) Earnest, the first fruits of eternal life. Those that come to Christ shall have the beginnings of heaven here on earth, the first fruits of eternal life even in this life, some clusters of Canaan's grapes in the wilderness. Heaven is a place of joy, here they shall have joy unspeakable; a state of enjoyment, here they shall enjoy the presence and favour of God, fellowship with the Father, a state of glory; here some buddings of glory, that which makes them all glorious within, that for which they are said to be changed from glory to glory; a state of vision, here they shall see with open face the glory of God, though but in a glass, here they shall have a Pisgah sight of heaven at least.

(4.) The possession of life eternal, John 6:40. They are so sure to possess it, as though they were in present possession. The expression is answerable, John 6:47, 1 John 5:10-11.

Use 1. Information. Take notice of the misery of those who will not come to Christ. Those only that come to him have life; those, therefore, that come not to him are without life.

Without the blessings and comforts of natural life. The life you live without Christ is but such as the life of condemned malefactors; it is an uncomfortable, an unuseful, an accursed life, such as tends to death.

Without spiritual life in all respects. Justice has passed the sentence of death upon every such sinner, and it will never be repealed without satisfaction, which being of infinite value, none can tender but Christ, and he tenders it for none but those that come to him; till then, every such sinner is ■■ ■■■, a son of death: 1 Samuel 20:31, rendered, 'He shall surely die;' or, as the Hellenists phrase it, John 17:12, ■ ■ι■ς τ■ς ■πωλε■ας, a lost, a dead man; so he is in law already condemned, John 3:19. Light Christ revealed in the gospel, and men love darkness, sin, the work of darkness, their natural sinful state, which is the state of darkness, and this is condemnation. For this cause sinners are under the sentence of condemnation; and if God be just, as just he is essentially, no less than merciful, the sentence now passed will be executed on all that come not to Christ. This was the issue of the first sin: Romans 5:18, 'Judgment came upon all;' so that every son of Adam, as soon as he lives, has judgment of condemnation to death, and so he continues a condemned person under the sentence of death, till he come to Christ, and then only is he absolved, Romans 8:1. Till then, as justice has sentenced him, so wrath attends him, he can have no sense of the favour of God, which is better than life, and so his condition is in this respect worse than death.

Use 2. Examination. By this ye may know whether ye be come to Christ or no. It concerns thee as much as thy life to know this, and yet few regard. Most take it for granted, when they have no ground for it, and therefore I have delivered many things formerly tending to conviction, that none may deceive themselves in a matter of such consequence; but because Satan and men's corrupt hearts are great enemies to this conviction, and it is the hardest thing we meet with to convince any of those who profess Christ that they are not come to Christ, let us make use of this truth for a

further discovery. Would ye know whether ye be come to Christ or no? Why, by this you may know it: if ye be come to Christ ye have life, spiritual life. But how shall this be known? Why, by such resemblances betwixt natural and spiritual life as the Scripture holds forth; as where there is natural life there is breath, motion, sense, so where there is spiritual life there is spiritual breathings, motions, sensibleness.

1. Where there is life there is breath. Death is expressed by want of breath: Psalms 104:29, ‘Thou takest away their breath, they die;’ and life is expressed by breath, as that which is inseparable from it, Ezekiel 37:5-6, Ezekiel 37:8, Ezekiel 37:10. Where there is spiritual life there is breathings after God; so Lamentations 3:56. The quickened soul breathes after God, the sense of his favour, communion with him; breathes after Christ’s righteousness, the power of his death, the virtue of his resurrection; after growth in grace, and increase of holiness, victory over sin; after the enjoyment of God, Christ in his ordinances, nothing else will satisfy; so David, Psalms 42:1-2, Psalms 27:4, Psalms 63:1-2. Think not we go too high in making David’s example our rule; our gospel enjoyments require more, though few answer them. Where spiritual life is, there will be in some degree such breathings after Christ, such ardent desires, in some degree, more or less, according to the degrees of spiritual life: where no such breath, no life; that soul is not yet quickened, not yet come to Christ.

2. Where there is life there is motion. These are joined: ‘In him we live and move;’ they are inseparable both in grace and nature. When the soul is quickened, it moves towards God, the bent and inclination of the heart is after Christ, the affections are carried out to him, the conversation is an acting for him, it has another centre, and moves to other terms, from sin and the world, to Christ and heaven, Colossians 2:1. It moves spiritually. A natural man may move in God’s ways, but he moves not spiritually; he may pray, read, hear, meditate, but not spiritually, not out of love to Christ, but out of custom, self-love, enforcements of conscience; not to honour Christ, not with any desires to enjoy him, but for by-ends, sinister respects; not affectionately, but in a heartless, careless, unaffected manner. If the work be done, he is satisfied, whatever the temper of his heart was in doing of it; whether God get glory by it, or he enjoy Christ in it, he regards not; so the duty be performed, it is enough. Such motion there may be without spiritual life, but it is spiritual motion which is the pulse by which ye may know this spiritual life. Where no heavenly inclinations, no holy tendencies towards Christ, with desires to enjoy and honour him, there is no spiritual life, such as are* not yet come to Christ.

3. Where there is life there is sense. The quickened soul sees a transcendent excellency in Christ, as to contemn, part with all for him; sees a loathsome deformity in sin, sees a wonderful beauty in holiness, sees a woeful misery in a natural condition, and sees so as his soul is affected with it. Where these objects are not spiritually seen, affectionately discerned, there is no spiritual life.

Hears. The heart hears. That which comes but to the ears of others, when the gospel makes known the mysteries of regeneration, of Christ’s righteousness imputed, of self-denial, of mortification, hears them as things which he finds, and has experience of in his own heart. When Christ commands to leave sin, to mortify lusts, be crucified to the world, decline his own carnal humours, interests, inclinations, he hears so as to obey, to resolve and endeavour it.

Feels a weight, a burden in sin, feels the wounds it has made in his soul; he wonders he should be so much past feeling before, as not to be sensible of that load of sin which was pressing his soul

down towards the pit. His conscience smarts by those sins which the world count not worthy the name of sin. Those that are past feeling are without life.

Tastes the sweetness of Christ, 1 Peter 2:1-25. Christ is sweeter to him than any of the pleasures of sin. Formerly he heard of Christ's sweetness, and had such apprehensions of it as he had of the Israelites' manna, which he never saw nor tasted; he thought of Christ's sweetness before, but now he has tasted his sweetness.

He tastes sweetness in the promises. They are sweeter to him than the honey and the honey-comb, he feeds on them as on manna, he lets them lie long on his soul, in his thoughts, as sweet things on our palates; they are his dainties, his refreshment in the night-season, he has meat to feed on which the world knows not of.

He tastes sweetness in spiritual enjoyments. Enjoyment of Christ in his ordinances, this is to his soul as marrow and fatness; as David promises himself, if he should again see the power and glory of God in the sanctuary: 'Then my soul shall,' &c., Psalms 63:5. If you never tasted this, never had experience of so much pleasure in word, or prayer, or meditating on Christ or promises, but you have taken more delight in worldly pleasures; never tasted such sweetness therein, but that you can live comfortably without them, if outward comforts be but continued, then it is evident you are yet without spiritual life, not yet come to Christ. THE LORD THE OWNER OF ALL THINGS AN INDUCEMENT FROM EARTHLY-MINDEDNESS For all … is thine.—1 Chronicles 29:11.

These words are part of David's praise and solemn thanksgiving to God. In which we may observe, 1, the occasion or ground; 2, the form and mode of it.

1. The occasion of it is this, as laid down in the former verses: David, in a general assembly of his people, declaring his design to prepare for the building of a temple for the solemn worship of God, moves them to contribute towards it, and encourages them by his own example. They comply with him herein, and contribute 'willingly,' cheerfully, of their own accord, without further importunity; 1 Chronicles 29:6, 'sincerely,' not out of ostentation, not to gratify their king, but to honour God in promoting his interest and service; 1 Chronicles 29:9, 'liberally,' in great proportion; for reckoning a talent of silver at £375, and a talent of gold at £4500, what they offered amounted to above twenty-six millions of pounds sterling (besides the ten thousand drams of gold, the other metals, and precious stones, 1 Chronicles 29:7), which, with what David himself gave out of his private treasury, being above sixteen millions more, 1 Chronicles 29:4, makes a very vast sum. For this he and the people rejoice. Pleasure is τελε■ας ■υεργε■ας ■πιγιν■μενον τ■λος, the result of an excellent act, 1 Chronicles 29:9, and David lets forth this joy in public praises, 1 Chronicles 29:10. He blesses and praises God, not because they had so much, but because they had hearts to lay out so much for God and his worship. It is more occasion of joy and praise to expend much for God and for his service than to have much to expend. To have much may be a curse and a snare, and matter of greater condemnation; but to have a heart to employ it for God is a happiness indeed, a far more blessed thing than to keep it, or to gain it, or any way to receive it, Acts 20:25. And this is a truth so evident to reason (though a paradox to worldlings), that the heathen did acknowledge it. Isidore tells us it was the maxim of some amongst the Persians.

2. The form or mode of his praising God we have in this verse. It is an ascribing all excellencies to him. Whence we may learn wherein the true praising or blessing of God consists; it lies in acknowledging that to be God's which is his. We can give him nothing, for all is his; we can add nothing to him or his glories by blessing him, he is far above all such praises and blessings; he wants nothing that is excellent, he is all-sufficient of himself, and infinite in all his perfections, and was so from, and will be so to, everlasting. All that men and angels can do is to acknowledge him to be what he is, and to have what he hath. And to do this is to praise or bless him. Thus, when our Lord Jesus is teaching his disciples how to pray, and how to praise the Most High, this is the mode of praising him, Matthew 6:13, 'Thine is,' &c. And after the same manner does David here praise him.

'Thine is the greatness.' Thou art immensely, infinitely great, and all other greatness besides is from thee, it is thine.

'The power.' Thy power is almighty, and the power of all others is derived from thee, and depends altogether upon thee, it is thine.

'The glory.' Thou art all-glorious, and all other glory is but the shadow of it.

'The victory.' Thou conquerest all that oppose thee, and givest victory to all that vanquish, the victory is thine.

'The majesty,' or 'authority' as some render it. Thou hast all authority in heaven and earth, and all that have authority have it from thee; what is not exercised for thee is no authority, and what is duly exercised is thine.

'The kingdom.' Whoever rules in any realm, the kingdom is thine; O Lord, they do but rule by commission from thee, and as substitutes under thee; thou art supreme governor of them all, thou art exalted as head above all, and, in a word, all is thine, all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine.

All dominion is here ascribed to God, whether it signify rule, or whether it signify propriety; God is both the ruler of all, and likewise the owner of all. I have insisted on the former at large in some late discourses, and the latter I have chosen for my present subject. Take it in this observation, clearly held forth in the words of the text, Obs. The Lord is the owner of all things.

Whatever is in being is either in heaven or on earth, and all this is the Lord's; he has the best title to it, he is the true proprietor and owner of it. This is a truth of great moment and consequence, yet little, or not at all (so far as I have observed) insisted on in pulpits, and but sparingly touched in writings; but since it is of much importance, and exceeding useful to stay a little on, it may not be amiss. In the prosecuting hereof, I shall endeavour to shew, I. What evidence there is in Scripture for the Lord's title to all things. II. What kind of title it is for which he is called the owner of all. III. What the ground and foundation of it is, upon what account he challenges it and will have it acknowledged. And then, IV. What useful application may be made of it, how much and excellent fruit it will bear if it be duly improved.

I. For the first, the Scripture abounds with evidence for this purpose, asserting the Lord's title to all things, even such as we count ours, whether ours in common with others, or such as we think to be properly ours.

1. Of the former sort; the world in general is said to be his own, Psalms 50:12, the fulness, the furniture of it, whatever fills it or adorns it, whatever does replenish or beautify it: ‘The world, and all that it contains, is mine.’ More particularly the principal and integral parts of this great fabric, with appurtenances. Heaven is his, Psalms 89:11, and whatsoever has the name of heaven, Deuteronomy 10:14. The heaven of heavens; i. e., the highest heavens, these are the throne of the Most High; and the heavens, i. e., both the ether, the place of stars and planets, and the air, called heaven, Genesis 1:20, &c., this is called his chamber, Psalms 104:3, the beams of his upper rooms in the watery clouds; and these clouds are his chariot, and the winds (which are but air in motion) are the wheels of his chariot. All, from the highest to the lowest, are his own. The sea also is his, Psalms 95:5, and so are the rivers; and he resents it as an intolerable arrogance in Pharaoh, king of Egypt, that he would lay claim to the river Nilus as his own, Ezekiel 29:9. The earth likewise, Exodus 19:5, not one, or many regions of the earth, but all, and all the parts of it, high and low, even to the centre, Psalms 95:4, and all the furniture of the whole, and every part of it, Psalms 24:1, whatsoever in the least takes up any part of the earth, whatsoever is in it, Deuteronomy 10:14. He lays claim to whatever is under the whole heaven as his own, Job 41:11.

Finally, no more need be, if any more may be added, under this head. Time is his, and every season and moment of it, Psalms 74:16-17. We are ready to say, We have time enough for this or that; but if we presume that it is ours, and at our disposing, it must be such time as falls neither under night nor day, nor any season of the year; for every moment of this is the Lord’s, and so wholly at his disposal.

2. But there may be more question of things under the other head, such as we count properly ours. Yet here we may be deceived in the title, and mistake the true owner. There is as much evidence that the Lord is the true proprietor and right owner even of these. We may be proprietors in respect of men, so far as none of them may be able to produce any good title, or lay any just claim to what we have, nor can of right deprive us of it; but we are no proprietors in reference to God. He is the owner of us, and all we have, and not ourselves, as will be manifest by an induction of particulars collected from the Scriptures.

(1.) Lands; that which is left one as his inheritance, or that which he purchaseth, or which he is otherwise legally instated in; this he counts unquestionably his own: and so it may be, as to any title that man can set up against it: Psalms 49:11, they impose their names upon their lands, signifying thereby that they are the undoubted owners of them; and others agree with them herein, and say, This is such a man’s land, and that is such a man’s. But the Lord puts in another claim, which will carry it: ‘The land,’ says he, ‘is mine,’ Leviticus 25:23. This is spoken not of the land as it was then only, but as it would be when the Lord had given it them, as much as he gives anything, when they had conquered it, and the law of nations, κρατο■μεν ■κ* τ■ν κρατο■ντων ■■ναι φασ■, when it was divided amongst them, and each one had possession of his share; when it was as much theirs as anything could be among men, yet then says the Lord, ‘The land is mine.’ You cannot dispose of it as you will, but as the chief landlord, the true proprietor will allow you. And the same may be said of houses as of lands; we are no more the owners of the one than of the other in reference to the Lord of all. The Lord shewed how much they are his own in giving not only the lands, but the houses and cities of the Canaanites to the children of Israel. And when the Israelites built a house, they used to dedicate it, Deuteronomy 20:5; and the solemnity of the dedication was feasting and thanksgiving, and by this means they acknowledged the Lord’s interest in their

habitation. The 30th Psalm is such a thanksgiving at the dedication of David's house, as the title of it tells us. So when the walls of Jerusalem were built, they were solemnly dedicated, Nehemiah 12:27. And because they were wont to be dedicated by other nations, hence the civil law determines, that the gates and walls of cities, nullius in bonis sunt, are no man's property, ædificio* cadit solo.

(2.) The fruits of the land, whatever it yields, is as much the Lord's as the land itself. Though among us he that does but farm some ground, and pretends to no other title, yet the fruits of it, and what through his industry it produceth, he counts his own; yet whoever let it, or take it, whatever care, or pains, or culture is spent upon it, the Lord is the owner of all that it yields, Hosea 2:9. She calls all her own, Hosea 2:5; but the Lord shews her who was the true owner, and will make her understand effectually whose it was by disposing of it as he pleases. He that has the present disposal, has the propriety. So it is made an aggravation of the people's idolatry, that what was the Lord's of right they offered to idols, Ezekiel 16:18-19.

Cattle also, wherewith the land is stocked, and wherein, in ancient times, their riches did principally consist, Job 1:3, are as much his. Whoever have the possession, the Lord is the owner, Psalms 50:10-11. Hence it was ordained under the law, that the children of Israel should offer the first-born of their cattle, and the first-fruits of their trees and lands, unto God, Exodus 34:19-20. This was the tenure by which they held of him all they had; by this part they acknowledged him to be Lord of all, and that he was the proprietor, though they had the use of all. Thus what was not fit to be offered, was to be redeemed; and if they did not redeem it, though it were but an ass, no man had any right in it so much as to use it, Exodus 13:13. God's propriety in such things is evident by one instance, Matthew 21:2.

(3.) Money and clothes also are as much his, though they be on our backs, or in our coffers, as that which is most our own; yet the Lord is more the owner thereof than the possessor, Haggai 2:8. This David acknowledges in this chapter. All the silver, and gold, and precious stones, and other metals which they offered so willingly for the building of the temple, it was all the Lord's, even before they offered it, Haggai 2:14, Haggai 2:16. And thus the act of the Israelites is best justified, when they spoiled the Egyptians, and restored not the jewels of silver, and gold, and raiment which they had borrowed, Exodus 12:35-36. To detain that which is not ours, without the owner's consent, is theft; but here the Israelites had the consent of the chief Owner; they had his special warrant for it, who was the Lord of all the Egyptians had, and had right to dispose of it to whom he pleased. If the Lord had not been more the owner of the Egyptians' raiment and jewels, then they themselves, the Israelities could not be excused.

(4.) There is something counted more ours than any of the former, viz., our children; the parents' relation to them is such as cannot be extinguished, nor transferred to any other; they have such interest in them, and such power to dispose of them, as amongst the Israelites they might, in some cases, sell them, as when they could not otherwise pay their debts, or were not able to sustain them, Exodus 21:7. And amongst the Romans they had power of life and death over their children: κα■ πιπρ■σκειν το■ς πα■δας το■ς γονε■σιν ■πετρεψαν κα■ φονε■ειν ■τιμωρ■τως. The ancient laws of the Romans, says Simplicius, allowed parents both to sell their children and to put them to death without being questioned for it. Yet for all this parents are not so much the owners of their children as God is, who is the owner of all, Ezekiel 16:20-21. The ground of parents' interest

in their children, and why they are judged so much their owners, is because they give them life and being; but this reason will shew the Lord more the owner of them, for he contributes more to the life and being of children than the parents do, and without him they could do nothing towards it. It is in him that all the children of men live, move, &c., Acts 17:25, Acts 17:28. And we find when he calls them ‘my sons,’ then the ground of it is added, ‘the work of my hands,’ Isaiah 45:11.

(5.) We are thought to have much propriety in our children, but much more in ourselves, and yet the Lord has more propriety in our persons than we ourselves; so much more, that we are said in Scripture not to be our own in comparison, 1 Corinthians 6:19. His title and interest in us is so great, that all which we conceive we have in ourselves is swallowed up by it. We are not our own. Whose are we then? who has more right to us? Why, his we are who made us, Psalms 100:3. He hath made us, and (as it may be as well read) his we are. We are his people, his servants. A bond-servant was no way sui juris, could no way dispose of his own person, it was part of his master’s goods; peculium domini, he might sell it, or do what he would with it, in servum omnia licent. Our persons are no more our own than such servants were. We are more the Lord’s than they were their master’s.

(6.) It need not now seem strange to tell you that the Lord is the owner of our bodies, that he has so much propriety therein as they are more his than ours. The apostle tells us as much: 1 Corinthians 6:20, ‘Glorify God in your bodies, which are his.’ Our bodies, and every member thereof, are his; for if the whole be so, no part is exempted. And therefore they spake proud things, and presumptuously usurped the propriety of God, who said, ‘Our lips are our own,’ Psalms 12:3-4; as though their lips had not been his who is Lord and Owner of all, but they had been lords thereof, and might have used them as they list. This provoked God to shew what right he had to dispose of such lips and tongues, by cutting them off.

(7.) But what shall we say of our souls? Our bodies indeed may be so in our power, and at the disposal of others, that we cannot count them, nor use them as our own; they may be imprisoned or enslaved, yea, or sold. That has been ordinary heretofore, to make sale of the bodies of men as well as anything else; but the soul would remain free in such a condition, and is not in danger of any such bondage, confinement, or alienation, nor anything else that can hinder it from being called or used as our own. Is it not so, are not our souls our own? The Lord answers this himself, Ezekiel 18:4; and the apostle says both the body and the spirit or soul is the Lord’s, and not our own, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; consequently all the powers of the soul are his, and all the abilities of those faculties, in what degree soever they are found or exercised in the soul of man, for he that is the owner of the principal has right to the accessories.* So you see it is most clear in Scripture that God is the owner of all, and every thing and person.

II. Now, since all just propriety and right has some good ground and foundation, let us inquire in the next place what is the ground and foundation of the Lord’s title to and propriety in all things, and so discover the reason why he is the owner of all; and this will shew the justness of his claim, and the necessity and reasonableness of acknowledging it, and yielding to it. Now, the ground of God’s propriety in all things is his creating of all, and (which is equivalent to creation) his upholding them. Redemption is a ground of peculiar interest in the redeemed; but it is not pertinent here to insist upon that, because the question is of an universal propriety, not in some, but in all, and the foundation of this general title to all is creation. Accordingly, you may observe in many of the

scriptures before quoted, as also in others, where the Lord's propriety is asserted, this, as the ground of it, is annexed: Psalms 89:11-12, the heavens, the earth, the whole world, and all therein is thine. Why so? 'Thou hast founded them.' And so are all the regions and quarters of the world, northern and southern, western and eastern; for Tabor was on the west, and Hermon on the east; all are thine, for thou hast created them. So sea and land, Psalms 95:5. As all things measured by time, so time itself, the measure of all, Psalms 74:16-17. 'Thou hast made the light,' i.e., the moon for the night, and the sun for the day. He lays claim to all the climes of the earth, and all the seasons of the year, on this account; he made them. So children are his, being the work of his hands, Isaiah 45:11; and our persons his own, because he made us, Psalms 100:3. He still produceth.* He that gave all their being is clearly the owner of all; he has all right in the work of his hands, to dispose of it as he will. This will be more evident and unquestionable, if we take notice of these particulars.

1. He made all for himself. He was not employed by any to make it for another, for in that case the maker is sometimes not the owner; but the Lord did employ himself in that great work, and for himself did he undertake and finish it, Proverbs 16:4, Colossians 1:15-16. The first-born, the heir of all, because all created, not only by, but for him, Revelation 4:11. Not for the pleasure of another, as the Israelites wrought for Pharaoh.

2. He made all things of nothing, either without any matter at all, or without any but what himself had before made of nothing. A potter when he makes an earthen vessel, if the clay be not his own which he makes it of, he is not the full owner of the vessel, though he formed it: the form is his, the matter is another's; but since the Lord made all of nothing, or of such matter as himself had made, all is wholly his, matter and form, all entirely. Caius; Ex alienis tabulis navim fecit, navis ejus erit de cujus ligno.

3. He made all without the help or concurrence of any other. There was none that assisted him, or did in the least co-operate with him in the work of creation. He created all, ο■δενος ■πιδε■μενος, as Athanasius. He needed none, he used not any help foreign, Isaiah 44:24. Those that assist and concur with another in the making of a thing, may claim a share in it; but here lies no such claim in this case, where the Lord alone did all, alone made all. All is his only.

4. He upholds all things in the same manner as he created, continues the being of all things in the same way as he gave it. He does it of himself, without other support, without any assistant. All would fall into nothing in a moment, if he did not every moment bear them up. So that all things upon this account have still their being from him every moment, and their well-being too, and all the means which conduce to it; and therefore all are his own, Colossians 1:16-17, Hebrews 1:2-3. His Son is the heir, i. e., the owner of all things, not only because he made the worlds, but also because he, as one God with the Father, upholds all things. He that thus created all, thus maintaineth all, must needs be the owner of all. There cannot be a more full and clear title to propriety in all or any things, than the Lord's so creating, and so upholding of all and every thing. Why the Lord is owner of all hereby we see.

Now for the ■τι that he is so, may be thus made evident. Propriety is a right of possessing, disposing, and using the thing or person owned. And such a right the Lord has in reference to all things and persons, and shews he has it by acting accordingly.

1. He has a right to possess all, and is actually in possession of all. The ‘possessor of heaven and earth,’ i. e., of the whole world, is his title and attribute, Genesis 14:19, Genesis 14:22. Psalms 139:14, he ‘fills heaven and earth;’ he is actually everywhere and in everything, as the maker and preserver of it; and so, as the owner, he has taken possession of all, and keeps it, and will do, while it is capable of possession. And sure he would not take and keep possession of anything but what is his own; he has undoubted right and title to all he possesses.

2. He has right to dispose of all as he will, and does actually dispose of any things and persons as he thinks good. He disposes of the things in this world when, and to whom, in what manner, and upon what terms, and for what time he pleases. He has jus præsenter disponendi, the right of present disposal, which is properly dominion or property.* He gives possession and ejects, puts in and throws out, lifts up and casts down, whom and when he will, Isaiah 40:22-24, 1 Samuel 2:6-8. Why does he thus dispose of all? Why, because all is his own. The pillars, i. e. (say many), the poles of the earth, the whole earth from one pole to the other, is all his own. Daniel 2:21, he gives kingdoms as we give farthings; he disposes of them to beggars, and throws the loftiest princes out of their thrones upon the dunghill, Isaiah 43:3, and Isaiah 45:12, Isaiah 45:14. You see he disposes of persons and things, kingdoms and countries, houses, and lands, and cities, of money and merchandise, and all. He would not do this, but that he has right to do it; and how could he have right to do it, if all were not his own? And he has right to dispose of persons as he pleases, not only as to their outward condition in all circumstances, but as to their eternal state. So much propriety has he in soul and body, that he can make both everlastingly happy or miserable as he will, Romans 9:18-20. Can any reasonably except against God for dealing with man as he pleases, since he is his own creature, of his own forming? He shews how much right the Lord has herein, by one that has less, Romans 9:21. He that disposes of all things and persons as he pleases, shews thereby they are his own. If they were not his, what right could there be to do it?

3. He has right to use all as he will, to make what use of persons or things he pleases. Accordingly, he can make the land barren or fruitful, he can improve the ground or consume it, he can hold up kingdoms, cities, houses, families, or let them fall. Who can tie him to keep the world, or any part of it, in repair? He can sow it with man and beast, or he can sow it with salt or with fire, and has right to do it. He can turn a place like the garden of God into a vale of Sodom, or let Sharon run into a desert. He shews what right he has, Jeremiah 1:10; he has right to use all as he will. He can employ what persons he pleases for the highest or the meanest uses. He can make use of Hazael, as a man or as a dog, 2 Kings 8:13: as a man when he was a subject, and as a dog when he was a king; and could use the great Nebuchadnezzar as a king or as a beast. He binds all others to such use of what they have, as he thinks fit;* and they have no right to use anything otherwise. They are obliged to employ whatever they possess, and all the improvement of it, for his use, for his interest and honour. And if they do not thus employ it, they forfeit it, and he has right to take the forfeiture, though he always does not. And how could he of right do this to all the world, if all were not his own?

Thus much may serve to shew both that the Lord is owner of all, and why he is so.

III. Let us now further endeavour to be satisfied concerning the nature and quality of this propriety, that so we may understand in what sort and way, in what capacity or degree, the Lord is the owner of all. Take an account of this in some particulars.

1. He is the primary and original owner of all. His title and propriety is underived. Whatever right any other has, it descends from him; but his right is not derived from any other. He had it not from any former owner, for he was the first; he had it not by inheritance, for he has no predecessor, nor does he succeed any; nor had he it by contract, for in that very instant wherein he created anything, it was upon that account then his, before any moment wherein we can conceive any contract to have been possible. That which he gave for all things that are his, was their very being; and from his giving this, his right to them did result immediately, before and without any act of theirs, and so without any contract or bargain, which includes mutual acts. Nor had he it by gift, Romans 11:35. The question here is a peremptory denial. No creature can pretend that he gives God anything, any right which he had not before. It is true the holy angels and sanctified men do give up themselves unto God; but this does not make them his first, but is an acknowledgment that they were so before. As soon as they were creatures they were his, even before they did act either as good or intelligent creatures; and when they resign up themselves unto him, they do not hereby give him a title to them, but effectually recognise it. They were his before, whether they would or no; but now they are his voluntarily, and hereby acknowledge it. They now oblige themselves to regard him as their owner, and he now owns them in a more peculiar manner. But he was before the owner of them, as he is of all things, by a primary and original right.

2. He is the absolute owner of all, without any condition or limitation. His right and propriety is not in any way limited, nor in the least conditional. He holds not anything sub certa lege, upon certain terms and conditions. For who could give law to God, or prescribe him terms, or tie him to conditions, or any way bound or limit him who was Lord of all, before any were in a capacity to deal thus with one another. Some, in what they possess, are limited as to the time, they may hold it so long, but no longer; some as to disposing, they may not alienate it at all, or not convey it but to such and such; and some as to the use, it must not run to ruin or out of heart, and some proportion of the profits must be paid out of it. But the Lord is not under any such restraint, as to all, or anything. None can limit him but himself. He makes his own terms, and has no other bounds but his own will. He holds all as long as he will, disposes of all as he pleases, uses all as he thinks fit, and none can say unto him, What doest thou? They that are, or count themselves most absolute in their possessions or kingdoms, in respect of God, have but a limited and conditional tenure. And if they transgress their bounds, and observe not the conditions they are under, they do it at their peril, and he will call them to account for it, they must answer for it before the great God of heaven and earth. But he is accountable to none, being under no tie nor obligation from any in the world, Daniel 4:34-35. The work of his hands could not tie him to terms, more than the clay can bind the potter; nor would he limit himself to the prejudice of his own right. His title to all remains such as becomes him, the greatest, highest, and most excellent, and therefore every way most absolute.

3. He is the principal owner. All others that have right to anything, have it under him, and in subordination to him, and are tied to acknowledge it by doing him service for whatever they have. No creature has such a dominion or propriety, as the feudal laws call allodium, an independent and sovereign right, so as to be nemini leudes, under none, and to owe no service or acknowledgment for what he hath; though some owe it not to men, yet all owe it unto God. For he is Lord paramount, and all hold of him and under him, not only their estates, but their beings; and so are obliged to him, more than he that had feudum ligium, who upon that account contra omnes fidelitatem domino debet, was bound to be faithful to his lord against all men, the emperor not

excepted. Amongst us, some hold what they possess of their landlords, some of manors, some of the king. But lord, and king, and all, hold of God, and owe him service and fealty as his liege vassals; they have all from him, and can duly dispose of nothing but by him, nor use anything but for him, Romans 11:36.

4. He is total owner of all. He has a full title to all, and the right is wholly in him; he has no copartner nor associates therein. When David gave the possession mentioned, 2 Samuel 19:29, between Ziba and Mephibosheth, they had a joint interest therein, as Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah would have had in the navy and adventure, if they had joined their ships, according to the proposal, 1 Kings 22:49. But none has a joint interest with God. He has a plenary title to the whole world, not a half, or a divided right. As none could have such a title to the land of Egypt and the people thereof, as Pharaoh had, Genesis 47:20, but he that was king of Egypt; if he had had a partner therein, he would have had a share in the royalty; so here, it is the royalty of God to be the owner of all things. This is not separable from him, nor communicable to any, but he that is God. If any should share in his title, they would share in his lordship; but he is Lord alone, Isaiah 43:10, and Isaiah 45:5-6. Besides, the foundation of this propriety, as I shewed before, is God's creating of all things. Now, none can have a share in the right, but such as have a share in the ground of it. But God alone createth all things, and none beside him can create anything; and therefore, none can pretend to partake in the title with him. He had no partners in making all of nothing, or of sustaining all so made; and therefore he has no partner in the title to all. The propriety is wholly in him, he is the total owner of all.

5. He is the perpetual owner of all. His interest and right to all is never transferred, never diminished, never lost or extinct. However things are disposed of in the world, he still remains proprietor, and will do so for ever, and he alone. In respect of God, there are no such owners as the civil law calls perpetuarios. For though one man may convey to another estates of inheritance to him and his heirs for ever, and thereby cuts off himself from all right, to deprive the other of his possession, yet the Lord always retains a right to dispossess whom, and when he pleases, being ever the full and absolute owner. This right abides in him for ever, for none can deprive him of it. What is said of one particular, holds true as to his propriety, in all, John 10:29. He must be greater and more powerful than the Almighty, that can wrest his right from him. There is no way of parting with it, unless he himself will voluntarily quit it. But neither will he divest himself of it, for it is one of the glories of his crown, that all should hold of him as the chief Lord and absolute Proprietor. And this honour will he not give, this glory will he not part with, to any other. It is annexed inseparably to his kingdom, and so must last no less than that which is everlasting, Daniel 7:14. It can no way cease, unless the ground of it should fail. Dominium non amittitur, nisi amisso eo in quo fundatur,* property is not lost, unless the foundation of it fail. But that is here impossible, unless the Lord should cease to be what he is, the maker and preserver of all things, for therein his propriety is founded. And whereas it may be said, The Lord gives away many things, and that in one way of alienation, the propriety passes by gift to him that receives, he becomes the owner, I answer, So it is amongst men in full donations. But the Lord gives nothing so as to divest himself of the propriety he has therein. He gives us the use of things, an use limited as he thinks fit, and an answerable possession of them; but he never gives away his interest and propriety in what he bestows on any. And so you may observe in Scripture, that after he has given things, yet they are said to be his own still. He has given the earth unto men, Psalms 115:16, yet not so given it, but that it is his own

still, Psalms 24:1, 1 Corinthians 10:26, 1 Corinthians 10:28. So he gave the land of Canaan to the Israelites, and gave it for an inheritance, Deuteronomy 4:21, yet did he not give away the propriety, it continued his own still. ‘The land is mine,’ Leviticus 25:23. So Hosea 2:8-9, he gave, and yet still they were his own, and Ezekiel 16:18-19. So he gives us our souls, Ecclesiastes 12:7. The Father of spirits gives the spirit, the soul, but so as it is his still, Ezekiel 18:4. He gives to the children of men some use and possession of things, but he does not give his interest and right in them. He is as much the owner of them as before he gave them, and so perpetually.

6. He is transcendently the owner of all. He has the greatest right to them, a super-eminent propriety and interest in them, far exceeding all that any other can challenge. He has more right to all than we have to any thing, and is more the owner of all than we are of that which is counted most our own. The nature and being of all things are his, he being the maker and upholder of them; but the use of things only is ours, and therein also we are subjected to him, and are to be ordered by him, having no right to use any thing, but as he appoints us, or gives us leave, no otherwise than according to the rules of our tenure prescribed by him. But he in this is ordered and regulated by none, but has right to, and may use all or any thing as he pleases. We count that which we pay for more our own than that we borrow, and an estate of inheritance more ours than that which we have but as tenants, and our children more our own than other possessions, and our persons more our own than children are; and our souls more our own than any thing. Yet the Lord is more the owner of all things than we are the owners of our souls; for propriety in things is more or less as the right and power to possess, dispose of them, or use them, is more or less; for herein dominion or propriety consists. Now we cannot hold, or retain, or possess our souls as long as we will: Ecclesiastes 8:8. No man has dominion over his spirit or soul, to keep it in his body while he pleases. Death comes (when the Lord will send it), and takes away the soul, whether we will or no, we have no right to keep it a moment longer; but the Lord has right to keep, or hold, or retain any thing as long as he pleases. And so, in this respect, all or any thing is more his own than our souls are.

Further, We have no right or power to dispose of our souls in what state we will, either a state of grace here, or of glory hereafter; but the Lord, who worketh or disposeth of them and all things, according to the counsel of his will, Ephesians 1:11, has right to dispose of all things, in any state, as to their being or well-being, as to their happiness or misery, as he will. And so, in this respect also, all things are more his own than our souls are ours.

Finally, we have no right to use our souls, or any faculties thereof, as we will, but only according to the laws and rules he has given us; but the Lord has right to use all, or any thing, as he will himself; and so, in all respects, he is more the owner of all things than we are of our souls. He has more propriety in any, in all things, than we or any else have, even in that which is counted most our own.

7. He is the sole owner of all things. He is the only proprietor in the sense expressed in the former particulars; yea, none else but he is strictly and properly the true owner, not only of all, but of any thing. And that you may be satisfied herein, and assent to it as a truth, which at first sight may seem new and strange, and upon a bare proposal may meet with some contradiction, let me give some reason for it; for I would not impose any thing upon you of this nature, liable to exception, upon my bare assertion.

(1.) If the whole right be in him, none can have a part of it; but he is the full owner of all, and the right to all is wholly in him, as I made it evident in the fourth head.

(2.) If he have right to take all, or any thing away when he will, and to dispose of it to whom, and when, and how he pleases, and to tie and oblige the possessors to what uses they shall employ all they have, so as they have no right to employ it any otherwise, then is he the sole proprietor, and the right and title is only in him; for this power is a clear and undeniable evidence of it, as appears by the nature and essence of propriety, and the severals wherein it consists, of which I have given an account before. He that has right to do what he will with all, and every thing, and none else but he, is the sole owner of all, and every thing; but such is the Lord's dominion over all, such a right hath he as to all and every thing. Therefore, &c.

(3.) If the persons of the possessors be not their own, then nothing else is. He that is not the owner of himself, is owner of nothing; ■ δεσπ■της το■ ■γεμονικο■, π■ς ο■χ ■ξει τ■ ■ποβεβηκ■ς; he that is the lord and owner of the principal, cannot but be the owner of the accessories; but so is he who is Lord of all, the owner of all persons, and so the owner of all that belongs to them, and not they themselves. So a bond-servant, being part of his master's goods, domini in bonis, since himself was not his own, he was owner of nothing; all that he had was his master's. Thus, a Hebrew having sold himself, or being sold by others, to be a servant, so that his person was become his master's possession, all that he had in that capacity was his master's, even his wife and children, Exodus 21:4. When he himself was free (as he might be by law in the seventh year), yet, by the same law of God, his wife and children were to continue with his master as his own goods. And so we need not wonder, that in the Roman empire, by the common laws of it, if a servant had an inheritance or a legacy left, it was his master's, he being not his own man, could not be the owner of it. So Ulpian, Si hæredes instituti sunt, et hæreditates nobis adquirunt, et legatia ad nos pertinet. If our servants be made heirs, the inheritance is ours, and the legacy left them belongs to us. So Caius,* Quicquid iis a quâlibet personâ donatum, vel venditum fuerit, &c., id dominis sine aliquâ dubitatione conquiritur. Whatever by any person is given to (servants) or sold to them, that without all doubt is their master's; so that in all law and reason, if our persons be not our own, nothing that we possess is ours, but his who is lord and owner of our persons. But I shewed before, that our, and all persons are his, and therefore he is the sole owner of all.

Obj. But are we owners of nothing (may some say)? Both Scripture, and law, and common sense, make and speak many things to be ours.

Ans. I shall shew you how these things are ours, and how they are not, both to prevent mistakes, and also thereby to declare more fully and evidently how the Lord is owner of all things, and how he is the sole owner of all. Take it in these particulars:

(1.) We are not true proprietors of any thing in respect of God, though otherwise what we possess may be called ours. To clear this, and leave no room for misunderstanding, observe, that things in our possession may be considered either in respect to the right lord and true owner, or in respect to others. In reference to God, who is the right Lord and true Proprietor of all things, we are not properly owners of anything. But in reference to others, such things as the providence of God in a just way gives us the possession and use of may well be called ours, because no others can challenge them, or lay any just claim to them. This will be clearer by some parallel instances. That which we borrow may be considered with respect either to the lender, or to others. In reference to

the lender, we have no propriety in that which is borrowed; for, as the Civilians say, in commodato res non ita datur, ut fiat accipientis. A thing lent, is not so given as to become his who borrows it. ‘Alas, master, it was but borrowed!’ 2 Kings 6:5. The lender is still the owner, though it be in another’s possession. But in reference to others, that which we borrow is so far ours, as another may not take it from us, nor hinder us from the use of it. So in what a tenant possesses, in reference to the landlord, he is no owner, for he has the possession and use only, not the propriety. So it is a rule in the feudal laws, Possessio per beneficium ad eum pertinet, proprietas ad alium spectat, possession belongs to the tenant, propriety to the lord. But in reference to others, it is and may be called his land, his own farm, because no other has anything to do with it; he may challenge it as belonging to him, and if any take it from him, they do him wrong, and he may maintain a right against them. In like manner, in reference to God, we are no more owners of what we have, than a borrower is in reference to the lender, or a tenant is in respect of his landlord; but in respect of others, they are and may be called ours, because others have no interest therein, cannot justly deprive us of them, have no right to disturb us in our possession, or hinder us in the use, or from the profits thereof. In these respects we are quasi domini, as it were owners, but not verè domini, not true owners, as Civilians distinguish* between verum dominium, and quasi dominium, true propriety, and that which is but as it were such. The Lord alone is truly proprietor, we are but the improvers of his possessions; so some understand those expressions in Scripture, where the servants of God are called strangers, or sojourners; and in two places there seems good ground for such a sense in the context: one is in this chapter, where, having in many expressions ascribed all to God as the owner of all, and he only, he adds, ver. 15, Non proprietarii sed tui coloni, say divers of great note, we are not proprietors, but thy husbandmen; so Leviticus 25:23, ye shall reap the fruits of it, but the land is mine; ye are ■■■■, ye are my labourers, or husbandmen, coloni, it is rendered. Now, husbandmen in the Roman empire, such as were ■ναπ■γραφοι, enrolled, had nothing of their own, but all they had was their master’s, as appears by that of the emperor Anastasius, in Cod., τ■ το■των πεκο■λια το■ς δεσπ■ταις ■ν■κει, their proper goods belong to their lords. Answerably the Lord says here to the Israelites, ‘The land is mine,’ not yours; and David, in the other place, acknowledges, ‘All is thine own;’ so that we are not what landlords are accounted in reference to their tenants; nay, we scarce are so much as tenants in respect of the Lord of all. For,

(2.) We have not a full tenant’s right to what we count ours. Those who are thought to be most the lords of their lands, are not so much as tenants in respect of God.

[1.] For a tenant is sole possessor, though he be no proprietor. He that lets him a farm, keeps it not in his own hands, but gives whom he lets it to investiture, or, as we call it, livery or seisin, gives him possession, and so parts with that to the tenant, though he give him no propriety. But we are not sole possessors in respect of God; for though he give us possession of what we have, yet he gives it not away from himself; he puts nothing out of his own hands, but continues always in possession of heaven and earth, and all things, as much as if there were none else in possession, Genesis 14:19; he has jus retinendi, and insistendi rei (as possession is defined), a right to hold and abide upon everything, everywhere; he never divests himself of this right, as others do to their tenants; yea, he always actually exercises this right, keeping all in his hands, and remaining in and upon his possessions, and every part thereof, every moment (as none else can do), Jeremiah 23:24.

[2.] A tenant hath usually some time in what he holds; some have it for life, some for years; and if less, yet for some time certain; and those that have no lease are not turned out without some warning; but we have no time certain in anything that we possess. The Lord may turn us out when he will; he may take it from us, or us from it, whenever he pleases; nor is he obliged to give us a moment's warning, Matthew 24:42, Matthew 24:44, Matthew 24:50. Our tenure is no better than that of the most ancient feudatories, whose possessions domini quando vellent auferre, their lords might take away at their pleasure; or theirs of old in England, who were called tenants at will, but were really bondmen, who had nothing of their own (person or estate), and no time in what they improved for another, but were wholly in the power and at the will of their lord for all. It is not so good as that of those feudal tenants,* who, after a year, their lord turned out of possession, quacunque hora vult, at any hour when he list; they had a year certain, but we have not an hour nor a moment. We have warning, indeed, not to let us know what time we may be certain of, but to give us notice, that we are not certain of any time at all, nor of the least parcel of it, Matthew 25:13. Whenever he comes, he turns us out of all our earthly possessions; and we know not but he may come the next day, the next hour; he comes whenever he will, Mark 13:35, and ordinarily when we least expect it, Luke 21:34-35.

[3.] A tenant, observing conditions and paying his rent, hath the rest of the profits for himself and his own use. Proprietas rei penes dantem remanet, usus fructus vero rei ad accipientem transit, is the rule in law betwixt lord and tenant; though he have not the propriety, yet he has the use and profit for himself; so when Pharaoh had got all the land of the Egyptians into his own hands, he lets it out to them upon these terms, that paying a fifth part to him, the rest of the profits should be their own, for the use of them and theirs, Genesis 47:20, Genesis 47:23-24. But all that we have must be employed for the use and interest of our Lord; not for ourselves, but for him. Accordingly, the Lord represents himself to us by a householder, who, having planted a vineyard, lets it out to husbandmen, but sends his servants to receive the fruits of it for him and his use, Matthew 21:33-34; all the fruits of our lands, trading, labour, studies, belong to him; and he expects they should be wholly employed for him one way or other; and we have no right to spend them upon ourselves, or relations, or others, any otherwise than may be for his service and interest. We have nothing simply for our own use (as tenants are supposed to have), but all we are bound to use for him; all the profits and advantages of what we have should be ordered so, as to advance his honour, and serve his pleasure, and promote his interest, or else they are abused, and usurped against all right, and contrary to the terms and conditions upon which we hold all we have; but if we are neither true proprietors, nor have so much as the right of tenants, how are things said to be ours? I answer positive:

(3.) We have them as stewards, entrusted by their master with his treasure, or goods, to dispose thereof to such persons, and for such uses, as he appoints. Thus we are frequently in Scripture represented as stewards, particularly Luke 12:42. A steward has his master's stores committed to his trust; he has them in his custody, and so far they are in his possession; he has power to dispose thereof according to his trust, and so he is said to be the ruler over the household, i. e., the disposer of things belonging to the family, Luke 12:44. And accordingly he makes use of, and employs what is in his hands: he provides and brings forth necessaries for the family, gives them their meat, &c. And so Abraham's steward is ■■ ■■■, one who runs to and fro to provide what is requisite; or as others, filius eductionis, who brings forth necessaries out of the stores, Genesis

15:2; but all according to his master's order and appointment, Matthew 20:8, Genesis 44:1. And no other has any right to take from him what is in his custody and possession, or to dispose thereof as he may, or to hinder him from so using or employing it. And so far, that which he, and no other, has right to possess and dispose and use, may be well said to be his; but it is not his to keep, or use as he list, as the steward in the parable found, Luke 16:1, and Luke 11:45-46. And even thus are things ours. The Lord has entrusted them in our hands, to dispose of them as he appoints, and use them as he has given us order, and no otherwise; because we have right to such a possession, disposal, and use of them, a right which no other can claim to the things in our trust; upon this account they are and may be called ours. Or as an artificer's tools, which he entrusts in the custody of his servant, so as he may dispose them most conveniently for his work, and use them for his service; another has no right to take them from him, or to use them without his leave. So far they may be said to be the servant's tools.

We are the Lord's servants, and a servant is, as Aulus says, το■ δεσπ■του ■ργανον, his master's tool. So are we, so are all our members and faculties, our Lord's instruments; but he gives us them to be employed in his work, and used for his service, and none can justly hinder us from so employing them. So far they are ours; and other things which we possess proportionably, ours in trust, but the Lord's in true propriety. So much for the explication and proof of this point, in which I have stayed the longer, that our judgments might be more clearly and firmly settled in this truth, too little understood, or too little regarded, as we may suspect, since the genuine consequences of it in practice are so much neglected. That which is dubious or obscure being cleared, we may proceed more currently with the practical improvement of it, to which I now pass.

Use 1. Of information, in many particulars of great concernment.

1. Herein we may discern the greatness of that Lord whom we serve, and whose we are. The whole world, and its fulness, all that is in it, both persons and things, are his own, wholly and absolutely his. The heaven is his throne, the earth is his footstool; hell is his prison, the devils are his executioners; the angels are his ministers, as much his servants as those who are bought and sold; they do nothing but his will, and have nothing but at his allowance; they cast their crowns at his feet, as having them and all from him, and holding them and all at his pleasure. The greatest monarchs in the world, and those that are called terrarum domini, lords of the earth, are his vassals; they hold what they have of him, by a tenure of as much subjection as that which was anciently known here by the name of villainage. They have nothing of their own; all they possess is his. They have it but to improve for him and his service, and they are turned out of possession at the will of the supreme Lord; and though they may seem to have much in their hands, yet the greatest empire, that of Ahasuerus, consisting of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, or that of Alexander greater than the Persian, or that of the Romans much larger than the Grecian was, is but as a mole-hill, or the small possession of an ant, yea, much less, compared with the dominions of the great Lord of all. The whole earth is but as a needle's point to the visible heavens, and how much less these are than the heaven of heavens we cannot tell. But this we know, that these and all are his own, and more at his disposal, than any clod of earth is at ours. In brief, all that are in the heavens, or on the earth, or under the earth, are his, his creatures. Whoever they are, whatsoever they have above mere nothing, they have it all from him, and so hold it as that they and all are still his own. Oh what reason have we to adore and admire him, to ascribe all to him, and to him alone! Thine is the greatness, and the majesty, and the kingdom, and the dominion.

‘Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable,’ Psalms 145:3; ‘Great is the Lord,’ &c. He is exalted far above all. What high thoughts should we have of him! How should we revere him! How should all the earth tremble before him! ‘For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth,’ Psalms 47:2, over all the heavens, over all the world. Let us strive for suitable apprehensions of him, and praise him according to his excellent greatness.

2. This may inform us that the Lord hath right to deal with us, or any creature, as he will. However he use us, he can do us no wrong. This is manifest, in that we are his own. This is enough to answer whatever may be objected against his disposing of us or anything at his pleasure. Shall I not do with my own as I will? Matthew 20:10, Matthew 20:15. If our diminutive, limited, dependent interest gave us right to do what we will with what we call our own, we think it our due to exercise it as we please upon the inferior creatures, what right and power has he, who is Lord of all, to use us or anything as he will, when he is so fully, so absolutely, so transcendently the owner of us and all things? It is true, and should be observed and remembered, that in reference to rational creatures, the Lord has restrained the exercise of his plenary right by his laws and promises; he has declared hereby, that though he has undoubted right to use us any way as he will, yet he will not use us but so and so, according to the import of those laws and promises. Yet though he will not exercise all that right and power over us, as he is our ruler, yet otherwise, as he is our owner, it fully belongs to him. And thus, if we consider him as a lord and proprietor antecedently to his determination of forbearing such exercises of his right, so he might use us however we would; nor could whatever he did be any wrong to us. No usage of us whatsoever, no, not that which seems most grievous to nature, or most harsh at first sight unto reason, could possibly be unjust in him or an injury to ns; for justice or righteousness ■ν τ■ ■φεκτικ■ κα■ ■βλαβε■ κε■ται, consists in abstaining from what is not our own; or, as others commonly place it, in giving suum cuique, every one his own; so that which is unjust or a wrong to us, must be a withholding or taking from us that which is our own. Therefore nothing that he can take or withhold from us can possibly be injurious to us, because in respect of him nothing is our own; he is the true owner of us, and all we have or can have.

Yea, if we were innocent, and without sin, yet the Lord, as our proprietor, might deny or take from us anything whatsoever, our estates, lives, being, or well-being, righteously, and without doing us the least wrong; for what injury could it be to take that from us which is his own and not ours?

If he should take from us what estate we have, as he did from Job, and as is generally conceived, without respect to his sin, he would not thereby wrong us, he takes but his own.

If he should take away life, or give others a special command to do it, as he did to Abraham in reference to his son Isaac, Genesis 22:1-24, the taking away his life in that case had been no murder in Abraham, no wrong to Isaac, because the Lord and owner of his life gave order for it, who had right to call for his own, and take it in what way he pleased.

If he should take away our being, and quite annihilate us, he would but take his own, and that which we wholly owe to him. Thus, as our Lord and proprietor, he has right to do, but only that he has declared he will not do it. If we have so much power over the being of other creatures, as to destroy them, so as they are never restored again, though they be not reduced to nothing; if we may kill them for our use, food, or physic; if we may burn wood and other things, turn them to

ashes for our service, and yet do them no wrong, what right and power hath he over our being who is full and absolute Lord and owner thereof!

If he should take away our well-being, if he should inflict pain on us in any degree or for any continuance, so as to deprive us of a comfortable, a well-being, this would be to take his own, and that which he owes us not; this he might take, considered as our proprietor, and without respect to his promise; that indeed declares that he will not so use us, but otherwise, setting that aside, he hath right to do it, and might inflict what pain he would, and continue it as long as he pleased, as a mere affliction, without respect to sin, though not as a punishment. If freedom from pain, any degree of it, be not due to us, then it would be no wrong to inflict it on us in any degree, and if freedom from it for a moment is not our due, then it would be no injury to inflict it for any continuance; for it is no wrong to deny us that which is not due to us, and that is not due to us which we cannot challenge as our own. And what can we count our own, if being, well-being, and all, be wholly and absolutely his, who is Lord and owner of all? In that which is not due to us, we can have no right; and in that where we have no right, we can have no wrong; and so the Lord, as owner of us and all things, may deal with us, or any, as he will, without doing us any wrong. Rationabiliter autem negatur, quod nulla ratione debetur.*

3. Let this inference be minded and believed according to the reason you see for it. It clears up the absolute dominion of God, and those difficulties which concern it, very much to my own satisfaction, and it may do such service to others. It is no curiosity nor useless speculation, but tends much to illustrate the freeness of grace, and to manifest the righteousness of God's decrees with the execution of them, and by the help thereof we may vindicate it from the reasonings of such as would impeach it. But so much for the general inference. The truth before us will give us more special information concerning the Lord's righteousness in some particulars, which our partial reason may be apt to call in question. As,

(1.) That the Lord has right to pass by some when he chooses others; to leave some to misery, while he sets apart others for life and happiness. Unless the sovereign Lord of all have less right and power to dispose of that which is more his own, than common reason acknowledges men to have for the disposal of that which is less their own, he may righteously, and without any show of injury to others, do what he will with his own, and so may choose some of the sons of men to be the objects of his special favour, and refuse others, without any injury to those that are rejected; for, in this case, both the persons whose state he will have to differ, and the things which make the difference, are more incomparably his own than anything we have power to dispose of is ours. The persons are his own, they are the work of his hands entirely, they are his creatures; whatever they are, or have beyond nothing, is wholly his. And may not he of right dispose of that which is so much his own, into what state he will? And then the things are his too; life and happiness are his gift, Ephesians 2:1-22. They are more his than anything which we have right to give to whom we will. And has not the Lord right to give what is his own to whom he pleases, and to bestow his bounty on what objects he thinks fit, and to single out some from amongst others to partake of it? Till the common notions of equity and righteousness be razed out of the souls of men, methinks this should be counted most equal and righteous. The Lord asserts his own right to dispose his mercy to whom he will, Exodus 33:19. This the apostle applies to the present case, and by the light and evidence of it disperses the objection of unrighteousness, as a mist is scattered by the sun going forth in its strength, Romans 9:13-15. If it be not righteous with the Lord to shew his

mercy, or refuse it to whom he will, he has not the right (which men have) to do with his own what he will. Those who dispute against this, leave not the Lord so much right over his own as the potter hath over his clay or his vessel, as the apostle's argument proceeds, Romans 9:20-21. Both persons and things here concerned are his own, more the Lord's than either the clay or the vessel is the potter's. If he have not as much power and right to dispose of us for happiness or misery, for honour or dishonour, as the potter has to dispose of his clay or vessel, then he will have less right when the ground of it is more. And whereas it is said that the Lord, dealing thus differently with persons otherwise equal, makes him chargeable with respect or acception of persons, which he both disclaims himself, Acts 10:34-35, Romans 2:11, and forbids and condemns in others, Leviticus 15:16, it will appear by the truth we insist on, that this objection (how much soever some great pretenders to reason would make of it) is altogether impertinent; for acception, or respect of persons, which is culpable, has place only in judicial acts (or those of like nature), where justice must be done according to the merits of the cause, without respect to the quality, relations, accomplishments of the person concerned. He that is swayed by such personal respects, to pass sentence otherwise than the cause itself in justice requires, is an accepter of persons in a criminal sense. But in acts of bounty it has no place, where one is not deciding what is right and just betwixt others, but where he is disposing of his own; he may dispose of his own, and express his bounty to whom he pleases, and not be liable to any charge of unrighteous respect to persons.* And this is the case here: the Lord proceeds not in these acts as a judge, distributing to every one what is due in law, but as a lord and proprietor, disposing of what is his own to whom and how he pleases. And there is not herein any shadow of respecting persons, since he is not moved thus to deal with us by any external respect whatsoever.

(2.) That the Lord has right to vouchsafe his gospel unto some, and not to others. It is his own, and if he have right to dispose of his own as he will, he may vouchsafe it or deny it to whom he pleases. He has used this right in all ages, apparently under the law, Psalms 147:1-20, and afterwards also, Matthew 11:25. In the apostles' times, the gospel did go through all the world; but that world was little more than the Roman empire, for anything appears in Scripture, and that empire is called the world, Luke 2:1. Take the world in its full latitude, and there are many parts of it in which no footsteps of the gospel could be discerned in latter ages. This some cannot digest, that the ordinary means of salvation should be denied to any. But the Lord does them no wrong that want it; it is no injury to withhold that from any which is no way due to them. And how does it appear that the gospel was due to any that want it. By what right can they challenge that of the Lord which is his own and at his free disposal?

(3.) That the Lord has right to deny his grace to some when he gives it to others. It is his own, he may give it or deny it to whom he will. He has declared it to be his right, by communicating or withholding it as he pleased, Deuteronomy 29:2-4, Matthew 22:14. 'Many are called' (he says not all any way), 'but few are' called effectually; few have grace to answer the call, 1 Corinthians 1:26-27. Yet the Lord wrongs none to whom he imparts it not. If it were a debt indeed, this might be alleged, but it is grace, Romans 4:4. It is his own, and comes not to any but by free gift, and so with right and liberty to bestow or deny it to whom he pleases. He owes it no way to any, unless he have promised it;* and where has he promised it to all, or to any that never have it?

(4.) This shews us evidently the freeness of the love of God, to all that are the objects of it, men or angels, and of all the acts and expressions of it. If the Lord could not love most freely, he would

love nothing at all besides himself. For hereby it appears, that all else is most worthless; not only utterly uncapable of deserving love, but far from any way of obliging his affection, or moving him to vouchsafe any expression of it.

1. We are most worthless creatures; we are worth nothing at all; we have not anything of our own, not anything that is good or fit to be loved that we can call our own, James 1:17; whatever we have that is any way good, it comes from him; it is his gift, and he gives it not so, but that it is his own still. If we were stripped of all that is not our own, we should have nothing at all left, that could be the object of any love, or capable of any expression of love; we should not have so much left as our mere being, for even that is not our own; we should be no better than just nothing.

If a prince should take a beggar from off the dunghill, and set his affections on her, the freeness of his love, to such a wretched object, would be a wonder; and yet the beggar would have more of her own in respect of him, in such a condition, than we in our best estate have in respect of God. Her person would not be his till she gave her consent; but our persons, parts, accomplishments, all are not our own, but his, whether we yield to it or no. Oh then, how wonderfully free is the love of God! how admirable is it, that he could think of loving such as are worse than nothing! What we have of our own, we may take an account of, in the description of Laodicea, Revelation 3:17. Who can love wretchedness, and misery, and poverty, and blindness, and nakedness? Why, we have nothing better of our own; and if the Lord loves us not for our own, he loves us freely. If the Lord could not have loved most freely, we had never been the objects of his love; for we had nothing at all of our own, but what might rather stop and non-plus love, than any way encourage it. Oh with what sense and affection, with what admiration, should we look upon such declarations of his love! Hosea 12:1-14.

2. How far are we from deserving his love! How ridiculously unreasonable are those conceits of our deserts in reference to the love of God, or any expression thereof! There are three conditions necessary to make anything in us deserving; and this truth discovers them, and every of them, to be utterly impossible, and so the fancy of merit to be an absurd chimera.

[1.] If we deserve anything, it must be by virtue of that which is our own. But we have nothing of our own; all that we have and are is his that loves us, and therefore lets us have whatever we have. Can one deserve anything of another by letting him have what is his own? He that lends may deserve something of us, but not he that only restores what he borrowed; he is so far from meriting hereby, that he would be no better than a thief if he did it not. The Lord lends us what we have, he deserves of us for trusting us; but can we deserve anything by letting him have his own when he calls for it? Proverbs 22:7. Whatever we do, whatever we bestow for God, we give him but his own, 1 Chronicles 29:14, 1 Chronicles 29:16. We deserve nothing of him, unless it be the reputation of not being cheats and thieves; no more love or expression of it than this.

[2.] If we deserve anything, it must be by virtue of that which we owe not. Now, since we have nothing of our own, but all is the Lord's, and from him, we owe him all we have, and all we can do, it is a due debt; and no man merits by paying his debts. Not to be grossly dishonest, is far from being meritorious.

[3.] If we deserve anything, it must be by virtue of that which is of some advantage to another; but what advantage has the Lord by us? Job 35:7 and Job 35:12, and Job 41:11. Who has prevented

him? Who has given him anything which he had not first received of him? He prevents all; for all is his, before any be in a capacity to give to him. And if we should give him what is his (as, alas! we do not) he is but as he was; it was his before, he is no better for it, we do but give him his own; and upon this account, when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, Luke 17:10. We deserve not so much as thanks; and that which merits not so much, deserves nothing, Luke 17:9. We are but such servants as a master has no advantage by. He gets but barely his own by us, seldom so much. When he that was by his Lord entrusted with a talent restored it to him, and said, 'Lo, there thou hast that is thine,' he suffers as an unprofitable servant, Matthew 25:25, Matthew 25:30. And if we make any improvement of what he entrusts us with, even that is his also, and for him we have it, Php 2:13. So that if the Lord express any love to us, we do not any way in the least deserve it, and so he loves freely. And this is not only true of the children of men in the state of degeneracy and imperfection, but even of the angels in the height of their blessed and perfect condition. All they do for him cannot deserve his love; they give him but his own; they do but what they owe him, and he is no better for it. Whether he loves angels or men, he loves freely.

[4.] We cannot oblige him to love us, or to express it. Yet one may be obliged to that which is not deserved of him; that which is deserved is due in justice; but we may be obliged as to equity and ingenuity, and so we are engaged to return love for love; but thus we never do, we never can oblige him to love us, for his love is before ours, 1 John 4:10, 1 John 4:19. Even our love to him is from him; this is his as all things else, he works it in us. As he puts his fear, so his love, into our hearts, else it would never be there, Deuteronomy 30:6.

We cannot any way oblige the Lord to love us. It is his promise that obliges him to express love to us; and our love, and whatever else we can think may oblige him, is that which is promised, and so is his gift, and given after he has obliged himself; and so no possibility of our obliging him beforehand, since all that might be thought to do it is the issue and effect of his own love.

He loves us freely, we can no way oblige him to do it.

[5.] We can no way move him to love us, or to express it. We have not anything of our own to attract his affection. We have nothing of our own that is lovely, nothing that is delightful, nothing desirable. Whatever of this nature is in us, it is his, not ours. We have no estate (and that moves some to love) but what he is the owner of; no sweetness of temper, but what he helps us to; no good quality, but what he plants in us; no beauty, but what is lent us by him. And who will love a person that has no loveliness of her own, no beauty at all, but what is borrowed? We may discern how far we are from having anything that may move the Lord to love us, by looking ourselves in the glass of that description, whereby he represents Jerusalem; we may see our unlovely state therein, Ezekiel 16:6, instead of rare, fine complexion, and lovely features, all covered with blood and pollution; so far from being amiable, as we were ghastly and loathsome, more fit to be cast out with abhorrence than to be embraced; not only too bad to be loved, but to be pitied; not only without beauty and ornament, but without life; no more in us to move love, than in a dead carcase. Such were we, such the state of our souls; and could the sovereign Lord of the world set his love on such objects as we, having nothing in the world that we can properly call our own, but sin, the most hateful, the most ugly, and loathsome deformity in the eye of God? Oh how free is that love, that would pitch on such objects as we, who had nothing in us fit for love, nothing of our own that could deserve it, nothing that could oblige it, nothing that could any way move or attract it, nothing

of our own, but what might sooner have provoked hatred and loathing.

Oh if the Lord had not loved most freely, if his love could not have moved itself, we had never met with it, nor any expression of it. We see hereby the Lord loved us (as he shews mercy), because he would love; we see that wonderful freeness of it exemplified again in us, as it was in Israel, Deuteronomy 7:7-8.

[6.] This shews us the great evil of sin, how exceeding heinous, how extremely dangerous it is; what reason there is both to hate it, and fear it, and bewail it, and be ashamed of it; how much we are concerned, both to avoid and mortify it.

First, It is the worst that we can possibly do against the greatest benefactor; we cannot act or contrive anything worse against him who deserves the very best, infinitely the best of us. And so it is the most horrid ingratitude that a creature can be capable of; si ingratum dixeris, omnia dixeris, when you call a person ungrateful, you brand him in one word with all that is odious. Oh but there is no ingratitude to men that has anything in it of a like hateful and abhorred import, as ungratefulness to God in sinning against him. It is ungratefulness not to return good for good; one kindness for another; what is it then to return evil for good? It is ungratitude to return the least evil for a small courtesy, for any one good turn; what is it then to return the greatest evil for all that is good? This, in reference to men, would be counted, not only inhuman, but devilish. A devil cannot be more odiously disingenuous than to render the worst he can for the best, and to do him the greatest mischief who has done him most good. Yet this, how odious and horrid soever it seem, we do, and are guilty of in reference to God, when we sin against him; for sin is the worst thing of all in the account of God; it is all the evil we can do him, and we do it against him from whom we have all the good we are possessed of; for he is the owner of all, we have nothing at all of our own; all we have, all we are, we had it from him. Our very being, our well-being, all that belongs to, or makes up, or sustains either of them, is from him; and so when we sin against him, we do the very worst against him, from whom we have all the good we have. And what can be more odious and disingenuous in the worst of creatures, of devils, than this! Oh think of this when you are tempted to sin, when you would excite a greater hatred of it in your hearts, when you would engage yourselves more resolutely for the mortifying of it. It is ingratitude hateful to our natures, odious and abhorred by a temper that is anything ingenuous. It is ungratefulness in the highest degree, and of the most hateful and intolerable strain, not tolerable in the account of any, who have not exchanged humanity for devilism; it is a return of the worst evil for all good.

Secondly, Hereby it appears that sin is an abusing of the good things of God against himself. It is a turning of the goods you are entrusted with against him that entrusts you; as it were, the converting of the instruments which he lends you for your advantage, to do execution upon him who lends them. There is no sin which you act any way, but it is by the help of some instruments or enjoyments which you have from God, which he is the true owner of. You have nothing of your own, he is the owner of all, and so when you sin you employ that which is his own against him. When you think evil, when you conceive it, when you incline to it, or resolve on it, or affect it, your minds, wills, or affections are the instruments of this evil. Now your souls, and all their faculties, belong to God; he challenges them as his own, and so you make use of his own against him; they are his; so are your tongues, when you speak evil; so are your other members, when they act sin; so are your estates, when they minister to pride, or covetousness, or sensuality, &c. You make

use of these to help you to sin; and these are not yours, but his who is the owner of all, and so you employ that which is God's against himself. What a horrid and intolerable provocation is there in this dealing with God! And what would it be accounted if you should deal thus with one another? It is as if a wretch should take the clothes and jewels of his wife to adorn his harlot; she would be ready to say, when she saw her rival tricked up with her ornaments, Can flesh and blood endure this? Oh but the Lord endures more, and has worse usage at our hands. We bestow more upon sin, and that which is more his, when it is a rival, more odious to him than any can be to us.

It is a great evil not to employ for the Lord what we have from him, as appears by the dreadful doom passed on the slothful servant, Matthew 25:30; his crime was, not the using his talent against his lord, but only not using it for him. It would be a horrid thing to employ anything against God, if it were not his own; to be found striking at God with any weapon, from whomsoever we had it. What is it then to turn his own weapons, which he has furnished us with for our security and advantage, against himself; to make use of that which is his own, to do him the greatest injury; not only not to employ it for him (which he may reasonably expect, since we have it upon these terms), but to employ it against him! Sure this is most intolerable. As if one should give you wood for firing to warm you, and you should make use of it to set his house on fire, from whom you have it. By this the Lord sets forth the sinfulness of Jerusalem's sin; this made it not only abominable, but did aggravate it into an abomination in the abstract. That what was his she employed against him, laid it out on idols, made use of what was his own to serve her idolatry, Ezekiel 16:17-23. She employed what was the Lord's against him; this made her actings so exceeding abominable. And this we do in every sin against God. When he is the owner of all, we still make use of something or other which is his to help us to provoke and dishonour him.

Thirdly, This shews us (and thereby the extreme danger of sin directly appears) that we cannot make the Lord satisfaction for the injury we do him by sin. We have no way to satisfy his justice, so as to obtain freedom from what it is most just to inflict on us for sin. We can make him no satisfaction but what is our own, and what we do not owe him, and is not his, and due to him, though we had not offended him.

If we have injured a great person in his honour, it will be no satisfaction to give him some of his goods, or to pay him what was his due if we had not injured him.

How then can we satisfy the Lord, since we can part with nothing but what is his own, nor do anything but what was due to him on another account than the injury we have done him?

If you perform most perfect obedience for time to come, as sinless as that of any saint in heaven, yet this would be no satisfaction for any former sin; for such obedience is due to him if you had not sinned; you owe it him, because you are his own, his creatures; and so being no more than is due on that account, it cannot discharge that which is due on another. The paying of one debt is no satisfaction for another.

If you should offer all your estates, yea, or all the treasure in the world for satisfaction; if you should 'come before him with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil; if you would give your first-born for your transgression, or the fruit of your body for the sin of your souls,' Micah 4:7; if you should offer him your lives, your well-being, or your very being itself, this would be no satisfaction for any of your sins; for all this is his own already, and you tender as good as nothing

for his satisfaction, when you can give no more but what was his own before.

Oh consider this when you sin; you do the great God such an injury as neither you, nor all the men on earth, nor all the creatures in the world, no, nor all the angels in heaven, can make satisfaction for. The dreadful penalty of sin will be inflicted, if the Lord be not otherwise satisfied. And you having nothing of your own, nothing but what is his, who is owner of all, can give no more towards a satisfaction, which will procure a discharge, than that which comes to nothing.

Use 2. For exhortation. This truth leads you to very many duties of greatest moment and consequence, such wherein the glory of the most high God, and the honour of your profession, and your own safety and comfort, your own happiness and salvation, is very highly concerned. This truth has in it the force of a powerful motive, to engage you in and for those duties. And the due sense how it obliges soul and conscience therein, will be an effectual means to help you to the performing of them. And I shall endeavour, in the prosecution of this use, to lay both jointly open before you, that you may neither want motives nor means, and may neither be left unwilling nor unable, if you be willing to practise what the Lord hereby calls you to. The first duty I shall instance in is,

1. Thankfulness: a duty so pleasing, so honourable to God, that he will have it continued to eternity; and will have it not only to be the employment of earth, but in heaven, where many other acts, now our duties, will be out of date. This engages us to thankfulness for all things and at all times, so that our whole life should be made up of acts of gratitude. Whatever we do, should be some way or other a giving thanks to God; otherwise we do not, we cannot answer the engagement which this truth lays upon us, 1 Thessalonians 5:18. It is his will that you be thankful in everything; it is his will that everything should be an occasion of thankfulness. It is of his good will that everything is so ordered for good, as to minister cause of thankfulness. It might have been otherwise if he would, for everything which obliges you to be thankful was his own, he might have disposed of it as he would; and so, if he had pleased, it might have been worse with you in everything than it is. But that you may see more distinctly how you are here by obliged to have your whole life all made up of thankfulness, and that continually, whatsoever we have that is good is from him, of his mere good will and pleasure, and not only the substance, but every degree of it. And we owe it to him as much every moment, as if every instant we did anew receive it of him.

(1.) Whatever is good is from him. Take a survey of all you have: begin at the foundation, at your very being, whatever is added to make it a well-being; the ground-work and the whole structure, the subject and all the accessaries, are wholly from him, for all is his own. How then come you or others to have anything, but merely of his favour and good will, who disposes of his own to whom he pleases? None could constrain him, none could oblige him to part with anything (for by what could they do it, all being his own?), to dispose of his own any otherwise than he would. So that whatever you have, you have it of him, and you have it freely. You have not, you could not have anything, but of his good pleasure. To this you owe all, and so owe thankfulness for everything. All are as free favours (though not so great) as Christ and heaven is. You received everything, and everything gratis; so that you have no occasion of glorying in the least, nor in the least an excuse for not being thankful in and for everything, 1 Corinthians 4:7, since there is nothing which thou hast not received, nothing wherein thou canst glory, as if thou hadst it not from his mere bounty. Wherefore art thou not as thankful for everything, as the unworthiest beggar ought to be for the

freest alms? Genesis 32:11, the word translated ‘not worthy,’ is ■■■■■, ‘I am little, or less, by the least, in respect of thy mercies.’ Take away all that Jacob owed to free mercy, and he would have had little left; indeed, he would have been just nothing; he owed all to the mercy or the truth of God, to ■■■, or ■■■. Some favours he had which were not so much as promised: these were free indeed; the Lord had not obliged himself to bestow them. And some he had by virtue of the promise: these came from the truth and faithfulness of God; but even these were from free mercy too, for this alone moved him to promise, and this moved him to perform the promise, when Jacob’s miscarriages might otherwise have disobliged his truth and faithfulness. And thus are we little, thus have we nothing but we owe to mere bounty, and so should make a thankful acknowledgment of it in everything, if it be but a grain above nothing. All was his own; and it was at his free choice, whether we should have anything of it or nothing.

(2.) Every degree of what is good to us, we have it from him, for all is his own wholly, every degree of it, and wholly at his disposal; and so it was at the choice of his own will, whether we should have it in such a degree or no; and if we have it, we owe it to his good will and pleasure, and therefore owe thankfulness for every the least degree or advance of what we have.

If it be better with us in any degree than it might have been, or than it has been, or than it is with others, we owe it to him who is the owner of all. And so, wherever we look, there will be matter obliging us to thankfulness still in our eye.

If it be better with us than it might have been, for this we should be thankful; it might have been worse, if he would have had it so. We might have been toads or serpents, instead of rational creatures: the matter he made us of was his own; he might have formed it into what shape he pleased. If he had given us the shape of those creatures which we count most ugly, instead of that we have, he had done us no wrong, nor could we have had the least cause to complain; all expostulation had been unjust and unreasonable, Isaiah 45:9, Jeremiah 18:4-6.

If we had been fools or idiots, without the exercise of reason or the use of senses, he had but done what he had all right to do, in so disposing of us. Could we oblige him any way to make us better, before we were? What we have more desirable than such a lamentable condition, is from the good pleasure of his will. He might have done what he would with his own, and disposed of it in that or a worse condition. The paper cannot oblige the writer; he may put a flourish on it, or make it a blot, as he pleases, no more, &c.

We might have been without common gifts, or without ordinary comforts, without estate, without friends, without ease, without health; we might have consumed our days in want and poverty, in affliction and misery, in languishing sicknesses or torturing pains. What could have hindered the Lord from so disposing of us, his own? Only he would not do it. Not because we could any way engage him to deal better with us, but because he would not do it. We owe every degree of a better condition to his good will; and how much thankfulness do we owe on this account, since every degree of our well-being, in all its latitude, is a free favour?

Yea, he might have cut us off and cast us into hell, before we had got into the way to heaven. You may say his eternal purpose and decree was otherwise: and this is true concerning the elect. But what is his purpose and decree, but his will? And what determines his will but himself? not anything existent or foreseen in us. And might not he who hath right to dispose of his own as he

will, both in time and from eternity, have otherwise disposed of thee and me, or any, if he would? Oh what thankfulness does this oblige us to!

(3.) If it be better with us, in any respect or degree, than it has been sometimes, this is from him too who owns all, and to him should it be thankfully ascribed.

If we were sometimes darkness, but are now light in the Lord; if we were dead in sins and trespasses, but are now begotten again to a lively hope; this is from him, and must be gratefully ascribed to the good pleasure of his will, James 1:18. From whence is this happy change? Might not he, who may do with his own what he will, have left thee still in the gall of bitterness, a state of sin and wrath? If you look for a reason of this, as far as from everlasting, you will find none but his good pleasure. He did this for thee because he would, and if he would, he might have done otherwise. And why may he not do according to his pleasure with his own? And that he deals so graciously with thee, when he had all right to deal otherwise, what heart will it not constrain to all thankfulness! So if thou hast, in any degree, more comforts, or more health, or more wisdom, or better gifts, or more grace, than heretofore, thou owest it to him who is the owner of all, and owest thankfulness for it. And the more because thou hast it so freely, of his mere good will, when he was not obliged, either by others or by himself, to let thee have so much of his own in these particulars. For as nothing can oblige the Lord to us but his promise, so he has not obliged himself by promise to give any of these, to such or such a degree.

(4.) If it be better with us in any degree than with others; if we have had better education, example, more restraints, means, light. To touch this last a little. Darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the people. How is it that it does not cover you? Why have you the light of life, that of the gospel, when others have nothing but the light of nature, very dim and obscure, and almost extinct? Are your lines fallen in a pleasant place, in a valley of vision? Why were you not disposed of in some valley of the shadow of death, when such valleys take up far the greatest part of the world? Why did not your lot fall in those dark places of the earth, where Christ is not known, and the way to life not discovered, where they breathe in no air but what is dangerously foggy and pestilential, where is no air for souls but what conveys poison to them, and is infected with the mortal contagion of popery, heathenism, or Mohamedanism? This is the condition of ten to one in the world; and how comes it that your lot is fallen with the fewest, in the light, rather than with the most, in darkness? All places and persons are the Lord's; he disposes of them as he will. What thankfulness do you owe for his disposing of you so mercifully, in comparison of others, so many others, almost all the world? Our Lord Jesus shews how much this obliges to thankfulness by his own practice, Luke 10:21.

(5.) If it be better with you, not only as to that which is good, but, in any degree, as to that which you count not good. Such are afflictions. These are occasions of thankfulness, 1 Peter 4:6. The apostle has respect to them, 1 Thessalonians 5:8. These engage us to glorify and praise God, not only when we are called to suffer for Christ, and have therein a peculiar honour, which the Lord will not vouchsafe to every one of his own, not only because they are sanctified to produce comfortable and blessed effects, but on this account also, because they are easier and more tolerable than they might have been. We never met with any thing grievous in this life, but it might have been heavier. It is never so bad with us in this respect, but it might have been far worse. It is heavy and grievous, but it is not too heavy to be borne; it might have been so. There are very bitter

ingredients in it: oh, but they might have been more, and those more bitter; the bitterness of death is not in it. How bad soever it be, it is not hell. So much better as it is than it might have been, so much cause of thankfulness we have; and so in every affliction, thousand and thousand causes of thanks, because it might have been, by many thousand degrees, worse than we suffer. The Lord has taken away some degrees of our ease, or health, or liberty, some of our friends or dear relatives, some part of our estates, some portion of our comforts; but he might have taken away all, in every degree, for all is his own. And why might he not have taken all that is his own, as well as any part or degree of it? He deals mercifully with us, when he leaves us any thing, when he leaves us so much; when we can challenge nothing as ours, but by his good will and pleasure only. Every good thing, every degree of it left us, is an act, a degree of mercy; and if thankfulness be due for every degree of free mercy and bounty, we have innumerable occasions of thankfulness in the most afflicted condition we meet with.

(6.) We owe him as much thankfulness, every hour or moment, for all we have, as if, every hour or moment, we did receive all; for every moment's continuance thereof is as much a favour, and so as much obliges us to thankfulness, as the first giving of it, because all being his own, he might take what we possess the next instant, and is no more obliged to continue it another hour, than he was at first to let us have it. As we say, the Lord does as much every moment in preserving the world as he did at first in creating it, the same power and influence which at first made it being put forth every moment to uphold it, so that the preservation of all is no less than a continued creation of all; and all things owe their being to him every minute, as much as if they received it anew of him every minute. Answerably here. The Lord does as much for us, in continuing what we have, as he did at first in giving them, the same favour which at first bestowed it being shewed every moment in not taking it away, so that the continuing of what we have is as much as a continual giving of it; and we owe as much to mercy every hour, in that we lose not what we have, as if every hour we received all from his hand.

God may take away his own when he will; every moment that he does not, the mercy which at first gave them is as good as renewed, and so there is renewed occasion of thankfulness, for all we have, in every moment of our lives; as much cause for it as if we received all by a new gift every hour and moment, so that no part of our lives should be void of thankfulness. We are every moment as much obliged to it, as if every moment we were receiving from him all we have. Let us therefore, as Hebrews 13:15,—

2. Give up yourselves unto God as your owner, and as to such an owner as indeed he is. This is a great duty, indeed the sum of all that the Lord requires of you. And this truth shews you that there is all reason for it; that you are so strongly obliged to it, that there is no refusing, there can be no pretence for declining. You are his, for all things are his own; and will you not let him have that which is his own? Give unto God the things that are God's. It is most unjust and unreasonable to deny him anything that is his; and if you be not willing yourselves should be his, that which is most in your own power, you will be wholly inexcusable. It is true, the Lord needs not your consent to give him a title to you; you are, and will be his, on a common account, as all other things are, whether you will or no; but by resigning up yourselves to him, you will honour him by acknowledging his title; and this is the way for you to be his in a special manner, and to be owned by him as his peculiarly to be his own, upon an account more for your comfort, advantage, and happiness, than other things and persons are. So, as there is the greatest reason for it, the

advantage is answerable; and the danger, in case of refusal, no less. It will prove dreadful in the issue, to put the Lord to distrain for his own, and to make you acknowledge his right and title. Perforce he will secure his honour this way, but you will have nothing left but guilt and misery. And what can they expect better who are not willing the Lord should have his own? If you have any regard of the Lord's honour, or your own happiness; if you would not defraud God, and make yourselves miserable, then resign up yourselves freely to him. But how must this be done? Wherein does this resigning up of ourselves to God consist?

Ans. It requires an act of the judgment, of the will, and of the life.

(1.) Be apprehensive that you are his, and how much you are so; what clear and full title he has to you, upon the grounds formerly opened; what evidence there is for it in Scripture, and in common reason; and hereupon you must yield a full assent to it, and firmly believe it; and be fully persuaded that you are more his than anything which you count your own is yours; such an act of faith, such a belief and persuasion, of his interest in you, is the foundation of all; and without it nothing will follow to purpose, either in the will or life; but the judgment being fully possessed and convinced hereof, and the apprehension of it being quickened and reinforced with frequent and due thoughts hereof, so as the belief of it be kept firm, actual, and lively; this will facilitate all the rest, and make the will (upon which the acts of the whole life depend) come off more freely to this great work of resigning up ourselves unto God.

(2.) The will must consent, that the Lord shall possess you, and dispose of you, and use you as his own. When the will gives consent to this, thereby we become his own peculiarly; for this is our entering into covenant with God; upon which the Lord owns us, not only as he does all other things, but as his own by covenant, Ezekiel 16:8; you are his before, but not so as now; not his by covenant till you give consent; you give up yourselves unto him, and effectually acknowledge that you are his, when you consent to the particulars, wherein propriety consists.

[1.] To be possessed by him as his own. You must be willing that he should have possession of mind and heart; that he should have highest place in your minds, the chief place in your hearts. It is fit that the owner should have the best; the best and highest of your thoughts; the best and strongest of your affections, Psalms 139:13; reins are the seat of desires; the Lord took up his affections, Psalms 73:25, and his thoughts too, Psalms 73:17. It is not fit that any should be entertained but who the possessor likes; if you yield up your souls to God, as his possession, you must not admit any thoughts, yield to any inclinations, give way to any motions, harbour any affections, but what he allows; none that will take place of him; none that will disturb him in his possession; nor any that will not please and serve him. You yield him not possession, unless you admit him as your King and Lord, for he is so; therefore he must have the throne in your souls; all must be cast out that rebels against him, or any way resists him; nothing must be entertained or tolerated, but under him, or for him; as his footstool, or as his ministers and servants, to observe his will, and do his pleasure; the will must consent to this, if you resign up yourselves unto him.

[2.] To be disposed of by him as his own. You must yield to be ordered by him, as to your condition in this world; to be low as well as high; poor as well as rich; afflicted as well as delivered, if he see fit, so to dispose of you; so was John Baptist, John 3:30, and the apostle Paul, Php 4:1-23.

You need not fear that he will dispose otherwise of you than will be for the best; he has given you sufficient security as to that; or if he had not, yet would it be your duty still to yield to be wholly ordered by him; if you do not resign up yourselves to him, you deny, in effect, that you are his own, if you will not be fully at his disposal; you, yourselves, do not count that your own which is not at your disposal.

[3.] To be used by him as his own. Yield soul and body to be put to what use he will; give all powers and members into his hand, to be used his instruments, for what he pleases, and for nothing but what may please him; dedicate them to his use, and his alone; be resolved and ready to be used by him, in any service, active or passive, what suits you, or what suits you not; both in what is easy and what is difficult; not only in what is applauded, but what is reproached; not only in what is gainful, but what is expensive; not only in what is safe, but what is hazardous, and may endanger your outward concernments. You are his own, and if you will acknowledge it, and resign up yourselves to him as his own, you must consent to be used by him as he will; otherwise, you may pretend to give up yourselves to him, but you do it not really. You think it just to allow another to use his own as he will, upon this account, because it is his own; and if you be not willing, the Lord shall put you to what use he will, though you profess to be his own, yet hereby you deny it indeed, and contradict your profession; when there is a sincere resigning of yourselves unto God, the will consents to all this; see it in Paul, Acts 9:6, Acts 9:15-16, a chosen vessel, ready for any use his master would put him to; they were great, and difficult, and hazardous services, and sufferings too, when it came to the trial, Acts 21:13.

(3.) You must lay out yourselves for him, in your whole course; employ soul and body, your whole person for him, under a continual sense that they are not your own, but his; an apprehension of his interest in you. No consent is enough without this; indeed, you did never consent enough, i. e., cordially, unless this be the issue of it. The apostle calls for it upon this ground, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, employ body and spirit for the interest of his glory; think it not much nor hard to employ both all the members and faculties of both, thus for him, and thus continually. It is not hard, it is no more than is highly reasonable and equal, that both should be thus employed, and thus only; for both, and whatever in either you call your own, is indeed not yours, but his; and for whom should they be laid out, but for their owner? For whom should a servant be employed but him who bought him for his service? His person was part of his master's goods; he had bought it, and paid for it; if he had followed his own employments, or been set a-work by others, instead of doing his master's service, it would not have been endured. We are more the Lord's, not only than mercenary hired servants, but than mancipia, bought servants; both our bodies and spirits are his, not our own. If we will let sin, or the world, or self set us a-work, and employ our faculties, senses, or members, the Lord, whose we are, is wronged by it. You may as well work another man's horse without his leave, or command his servant to do your business, as do what these other usurpers would have you; you deny the Lord's interest in you by obeying them, Romans 6:16; if we will acknowledge ourselves to be his, we must do his work, and none but that which is some way his; we must be only at his command, ready to do whatever he enjoins, and to undergo what he would have us endure, and to resist what he would have us oppose, and to avoid what he forbids us, and to part with what he would not have us possess. This may serve to shew you what it is to give up ourselves to him as our owner. This is it which this truth obliges us to. But this is not all; we must give up ourselves to him not only as our owner, but as to such an owner as he is indeed. The

particulars you may collect from what was delivered in the explication. I shall instance only in four. We must give up ourselves to him,

[1.] Absolutely, without offering conditions, or making any terms. The Lord is the absolute owner of all; there is no obligation restraining him from disposing of his own as he pleases, but what flows from his own free will. If we will offer to restrain him by any condition as to his disposal or using of us, instead of giving up ourselves to him, we take from him the glory of his absolute dominion. To say, I will give up myself to him, if he will not urge such a duty, grievous to me, and prejudicial to my wordly interest; if he will allow me in the neglect of this one, or if he will tolerate me in such or such an evil, which is gainful or pleasant, or otherwise endeared to me; this is not to resign up yourselves to him as becomes such a Lord, but to do nothing, yea, that which is far worse than nought; for to make terms with God, and prescribe conditions to him, is an intolerable presumption in the greatest of men, yea, in the highest angels. To make any terms but what himself has made, to offer yourselves to him with an if, is to offer him an affront of an unspeakable provocation.

[2.] Principally; for he is the principal owner of all, and of us. Others may have some interest in us as superiors and parents, and so may challenge some observance from us; but we owe none to any but for him, and in subordination to him. They are to have no affection from us but such wherein a greater love is expressed to God. As we love the picture of a dear friend, not for itself, but for something of him in it, so that, even in loving it, we love him more, so are we to love other things and persons, and no otherwise, but for something of God in them; something of his authority, or of his image, or of his goodness, as they resemble him, or as they come from him, or point at him, or lead us to him, or help us in serving him; so that affecting them for him, we may shew even in that affection we more love him.* Likewise they are to have no obedience but such wherein we obey God, and this is to obey in the Lord, Ephesians 6:1, Ephesians 6:5-7.

[3.] Entirely; without exception or reservation of anything; for he is the total owner of all, and of us and all wholly. To deny or withhold any one thing is in construction to deny him all; for he has the same title to that one as to any; and so his title, not acknowledged in any one particular, is, by consequence, disclaimed in all; it will hold no more in any than in that. All the superior powers, the mind, conscience, memory, the will and affections; all the inferior faculties, the fancy, appetite, senses, the whole body, with all its parts, must be resigned to him, and given into his hands, to be ordered and disposed of by him, to be used and acted for him, and wholly for him. No habit or disposition, no inclination or resolution, no intention or motion, no act or word, or thought, must be exempted from his disposal or use; must be ordered or used not as we will, but as he will, as that which is his own. Whatever of these will not serve him must be suppressed, noway tolerated; and what is capable of serving him must be used in his service, and ordered for it. This is it which the apostle desires for the Thessalonians, and thereby shews it is the duty of all to desire and endeavour it, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. To be sanctified, is to be given up and dedicated to God, so as to be set apart from all other uses for his use alone, as that which is his own, and no other's. This is the proper notion of holiness or sanctification. Now thus he would have them sanctified, ■λοτελε■ς, entirely; wholly as to every part and motion, and the whole of each. He would have ■λ■κληρον ■μ■ν, the all, the whole of them, their body, soul, and spirit; all the parts of the body, all the powers of the soul, both higher and lower, both rational and sensitive; the whole of this thus given up to God, and set apart for his use alone, as the way to be preserved blameless to the coming of Christ.

We are as much concerned in this as they were. We profess Christ to be our Lord, the full owner of us, and he that has a plenary dominion in and over us, and therefore we are obliged to let him have his own; to give up soul, and body, and spirit; to set apart the whole of them wholly for his use, that so, at his coming, we may be found blameless, as those who have effectually acknowledged that he is our Lord, and we wholly his, and have not withheld anything of his own from him.

[4.] Perpetually; for the Lord is the perpetual owner of us, as of all things. His right never ceases, and he is ever actually exercising it; and therefore we should give up ourselves to him by an irrevocable act, such as will never be recalled or repented of; and by a continued act, such as will not admit of any intermission. We must resign up ourselves to be always his own, and always acting as his own. We are hereby obliged to be always his servants, and to be always serving him. Not only as those husbandmen mentioned in the code, who were to serve their masters, so as all they had and did was his and for him, during the space of thirty years, but afterwards had more freedom and property. Nor only as those Hebrews, whose service lasted but for seven years, Exodus 21:2, but rather like those of them who loved their masters, and would not leave them when the law gave them liberty, and so were to have their ear bored, Exodus 21:5-6, and fastened to the door, Deuteronomy 15:17, whereby was signified, that he was fixed inseparably to his master, and was never to quit his service. He thereby became ■■■■ ■■■, a perpetual servant, fastened to his master for ever.

Thus should we give up ourselves to God, to cleave to him inseparably, and continue his servants for ever, as Ruth 1:16-17. And as we should be perpetually his servants, so should we be always actually serving him one way or other.

Take care you be always so employed, as if any inquire, at any time, what you are doing, you may be able to answer it, the Lord's work, viz., that which he sets me about, whose I am, and to whose service I am obliged every hour. Be ever doing that which you may be blessed for, if the Lord should come when you are at work, and 'find you so doing.' But then you need not think that you are only employed in your Lord's work, when you are about acts of worship. For in a due following of your lawful callings, if you sincerely design to employ what you get thereby for the Lord, and to dispose of it, as the Lord, who is owner of you and it, would have it disposed of, you are therein truly serving him. Yea, in eating, sleeping, recreations, if you use these only for this end, to render you more serviceable to the Lord, you may be herein truly said to be serving him. But you must never be employed, but either in that which is his work directly, or that which conduces to it, and is requisite to help you therein; if you will demean yourselves as those who have resigned up themselves unto him, and would effectually acknowledge his interest in you, as those who are his own.

(4.) Improve all you have for God. Your parts, your time, your strength, your estates, all that you have, as well as all that you are, should be laid out for God. The truth in hand leads you directly to this duty, makes it evident that it is your duty, and powerfully obliges you to mind, pursue, and perform it. For all is his own. All that the world hath, all that you have. And should not all be improved and used for the true and right owner, especially when we are entrusted with all we possess upon these terms, that all of it should be employed for him, whose it is, and for whom we have it in trust? Which is our case, as I shewed you in the explication.

If all be not thus used for God, one way or other, as he has directed you in his word, you will bring great guilt upon your souls, and expose all you have to greater danger than I can easily express, or you apprehend.

Mind this, as to your estates, to instance in that one, where it is so much neglected; and what is said of this, holds proportionably of all, and yourselves may easily apply it to the rest. I must not stay to dilate on severals.

[1.] Let this be your design and end in following your particular callings, to employ what you get for the Lord and owner of all. You should not have the end and design of worldlings in anything; no, not in your earthly affairs; but such ends and intentions as become Christians, if you would approve yourselves to be such really, and not in name and profession only. Your end, in your main course, will shew what you are, whether you have given up yourselves to God or the world. A worldling would be rich. That is his aim in following his calling, therefore is he careful and industrious, therefore sparing and saving, and parts with little to others or himself. But a Christian would be rich in good works, or rich unto God, that is the main end of his care and pains. A worldling would have abundance for him and his. A Christian would have more, that he may do more good, and be more serviceable. A worldling would have the reputation and credit which riches procure, that esteem and respect which a sordid degenerate world almost appropriates to riches. A Christian would honour God with his substance, according to the divine rule, Proverbs 3:9. A worldling would gratify the flesh, or his fancy, with such a garb, state, or accommodation, as a great estate will afford. A Christian would please and glorify God more, and that is his end in desiring and seeking more of the world, that he may be able to lay out more for God. If you be out as to the end of that which is the business of your lives, you are greatly and fearfully out indeed. God will judge of you, not by this or that particular act, but by your whole course, and principally by the end of that. If your end in your callings be that of worldlings, and not of Christians, what portion or reward can you expect from God, but that of worldlings? And if your end be not to employ all you have, all you get, for God, is there any hopes you will so use it? Is it likely you will do that which you never intended to do? When you would express yourselves farthest from doing a thing, you say, You never did intend it. How far are you then from honouring God's dominion, and acknowledging all to be his own, by employing all for him, if it be not your end in possessing or getting what you have, if you do not so much as intend it? Make sure that this be your end in all.

[2.] And that being done, pursue it. Shew that you did sincerely design all for God, by conscientiously employing all for him; that so, when you are thinking to dispose of anything, or actually doing it, and inquiry be made, Who is this expended for? you may be able truly to say, It is for the Lord; I am disposing of it as he, who is the owner of it, and has entrusted me with it, would have it used. Some may say, How can it be our duty to expend all for God? Something must be laid out for ourselves, something for our relatives and families, and something for others. This is true, and yet all may, and must be employed for God principally and ultimately; for no other chiefly, but for him; for others only in subordination to him; for no others, as the last end, without looking further; for others, with respect and reference to his pleasure, and service, and honour; for it, and in subserviency to it, and so only.

Now thus it is not employed,

First, When it is buried; when what we have is kept close to ourselves and ours, as if the Lord had not designed it, or any considerable share of it, for any besides us. Nothing in comparison of what the Lord expects, is laid out for the adorning of their profession, or maintaining of the gospel, or relief of those in want, or comfort of those that suffer. When it should be brought forth freely and plentifully, for these and such uses as the Lord and owner of it would have it employed for, it is hid in the earth, and there they keep it for themselves. This is, with the unprofitable servant, to hide your Lord's money, instead of improving it for him. Consider his dreadful doom, and tremble at being guilty of a crime which the Lord will punish everlastingly with such severity.

Secondly, When it is consumed. When it is laid out for the support of pride, vainglory, earthliness, or sensuality; to nourish the lust of the eye, or the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life; this is not to improve, but consume it, James 4:3.

Thirdly, When it is thrown away. As it is no better, when used idly, vainly, on such things as will turn to no account; when laid out upon such superfluities, as are not helpful to soul or body, in any way of serviceableness to the great Lord or owner. If the servant entrusted with one talent, had only played with it, or laid it out in trifles, his Lord had got no more advantage by this, than by his hiding it; he had been as unprofitable a servant, and might have met with as much severity.

Fourthly, When no due proportions are observed in employing what you have; but that has all, or very much, which should have little or nothing; and that has little or nothing which should have most; when that which tends, certainly, directly, or advantageously, to the promoting of the Lord's interest, is scanted and pinched, while the main stream of what we possess runs another way; we let but out some drops there, and the sluices not opened but for other occasions. To clear this a little, and to shew you withal what it is to employ what you have for God, observe these severals.

First, There is a way to lay out what you are entrusted with certainly for God; and that is, when you employ it so as he commands you. That is undoubtedly for his interest, which he himself directs you to. You may have a discovery of this in part from these few scriptures, 1 Timothy 6:17-19. To do good with what you have, and to do it richly, according to the proportion of your estate; to be as ready to distribute, as willing to communicate, as if it were the way to be rich; so it is indeed to be rich in God's account. What you do thus, you do it for God certainly; for it is by his appointment, Galatians 6:10, Galatians 6:16, Matthew 25:34-36, Matthew 25:40. You see a way certain, so to employ what you have, as Christ will take it as employed for himself, Hebrews 13:16. This will be as much for his service, as ever the most acceptable sacrifice was.

These are ways of laying out what we possess for God, who has entrusted us, and that most certainly. Yet many there are, too many, who will expend little this way, in comparison of what they reserve, at great uncertainties, whether ever it will be employed for God or no. Some will be sparing till they have raised their estates to such a pitch, and then they will be free and bountiful; but when this will be, none knows; or whether they will be then of the same mind, all utterly uncertain.

Others will be sparing while they live, but when they come to die, they will leave abundance to good uses; but this is as uncertain as their lives. Others will reserve more for a child, than all the good they have done in their whole life comes to; and it may be for such a child as gives no hopes, much less any certainty, that he will employ what is left him any way for God.

Others, who have no children, will save and spare for they know not who. But all this, and the like, are but wicked attempts of covetous hearts, to defraud God of his own. Those that mean to employ what they have for him, will never neglect those certain ways of his own prescribing, for such ways of their own, as are mere uncertainties. They will rather choose to do nothing at uncertainties (though it be the fashion of the world to do most there), than not to be free and open handed, in a way which they are certain is for God.

Secondly, There is a way to lay out what you have directly for God and his interest, more directly than some other ways which are commanded us. Such is the promoting of his worship, the upholding of his gospel. You cannot lay out what you possess upon any thing that tends more directly to the promoting of God's interests than this; and those that mean to be free for God any way at all, will not be sparing here. The nobles of Israel, upon David's motion in this chapter, contribute more towards the worship of God than the whole estates of all our nobility will amount to. They were sensible it was for the Lord in a special manner, being for his worship; they thought it their duty to return him his own in greatest proportion, when there was so fair an occasion for it. And for the gospel, you cannot expend anything which tends more directly to serve the interest of Christ, than what serves to keep it amongst you, or help others to it; for the several lines of Christ's interest do all, in a manner, centre in the gospel. To uphold that, is to employ what you have to scatter darkness and ignorance, to suppress wickedness and ungodliness, to advance holiness and righteousness, to convert souls, to enlarge Christ's kingdom, and destroy the dominion of Satan; and what can you do which will more directly honour Christ, and serve his interest, than what is of this tendency? Yet many there are (though I hope few, if any, here) who own God and his dominion, yet think a very little to be much, for the upholding of the gospel, for themselves and others. They like ■δ■πανον ■υαγγ■λιον, a gospel, a religion that will cost them nothing; but they will make a shift for their souls rather than it shall be chargeable. They will and do lay out far more for superfluities, than for that wherein God and his interest is so directly and highly concerned. They who have devoted what they have unto God will omit no occasions to shew it; but such as more directly concern him, they have a particular respect for; they will not only spare some little out of their superfluities (as one that has little sense of God's interest may do), but will pinch themselves in necessaries, rather than the gospel shall want support amongst themselves or others. As those of Macedonia, in the like case, 2 Corinthians 8:23, and the Galatians before they were seduced, Galatians 4:18, John 21:12.

Thirdly, There is a way of employing what you have for God advantageously, and that is, by laying it out for a common good. It is obvious to common reason that a public good is to be preferred to a private; it is best, says Plato, both for the whole and each particular, τ■ κοιν■ν τ■θεσθαι καλ■ς μ■λλον ■ τ■ ■διον, that the common good be regarded more than any particular. And this is evident, not only because therein we do good to more, and do more good at once, than we can do in many particular acts, but because hereby we serve our Lord's interest more advantageously, this being more extensively promoted by a diffusive good than by that which is but personal and particular. This is to act more like God, and to lay out what we have in a way that he likes best. A public spirit is upon this account a more divine and excellent spirit, and most becomes those who would imitate their heavenly Father; it is as far to be preferred before that private spirit which acts too many, and confines them to themselves and relatives, as the sun, which enlightens so much, is to be preferred before a candle, which gives but light in one private room. The Lord would not

have our light to shine to ourselves and ours only, but before men, because this is more for his interest, Matthew 5:15-16. We put that which should make us shine under a bushel when we reserve it for ourselves and ours; when others, far and near, have advantage by it, it is set upon a candlestick, and so it reflects most glory upon God, and best serves his interest. Those who mean to employ what they have for God will be most free where they may do it most advantageously. This may serve to shew how what you have may be improved for God. What enforcements there are in this truth, to oblige us to improve all we possess for him, I shall next give some account of. From hence we may clearly collect the equity and the advantage of so improving all, and likewise the danger of neglecting it.

1. The equity of employing all for God is hereby apparent. If all be the Lord's, all that is in heaven and in earth, then all that we possess is his. If he be the full and sole owner of all, then is he the owner of all that we have. And if it be his own, is it not equal and reasonable that it should be employed for him?

If he be so much the owner of all, as I have shewed, what we possess, we can have no otherwise than in trust; and the trust, the intent of it, is declared, it is left in our hands for the owner's use, and can it in any equity be employed to other uses? If you should convey any part of your estate to another in trust, and declare for what ends and purposes you did it, you would count it a great iniquity for him who is so entrusted to convert it to other uses. We have our time, opportunities, parts, gifts, graces, health, strength, estates, and all, upon such terms; he is the proprietor, we are but trustees. Is it not equal his own should be used for him according to the trust?

2. The advantage we shall have by employing all for God may be hereby discerned; to use all for him as he would have us, and as all that is his own should be used, is the way to be entrusted longer and entrusted with more.

We need not fear that to improve all for another is the way to have nothing ourselves. To use all for God is the most advantageous improvement thereof for ourselves.

We shall be far from losing anything thereby. He who is owner of the whole world, and all that is in it, has enough to reward us, enough to encourage us, and has declared himself willing and ready to do it. He has so obliged himself, as we have all assurances we shall not have less but more.

It is so with men. If you have a factor that manages your concerns for you to the greatest advantage, you will count it your interest to trust him still, and to commit more to his hands. And thus the Lord represents himself to us in the parable of the talents: he that had improved five talents to the gaining for his lord five more, because he had been faithful in a little, is entrusted with much, Matthew 25:22-23, Matthew 25:30-31; for the faithful improvement of one pound for his lord, he is made ruler of ten cities, Luke 19:16-17. One that is wise in the world's account, would have thought it more for his advantage to employ the money for himself than for his master; at least to have reserved something of the improvement to himself; but if he had made use of such wisdom he had lost all, it would have undone him. He found that the wisest and surest way to make him a man was to be faithful to his lord. By improving all for him, nothing for himself, he got much more than both stock and improvement came to. And of the like advantage are all assured, Luke 19:29. To him that uses all he hath for his Lord, though he seem to neglect himself and his particular concernments, yet he shall find it the way both to secure and advance them, to him much shall be

given; he shall be entrusted with much more, and shall have abundance. The talent is taken from the unprofitable servant, who would not employ it for his Lord, and given to him who was faithful, Luke 19:28. Thus the Lord confutes the wretched wisdom of worldlings, who think nothing is to be gained but by serving themselves. Their way of saving and gaining is the direct way to be undone; and his way of improving, by using all for him, and according to his order, though it seem the way to leave ourselves nothing, tends most to the increase of what we have, Leviticus 19:23-25. The three first years they were not to meddle with the fruits of their trees. The Lord was to be first served; he was to have the first-fruits, those being reserved as an acknowledgment that all was his own, and they were not fit for him till they came to full maturity and perfection, which, it seems, in new plantations, was not till the fourth year; so that four years' fruit seem lost to them. Was this the way to make the best advantage of their plantations? Yes; the increase thereof depended on it. It would yield the increase if the Lord had his due and his orders were observed, otherwise they were not to expect it. If you would have anything you possess yield its increase, dedicate it to God, employ it for him. This is not the way to diminish what you have, though it may seem so to carnal and selfish reason, but to have it increased with the increase of God; a blessed increase.

3. The danger of neglecting to improve all for God is hereby discovered; and that both in respect of sin and suffering. It is a dangerous sin, and exposes us to answerable sufferings. The sinfulness of it is great, and the Lord will proceed against it accordingly.

(1.) For the sinfulness:

[1.] There is intolerable unthankfulness in it. It is as if one who had received all that he has in the world from the bounty of another, should, when he has it in his possession, refuse to acknowledge the owner who lent it him, but should call it all his own, and use it accordingly. All that hear of such dealing would cry out of him as a most disingenuous and ungrateful wretch; yet we deal no better with God. Our being, our well-being, all we are and have, he lends us, yet by not employing it for him, we refuse to acknowledge his interest in what we have. We look not upon him, but ourselves as the owners. We say, It is not his, but ours, in using it as we list ourselves, and not as he would have us. And this is all he gets by dealing thus bountifully with us; this is the return we make for all he vouchsafes us, and it is such ingratitude as heaven and earth may condemn. To them the Lord seems to appeal, Isaiah 1:2-3. I have dealt with them as children; they owe their being, their nourishment, their advancement all to me, and yet, as if they owed nothing at all, they do not acknowledge me to be the owner of them and theirs, they are more disingenuous herein than the very beasts. The ox will, according to his capacity, acknowledge his owner, but my people will not consider, not take notice that they are mine, and all they have too, but act as though they had right to dispose of themselves, and all that they have, as their own.

[2.] It is horrid unfaithfulness to God. It is as if a steward, having his master's goods in his hands to be employed for his use, should refuse so to employ them, but challenge them as his own, and convert them to his own use. We are but the Lord's stewards, 1 Peter 4:10. We have no more right to any gift, grace, enjoyment we are entrusted with, than a steward can claim in his master's goods. We have them but to use and lay out for him, and as he appointed. Now, 1 Corinthians 4:2, 'it is required in a steward that he be found faithful;' but how are we faithful if we observe not the Lord's orders, acknowledging not his propriety, nor him as owner, and employ not all for his use, but as if all were our own, not his, use all as we please, and dispose of all as we list; not for him,

but for ourselves and ours, without regard whether therein we serve his interest or not? Oh, what account will be given of such unfaithfulness when the Lord calls us to give an account of our stewardship?

[3.] It is gross theft, and the worst kind of it that any creature can be guilty of; it is a stealing from God, a robbing of God. ‘Will a man rob God?’ says the prophet, Malachi 3:8. He is a desperate wretch that will offer to rob a man in the face of death, which the law sets before him. What then is he that will attempt to rob God? Can any such wretch be found out of hell? Alas! they are to be found everywhere. Every one who employs not what he hath for God, is a thief to God, and offers to rob none less than the Almighty. He would take that which is God’s, and make it his own, and uses it as if God had no title to it, no right to have it used for him. By the civil law,* if a man have the use of a thing, if he use it otherwise than the owner allows, si aliter ea usus fuerit quam acceperit, furti actione tenetur, he is liable to an action of theft. The Lord is the owner of all, he lets us have the use of what is in our hands, but allows us not to use it any otherwise than for himself, 1 Corinthians 10:1-33, 1 Peter 4:11. If then we lay it out for ourselves, or ours, in any way which may not justly be accounted an using of it for him, we are no better than thieves, not only to men, but to God, and that even by the determination of human laws, Malachi 3:8. The Lord charges the Jews for robbing him. They, not imagining themselves guilty of so horrible a crime, ask wherein they had robbed? He answers, ‘In tithes and offerings;’ in not bringing that which was requisite for the upholding of his worship. To which that in the first chapter may be also reduced, in offering the refuse, that which was of small value, to him, and keeping the best for themselves. Now, if we allow not what is necessary for the maintaining of his worship, or give but the Lord the offal of our estate, some crumbs or driblets, something little worth, and of small value in comparison, and reserve the most and best of what we have for ourselves and relatives, will not this in us be proportionably a robbing of God? And since it is a robbing of God, I need not tell you that it is unrighteousness, that is a dealing most injuriously and unrighteously with God. To deal thus with men was abominable even to the heathen. It is the character of a very odious person to make no conscience of letting others have their own. What is it not to let God have his own? What is it to defraud, to go about to put a cheat upon him, and so act as such cheats in our whole course? To detain from him what is his own, when we know it to be so; to put him off with a little, when we know that all is due; and not to restore, when we are convinced of the fraud; when we profess that all is his, and that we ought to use all as his servants, to use it for ourselves, and as we list, will the Lord endure this? Do we think that he perceives not the fraud of our dealings, the hypocrisy of our pretences? Will he not bring it upon our heads in the issue? Galatians 6:6-7. We may deceive and cheat ourselves herein, but God will not be cheated, he will not be abused. We may be sure that as we sow we shall reap; as we deal with God in using what we have for him, or not for him, so will he deal with us.

[4.] It is virtual atheism, and no less in effect than treason against the Most High. We cannot deny that to be his which properly is so, but thereby we shall deny him to be what he is. When we deny his propriety in all, or anything, it is constructively an attempt to dethrone him; it is in effect a denying him to be God. If he be not the owner of all things, if he be not the rightful possessor of heaven and earth, and all things therein, he is not God. Deny his universal propriety and dominion, and you deny him that which is essential to him, viz., to be universal Lord. But you practically deny his dominion and right to all, when you use what you have as though it were your own, and not his;

when you use it not for him, as his own should be employed, you deny in effect that it is his, and thereby deny that he is Lord and owner of all, and consequently that he is God.

Now what a dreadful and dangerous thing is it to go on in practical atheism through the whole course of your life; to be guilty of not owning God in the continued and main concernments of your conversation and actings; to order your improving and using of what you have, so as it will be a disowning of God! And so it is, and will be, if what you have be not improved and used for him as his own.

I need not add that this involves a denial of his infinite power, or wisdom, or justice, which are essential to him, so that, without any one of them, we cannot conceive him to be God. A thief would not adventure to rob a man if he did believe that he was able to resist him, and would be too hard for him; neither would he attempt, if he was sure he should suffer for it according to law. A cheat would not offer to defraud a man, if he perceived that he was aware of him, and discerned all his intents and practices. And would you neglect to employ what you have for God, which he accounts a defrauding or robbing of him, if you did believe his omniscience, that he is perfectly aware of you in all that you act or design; or his almighty power, that he would certainly be too hard for you; or his justice, that he will undoubtedly have his law executed upon you? If you believe not this, you do not believe that he is God; and you do not believe this to purpose, if you do not resolve and endeavour to employ what you have for God. Though you profess to acknowledge and believe God, yet in works, and that in a continued course, you deny him. You profess yourselves Christians, owners of God and his dominion, but herein you act more like atheists, and deniers of God and his interest in yourselves and in the world.

I beseech you consider these things, and when you are tempted to save or spare what God would have you lay out freely for him, say thus to yourselves, Shall I be such an ungrateful miser as to grudge him anything he calls for, when I owe to him all that ever I have? Shall I be such an unfaithful wretch as to reserve and convert my master's goods to my own use? Shall the world prevail with me to be so desperate as to offer to rob or defraud God of what is his own? Shall I act so atheistically under the profession and vizard of a Christian, as to disown God in the improvement and use of what I have? Oh far be this from me; far be this from any of us. It would be incomparably better, and more tolerable, that we and ours should be utterly beggars, than that we should involve ourselves, under any pretence whatsoever, in such horrible guilt. And this they will one day acknowledge, and be sensible of as a real truth, who are now farthest from believing or considering it.

(2.) You see the danger in respect of guilt, how great it is. Let me shew you also the hazard, in respect of suffering, in a few particulars.

[1.] You forfeit all you have if you employ it not for God. You are by him entrusted with it upon these terms; upon these you hold all; and upon the observing of the terms your right of holding what you have depends. If you observe them not, your right is gone, and all you have is forfeited. What right soever may continue in respect of men, yet you leave yourselves no right at all in respect of God. And to hold what you have without any such right, is a lamentable tenure. You are but as usurpers in the sight of God, though human laws do allow your title.

If a tenant pay not his rent, observe not conditions, his lease is void; he has no right to what he holds. So in the feudal laws,* negato servitio amittitur feudum; he loses his land, who denies the homage he is obliged to for it. And there is an instance of the emperor Frederick, who, holding a dukedom of another, and denying fealty for it because be was sovereign, yet, by the judgment of his peers, for the refusal, he forfeited the dukedom. The homage and fealty which we owe to God for what we have, is the employing it for him for his honour and interest. Upon these terms we hold it; and if they be neglected, what we have is forfeited. He shews, when he will, that no right remains to the possessors, by turning them out, and taking what is in their hands away. He does it not always, but he may do it when he will; and Israel is threatened accordingly, Hosea 2:8-9. She did not acknowledge that she had them from God, and that they were his own; she did not employ them for him, but as her own inclination led her; thereby she forfeited them; and the Lord will take the forfeiture, and strip her of all, Hosea 2:10-12; ‘She forgat me,’ Hosea 2:13. So by those ancient laws, if one acknowledge not the interest of the lord in his estate, si propriâ autoritate capiat, if he hold it as his own, feudum amittit, he loses it. So we hold it; when we employ it not for God, we extinguish what right we have, and provoke the Lord to take the forfeiture, and to deal with us as with Israel, Hosea 2:3.

[2.] That which you have, if you employ it not for God, will never prosper, nor will a blessing attend it. If he takes it not away, he will some way or other blast it; and you will find it, or yourselves, blasted for it sooner or later. When one gets or increases what he has fraudulently or unrighteously, it is the common sense of mankind, and we are wont to express it by saying confidently, It will never prosper. And why? But because we think (as we have reason) that the righteous God will never encourage unjust and unrighteous practices with his blessing; he will not let that fraud and injustice to prosper whereby others suffer; and can we think he will be more favourable, where himself, in his honour and interest, suffers? Doth he curse us, when we cheat men? And will he bless us, when we defraud God? Will he bless us in unrighteously withholding his own from his own use, that which he has given and designed it for? No, sure, you may make account, that what you spare or save, when it should be laid out for God, will be followed with a curse; which will seize either upon your estate, or souls, or other concerns, or all together. You may expect either a visible, or (which is far worse and more dangerous) an insensible curse: Malachi 3:9, ‘Cursed with a curse;’ i.e., exceedingly, superlatively cursed. Why so? Ye have robbed God. Wherein? In not giving that which was due to his worship, and his officers employed in it, ver. 8. They may think that the sparing of so much, and keeping it to themselves, was the way to be rich; but the Lord confuted their vain imaginations with a curse. He cursed what they had, and cursed what might have supplied them with more. A blessing did neither attend their possessions nor their hopes.

If they had laid out all which was due to God, in his worship and servants, they might have thought this the way to impoverish them, lessen their estates, and keep them low. But their worldly hearts did befool and delude them; it was quite otherwise: this had been the way to all plenty and abundance, Malachi 3:10-11. Their hands and hearts were shut, so that God could have little or nothing of what was due to him; this shut the windows of heaven: whereas large hearts for God would have set them wide open, and made way for more than they had room for, and, what was more than all, his blessing with it. If you would not have what you possess cursed of God, and blasted from heaven, employ it faithfully for God.

[3.] God will judge for this. He will have an account of you for all his own wherewith he entrusted you. It may be, you hope to make shift, as to the curse here (as some seem to do, when it falls especially upon the soul, and there is not taken notice of, though the fall of it there is heaviest and most dreadful), but what will you do hereafter, when God will reckon with you for all that you have had of his? The day is coming when he will say, ‘Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.’ He will then mind you of that which it may be now you forget, for he has a book of remembrance; and then the books will be opened, and there you may find what has been done with all you had, and how and for whom it has been disposed of; so much to please my humour, my fancy, my appetite, my vanity, my curiosity; so much for the excess of my garb, my table, my other accommodations, to please myself, or answer the vain expectation of others; great sums for these: and for some there will be so much to satisfy pride, or revenge, or lust, or vain-glory, no small quantity, the rest left to my children or relatives. For what? To educate them so, as they might be more serviceable: it may be some respect to that; but principally to make them rich, or great, to bear up my name and family, or that they may live like the children of one who had a better estate than others.

Well; but what in all this for God? what for his worship? what for his gospel? what for his suffering messengers? what for his poor members? what for others in need and distress? what for the adorning of your profession, and winning others to a good opinion of the ways of Christ? what for any public good? Why, something for these, or some of them, what little I could spare from those other uses, wherein myself alone, or myself multiplied, was so much concerned. Or another, who loved the world too much to be expensive any way, will have nothing to say, but, ‘There was that which is thine.’ I did no good with it while I lived, and when I died I know not what became of it. The napkin I carefully hid it in was opened when I was gone; I left it amongst them, and if they have squandered it away, I cannot help it.

But, may the Lord say, all that you had was mine own, and should have been all employed for me, How comes it then to pass that so little account was made of me, and of my interest, and so very little laid out for me, in comparison of the great sums expended otherwise, whenas it should have been all for me? More for a costly garment, or a needless ornament, or a modish excrement, in one day sometimes, than for me directly in a whole year. And, upon the whole, more for mere superfluities and excesses, than for the special concerns of my interest in your whole life. Is this the account you will give God of all his own you have had? Is this to be faithful stewards, or not more like to unfaithful and unprofitable servants?

What will be answered for these things? What can be expected but confounded silence? what but shame, and remorse, and confusion? what but that dreadful sentence which Christ, at the last day, will pronounce against, and execute upon, those who have not been faithful in using what they were entrusted with for him? Matthew 25:1-46. You see those who employ not what they have for Christ, will at the last day be counted goats, useless and odious creatures, in comparison of the sheep; they will be set at his left hand, as those that are castaways, rejected by him; they will be cursed, as he who turned what was set apart for God to another use was anathema, cursed, Leviticus 27:28. They will be separated from the blessedness of the divine presence, as those who had not given up what they had to him, and separated it for other uses from him. They will be cast into everlasting fire, and there tormented with the devil and his angels, and that for ever. And why all this severity, in so fearful a sentence and so terrible an execution? It is plainly upon this

account, because they laid not out what they had, so as it might be accounted laid out for Christ. Oh that you would avoid the wrath of the Lamb, and of him that sits upon the throne! If you have been guilty herein, yield to conviction. Break off this dangerous evil without delay, persist not in such wickedness. Take warning before it be too late. Employ what you have so as, when you stand before the tribunal of Christ, you may give an account thereof with joy, and not with grief, and shame, and terror, and a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which will then devour those who continue in such ungrateful, unfaithful, injurious dealing with God, and will be devouring of them for ever and ever.

[4.] I might add, as another inducement, the comfort we may have thereby. This is the way to make all we have, and all we do, to be holy, holy unto the Lord, and used holily. How acts of worship, and what is set apart thereto, are holy, we easily apprehend; but how our particular callings, our earthly business and worldly enjoyments, should be made so holy, and those pursued, and these used, in a holy manner, is the difficulty, and yet a most necessary duty, for otherwise we cannot be holy in all manner of conversation, which is required of us indispensably, 1 Peter 1:15. Not only in that part of our conversation which immediately respects God in duties of worship, but that part of it which respects the world, and the business and enjoyments of it. How may these be made holy, or we shew ourselves holy in them? Why, plainly, thus: that is holy which is set apart to God, and used for him. That which you design and really resolve shall be for God, you consecrate it, and make it holy, and what you use (as so set apart) for him, you use as a holy thing; so that if God be your end and design in your particular callings, if you follow your business for him, and employ what you get for God, all thus become holy, and you use them as becomes holy persons to use holy things. If your intention in all be to please, and serve, and honour God, and you employ all in a subserviency to these ends, and no otherwise, you are holy, even in this part of your conversation, and not only in that part of it which is taken up with his worship, Hebrews 13:16, Php 4:16-18. The art* of sacrificing was a holy employment, and the sacrifice offered to God was a holy thing, and so are you employed, when you are doing good with what you have; and that portion of your estates which you do good with, which you employ to please, and serve, and honour God with, it assumes, as it were, the nature of a sacrifice, and is offered to God as a holy thing.

You see the way that holiness to the Lord may be upon all you have and do in the world. Use it as that which is God's, and as he who is the owner would have it used; use it not for yourselves or others, but so as God may be served, and pleased, and honoured by it, and then it is employed for God. It is as it were offered to him; it will be holy and acceptable to him, as the sacrifices of his own appointing were. And how comfortable will it be for you to have the Lord look upon the use and employment of what you have in the world, as the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to him, and to make it the end of your callings, and the business of your lives, to be (when others are sacrificing all to their lusts, or themselves) still offering to him (in the use), or preparing for him (in your care and industry) such holy offerings.

[5.] What you have will hereby be better secured. The Lord will be particularly interested in the preservation of it as that which is his own, not only by a common right which he has in all things, but by a particular right, such as he has in things dedicated to him.

If our end and design be, if we sincerely intend to employ what we have for God, we have thereby given it up, dedicated it to God; and so it is his own peculiarly, and those that wrong us therein, wrong God himself, not as common transgressors only, but as those who should steal away that which was provided and prepared for a sacrifice for God. This would not only be a wrong to the person who provided it, but to the Lord for whom it was designed, and to whom it was to be offered. God is herein more particularly concerned than in common injuries, and will shew it by taking special vengeance for it. Those that will oppose or defraud you, or by deceit or violence take anything from you, when you have given up all to God, and are accordingly employing all, run a more dreadful hazard than any other deceivers or oppressors, they shall not escape so well as others. He will make them know they had better have employed their fraud or violence anywhere than upon such, they shall feel what it is to attempt upon that which is God's own, Jeremiah 2:3. 'Israel was consecrated or set apart to me, and the first-fruits of my revenues, all that devour him shall offend,' not as common offenders, but as those which devoured that which was God's, as such who attempt to rob the exchequer of the Most High; 'evil shall come upon them,' some grievous evil answerable to the offence. They shall not escape without exemplary punishment.

Hereby you have assurance, that the Lord will secure what you have as he will secure his own. All you have is his, and so should be given up to him, and used for him; hereby it becomes his own peculiarly. And so this is the way to engage him to take care of your concerns as his own. But enough of this; though indeed never enough of it, till it lead you effectually to the practice of this most important duty, of employing all for God.

4. Another duty that this truth leads us to is patience, and the continual exercise of it, as there is occasion. It will help us, being duly considered aud effectually believed, in patience to possess our souls, whatever our condition or the circumstances of it be. It will serve both as a motive and a means to keep our souls in a submissive, quiet, composed, undisturbed temper, even in such cases which are most like to disturb and discompose us, to make us yield submissively to the disposal of God when others rise up against it, and to silence and quiet our hearts when they are tempted to grumble and murmur and shew themselves unsatisfied. This will shew us that the least degree of impatience is most unreasonable, very sinful, and exceeding dangerous, that it reflects untowardly upon the universal dominion and propriety of God as to all things, and either denies it, or questions whether he duly exercise it towards us, and by such guilt very much endangers us, and tends to make our condition far worse, when we think it too bad already. Let me instance, in three particulars, when impatience has the greatest advantage, and usually most prevails.

(1.) In wants and necessities. When we have not what we desire, or so much of it as we would have, this brings us into impatience. But how unreasonable it is to yield to it, whatever our wants be, how heinous and dangerous it is, hereby appears evidently. The Lord is the owner of all: that which we would have, as well as that which we have, is his own, and so he has all right to dispose of it as he will. No, says impatience (this is the voice and language of it, though we are apt to put a better construction on it), it ought to be disposed otherwise; I should have more than I have, I have not enough, my share is too little in this, or that, or many degrees. And what is the meaning of this, but a denying that God is the owner of what we would have, or that he has not the right to dispose of his own as he pleases? And how intolerable is this, for a poor worthless creature, who has nothing at all but what he owes to the mere bounty of God, thus to rise up against the Lord of heaven and earth, and question his interest, and impeach his undoubted right, and prescribe to

him how he should order that which is his own! If a beggar, when you have given him what you think fit, should murmur and repine, and say you gave him not enough, he wants this, and that, and so much of it, and ought to have it of you, you would take him up as saucy and impudent, for challenging more than you think fit to give, and prescribing to you how you should dispose of what is your own, you would tell him if he were not satisfied with what you think fit to give, he should have nothing at all, as he deserved. A greater sauciness in such a beggar would be nothing to that of our impatience in God's account; the absoluteness of his dominion and right, with the infiniteness of the distance betwixt us, raises the provocation inconceivably higher.

It were more tolerable if that which we are impatient to have were our own, or any way due to us; but this truth leaves us no plea nor pretence for that. God is the true and sole owner of all; and therefore this should hush and quell all the stirrings of impatience, and quiet our hearts when our needs would disturb us, as it silenced those in the parable, who murmured that they had no more, Matthew 20:11, Matthew 20:13, Matthew 20:15. Is it not most intolerable not to allow the absolute Lord of all that right which we challenge ourselves, to do what we will with our own, when that we call our own is nothing so much ours as all are his? If any say, the Lord has promised what I would have, and so, though it be not otherwise due, yet by virtue of his promise it is; for that creates some right;—

Ans. The Lord has nowhere promised earthly blessings in such a degree to thee or any; he has promised in general what is good for his people in temporal enjoyments, but not such or such a degree thereof, or so much as they may desire, no, nor spiritual blessings in such a degree, though we are in little danger of impatient desires after these (alas! we do not so much value them, we are not so sensible of our want of them, the Lord encourages importunate eagerness after these), our danger is in respect of temporal enjoyments; and the degrees of these he has nowhere promised, and so he has not, as to these, any way restrained his own right of disposing of them in what degree and proportion soever he will. His dominion herein continues fully absolute, and altogether unlimited and unrestrained, so that we cannot challenge this or that degree of them as any way due to us, no, not so much as by his promise. He is at liberty to give less or more, as he thinks fit. And if we will impatiently desire this or that, or more of it, which he has reserved to his free disposal, we exalt ourselves against the dominion of God, as though he were not the owner of all, and might not distribute them as he pleases.

(2.) In losses. When we lose much, or that which is dear to us, we are apt to be impatient at the loss. But to arm us against the assaults of this evil, let us consider whose it is we part with, and who it is that takes it from us. It is the Lord that takes, whoever be the instrument, and it is he that is the owner of it, for he is the owner of all. He takes but his own; and should we repine, or think much that the Lord should have his own when he calls for it? Is this reasonable? Is this tolerable? Should you not rather be thankful that you had it at all, and that he would let you have it so long, than grudge that he should have liberty to take his own when he sees fit? Job had as great temptations to impatience as any we are like to meet with, considering how much he lost, and how dear some of it was to him, and in what way he was bereaved thereof, and yet by such considerations became an example of patience to the world. He was so far from repining at his losses as he blesses God under the pressure of them, Job 1:21. It is the Lord of it who gave it; it is the Lord, the owner of it, who took it: blessed be his name in both, adored and admired be his dominion both in giving and taking away.

If you should, in kindness, lend a friend what he needs; and he, after he has had the use and advantage, should think much to let you have your own again, when you have occasion to call for it; what a heavy censure would you think he deserves! We are worthy of a heavier censure ourselves, when we give way to the least impatience, when the Lord calls for anything in our possession. He did not give, but lend us what we have. He lets us not have the propriety, but the use of it. Our estates, outward comforts, dearest relatives, they are but lent us; when we have them, he is the proprietor, not we ourselves. And shall we think much to part with his own to him, when he will? Do we think ourselves the owners, because we have been so long entrusted with what is truly his? Will we deny his universal right and interest in all, because he has been so kind and bountiful to us? Is not this shameful, and to be abhorred by a temper that has the least tincture of ingenuousness? Let it then make us ashamed to give way to any impatience in such a trial.

(3.) In troubles and afflictions; when they are many, or grievous, or smarting, or tedious, then we have need of patience; and this truth, duly considered, that the Lord is the owner of all, may help us to it. He who is the owner of all things, is the owner of us. We are more his own than anything is ours, which we think we may use as we please, because it is ours. And has not he, then, all right to deal with us as he will? May he not do all his pleasure with that which is so much his own? And shall we be any ways impatient, when he does us no wrong at all, nor can do? Shall we repine, when we have not the least cause to complain; as we have not, when we are not at all wronged. And can he do us any wrong, who has all right to do with us what he will? And so he has, if we be his own; and so we are, if he be the owner of all: Job 2:10, ‘Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?’ so Job checks the impatience of his wife. Shall we think ourselves wronged in one more than the other, when the Lord has equal right to do both? When all those grievous things were threatened Eli, which the Lord declared he would inflict upon him and his, what says he, but that which expresses a great patience? And this is the ground of it, 1 Samuel 3:1-21. It is the Lord, he who has all dominion over me and mine; he has right to inflict on us whatever seems good to him; it will be good and righteous, whatever it seem to be; he will herein do us no wrong. And so we shall have no cause to complain, not the least excuse, not the least reason for any touch of impatience. It hereby appears to be a most unreasonable evil, and that which those who have the use of reason should be ashamed of, and blush at, as if it transformed them into the state of brutes.

5. This will serve, as a powerful means, to help us to humility. It may be improved, as one of the best expedients to make us humble, and to keep us so; to cast down all high thoughts and imaginations of ourselves, and to keep them under. All that we are, all that we have, may, by this consideration, be converted into the nourishment of humility, a grace which nourishes all other graces. This will teach you to make use of everything which others are proud of, to lay you low, and make you humble. There is nothing more tends to ‘hide pride from man,’ and to make ashamed, and afraid of it, as a most shameful, and one of the worst of evils. For hereby it appears,

(1.) That it is a most absurd and ridiculous evil. If God be the owner of all, we have nothing of our own. And, therefore, whoever is proud of anything, he is proud of that which is not his own. Now we count it matter of scorn and laughter, to see one proud of that which is another’s; to see one strut or look big, because he wears a jewel or a rich garment, when we know it is but lent him, is occasion of derision or indignation to any that observe it. Such a person is counted a fool, as being proud, when there is not the least occasion, nor any shadow of reason for it. And this is our case;

we have nothing to lift us up, nothing to set us off in our own eyes, or in the eyes of others, which is truly and properly our own. We have no accomplishments, no enjoyments, which we can call our own. God is the owner of all we are and have. And to think better of ourselves for that which is not our own, is to shew ourselves fools, and to make ourselves ridiculous, and worthy of all scorn and indignation. Upon this account, that may be acknowledged as true, which passes for a rule amongst the masters of reason; so far as any man is proud, so far he is a fool. If he wants not reason, yet herein he wants the use of it; he has not judgment enough to discern what is nearest him, or to understand himself in that which is most obvious. If we have a high opinion of ourselves, when there is not the least reason for it, we are unreasonably, absurdly, ridiculously proud; and no person on earth can be proud at a more intolerable rate, because he has nothing of his own, and so no reason in the world to give way to the least stirring of pride, 1 Corinthians 4:7. If thou art exalted upon the account of anything thou hast, it is without reason. As if the madman at Athens, who fancied all the ships which came into the port were his own, should have been proud upon this conceit. There is as little reason, as much madness, in all the pride of the world; it is all for that which is not their own.

(2.) That it is a perverse and desperate malady. Pride feeds itself by that which should starve it; turns that into poison which should cure it; is swelled and puffed by that which should take down the tumour. We are proud of something which we have; whereas everything we have should humble us, because we have nothing of our own. What a desperate malady is this, which is enraged and heightened by that which is most proper to assuage and heal it! How incurable by any art, by any hand, but that of the great Physician! How impossible the cure of it by anything but infinite wisdom and power! How dreadful to us should that distemper be, which is so hard to cure!

(3.) That it is a transcendent wickedness. You could not be proud, if you did effectually believe that you were nothing, that you had nothing at at all of your own. If you do not believe this, you disown God; you do not acknowledge his universal dominion, his propriety and interest in all things. And what a horrid and monstrous wickedness this is, I need not tell you. Yet when you give way to pride, you harbour such a monster, which rises up against God, opposes his dominion, and denies him to be the Lord and owner of all.

Make use of this to make and keep you humble; to suppress and quell all the stirrings of pride; to repel and baffle all temptations to it. When you are in danger to be proud of gifts, or parts, or any accomplishments wherein you seem to excel others, ask yourselves, From whom had I these? Whose are they? Wherefore are they in my possession? Did I receive them? If I be any way before others, who made the difference betwixt them and me? did I make myself to differ? And when he let me have them, did he part with his propriety? Is he not the owner still? Are not all these my master’s talents? Have I them otherwise than in trust? And shall I be proud of that which is another’s, and put a greater value on myself, for that which is not my own, or have higher thoughts of my own condition, because I have more of another’s in my hands? If all those feathers which set me off, and make so fair a show, were plucked away, and none left me but what I might truly call mine own, what should I have left, for any to be proud of?

Some are in danger to be lifted up with a conceit of their beauty and comeliness. Now what would you think of one that is proud of a painted face? You would judge her worthy of scorn and laughter. It is not her own beauty, you will say, she owes it to the art and colours of another. And do not you

more owe what comeliness you have to the hand of God? And does not this make it as little your own as that which you deride is hers? Native and painted beauty differ not in this respect; neither is your own; it is equally groundless and ridiculous to be proud of either.

Some are so vain as to be proud of what they wear, if it be finer and richer than others have. This seems some pre-eminence, and may possibly puff up a mind that has no better ballast than mere vanity. They think better of themselves for it, and think others will do so too. Now if you should see one adorned exactly according to the mode, with all the art and cost that might set her off to the eye of the beholders, and while she is shewing how proud she is thereof, by looks and gesture, one should declare, in the hearing of her, and all about her, that nothing of this was her own; that all from top to toe was stolen or borrowed; this would be enough to prick the bladder, and make the empty thing fall lank, and blush at her folly. Why, whatever you were, it is no more your own than that which is borrowed; nay, many times it is stolen, as it is always, when it should have been employed to better uses. At the best, he that clothes the lilies affords you clothes; you owe it to another as well as they, and have no more reason than they to be proud of it. If you were stripped of all that is not your own, you would be left, not only without your ornaments, but without your being. And should he be high-minded, who is as much in debt as all that he has comes to?

Others are in danger to be proud of their estates. The apostle will have those that are rich warned that they be not high-minded, 1 Timothy 6:1-21. Something in them apt to lift up the mind. Riches are apt to puff men up. There is some venom attends them, which if those who have them be not aware of, will make them swell. And the world is ready to feed the poisonous humour, which being not acquainted with the precious things of heaven, and the treasures above its reach, will have that most valued which is visible and sensible. Many are apt to be raised in their conceits, and to look upon others as below them, because they have more than others; they value themselves more, because they have much.

Well, but whose is that which you have? Is it your own? ‘The land is mine,’ saith the Lord to Israel. ‘The silver and the gold is mine,’ saith he to the Jews, Haggai 2:1-23. All the riches in the world is his, Psalms 104:24-25. If all the riches in the earth and in the sea be his, what is there that is properly yours? What has any to be proud of, unless they will be proud of nothing? You have more in your hands than others, but whose is it, and wherefore have you it? Is it not the Lord’s, since he is the owner of all? And are you not to improve it for him? And were you not entrusted with it for this end, and upon these terms? And will you think better of yourselves, because you have more than others in your hands, whenas nothing of it is your own? yours only in trust, and for the use of him who is the true owner. You will count that steward little better than a changeling, who will be proud because his master is rich. It is true, the more his lord has, the more the steward may be entrusted with; but what is that to him, since he cannot call justly one penny of it his own, nor can otherwise employ any of it but for his master’s use, unless he will play the knave, and be false to his master and his trust?

Those that have most have no more of their own than such stewards who have nothing but their master’s goods. What the richest have, they have but in trust, and the Lord entrusts them with it for this end, that it may be wholly employed for his use, and according to his appointment. And what occasion in the least to be high-minded for what they have, when it is not theirs properly, nor at their disposal, but according to the Lord’s appointment? So that those that have most have no

more of their own than they that have least; and so no more reason to be high-minded in respect of their estates than the poorest; only one is more in trust than the other. And if it be said, It is more honour to be entrusted with more; and he that is more honoured may be more valued by others, and may have some sense of it himself; I answer, It is more honour to be entrusted with more, if the faithfulness be answerable to the trust; otherwise it is no more honour than to be a greater cheat and deceiver than to be a less. The greater fraud, the greater infamy and reproach. And such is the fraud of those that are unfaithful in the employing of great estates. And if they be faithful, this also is from him from whom they receive what they are faithful in, 1 Corinthians 7:25. So that they owe both what they have, and their faithfulness in it, to him who is the Lord and owner of all; and therefore have no occasion for anything, but a great humility in all.

6. Another great duty which this truth teaches us is self-denial. It leads us to it directly, and strongly obliges us to the continual exercise of it. If God be the owner of all things, he is the owner of us; and if he be the owner of us, we are not to own ourselves, and not to own ourselves is to deny ourselves; to deny ourselves is to make account we are not our own, but belong to another as our owner; and to demean ourselves as in the condition of such a one who is not sui juris, his own man; as children in respect of their parents, or more fully, as bond-servants in respect of their master. They are not their own, but pertain to another as their owner. If they look upon themselves as their own, they wrong the true proprietor. So the Lord being our owner, we wrong him if we account ourselves our own. If we deny not ourselves, we deny his right and interest in us. So far as we own ourselves, we deny him; and his universal dominion, we acknowledge it not in all things, because not in ourselves. If we will give him the honour to be the owner of all things, we must not own, we must deny ourselves. You see what a necessary connection self-denial has with the acknowledging of this truth. Let us shew how it obliges us to the exercise of this grace, in some particulars, wherein self-denial consists.

(1.) As to our own judgments. He that is not his own man, must not follow his own judgment, must submit to be ordered by the discretion of his owner. Children must be guided by their parents, and servants must be ordered at the discretion of their master: δο■λος π■φυκας, ο■ μ■τεστ■ σοι λ■γου. Thou art a servant, what hast thou then to do with reason? The master's reason must conclude the servant; for why, he is not his own man, and so not to be ordered by his own judgment, but give up himself to the conduct of his owner. We are no more our own, the Lord is more our owner; therefore we must quit our own mind and judgment, and be guided by the wisdom of him who is our Lord and owner. We must give up ourselves to the conduct of that judgment which is laid down in Scripture, that which is called the mind of the Lord.

(2.) As to our wills. He that is not his own man, must not be ruled by his own will; he is to be disposed of at the will of him in whose power he is. The will of his owner must be his will. Since the Lord is our owner so fully, so absolutely, so transcendently, we must have no will of our own. This must be denied, crossed, laid down; and the will of the Lord must take its place, and be our will.

(3.) As to our ends. We own ourselves in that which is of greatest moment, that which influences our whole course, and moves all the wheels of it, if we pursue our own ends and designs. We are far from acknowledging ourselves to be wholly the Lord's, if we mind our own ends instead of his. Unless we deny ourselves herein, we deny his propriety and interest in us. If we be wholly his, we should give up ourselves wholly to serve his end, an end higher than our own, and that in all

things. The pleasing, and honouring, and enjoying of God is the end, the only end, that they should propose to themselves, either in holy duties or worldly business, who look upon themselves as entirely the Lord's, and not their own. Whatever is not subservient to this, is wholly excluded, &c.

(4.) As to our interests. That which is God's must be ours, and that only, if we own him, and none else, as our owner. He acts as if he were his own man, and not his master's servant, who minds his own interests, and not his master's, as Ziba did, 2 Samuel 16:3. He shewed that he had more mind to be a master than a servant, and acted as a traitor, not like one faithful to his lord, when he did Mephibosheth that disservice to serve his own turn.

If the Lord be your owner, you ought to own and mind his interest, and none else. You must disclaim the interest of the flesh and of the world, as inconsistent with the interest of your Lord; you must espouse that.

(5.) As to our business and employments. He that is not his own man must not do his own work, but that which his owner sets him about. So did the Israelites when they were bond-servants in Egypt, they did what work Pharaoh would have them. A servant, says Aristotle, is δεσπ■του ■ργανον, his master's instrument; so must we be in the hand of God as living tools, to act as he moves us, to do what he would have us, to follow that business, and that only, which he employs us about. Our Lord Jesus, when he took upon him the form of a servant and acted in our stead, gave us an example what we should be always doing, Luke 2:49, John 4:34, and John 9:4. We must be followers of him, making it the business of our lives not to do our own work, but the work of him that sent us, and that only. We must not do what our own humour, or inclination, or interest leads us to; nor what Satan, or the world, or the flesh, would have us. None should set us a-work, but our Lord and owner. We shall shew whom we acknowledge ourselves to belong to, by the work we busy ourselves about. If we let Satan employ us, we shall thereby confess he has interest in us, John 8:41, John 8:44. If we do Satan's work, we shall thereby declare that we own his interest in us, rather than God's.

If we follow the world, for the world's sake, and do its drudgery, we shall thereby shew that we are the children το■ ■ι■νος το■του, of this world, and that we belong to it of choice, and to no other than this present world.

If we do what the flesh would have us, that is our master, and we can expect no other reward but what such a lord and owner can give us, Galatians 6:8; Romans 6:20-21; Romans 8:13.

If we do our own work, that which seems good in our own eyes, self prevails, and we shew hereby, that we think we are our own, and acknowledge not the Lord to be our owner. We own not God and his propriety and interest in us, unless it be the business of our lives to do his work, unless it be of that nature as it may be some way truly counted his.

(6.) As to our possessions. If the Lord be the owner of all, and of us, we ought to deny ourselves so far as to look upon what we possess as his, not ours.

Self-denial includes a denial that we are owners of ourselves. And he that is not the owner of himself, can call nothing his own. A bought servant, as I told you, being his master's possession, could neither count his person, nor anything he had, his own. Yea, whatsoever fell to him while a servant, it was his master's, and that by law, Leviticus 25:45-46, Exodus 21:21. And if a woman

had a child while in service, and that by a freeman, the child was as much the master's as the mother, as much his servant, and part of his possession, as she. The Lord is more the owner of us, than any lord is of his servant. And we do not acknowledge his dominion and propriety in all, or in us, unless we look upon what we have as not our own but his, and so use it. But of this before.

We are not the disciples of Christ, unless we endeavour to live in the practice of self-denial. And how much this truth engages us to it, and how far the belief and due consideration of it may help us herein, you may discern by the premises.

7. This may be improved as a powerful means to wean us from the world. To bring us to a holy indifferency as to the riches and plenty of it; to make us contented with what the Lord has allotted us, though it be or seem but little; to take down the immoderate esteem we are apt to have of earthly enjoyments, a large portion of them; to moderate our affections towards them; to help us against an excess of love to, or delight in, or desires after them, or care to get, fear to lose them, or grief when they are lost; and so to crucify our hearts to the world, and the world to them; and likewise to take us off from that eagerness in pursuing the world, which engrosses the time, strength, endeavours, of so many, and leaves so little of this for heaven and their souls; and so dry up both the spring and the stream of those excesses and inordinacies towards the world, which are so common, and bear down the most that meddle with it, and are too hard for the best, both to cure this reigning disease, and to remove the symptoms and ill consequences of it.

Those who mind their souls, and are sensible how much they are endangered by the world, will look upon that, which may effect such a cure, as a receipt of sovereign virtue, and exceeding great value. Now such is the truth before us; if it be duly improved, there is that in which it may be effectual to cure this deadly distemper where it is working, and to prevent it where it is not. There are several considerations which flow from it, that are powerful for this purpose. For hereby it appears that,

(1.) Whatever you have of the world, how much soever you can get more of it, yet you will be nothing the richer for it all. Now if men were fully convinced of this, that if they could get as much as they would have, if they could compass all that is in the large grasp of their worldly designs, yet they would not be in any degree richer than they are at present, or than such are, who have but a very little for their earthly portion; if we could make them believe this, that all their care and pains, and affectionate industry, would nothing increase their riches, this would do much to quench that feverish thirst wherewith so many are distempered; for this is manifest, that it is eagerness to be rich that sets all the wheels a-going, and whirls them into disorderly motions; and had they no hopes to grow richer, they would drive on more heavily; they would be more moderate in their pursuit of the world.

Now if you believe this truth, that God is the owner of all things; the absolute, the total, the sole owner of all, as I have explained and proved it; it will not be hard to convince you, unless the love of the world have left no use of reason, that whatever you get more will make you nothing the richer; for if God be the owner, the sole owner of all things, then he is and will be the owner of all that you have already, and of all that you can get hereafter; and if so, you are not, you cannot be the true owner of it; it will not be your own, but his (whatever your title be in reference to men), and that which is not your own, how much soever it be, cannot make you rich, how much soever it be increased, cannot make you richer; how much soever you have in your hands, if it be all another

man's, you count yourselves no richer for it. Now whatever you have, or can get into your hands, it is and will be another's. God is still the owner of it, and not you yourselves; and will you count yourselves the richer, for that which is none of your own? When you have done all you can to raise and enlarge your estates, yet he that has the least, and is the poorest, will have as much of his own as you, and so will be as rich as you. Men may count you rich, and human laws may give you title to more than others, and in reference thereto the Scripture calls you rich, speaking according to common apprehension; but, in respect of God and his dominion and propriety, all that you can get will make you no richer than those who have least, unless more of that which is not your own can make you richer.

You count not a tenant rich for having much land in his hand, because it is none of his own; nor is he like to be rich, if he be tied to let his landlord have all the improvement of it, all that he can make of it; such a tenure there was once in England; and we hold all we have of God by no other tenure; the Lord lets to us all that we have, he continues Lord and owner of it, and has obliged us to improve it all for him; both the estate and the improvement is his, not ours. If, then, we have never so much in our hands, what shall we be the richer, since nothing of it is our own?

You count not a man the richer, because he has much in his possession; if he have borrowed it all, and be bound to restore it when the owner calls for it; so it is with those that have most; the Lord has but lent them what they have; he parts not with the propriety, though he lets you have the use and possession; he is still the owner of it; and you are obliged to part with it whenever he calls for his own; and will that which is but borrowed, how much soever it be, make you richer? Joseph had a great trust, when Potiphar, a great officer of Pharaoh's, put all he had in his hand, Genesis 39:4–6; but Joseph counted himself not the richer for all this; because all in his hand was his master's, not his own; and answerably, some understand that passage, 'and he knew not aught that he had,' referring it to Joseph; he converted none of all that he was entrusted with to his own use. What was he the richer for it, when it was not his own, nor might he turn any of it to his own use? So it is with those that have most, and with those that are industrious to get more; they are but labouring to get more of their master's goods into their hands; and when they have got all they can, they will be no richer for it; it will not be their own, nor for their own use, if they mean to be honest and faithful to the owner of it, as Joseph was. They have as much of their own already, as ever they will have; nor will they be richer, do what they can, unless that which is not their own will make them so.

If riches be that which you so highly esteem, so much affect, so eagerly labour for, this may be sufficient to moderate and restrain you herein; since God is the owner of all, more of the world will not make you richer, nor rich at all, how much soever you have, unless you could call it your own; which you cannot call it, nor account it, since it is his who is the Lord of all. Much of the world is (whether for this I do not now examine) in the account of Christ, riches but falsely so called and accounted, Luke 16:11. 'True riches' are put in opposition to that which is riches in the world's account, which therefore is not true riches.

You see also by this, what reason we have to be contented with what we have already, though it seem little, since we can have no more that will be our own; and what a strange humour is it not to be satisfied, unless we have more in our hands that is not our own!

(2.) You will have no more to spend than you have already, if you should get more of the world; no more to lay out, as it is the guise and custom of the world to lay it out; and this is it which endears a large share of earthly things unto us; this makes us put so high a value on it, and affect it so much, and follow it so keenly, even with the neglect of better things; this is counted the great privilege and advantage of having much; they who have it may lay out more than others in ways that please them; but this truth will let us see that those who have much have no more to expend in the way expressed. For God being the owner of all things, and so of all we have, we have no right to use it, but as he would have us; we are obliged to employ it so (and no otherwise, but) as he has appointed us; and so, how much soever you have, you will have nothing to expend, as the world is wont to do it; those that have most, have no more to spend upon their lusts than those that have least; no more for pride, or lust, or revenge, or intemperance, or sensuality, or ostentation, or the maintaining of factions and parties, or the countenance of any evil whatsoever. If they expend anything of their abundance in any such way, they are thieves to God, and thieves to men also, viz., to those for whose relief and refreshment that was due, which runs into such a sink. The employing great estates and revenues this way is no better than unjust wars are called, magna latrocinia, great robberies, and persons so spending them, the greatest robbers; they have no more to spend idly and vainly, so as no way tends to serve the Lord's interest, than those who have least; they have not a penny to spend this way, more than the poorest have; and if they venture to do it, it is at their peril; they do it against the express order of him who is the Lord and owner of it, and has entrusted them in it for no such purposes. But have they not more to lay out for themselves and relatives? No; not for themselves simply and precisely, but only for God upon themselves; only in such ways, and such a manner, as the laying it out on themselves may be justly said to be an employing it for God, the owner of it. As for their relatives and children, they may have more, if thereby the Lord's interest may be best served; but if they be such as give no hopes that they will employ what is left them for God, but rather against him, they ought to have no more, from those that have most, than what will serve them with mere necessaries, and keep them from being chargeable to others. And that seems to be all intended in that text, which is much abused otherwise in favour of worldly designs, 1 Timothy 5:8. He is speaking of poor widows whom the church relieved. Those of them who belonged to families, and had relatives that could maintain them, they were to be provided for by their pains and industry, so as they might not be chargeable to the church.*

Now if those that have more than others have no more to spend, in ways desirable to a carnal heart and a worldly temper, than those that have less, as it is plain they have not, because the Lord, who is the owner of all they have, allows them no more to expend in any such way, why are we not content with less? why not more indifferent whether we have more or no? why do we so much value, so much affect more of the world, and take so much care and pains for it? Is it because we would have more to lay out for God? He, who is the owner of it, and all, approves of no end but this, or what may be reduced to this. Indeed, when we see any so eager after the world, singly and sincerely because they would have more to expend for God, and manifest it by so employing it, they should be so far from being discouraged or pulled back, that they ought to be greatly admired, as those who have attained such a high degree of holiness and love to God, and zeal for his interest, as is rarely to be found amongst the children of men. For those who cannot say they desire more of the world for this end, because they would have God to have more from them, here is all reason to abate this keenness. They have no right from God, the owner of all, to

spend any of it in the other ways they propose to themselves; though they be worth many thousands, they have not one penny to spend in their own ways more than the poorest beggar. And if they take the liberty to do it, they do it in opposition to God's dominion and right in themselves and the world.

(3.) The more you have, the more you are in debt; and where is the advantage then of a great estate, if the more it be increased the farther you run in debt? But so it is, and by the truth in hand it appears to be so: for the Lord is the owner of all, you owe to him all you have, and he that has most owes most; and you owe to all those to whom the Lord and owner orders you to pay it; and the debt to these is proportionable to your estate, and rises higher as the estate is raised; for 'to whom much is given, of him shall much be required,' Luke 12:48. The more you get, the more you owe to God, the more for the upholding of his gospel and worship, the more to his messengers, the more to his suffering servants, the more to all in want, especially those of the household of faith, the more to the common good; the more for the honouring your profession, the more for the promoting of his interest here and abroad. And the debt grows vastly and insensibly through the neglect of payment, yea, or for the improvement of every parcel which was due, but not discharged, ever since it was neglected. None so much in debt as those that have most in their hands: it sometimes eats them up, and they owe more than they are worth before they are aware, because they employed that otherwise which should have discharged it. What a hole would be made in many men's estates, if their debts were paid, if all were deducted which they owe even in God's account? The Lord will not dispense with their neglect of payment, though they have so little conscience as to dispense with themselves. He would have the people of old so just in paying what they owed, that he allowed them and their children to be sold for satisfaction of their creditors, if they had not otherwise wherewith to satisfy: Leviticus 25:39, Leviticus 25:41, 2 Kings 4:1, Matthew 18:25. Now did the Lord admit of such a course for the discharge of what was due to men? What course then will he take with those who neglect to discharge what is due to him and his? The best plea that can be used, in excuse of such neglects, is a great charge of children, many poor relatives to be provided for. But he was so far from allowing they should be provided for out of what was due to men, as he would rather let them be sold for slaves or servants; and will he allow provision to be made for them out of that which is due to himself?

You owe much of what you have; and the more you have the more you owe, and the Lord keeps an exact account of it, and will not think (as you may) that the great sums which you owe can be discharged with a trifle. Till what you owe be faithfully paid, you hoard up or spend that which is another's, that which should pay your debts. You eat that which should feed others, and wear that which should clothe others, and make yourselves fine, and fare deliciously, with that which you owe to others' necessities, and live upon the estate of your creditors. Those whom the Lord has made such, you eat their meat, and wear their clothes, and lay up that for yourselves which should be in their purses, if you would be so just as to pay your debts. In like manner does Basil* express this wickedness, Το■ πειν■ντος ■στιν ■ ■ρτος ■ν συ κατ■χεις, it is the bread of the hungry that thou eatest; Το■ γυμνητε■οντος, &c., the garment of the naked which thou wearest; Το■ χρ■ζοντος τ■ ■ργ■ριον, &c., the money of the needy which thou hoardest up. And the ground of it, which Augustine thus delivers: What the Lord lets us have, above what we need, he doth not give it to us, but transfers it, that we may lay it out for others; et si non dederimus, res alienas invasimus, which, if we give them not, we invade other men's goods. This is no better than to

defraud our creditors, σ■ δ■ ο■κ ■ποστερητ■ς, ■ πρ■ς ■ικονομ■αν ■δ■ξω, τ■υτα ■δια σεαυτο■ ποιο■μενος; art not thou a defrauder, which keepest that to thyself which thou receivedst to be distributed to others? If you should see one sumptuous in his habit, diet, and accommodations, and designing great portions for his children or relations, when you know him to be over head and ears in debt, would not this move your indignation? Would you not judge him void of all conscience and honesty? Alas! this is the case of many who little think of it. None are more in debt than those who have much of the world. You can scarce look anywhere but you may see something they are indebted to some persons whom the Lord has made their creditors; and many times deal with them, as the unjust steward did with his master's debtors, Luke 16:5-7. They deal worse with those they are indebted to on the Lord's account; when they owe eighty or an hundred, they set down not eighty or fifty, but put him off with one or two, and so make a shameful composition, when they have more than enough to pay all. The Lord and Owner of all will not thus be put off: he will not be so defrauded, though men may. And since the having of more will put you more in debt, and the Lord will see it paid, or have satisfaction for it here or hereafter, what is it that men propose to themselves? What is it that they expect? What makes them so greedy after more? You use to count that no great or desirable advantage which will put you as much in debt as it comes to.

(4.) The more you have, the greater charge is upon you; and the greater charge, the heavier burden; and we care not in other cases to be burdened. Every one cannot bear a great burden, and to those who can make a shift to bear it, yet is it heavy and troublesome; and they are wont to desire rather to be eased of some of it than to have more weight laid on. To have children is counted a charge, as the world now goes. Those that have very many are said to have a great charge of children; their condition is not thought to be so easy, there is more lies upon them. A great estate is as truly a great charge. If all that is required of those that have it were duly minded, it would be so accounted. They have more to maintain proportionably to what they have; there is far more lies upon them than upon others. And it is not an easy burden that lies upon them, if we believe the Scripture, where riches are called thorns, Matthew 13:22.

It would be a wonder to see one forward to take up a burden of thorns on his back; an astonishment to see him eager for more and more, unless he be void of sense, and feel neither weight nor smart. Who else would be earnest to pierce himself through and through with so sharp a load? 1 Timothy 6:9-10. He that would bear such a wounding weight, and that too not for himself, but another, might well be counted a person of rare self-denial. And if you count it your own, you wrong God, deny him to be the owner of all; and if you would have it for yourselves principally, you would not have it in God's way, nor upon his terms, nor as becomes those who profess they are his. Yet it is selfish aims and respects most commonly, which makes all seem easy and light, and takes away sense of smart or burden, and digests all those fears, cares, perplexities, sorrows, cumber, trouble, which otherwise would make much of the world an uneasy burden and a burdensome charge, if at all tolerable.

Consider it as a trust (as it is no more indeed); the more you are entrusted with, the greater is your charge. A man in a journey would not choose to have along with him a great charge of money, especially if it were another's, and himself responsible for it; nay, he would be loath to have much treasure that is not his own long in his own house, if he had no other meaning but to be honest and faithful to the owner.

If we look upon what we have as no otherwise ours than in trust (and this truth allows us to look upon it no otherwise), why are we so importunate to be still charged with more, and to have more of that which is another's in our hands, unless we think to defeat the true owner, and convert what we are entrusted with for another to our own use?

If you observed one to make it his business to be entrusted with all that he could any way compass, and to get into his hands of other men's all that possibly he could, you would suspect he had some dishonest design for himself therein, and that he did not intend only the advantage of those that trusted him, because none are wont to be so desirous of more trust and charge. We have cause to suspect ourselves, that our ends are not right, and such as become our profession, when we are still earnest for more of the world, which, when we have it, we know will not be our own, but his who is the owner of all; since in other cases we rather decline a mere trust and charge, the benefit and fruit whereof not we, but others, must reap. If we intend our own advantage thereby, we are unfaithful to our trust, and to the Lord of all, whom we would have to trust us. If we intend not our own pleasure or profit, and design not to serve ourselves of it, why are we not content without a greater trust and charge? Even self will be content with less, when more does not tend to serve it.

(5.) The more you have, the more is your danger. And great danger is enough to those who are apprehensive of it, to take them off from that which they have otherwise a mind to. Those that have most are in most danger, not only of cumber and trouble, and those torturing affections which attend much, nor only of losing more, fraud and violence being most levelled against such; those who live by preying upon others being most eager upon the richest prey; such men being set in slippery places, and they being in most danger to fall who stand highest, when the place is slippery, and the fall from such a height being more dangerous, such tumbling, lapsu graviori, with a more terrible fall. Nor only of losing that which is more valuable than all the world, of losing their souls, and heaven, and eternal life, and of being drowned in perdition. Those who are cast into a depth, with a greater weight about them, sinking lower and most irrecoverably, and those who have more, having more to obstruct their way to heaven, and make the passage so difficult, as it will be next to impossible, Matthew 19:23-24. But also in most danger of that which is worse than the loss of all the world, yea, worse than the loss of heaven, yea, worse than hell itself. What is that? Why, they are in more danger of sin, 1 Timothy 6:9. They fall into temptation, and the most dangerous temptation, a snare; and such a snare as makes them sure, entangles them in not one, but divers, lusts; and such lusts as are not only foolish and hurtful, but most destructive, βυθ■ζουσι, such as engulf or plunge them deep, past recovery, in utter perdition.

More particularly, to insist upon that which is most pertinent, he that has more is in danger of greater unfaithfulness. He is entrusted with more, and so, if not faithful, he is false to the greater trust, which is to be most heinously false.

He that is trusted is thereby tried; so he that has more is, all the time he has it, under the greater trial: Τ■υτα δοκιμασ■ας ■νεκα πολλ■κις δ■δοται. Outward enjoyments, says Isidore,* are for the most part given us for trial's sake, just as afflictions are frequently called trials in Scripture. Riches are not counted afflictions; but they are no better in this respect, they are trials no less than afflictions; and the more dangerous trials, because the danger of them is not so well discerned, nor so much feared, and so not so easily avoided. Both are trials or temptations; for the import of

πε■ρασμος, which is rendered temptation, is no more than a trial. But much of the world is the more dangerous trial or temptation. And so the apostle, when he says it leads men into temptation, adds, ‘and into a snare;’ the danger of which is the greater, because it is laid secretly, so as those for whom it is laid do not see it, and so may not fear, and consequently take no care to escape it, but be fast in it before they are aware.

Such a trial or temptation, and, in the issue, such a snare, is a plentiful estate. The Lord tries those with whom he trusts it, whether they will employ it for him who is the owner of it. He tries whether they will be faithful in seeking, and possessing, and using it for him as his own ought to be, or whether they will be unfaithful, in doing this for themselves only or principally.

Now, here is the danger, the world minds not the end of getting, nor the rule in keeping, nor the proportion which is to be observed in disposing of what they possess. It is the custom of the world (so far has the temptation prevailed) to look upon what they have, and what they can get, as their own; and so make account they have right to dispose of it as they think fit, forgetting that God is the owner of it, and not they themselves; and that they have no right to dispose of any of it, but some way or other for him, and according to his order, who is the Lord and owner of all. And accordingly they do actually use it as if God had actually parted with the propriety, and made them the owners.

This, being so common, taints professors also, whose apprehensions and actions should be conformed to the word, and not to the world; and so they become guilty in not acknowledging the Lord to be the owner of what they have, and not employing it for him; and the more they have, the greater the guilt, the greater the danger.

(6.) The more you have, the more you are to give an account for, and the more difficult will it be to give a good account of it, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10. If you must give account to God of all you get, of all you possess, of all you do dispose of, you are highly concerned to look after it. There is nothing can possibly come into your thoughts that is of more weight and consequence than such an account, nothing that should strike your souls with a more awful regard than how you may acquit yourselves therein, as being your very greatest concernment. Those who look no further than the present world, judge it their great concernment to mind whether they or theirs be poor or rich. Poverty is a dreadful thing to them, and wealth a principal, a highly-valued attainment. Oh but riches or poverty are but trifles, no more to be regarded than children’s playthings, in respect of the consequence of that last account! In that you are infinitely concerned, for all eternity depends on it; in comparison of which this life is but as a moment, and all the enjoyments of it are but as bubbles of one or two minutes. The consequence of that account is the eternal state of your persons hereafter; the everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery, of soul and body. No less are you concerned in such an account, and it is certain such an account you will be called to; it is evident by this truth; for if he be the Lord of all, and the true owner of all you have, he will certainly reckon with you for his own. If he be the right proprietor, and what you possess you have but from him, and hold but of him in trust, he will undoubtedly examine whether you have been true to him and your trust or no. If he be the chief Lord, and you but stewards, he will have an account of your stewardship. It would be blasphemy to imagine him like those careless lords who never look after what they have, or those whom they trust with it; that is not for his honour, nor consistent with his perfections. His dominion over all,

and his wise and righteous exercise of it, requires an account, and obliges us to look and prepare for it. He who is Lord and owner of all you have, will have an account of all you have, why you sought it, and how and wherefore you kept it, and how you employed and disposed of it, and every parcel of it, to whom, and upon what, and in what manner, and for what end, and in what proportions. And so much for the considerations which this truth affords to secure us against the most ensnaring temptations of the world. They are such as (if duly believed and weighed) may be helpful to wean us from earthly enjoyments, to satisfy us that they are not so highly to be valued, or so much affected, or so eagerly pursued with any neglect of heaven and our souls, and to help us against those excesses and inordinances, wherein the men of the world are quite drowned, and worldly professors are dangerously overwhelmed.

Use III. For encouragement. Here is great encouragement to all sorts.

1 (1.) To those who have not yet given up themselves to God; to those that are yet in their sins, and engaged in the service of other lords, that have hitherto continued in the service of sin, or of the world, or of themselves; what encouragement is here to relinquish these, and to make choice of God to be your Lord! If you will be his, he will be yours, and so all will be yours; for all that is in heaven and earth is his.

(2.) He will be your friend. And what an infinite advantage will it be to have such a friend, one so rich, and who can do so much for you! If you were a friend, a favourite of some prince of great dominions, you would think you had enough, having such interest in one that had so much, and would deny you nothing. Why, but all the dominions of earthly princes are but mole hills, compared with the possessions of that great Lord. The greatest kings are but stewards to him, who will be your friend, if you will but enter into covenant with him. You may be his favourite, if you will but set your hearts upon him; you may have such interest in him, as he will deny you nothing that the greatest favour and friendship can afford, nothing of all that is in heaven, and all that is in earth, that is good for you. He were not a friend if he would let you have that which is not good; but all that is good you may be sure of, for all is his own, and he can dispose of it to whom he will, and to whom so soon as his friends and favourites? And such you may be, if you will relinquish his enemies, and make choice of him, and reserve yourselves for him only.

(3.) He will be your Father. And what will it be to have him for your Father, who is the Lord and owner of all things! ‘We have Abraham to our father,’ said the Jews. That was an honour, a privilege which they were proud of. We have a king to our father, say others. They think they have much to boast of who can say that. But both these are nothing in comparison of what you may say, if you will give up yourselves to God. If you will make choice of him, he will adopt you, own you as his children; you may say, he is my Father, to whom Abraham was a servant, and few kings are so much as subjects, so good as servants to him; he is my Father, who is absolute King and Lord of all kings, and their dominions, who can say, All that is in heaven and earth is mine: ‘Thine is the kingdom, and majesty, and thou art exalted as head above all.’

Oh, what can they want who have such a Father! Is not all that is in heaven, and all that is on earth, enough to supply you, enough to provide for his children? What need you fear? Has not your Father all things in his hands? Are they not his own, so as he can and may dispose of them as he will? And can he not dispose of what you fear, so as it may prove a comfort and security to you, instead of what you fearfully expect from it? Can he not do it? And who more ready to do it

than a father? So he will be, if you be but heartily willing to be his.

(4.) He will be your portion. Do but make choice of God for your portion, and he will be so. And what a portion will this be! What is it to have him for your inheritance, who is the owner of all things, who possesses and disposes of all that is in heaven, and all that is in earth, as his own! Interest in him will give you interest in all, insomuch that all the wealth which the men of the world possess will be but as the drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance in comparison of it.

Then may it be truly said, all are yours, as 1 Corinthians 3:21-22. Not only ordinances and offices, spiritual things and enjoyments, but the world, so far as it is good, so much of it as is truly desirable; not only things present, but things to come, which are so much greater and better than this present world can afford, as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive how much greater and better they are; life also for the enjoyment of things present, and death to convey you to the enjoyment of things to come. Oh where will you have such a rich possession? or, who will make you such an offer, or can make good any considerable part of it? Can you gain any such thing by serving sin, or following the world, or seeking yourselves? 1 Samuel 22:7.

What can sin, or Satan, or the world offer to move you to continue in their service, comparable to what the Lord offers you, if you will come over to him?

Oh how great will the condemnation of the children of men be, who will be tempted from God with a trifle, while he is offering them, what he will really give, himself and all. These deluders promise you much, but they are cheats and deluders; they cannot, they will not make good anything. But the Lord can make it good; for all that is in heaven and earth is his own.

2. To those who have interest in God.

What comfort is it, what ground of rejoicing, to have interest in him who is the owner of all things; to be able to call him yours, who can, and who only can, call all that is in heaven, and all that is in earth, his own. What reason have you to rejoice in the Lord, and to rejoice in him always, and to say with joyful hearts, ‘My lines are fallen in a pleasant place,’ &c. What a goodly heritage have you! What comparable to it, when you can lay claim to him who is Lord and owner of all!

What cause have you to be contented in every condition, to be well satisfied, though your share of earthly things seem small! You have enough in God, if all in heaven and earth be enough. All is his, who allows you to call himself your own. What if all be not in your hands, is it not better for you that it is in his hands, who vouchsafes to call himself your Father, your Husband? You are richer, and it is more for your advantage that it is in his hands than if all were in your own. He is able, he is willing to manage it more for your advantage than if it were in your possession. Be satisfied then, and say, as you have reason, ‘Return to thy rest, O my soul.’

What support is here to your faith! What encouragement to expect the accomplishment of all those great and precious promises which he has given you! This leaves no occasion to doubt of it in the least. When men promise many and great things to us, the multitude or greatness of them may make us apt to question the performance, especially if it be delayed. But though the Lord has promised more and greater things to us than men or angels could have expected, or can make

good, yet, since the Lord hath promised, there can be no doubt but he will perform all, if he be able; and that he is able to make good all to a tittle, there can be no doubt, if all in heaven and earth can make it good; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is his own, and fully, absolutely at his disposal. Unless that which you expect to be performed be more than heaven and earth, and all that is therein amount to, this truth leaves you not the least occasion of unbelief or doubting.

More particularly, this truth affords you encouragement in those special cases which are most apt to trouble and deject you.

(1.) In wants and necessities, whatever they be, whether they concern your inward or outward estate. If the Lord be both able and willing to supply you, you need not be careful, you need not be troubled. But hereby it is evident that the Lord is both able and willing to supply you.

[1.] That he is able. For what are your needs? Are they such as anything in heaven or anything in earth can relieve? Why, then, no doubt but he can relieve you; for all heaven and earth is his own, and he can give any of it to whom he will.

Want you wealth, or what you judge a competency? Php 4:12. All the riches of the world are in his hands, and he can dispose thereof to whom and what proportion he see good, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Php 4:19.

Want you authority to countenance and secure you? All the authority in the world is his; the greatness, and the power, and the majesty, and the kingdom, Php 4:11. He has the disposing of it all.

Want you victory over enemies, those that afflict and oppress your souls? The Lord can give it you; it is his own.

Want you strength outward or inward, to do, or to suffer, or to resist? This he can also help you, for it is all his own, Php 4:12.

Want you wisdom? This is his too: thine is the wisdom, James 1:5.

Want you gifts or graces, or a greater measure of them? These he can help you to; they are his, even as light is the sun’s, James 1:17. He can give them as easily as the sun gives light.

Want you comfort? He is the owner of that too, 2 Corinthians 1:3.

Want you friends? That cannot be, if you want not God. All the friends in the world are but cyphers to him. He is the best, the most powerful friend, who has all, and can dispose of all, in heaven and earth. You see hereby he is able; he is all-sufficient for your relief, whatever your necessities be. And, [2.] That he is willing also, is manifest by this truth, divers ways. For,

First, You are his, since he is the owner of all. And who is the Lord willing to provide for, if not for his own? You see him ready to supply all that any way pertain to him. He makes provision for the ravens, the young lions, the wild beasts, the grass of the field, the lilies. His hand is open, and he is ready to satisfy every living thing, Psalms 104:10, and Psalms 104:24, Psalms 104:27-28. He provides for all; he neglects nothing that is any way his. But if you have given up yourselves to him, you are his own peculiarly; and since he is ready to provide for all that are but his by common

title, can you think him unwilling to supply those that are his own by special interest? Will not he who provides for the very dogs of his great family, and takes care of the least thing that any way pertains to it, be more ready to make provision for his own children? There is little faith indeed, where there is any doubt of this, Matthew 6:26, Matthew 6:28-30. For whom does a father design the best share of his possessions? Is it not for those whom he counts most his own, his children? And will your heavenly Father deal worse with those whom he counts most his own? Matthew 7:9-11.

Secondly, The Lord has nothing the less, for what he affords to relieve and supply you, how much soever your necessities require. For he continues ever the owner of all, whatever is transferred into other hands; it remains still as much his own, as if none else were the possessor of it. The words of the text are eternally true, ‘All that is in the heavens, &c., is thine.’

If the Lord lost anything by supplying your needs, there might be some question whether he were willing to afford you all supplies. But how much soever you have of him, he loses nothing; he has nothing the less than if you had it not, for he parts not with the propriety; that and all is his own still, and he is as much in possession of it, as if it were not in your hands. It is not with him as with men, who, the more they give, the less they have. But he gives all things, as the sun gives light; and accordingly the apostle, in reference to his gifts, calls him ‘the Father of lights,’ as the sun is called the fountain of lights, James 1:17. The sun, when it communicates its light to the whole world, and diffuses it through heaven, and air, and earth, yet has not one jot the less light for all this; in what place soever, or how much soever it shine, it is all the light of the sun still; so how much soever the Lord communicates to you, he has nothing the less, it is all his own still. And why should you doubt of his willingness to supply all his children’s needs, when all those supplies will not in the least impair his own stores?

Thirdly, The more the Lord does for your supply, the more he gives, the more he shews himself to be the owner of all; the more conspicuous does he hereby make the glory of his riches, and the greatness of his dominion. As the sun is so far from losing anything, by communicating its light to the world, that the more it shines, the more glorious it appears; so the Father of lights, by expressing his bounty in relieving his people, gets himself more glory; he makes it appear that all is his own, in that there is no wants whatsoever but he can supply them. And you do not doubt but he is willing to be glorified.

(2.) Here is encouragement, to undergo or undertake anything for God which he calls you to; to offer yourselves willingly to the most difficult, or expensive, or hazardous services, for his name’s sake; for why? He is the owner of all things, and so has enough to requite you, to reward you, if all that is in heaven and in earth be enough to do it.

Why do men venture themselves freely for princes or great persons, but because they know such can do far more for them than all their hazards or expenses in their behalf come to; and because they hope that those that are able will be effectually mindful of such eminent services? And shall any be more free to venture themselves and what they have for men, than we are for God? Does not he take more notice of all you do, or suffer, or expend for him? And is not he infinitely more able to recompense you, when he has all things in the world at his disposing, for that purpose? This made Moses contemn the greatest things on earth, and prefer sufferings, before the honours, and pleasures, and riches of a flourishing kingdom, Hebrews 11:24-26. Let this make all difficulties

in the work of God seem easy. You are working for him who has all in heaven and earth at his disposal to reward. Let this make all sufferings for him seem light. You are suffering for him who is the Lord and owner of all things. Are you like to lose anything by suffering for such a God? Romans 8:18.

Let this make all expenses for him seem small. You understand not your own interest, when you will be saving or sparing in anything wherein God is specially concerned. If you had assurance to receive an hundredfold for all you lay out, either in hand or that which is equivalent, you would think it the best improvement you could possibly make of what you had, to lay out all you could spare in such a way. The Lord has given you assurance of this, as to all you part with for him, Matthew 19:29. And since he has promised, nothing can hinder you from this hundred-fold advantage, unless the Lord be not able to make it good. But who can question that, since he is Lord and owner of all things?

Particularly, [1.] In losses for God. When anything is taken from you because you will not sin against God, the case, as this truth directs us to state it, is this: they take that which is the Lord's out of their hands, whom he has made his stewards, because they will not be unfaithful to their Lord. You need not question but the Lord, in due time, will take order with such wretches as dare attempt this. And in the mean time, you ought to be sensible that he suffers more by it than you, it being more his than yours. Nor need you to fear that you shall lose anything by such a loss, if you had assurance that you should receive an hundredfold.

[2.] In banishment. In case you should be forced to leave your country, and your enjoyments in it. This is great encouragement. None can ever send you out of your Father's dominions. You will be still there, where he is the owner and disposer of all. If a child were sent from one of his father's houses to another, what great affliction would that be, so long as he is still in his father's house, and amongst no persons nor things but such as he is the owner and disposer of! This was Chrysostom's support, when he was threatened by Eudoxia the empress, ■ι θ■λει ■ξορ■ζειν, if she will banish me, ■ξοριζ■τω, let her banish me; the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness of it; every part of it is part of his dominion. What matter is it to be sent out of the emperor's dominion? You can be sent to no place but where the Lord is the owner of all, for all is his own; and so can dispose of all as easily for your comfortable subsistence, as much for your satisfaction, in any place, as in that which you most affect. He could not be counted the owner of all if he could not so dispose of all, and that everywhere.

[3.] In fears and dangers. If the Lord be the owner of all, then you are his own; and if you have resigned up yourselves to him, to be possessed, and disposed of, and used as his own, then are you his by a special title. And will not the Lord secure and take care of that which is his own? This may encourage you to call upon him in the day of distress, and to expect relief from him. The people of God of old did find support upon this ground. This has encouraged them to pray, and to pray in faith. This hath strengthened the weak hands and the feeble knees under great pressures, Psalms 119:49, Psalms 44:4, Jeremiah 14:8-9. Thy name is put upon us, as men mark what is their own with their name. This encouraged to hope the Lord would not leave them unregarded, undelivered in their distress, Jeremiah 2:2. Israel being set apart to God as his own, he looked upon that people as part of his revenue; this he would not suffer to be spoiled and devoured. He would make them examples, that would so provoke him by devouring that which was his own.

[4.] In reference to your children. We are apt to be solicitous about them, how they shall be disposed of, how they may be provided for when we are gone, when they are many, and but a little to leave them. As Andrew said, John 6:9, so we are ready to say, What will my little be, divided amongst so many? Well, but if the Lord be the owner of all, then sure he has enough both for thee and thine. Though thou hast not, yet he has sufficient for them, if all that is in heaven and in earth be sufficient; for all this is his. True, you may say, he is all-sufficient, but will he take care of mine? For this, too, look again upon the truth before us. If the Lord be the owner of all, then he is the owner of your children. If he have a transcendent interest in all, then those children are more his than they are yours. And whom will the Lord take care of, whom will he provide for, if not for his own?

You have given them up unto God; let it be your greatest care that they may give up themselves unto him, as becomes those who are in covenant; and then remember what he says to Abraham, Genesis 17:7. If he will be a God to thy seed after thee, he will own them when thou art gone; he will dispose of them, and provide for them as his own. And what can you desire more?

HEARING THE WORD Take heed therefore how ye hear.—Luke 8:18. In the former part of this chapter we have the parable of the sower, which is propounded, explained, confirmed, applied.

1. Propounded, from Luke 8:5-8, ‘A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold.’

2. Explained. The occasion, Luke 8:9, ‘The disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?’ The preface to it, Luke 8:10, ‘He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing might not understand.’ To you it is given to know savingly, effectually, &c.; to others no further than to make them inexcusable. The explication itself from Luke 8:11-16, what by ‘seed,’ Luke 8:11, what by the ‘way-side,’ Luke 8:12, on the ‘rock,’ Luke 8:13, ‘among thorns,’ Luke 8:14, ‘good ground,’ Luke 8:15.

3. Confirmed, by the causes of the several events. The cause of the unfruitfulness of that by the way-side was, 1. ‘It was trodden down;’ 2. ‘The fowls of the air,’ i.e., the devil, ‘devoureth, takes it away;’ 3. He ‘understands it not,’ Matthew 13:19. The unfruitfulness of that on the rock was, 1. Because ‘it lacked moisture, Luke 8:6; 2. It ‘had no root,’ Luke 8:13; 3. ‘Temptation,’ Luke 8:13; ‘affliction,’ ‘persecution for the word’s sake,’ Mark 4:17; called the sun, Matthew 13:1-58. That among thorns was unfruitful, because the cares, riches, pleasures of this life choked it: Mark 4:19, ‘The cares of this world, and deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things.’ That on the good ground was fruitful: 1. Because ‘an honest and good heart receives it;’ 2. ‘Understands it,’ Matthew 13:1-58; 3. ‘Keeps it;’ 4. ‘Brings forth with patience,’ Luke 8:15.

4. Applied. Makes use of it by exhortation and admonition; exhorts to manifest fruitfulness; urges it by a similitude, Luke 8:16, and a proverb, Luke 8:17. 2. By an admonition, ‘Take heed therefore how ye hear.’

Obs. Those to whom the gospel is preached must take heed how they hear; take heed as to the act, matter, manner.

1. As to the act: Take heed that ye hear. This is implied, and necessarily supposed. The modus supposes the act; and expressed, Luke 8:8, ‘He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.’

2. As to the object or matter: So take heed what ye hear. How with Luke is what with Mark. He concludes the parable with this admonition, Luke 4:24, ‘Take heed what you hear.’ That it be good seed, as well as good ground; that this seed be the seed of God, his who sows wheat, not tares.

3. As to the manner, How. This is principally intended, though the other be necessary. If we hear not at all, take not heed what we hear, neglect the means, the duty, no hopes to be fruitful. If we receive not seed, we can bring forth nothing but briars and thorns, cursed fruits, destined to the fire. If you hear, but take not heed what, you miscarry. If you receive not good seed, you cannot bring forth good fruit. If tares be sown only, no reason to expect wheat. If you take heed what, but not how, all is in vain. If you receive good seed, but not in a right manner, if you hear that which is good, but not as those that are good; you must receive good seed as good ground, not as the highway, else no good will come of it. If ever you would reap benefit by hearing, you must take heed how you hear. It is in vain to hear, in vain to hear that which is good, except we hear it well. The manner being principally intended, I shall principally insist on it. I need not go far for reasons, this chapter affords abundance.

1. Few hear well. There are not many good hearers; the most miscarry; therefore there is need to take heed. Of four sorts of hearers in the parable, three are naught, but one good. There is but one sort of good ground; the seed is lost upon three; they are barren, fruitless. Nay, in every of those three sorts there are many more bad than those that are good: ‘Many are called, few chosen.’ Many have common, rocky, worldly hearts, few good and honest. Though the multitude of hearers be as the sand of the sea, yet but a remnant hear well, Isaiah 10:22. Those that are planted by the rivers of waters are for multitude as the trees of a vast forest, yet those that bear fruit are so few as a child may write them, Luke 8:19. Good ground is but as a little island to the large continents of Africa, Asia, and America. The most that hear perish; few hear savingly. This should be a strong argument to take heed. If you were to shoot a gulf where millions had been drowned, not hearkening to the pilot, and but a few escaped, would you not take heed? If one should have told the Israelites, when they came out of Egypt, that if they would not hearken to Moses, all those hundred thousands should perish in the wilderness, and only two or three enter into Canaan, would they not have taken heed how they hearkened to him? The Lord gives us warning beforehand.

2. There are many enemies to oppose, and many impediments to hinder you in hearing. Where there is great danger, and much difficulty, there is reason to take heed. Here are enemies within, without, many, powerful, active, implacable; difficulties insuperable, but by almighty power, from ourselves, Satan, the world, afflictions, allurements; blindness, ignorance in the mind, no suitableness betwixt the faculty and objects, averseness to the word, ‘will not see,’ it is holy, just, good; the heart unclean, evil, desperately so, evil beyond knowledge; hardness, rocky, resists the word; it can take no impression, find no root; fulness, multitude of lusts, no room for the word. Intus existens prohibet alienum, 1 Peter 2:1, overgrown with weeds.

Satan opposes hearing with all his strength and craft, this being the principal means of salvation, Luke 8:12, he is resolute and able too; a multitude, the fowls of the air; nimble, can pick it up in an instant, immediately, Mark 4:15. It is his meat to do it, as fowls feed on corn. He is a bird of prey; therefore, Job 1:6, 'When the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan comes also among them.' The world, this opposes on the right hand and left; on the left hand with afflictions, tribulation, persecution, hot and scorching like the sun, Mark 16:17; on the right hand riches, pleasures, honours, cares, for these to get them, to keep them, and lusting after them, Luke 8:14. These are as thorns to choke it, leave no room for it to root in, no moisture to nourish it. These overtop it, crush it down; no good engrafting among thorns. The soul spends its strength and spirits upon these; no power to conceive the word, no strength to bring forth.

3. The advantage or disadvantage. This in the text, 'For whosoever hath, to him shall be given; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.' Mark explains and applies it to the purpose: Mark 4:24-25, 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given, for he that hath,' &c. According as you measure to God in hearing, so will he measure to you in blessing or cursing. The gospel continued, increased in light and glory, more of God's presence, Spirit, workings, motions, inclinings, more light, knowledge increased. Light to you, which is darkness to others. Comfort more refreshing; it shall be as marrow and fatness; grace more strengthening and nourishing; you shall grow up as calves of the stall. Else the candlestick shall be removed, a famine of hearing, Amos 8:11; your pastors shall be removed into corners, Isaiah 30:20; the Spirit withdraw, no longer strive; light end in darkness, stench, delusions, 2 Thessalonians 2:11; joy in terror, despair, lie down in sorrow, Isaiah 50:10-11; seeming graces, fair appearances vanish, he will take away what he seemed to have; outward blessings removed, and turned into war and desolation, Satan loosed. Then no balm in Gilead, no physician, no bread of life for the dying soul, no support for the sinking sinner, no hopes, no Christ, no pool for the diseased soul, or no Spirit to trouble the waters; no manna, or no stomach; no strength or sweetness, as in the quails, 'He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls,' Psalms 106:15. And when the gospel is gone, all outward judgments rush in. After the white horse, Christ with the gospel, neglected, comes the red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and the pale horse of pestilence, and other judgments, Revelation 6:1-17.

4. The gospel, according as it is heard, is a great mercy or a great judgment, a blessing or a curse, therefore great reason to take heed. The abuse of the greatest mercy may curse it. It lifts up to heaven or casts down to hell; it is the savour of life or of death, 2 Corinthians 2:15-16; advances salvation or aggravates condemnation. The cords of love or the snares of death; mollifies or hardens, Matthew 13:14-15, Isaiah 6:9-10; enlightens or darkens their eyes, Romans 11:10, John 12:40, John 9:39; opens the heart to Christ, or shuts it against him. If one should tell you this diet, according as you use it, will be life or death, would you not take heed? The gospel is like the water of jealousy. A bad hearer is like the adulteress, to him it is bitter water, which causeth a curse, Numbers 5:19; her belly shall swell, and thigh rot; it causes tumours and rottenness, and makes him a curse among the people. To a good hearer it is sweet, blessed, the water of life, fruitfulness, causes him to conceive seed, Luke 8:28. The word brings nearer heaven or further from it, it does good or hurt, makes better or worse, it is medicamen or venenum, a quickening spirit or killing letter. It returns not in vain, Isaiah 55:10-11; it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Now he appoints his servants, as Jeremiah 1:10, not only to build, but to

pull down; not only to plant, but to root out and destroy; and puts his words in their mouths for that end, ver. 9. It blasts those who blossom not, flourish not under it; overthrows where it edifies not; consumes, where it refines not as fire; it is a sword, either lances imposthumes, or pierces the heart savingly or mortally.

They are in a more desperate condition who hear amiss, take not heed how they hear, than those who cannot hear, those who never had the gospel. Their sin is more heinous, against clearest light, the gospel added to the law, John 9:41, the greatest mercy, more inexcusable: John 15:22, 'If I had not come and spoke to them, they had not had sin,' &c. The punishment is more grievous, more severe, sudden, certain. 'Under the whole heavens hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem,' Daniel 9:12. The reason is often given, 'We obeyed not his voice,' Daniel 9:10, Daniel 9:14. The dregs of God's wrath was poured upon them because they had tasted the quintessence of his mercy, the gospel. No people like them in gospel enjoyments, which they not heeding, no people like them in grievous sufferings. What caused that fearful desolation, see 2 Chronicles 36:15-16, 'They despised his words, and the wrath of the Lord came on them without remedy.' 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Hebrews 2:3. The nearer to heaven any are lifted up by gospel preaching, the lower will they sink into hell if they heed it not. 'It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah,' Luke 10:12; 'for Tyre and Sidon,' the most heathenish, the most abominable people in the world, those who have been most notorious both for vile abominations and dreadful sufferings, these shall fare better in the day of judgment, and suffer less in hell than gospel despisers; cords for them, scorpions for these; the finger of justice will lie heavier on these than it lies on them, those everlasting burnings will be made seven times hotter. These shall rise up in judgment against them, Luke 11:31. The queen of the South, 'Woe be to thee, Bethsaida,' Luke 10:12-13, 'And thou, Capernaum,' Luke 10:15.

6. It is the eternal concernment of souls. Hearing is the provision made for the soul's eternal well-being, its everlasting welfare depends upon it; if you fail here, your souls perish without remedy. For salvation comes by faith, and faith comes by hearing. It is an act of eternal consequence. According to our hearing, so shall the state of our souls be to eternity. It is not a temporal interest, but eternal. As you hear in time, so shall you be to everlasting. It is not the concernment of credit, body, or estate, but of your souls immortal. If a friend should say, Take heed to my advice, and you shall live in credit, and preserve your reputation unstained, but if you will not hearken to me, you will live in perpetual disgrace and contempt, who would not diligently observe what such a friend suggests? Is there not more reason to take heed how we hear God? His word concerns eternal glory, theirs but temporary opinion and repute. If a skilful physician should come to a patient desperately sick, and assure him if he hearken to his advice he would recover, if not, he should certainly die, who would not in that case take heed to his advice? The great Physician of souls prescribes hearing as the only way to recover our sick, desperately diseased souls. Shall we not take heed how we hear? The gospel preached holds forth a sovereign receipt for a dying soul; shall we not hear and take heed how? There is no hope for your souls but in Christ, no benefit by Christ but by faith, no faith but by hearing. If we miscarry in hearing, not only our estate, or bodies, but souls miscarry, and perish eternally without recovery. Is it not reason to take heed how we hear? Shall we be heedful to advice for body and estate, and not for our souls; for temporals, and not for eternals?

7. The gospel preached is the word of God, not of man, though by man; God is the fountain, man but the conduit-pipe; he the author, man the instrument; it is the sun his light, they the medium. The word of God is not that only which is written, but that which is equivalent to it, as the translations, verbum, though not verba Dei. That which is agreeable to it, if not expressed in the same words which are in Scripture, yet if in others, so as to express the mind of God, his intention; it is his word if it be his sense and meaning, though not tied to the form of words in which it is written. An ambassador sent from a king to a foreign state with short instructions to transact public affairs, though he do not tie himself to the words and letters of his instructions, if he express the meaning, and prosecute the intentions of his master in words of his own at large, yet are they received as the words or message of his master. Ministers are Christ's ambassadors, 2 Corinthians 5:20, who speak the word of God, Hebrews 13:7. That which is deducible from it by just consequence, that which is drawn from Scripture by necessary consequence, is Scripture. That which follows from the word of God is the word of God, if not directly, yet by consequence. Christ justifies consequences by his own practice; being to prove the resurrection by Scripture, he proves it by consequence: 'God is the God of the living,' Matthew 22:32, Luke 20:37. That which we draw from the words of men by consequence is not always their judgment, for man is short-sighted, of a narrow understanding, and therefore cannot see all that may be drawn from his words; but the Lord's understanding is infinite and immensely comprehensive; when he spoke and inspired his word, he foresaw all possible consequences, and will own them which are just to be his word as well as the letter from whence they are drawn. If he should have spoke at large, and expressed all that is consequent, the world would not have contained the books. He expressed his mind in brief for our convenience, and has appointed, and enabled, and authorised his servants, his deputies, to explain, to enlarge, to deduce, apply, what would have been impossible or inconvenient to have delivered at large. He gives his word in Scripture as a lump of precious metal, more precious than gold, appoints ministers to beat it out into large plates; and as gold is the same in the lump and mass and in the plate, so is the word the same word of God as it is read and as it is preached; he gives us his word in the Scriptures as honey in the comb, he appoints the ministers of the gospel to squeeze it out, it is the same honey in the comb and out. Only take this caution, that the gospel preached be received as the word of God, it is required he that preaches it should be sent by God, invested with his authority, appointed to be his vicegerent, sent as ambassador from him, otherwise doctrine agreeable to God's word cannot be delivered authoritatively as the word of God; it is like silver, though precious in itself, yet not current, not money, without the magistrate's stamp and impression. A private man may deliver things agreeing with the instructions of an ambassador, yet no state will look upon them as the words of a king, because he is not authorised by him to deliver them.

Now ministers are sent by Christ: 'Go, teach,' Matthew 28:1-20, made Christ's vicegerents, have the honour and authority of ambassadors; they are Christ's mouth, χ■ιλη το■ Χριστο■, deputies, vice-Christi, as they are called. 'No man takes this honour to himself, but he that is called' to it. They are furnished with abilities, 'I am with you,' 'in you,' Matthew 10:40, Luke 10:16, John 13:20. That therefore is the word of God which is equivalent, agreeable to, deducible from it, when delivered by those who are sent with authority from Christ to preach it. Such is the gospel which has long and is daily preached to you. Take heed, then, how ye hear, for it is the word of God.

It is more than if it were the word of a king, the greatest potentate. Yet in the word of a king there is power; it is as the roaring of a lion, strikes dead,* reverence into hearers. What heed would one take to hear a king; how composed, how reverent, attentive, obsequious; but what is it then to hear the King of kings, Lord of hosts, Prince of the kings of the earth, in comparison of whom all kings are not so much as worms!

It is more than if one from the dead should speak to us, as is plain in the parable, Luke 16:31, ‘They have Moses and the prophets,’ who, being authorised to speak from God, and as God, do deserve so much reverence, obedience, attention, as if they will not hear them, if they do not respect my word from them, my authority in them, it cannot be expected they should mind one from the dead; though one from the dead might tell them his experience, yet this might be as soon questioned, and more easily evaded than those sent by me.

It is more than if an angel from heaven should speak, Galatians 1:1-24, if not sent; if he spoke never so heavenly, seraphically, yet if it do not agree with the word, the word of God in the mouth of the meanest worm would be better entertained, Galatians 1:1-24, Hebrews 2:1-3. How attentive and heedful would we be if an angel should speak with the tongue of angels; much more when God speaks, when it is the tongue of God.

Nay, it is better far, than if God himself should appear and speak immediately: his glory, his majesty would affright us. None can see him and live. Israel at Sinai, Exodus 20:18-19, and Exodus 24:17. The sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire. Shall we despise this treasure, because in an earthen vessel; this light, because it appears in an elementary body; this water of life, because it passeth through a leaden pipe?

However we receive it, he looks upon it, accounts it his word; and he will resent it more heinously, in some respect, as he speaks by men, than if it were spoke by himself; for he condescends to our weakness, speaking to us by one of ourselves. So we contemn not only his word, but his mercy, in delivering his word in such a familiar way. We might pretend fear if he should speak immediately, durst not hear; but now, speaking by one of us, there is no excuse. If we will not take heed how and what we hear, it is because we will not. Hearers, generally, are guilty of a sin proportionable to the sin of the Jews. There is a like mistake about verbum Domini with us, as there was about Verbum Dominum with them. They took not the Word for God, because it appeared in flesh; we receive not the gospel as the word of God, because delivered by flesh. Their mistake was fatal and woeful. They crucified the Lord of life, because in the likeness of sinful flesh; we trample under foot the word of life, because it proceeds from sinful flesh. The mistake was their ruin, and so it will be to us. Come to hear, as expecting God to speak, hear it as the word of the great God.

8. It is that by which you must be judged at the last day: Judge, &c., according to this gospel, Romans 2:16, John 12:48. The sentence is already passed in the gospel: ‘He that believes shall be saved,’ &c. The execution accordingly will be at the last day; evidence will be brought in by the gospel. Herein, will Christ say, was laid open the way of life; herein discovered the paths of death; herein unbelief, impenitency, disobedience, were noted as damning sins, yet you would not avoid them, Luke 8:17. ‘Nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, neither any thing hid that shall not be made known.’ At the day of judgment, an account of every sermon will be required, and of every truth in each sermon: of every idle word we must give account, Matthew 12:36. If of every idle word, much more of every idle act; if accountable of what we speak to others, much more of

what God speaks to us; if of unedifying speaking, much more of unprofitable hearing. The books will be opened, all the sermons mentioned which you have heard, and a particular account required, why you imprisoned such a truth revealed, why you committed such a sin threatened, why neglected such duties enjoined. The gospel, at the last day, if neglected, will plead you inexcusable. ‘If I had not come,’ &c., ‘you had no sin.’ You cannot say, Si scissem, fecissem. Oh what a fearful account! So many sermons slept, not regarded, prejudiced, hated, forgotten, unpractised.

We must give account of all talents, all enjoyments, how improved, time, parts, riches. If of common mercies, much more of special, extraordinary. None like the gospel, no account therefore so exact. Other mercies are but as one talent, the gospel as five in proportion to one. If he that improved not one, received such a heavy sentence, what shall he expect who neglects, hides, improves not five? ‘If every transgression and disobedience,’ in the use of less mercies, ‘receive a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect’ the gospel, ‘which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him?’ Hebrews 2:1-18. ‘Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we hear.’ No wrath so fierce as God’s for the contempt of mercy, and of the greatest mercy in the gospel; no plea, no excuse, no escaping.

Use. Reproof to those that will not hear, neglect opportunities, make light of it. If it be a duty to hear well, it is a sin not to hear. If it be a sin not to hear right, it is a great sin not to hear at all; it is a common sin, national sin, threatens ruin to the gospel. Heathens and savages more forward than we! Manna is loathed, light hated. The sin of this place! A thin congregation makes me jealous with a godly jealousy, out of love to your souls. Are not you absent upon small occasions? A little rain, cold season, small employments, prejudice against God’s messengers, keep you at home. Is not this to make light of the gospel? Others compass sea and land, run from sea to sea, to hear; you will not stir out of doors. Read the parable, Matthew 22:1-46. A king made a feast at the marriage of his son, sent his servants to invite guests: they made excuses; one had married a wife, &c. What was the issue? The king was wroth, sent out his armies to destroy and burn their city, not one of them should taste of his supper. God in the gospel offers to espouse us to his Son, to feast us with fat things, the pleasures of his house; invites us. If we neglect, we shall never taste of Christ. The children of the kingdom shall be cast out. It will be with you in this nation, and this place, as with the Jews: he turned from them to the Gentiles. He will take Christ and the gospel from you and give it to Americans; and when the gospel is gone, then look for destruction and desolation. The Lord convince you of the sinfulness of this sin!

1. It is a high contempt of God, of Christ. Contempt is the highest degree of dishonour; God is jealous of this. Men cannot endure it, much less God; he is infinitely above us, we are worms; he stands in no need of us. It is for our good, our happiness: it is God contemned in his dearest and most glorious manifestation, mercy, bowels. If a great king should send an ambassador to a poor impotent man lying on a dunghill, a stranger, an enemy to him, to offer reconciliation, to adopt him, to make him heir of his kingdom, if this wretch should refuse to hear him, would it not highly exasperate him? So it is here; the Lord sends to us lying in our blood, poor, blind, &c. Mercy slighted, turns into the greatest fury. The arm of God’s vengeance will fall heavier upon gospel-slighters than upon any persons in the world. ‘It shall be more tolerable for Sodom,’ Luke 10:1-42. Why, might they say, it is but man that delivers it; if it were God, we might expect severity.

Nay, it is all one: he adds, ‘He that hears you, hears me.’

2. If you will not hear God now, God will not hear you in the time of distress, though you may make many prayers, Isaiah 1:15. He will send you to the gods whom ye have served: Isaiah 66:4, ‘I will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes,’ &c. Isaiah 65:12-14, ‘I will number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer,’ &c. ‘He will laugh at your destruction,’ Proverbs 1:24-31, Jeremiah 7:14-16. The time may come, when all outward refuges and supports will fail, at least on your deathbed, when it will be in vain to call to men and angels. If you then cry for pardon, mercy, the Lord will stop his ears; you heard not him in health, life, and he will not then hear you. Nay, at the day of judgment, when you, with the foolish virgins, knock at the gate of heaven, and say, Lord, open, deliver me from these everlasting burnings; Oh save me from these tormentors who are ready to hale me into endless torture. Nay, Christ will say, You would not hear me when I invited, beseeched, nay, and wept over you; now I will not hear you. Then you shall hear nothing but that dreadful sentence, ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting burnings,’ &c. If this terrible sentence must be denounced and executed upon wretches, because they did not feed, clothe, and visit Christ, much more against those who would not so much as hear him. Lord, hear me, or I perish, I sink into the bottomless pit, I shall be haled into outer darkness. Nay, you would not hear: he will hear no plea, no excuse.

3. Consider the state of the damned, those who, for neglecting the light, are cast into outer darkness. With what torture and anguish do they look upon their neglect of the gospel! Read the parable of Dives, Luke 16:1-31. Lay your ear to hell, and hear those forlorn creatures cry out against this sin, as that which has damned them, sunk their souls into endless miseries. Suppose you heard them say, Oh that we had esteemed the gospel! Oh that we had more regarded the Lord’s messengers! Oh that we had hearkened to the voice of Christ in them! Then might we have escaped that wrath which was once to come, but now is upon us; but now it is too late; alas, it is too late, the day of our visitation is shut up in eternal night! But oh if it were possible that time might be recalled, and a revenging God appeased, oh what would we give to hear the word of reconciliation from the most despised minister! We would give our estates; our health, our liberty, would be thought a small matter to part with for such advantage. Oh what would we do to hear but the least hope offered in the gospel! We would run from sea to sea, watch night and day, spend time, and strength, and means, upon condition we might but hear one gospel sermon, Christ once more offer peace to us! Oh what would we suffer, to redeem one of those many neglected opportunities! We would endure a thousand years’ torments for one hour’s time; a thousand years’ darkness for one minute of gospel light; a thousand years’ burning for one encouraging word from Christ, ten thousand of which we formerly slighted. But there is no hope for them, despair is part of their torture: yet can they not choose but be astonished at the desperate carelessness of men on earth, who will not hear, though this sin have sunk millions into hell; who will take any excuse, any occasion to be absent, when Christ is offering life and reconciliation; for hopes of a little gain, hazard the loss of their souls; for a little ease, expose themselves to eternal torments. It is too cold to hear the word, but you will find an alteration in hell; that will be hot enough, seven times hotter for you then. A little rain or snow will keep you at home when Christ speaks; but how will you endure that horrible tempest, which the Lord will rain upon gospel contemners? A flood of brimstone will be poured on you, kindled by the Lord’s fiery indignation.

Use II. Exhortation to this duty. It is a duty of Christ's enjoining, and to his disciples. To further the practice of it, I shall, I, remove impediments that hinder; 2, prescribe means to facilitate and direct.

1. The impediments are ignorance, contempt, distractions, prejudice, obduration, bad ends or principles.

(1.) Ignorance in the mysteries of the gospel, the principles of religion: 'Without knowledge the heart is naught,' Proverbs 19:2. Now the seed of the word is not well received, but into a good and honest heart, Proverbs 19:15. This is one of the defects in those who receive the seed, as the high-way, they understand it not, Matthew 13:19; and therefore are more obnoxious to the wiles of that wicked one: none so fit a subject for Satan to delude, to work upon, as ignorants; we are easily deceived in that, and deprived of that, of which we have not knowledge. Ignorance is darkness spiritual, and darkness is Satan's element; he is the prince of darkness; he has most advantages to act there, most nimbly, dexterously, and advantageously. Ignorance hinders the operation of the word upon conscience, will, affections; it is a thick, gross medium, which either much weakens, or quite obstructs the influence of the gospel. Conscience, not awakened, sleeps on, darkness serves the sleepy temper. On the will; will not yield to he knows not what, nor admit he knows not who. On the affections; a blind man is not affected with colours, how rare and orient soever; set before him the most exquisite pictures, the most curious pieces, that art can frame, they move him not. In the gospel, Christ and sin, grace and the world, are set out in their own colours, but to no effect, till the eye be opened, and the scales of ignorance removed: 'The God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not,' 2 Corinthians 4:4; 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,' Hosea 4:6; the mind is not opened but by the key of knowledge, Luke 11:52; be sensible of it, bewail it, use all means to get knowledge, reading, conference; dig for it as for hidden treasures, above all for the knowledge of Christ, as Paul.

(2.) Contempt of the gospel. That which we despise, we heed not. If we think it not worth hearing, we will not take heed how we hear; say not you are innocent, the best are incident to it: 2 Samuel 12:9, Nathan to David, 'Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?' Not hearing, is evil doing, either initially, or causally, or formally; it is the beginning, or cause, or the same with evil. Contempt is the natural issue of pride, and pride is the enemy of hearing, Jeremiah 13:15-17, 'Hear ye, &c., be not proud;' Jeremiah 5:5, 'Broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.' We must deny our own excellencies and understandings, and in the apprehension of the glory of the gospel, and the glory of that God who delivers it, lie low and tremble: Ezra 10:3, 'Tremble at the commandment of our God;' and Ezra 9:4, 'Every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel,' Isaiah 66:2; a sweet promise, 'To this man will I look, that is poor, and of a contrite spirit,' &c.; 'Though heaven be his throne,' &c.; and Isaiah 66:5, 'Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word.' Others will not. Nor is this a legal temper; see it in the gospel, 2 Corinthians 7:15. The Corinthians received Titus with fear and trembling; not Christ, nor Paul, but Titus, an inferior teacher; and the Corinthians did it out of awful apprehensions of God, and not eye the instrument alone, having high raised thoughts of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18. The most glorious manifestation that ever was vouchsafed, which the angels desire to pry into, παρακ■ψαι, 1 Peter 1:12. Principalities and powers think it not below them to be taught by the gospel, Ephesians 3:10; look on it as the gospel of peace, the word of reconciliation, of life, nothing but death without it; of salvation to those who would otherwise perish; of glory, else hell. What low condescensions of God in the gospel! What high exaltation of man,

promises, privileges, relations.

(3.) Distractions. Wanderings, rovings of mind, will, affections, senses, caused by the cares of the world and lusts of the flesh; carefulness of other things makes careless of the word. It is hard to hit a moving object, a bird in flight; as well, to as much purpose, sow the waves in a tempest, or cast seed upon branches tossed with the wind, as preach to a distracted, wandering hearer; nothing fixes, sinks, abides; his soul is like a highway, every man or beast has free passage. What encouragement has the husbandman to sow there? It is impossible, while it is crowded; and if clear, yet being open, it would be trodden down.

Fix your whole soul on God. Hoc age. Let there be no thoughts, projects, motions, affections, but what is suitable to, or raised by the word; summon the whole soul to wait, to attend to God; watch, that ye be not surprised; if any intrude, cast them out, drive them away: ‘Keep thy heart with all diligence,’ Proverbs 4:23. What an affront would it be to turn your back on a king, or to discourse with others while he is speaking to you! The postures and motions of your souls are as visible to God as your outward one to another. Deal with wandering thoughts, extravagant motions, as Abraham did with the fowls which came down upon his sacrifice, Genesis 15:11, he drove them away; wandering thoughts, like these fowls, would spoil our sacrifices; they are a progeny of devils, Satan has that name in the parable; they are his emissaries; bid them as Christ, ‘Avoid, thou art an offence to me;’ drive these fowls away. We must serve God with our whole heart, not suffer it to be divided, distracted, especially in the act of worship: ‘My heart is fixed,’ says David, Psalms 9:1; Psalms 119:10, ‘I will praise the Lord with my whole heart;’ ‘Unite my heart to fear thy name,’ Psalms 86:11.

(4.) Prejudice. An ill conceit of the gospel; the matter, or the manner of delivery, plainness, simplicity; or ministers, their persons, conversation, office, or execution of it. This was the ruin both of Jews and Gentiles, hindered them from hearing, or made the hearing ineffectual, though preached by Christ himself, or the apostles extraordinarily assisted. The gospel, and the prime subject of it, Christ, was ‘to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness;’ the gospel, when preached by extraordinary agents, when confirmed by miracles; much more now. The Jews were prejudiced against Christ his person; he answered not their expectation. They looked for a glorious monarch, not one in the form of a servant; his calling, not sent of God, an impostor, deceiver, blasphemer; his conversation, his country: ‘Can any good come out of Nazareth?’ His doctrine, too plain, too severe, taxing abuses. Paul was a babbler to the Athenians. To remove it, consider there is no reason, no room for prejudice against the gospel; those that despise it never saw its glory, nor tasted its sweetness: ‘If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost,’ 2 Corinthians 4:3; shall we think worse of the sun, because a blind man speaks against it, because an owl cannot behold it? and for ministers, there is glory enough in the gospel to gild them, how mean soever. To neglect the gospel, for their weakness or infirmities, is to refuse to take up manna because it falls on the ground; if there be any fault in them, they must bear it, it will be no excuse to you. Those who would not hear Judas, were no less guilty than those who would not hear the other disciples; Christ makes no distinction, either in his commission or sanction; those were equally threatened who received not him as the rest. Prejudice, when there is some ground for it, does not excuse; but for the most part it is groundless. I am apt to think, where there is a call, there can be no ground of prejudice; therefore, if there be any ground of prejudice, it must be something that may make the calling questionable.

Now those things from which we raise prejudice, are not sufficient to make a minister's calling questionable; for those objections, which are ordinarily made use of to this end, Christ or the apostles themselves are liable to.

Meanness, or despicableness of the person. Christ a carpenter's son, no beauty in him, &c. The apostles fishermen.

Ambition, affectation of superiority. Christ's disciples contend who shall be greatest.

Hypocrisy, covetousness. These were in Judas, yet he was called.

Weakness. The disciples had no acquired parts, their education would not admit it, they were ignorant of many truths.

Difference in judgment and affections. The stumbling-block in these times, yet visible in Peter and Paul, Galatians 2:11, and Barnabas and Paul, Acts 15:39. The contention so sharp as they parted asunder.

Carnalness, looking for a temporal kingdom and preferment thereby. Fear of suffering, all forsook him. Intemperate zeal, they call for fire from heaven.

(5.) Obduration: hardness of heart. 'To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,' Hebrews 3:7-8; Pharaoh heard not Moses, for his heart was hardened. We sow upon rocks; no hopes of fruit, where neither root nor moisture; it should be an 'engrafted word,' James 1:21; can one engraft upon stone? It should 'dwell in us richly,' Colossians 3:16; the heart is hardened by sinning against light. When the gospel reveals this to be sin, and that a duty, and no regard to practise this, or avoid that, the first brings the first degree; and after the more neglects, the more hardness, till the conscience grow senseless, and, as it were, cauterized. The Lord for this sin hardens judicially, withdraws mollifying influence, and exposes to occasions that harden.

Take heed of sinning against light, disobeying the gospel. Be not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Urge the covenant, whereby God is engaged to take away the heart of stone, Ezekiel 36:26. Plough up the fallow-ground, Jeremiah 4:3, Hosea 10:12. Make use both of law and gospel, that to break, this to melt. The heart must be softened, then broken, then melted, that it may be cast into the mould of the word. The image of Christ is stamped on the word, it must leave impressions of Christ on us; therefore we must be cast, delivered into it, Romans 6:1-23. Hereby it transforms, Romans 6:17, obeyed from the heart. Observe what considerations do soonest affect, judgment or mercy, promise or threatening, and make use of that which is most effectual.

Look upon hardness as the greatest judgment, more fearful than any temporal sickness, poverty, blindness, sword, &c., a sign of reprobation, an earnest of hell. Desire, with all importunity, a tender, melting, bleeding heart, trembling, yielding to every stroke, receiving every impression, running into the mould, complying, obeying.

(6.) Bad ends and principles, motives or reasons inducing to hear, these make every act good or bad. Take heed to these. We take not heed how we hear, when we hear.

[1.] Out of custom, because others do it. It is the fashion of the nation, and he that runs not with the stream hazards his reputation. He that hears but thus, will never take heed how he hears. Yet,

which is lamentable, this is the ground upon which the greatest part found both their religion and the exercises of it. Why are most protestants? Their parents, their magistrates, the major part are so; not weight of reason, but number of professors. So for religious exercises, hearing, praying, singing; not for any necessity, excellency, or spiritual advantage, but because others do it. And this is the cause of inconstancy in religion, and negligence and formality in the duties of it. He that will be religious, hear, &c., only because the most do so, shall receive that reward which the most do.

[2.] To carp, cavil, ensnare, take advantages. So the Pharisees to Christ. Make a man an offender for a word. It is the practice of the devil, he hears, observes, that he may accuse, disquiet, ensnare. To pervert it in such a horrid way makes you worse than the devil, the word was never intended for his advantage.

[3.] To please the fancy, perfect intellectuals, to get notions, to satisfy itching ears; placere, not sanare; neat expressions, apt similes, quaint notions, please more than wholesome words. This is to abase the gospel, and bring it down to base ends, which was appointed for the highest.

[4.] To satisfy conscience, if convinced it be a duty enjoined under penalty, and conscience not asleep, dare not omit. Or to pacify conscience, to expiate a week's sin with one act of service.

Get right principles. Propound the best, the highest motives. Act upon spiritual grounds. Be armed by spiritual reasons.

God's glory, Jeremiah 13:16. Hearing brings glory to God, acknowledges many of his attributes, authority, truth, mercy, our subjection to him. It is an act of worship naturally engaging. Our good. Our necessity of it as new-born babes. Come as the Israelites to gather manna. It is the bread of life, water of life. Come as to the pool. Consider the excellency of it. Hear the word out of love and delight: Psalms 119:127, 'I love thy commandments above gold.' 'Oh how I love thy law!' Psalms 119:97. If the law, much more should we love the gospel. It is 'sweeter than honey,' Psalms 19:10. 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God, &c. Oh when shall I come and appear before God?' Psalms 42:1-2. Psalms 84:10, 'A day in thy courts is better than a thousand.' Consider the spiritual advantages of it, light, life, strength, growth, comfort, peace, glory. It is an inestimable treasure and mine, an universal remedy, πανφ■ρμακον, the choicest dainties, an all-sufficient magazine, an infallible oracle.

2. Directions how to hear.

(1.) Get a punctual knowledge of the state of your souls in reference to God. Every man is either in a state of nature or grace, regenerate or unregenerate, either in the faith or in his sins. Now before you can hear aright, you should know in which of these states you are. The reason is this, we must take heed how we hear, that we may hear fruitfully, that the word may be profitable. It is most profitable when it is seasonable. It cannot be seasonable to you (whatever it be in itself), except you be acquainted with your soul's condition. It is seasonable in itself when it is suitable to a hearer's condition, but it is not seasonable to him, except he know it to be suitable, which he cannot do except he know what his condition is. 'A word in due season, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver,' Proverbs 25:11. It is precious, lovely, excellent, profitable, adorning, and enriching. It requireth the tongue of the learned to speak seasonably, Isaiah 50:4. It requireth a learned heart to hear seasonably. Indeed, this is requisite to every spiritual service, whether we pray, read, receive, else we offer the sacrifice of fools. Paul in another sense, 1 Corinthians 14:8,

‘If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?’ It is uncertain, when it is not known what it means, or whom it concerns. The sound of the gospel is uncertain, when hearers know not whom it concerns, know not whether them or no. Ministers speak in the air, to no purpose. And 1 Corinthians 14:11, ‘If I know not the meaning of the voice, he that speaks is a barbarian,’ &c.

It is dangerous. If a man, not knowing his temper and constitution, come into an apothecary’s shop, where are receipts of all sorts, he might, through ignorance of his complexion, take that which would be poison to him, though healthful to another. The word offers that which is proper to every condition. That which is not proper is destructive. If you know not your condition, you may undo your souls, apply promises for threatenings, persuade yourselves of God’s love when in a state of enmity, conclude for heaven when heirs of wrath. As you love your souls, follow the apostle’s advice, 2 Corinthians 13:5: ‘Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves.’ The duty is ingeminated and enforced with a reason, ‘Know you not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.’

(2.) Before you hear, endeavour to get your souls into a capacity of hearing fruitfully, to get spiritual advantage by hearing. Take pains with your hearts in private before ye come, make them tender, fit to receive impressions. Set them open, that Christ may come in. Make room, empty them of sin and vanity, that the Spirit may work freely, with liberty, without interruption. Get them melted in prayer, sublimated, raised by meditation. If you seek the Lord there, he will find you here. If you meet him in private, he will come along and continue with you.

You expect no increase from seed if it be cast into the ground before it be ploughed and broken up. You must get the fallow-ground of your hearts broken up before you come to receive the seed of the word: Hosea 10:12, ‘Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up the fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.’ If you would sow rightly, and reap in mercy, you must break up, &c. How is that? Seek the Lord by heart-breaking, heart-melting prayer; then he will rain righteousness, rain peace and holiness; not in drops, but showers, Jeremiah 4:1-31. Sow not among thorns, pluck them up, cast them out, cares, pleasures, lusts; else no room for the good seed; they will choke it. Say to them, as Abraham to his young men going to sacrifice, Genesis 22:5, ‘Abide you here, and I will go yonder and worship, and come again to you,’ if lawful. Let not your hearts be as the highway; that seed prospered not which fell there. Enclose your hearts with holy thoughts, awful apprehensions of God. He is a jealous God, and will be sanctified. Common hearts are profane hearts; there must be a separation; you must fence your hearts against the inroads of the world.

Let not your hearts continue rocky; if they are, though the seed may abide there, yet it cannot take root. Get them mollified, melted, that they may receive impressions from the mould of the word. By conversing in the world, we contract hardness and pollution; though it make us not altogether incapable of fruitful and familiar converse with God in ordinances, yet it many times leaves but a remote capacity. To remove this requires extraordinary presence and working, which we have no reason to expect. Green wood will not quickly nor easily take fire if we would kindle it suddenly; the matter must be dry. We must get our hearts warmed in private, that we may be kindled in public, so as our hearts may burn within us when he speaks to us. Those who have experience of the Lord’s presence and workings, find there is a vast difference, as to the efficacy of the word, when

they come negligently and preparedly. When they step immediately out of the world into God's presence, their interviews are not so delightful, so advantageous, the word not so powerful, melting, inflaming, as when they have endeavoured to dispose their hearts for so great a work.

(3.) Receive the word, and every part of it, as concerning thee in particular. Set thyself as in God's presence, and persuade thyself that he speaks to thee; hear it, as believing that God designed it, cut it out for thee. God aims at thee, intended it and put it into the mouth of his messenger on purpose for thee. It is Satan's policy to persuade, that he may render it ineffectual, the word belongs to others, not to me. It is certain there is no truth delivered, no sin threatened, no duty enjoined, no state discovered, but it concerns every one, and therefore thee in particular, and God sends it on purpose to thee; for if a sparrow do not fall to the ground but by God's appointment, surely there is no word proceeds from the mouth of God but out of design. If providence reach less things, much more greater. If thou must give an account for every word thou nearest, sure every word concerns thee; for God is not imprudent or unjust, &c. Hear it then as spoke to thee, as sent to thee. The word never is effectual but when it is particularly applied; when thy soul is opened to receive it, as Lydia's; when thy heart is pricked, as Peter's hearers. Now generalia non pungunt, generals affect not. Now ministers, in public auditories, can but speak generals; they must not name men, and say, as Nathan to David, 'Thou art the man.' Though it be their duty, and they endeavour to speak punctually to every man's condition, which is ■ρθοτομε■ν τ■ν λ■γον, yet that which is most particular as from them is but a general notion to thee; if thou apply it not, receive it not as spoken to thee. If there be not a receptive faculty in every particular soul, in every member of the mystical body, as there is in every part of the natural body, this spiritual food will never nourish. A chirurgeon bids apply a salve to a sore hand; the hand casts it off as fitter for the head; is there any hopes of a cure? A physician prescribes physic to a sick man; he refuses to take it, and says his neighbour stands in more need of it; so if you, when threatenings are denounced, say such a man indeed is a great sinner, this may belong to him, but I thank God I am not so bad, I am not as other men, &c., this is a dangerous stratagem of Satan, to make the word unprofitable. The word, whenever it does good, enters into the heart, Acts 16:14; Psalms 40:9, 'Thy law is within my heart;' Psalms 119:11, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart;' Jeremiah 31:33, 'I will put my law in their inward parts.' Now by those means the word is kept out.

Some truths are more seasonable than others, yet all seasonable in some respect. That is seasonable which is suitable to our condition. Our condition is past, present, future, or possible. That is most seasonable which concerns the present state, others as they have an influence upon it.

Present. If in the state of nature, it is seasonable to shew the misery of it, and the necessity of a change.

Past. This may be useful to one regenerate, to make him thankful, fearful of relapsing into former sins, pitiful to others, affectionate to Christ.

Future. I am now in health and prosperity; but sickness and persecution will come, and it will be seasonable now to prepare for them.

Possible. You hear some grievous sin threatened, you are not guilty of it, but it is possible you may be; the seeds of that sin are in you. Therefore it is useful to make you watchful and dependent

upon Christ, and sad for the sinfulness of your nature.

Get knowledge of your greatest wants, weakest graces, strongest lusts, worst distempers, coldest affections, difficultest encumbrances, that so you may know how to apply the word. All must be applied, but those more especially that are most seasonable. There is prudence required, to discern ‘what is that good, perfect, acceptable will of God,’ Romans 12:2. The word, if you apply it not, will no more profit than meat not eaten.

(4.) Be not satisfied with anything in hearing, but the presence of God. That special presence, when operative, makes the word effectual to the ends appointed. The presence of the Lord his glory filled the tabernacle under the law; and his presence is as abundant and glorious under the gospel. He fills now the tabernacle with his presence, when the glorious effects of his presence are sensible in the hearts of the hearers, convincing, enlightening, terrifying, humbling, melting, inflaming, comforting, strengthening, quickening. These are the signs of this glorious presence. It is a greater glory than the other, though not visible; it is liker to that of heaven, and more suitable to the spiritual and elevated estate of gospel spirits. The efficacy of all ordinances, and of this in special, depends upon God’s co-operating presence, their light, life, power, sweetness. No healing virtue in these waters, but when the angel of God’s presence descends, and troubles the waters, whoever steps in after the troubling is made whole of whatsoever disease, John 5:4.

It is a popish delusion to expect anything, ex opere operato, from the work done, without respect to the manner of doing. It is a great provocation to expect ex opere operantis, from the preparation of the hearer or endeavours of the speaker without looking higher. All that we have to depend on, or expect from, is opus co-operantis, the concurrence of God. If an angel from heaven should preach, or a man with the tongue of men and angels, it would be ineffectual without co-operation. If Christ himself should again exercise his prophetical office on earth, and preach the gospel, it would have no better success than on the Jews, without divine concurrence. The word, though light in itself, is darkness to you, except the glorious presence of God scatter the clouds which benight the faculty, clear the medium, discover the object. The word, though spirit and life in itself, yet will be a dead letter to thee, except his Spirit and presence quicken it. It is as a body without a soul; it is his presence that informs, acts, enlivens. It is quick and powerful in itself, but it moves not the soul, conscience, will, or affections; these weapons are mighty through God. The affections are like the wheels in Ezekiel’s vision, God’s presence like the spirit of those living creatures: Ezekiel 1:21, ‘Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went: for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels; when they go, these go; when they stood, these stood; when they were lifted up from the earth, these were lifted up.’

What is the reason that a truth sometimes breaks in with rays of light and evidence, which was always darkness before, though oftentimes before propounded? What is the reason some passage doth sometimes affect, move, inflame; at other times, though pressed with as much power, moves not at all? God’s presence. The heart is sometimes as brass, sometimes as oil. Seek God’s presence above all, avoid what hinders; mourn and lament after him. If thou goest not with us, we will not go. ‘She called his name Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed,’ 1 Samuel 4:21. Cry after him, ‘Oh that thou wouldst bow the heavens, and come down,’ Isaiah 64:1.

(5.) Take heed of suppressing any good motions raised by the word. Constant hearers have experience of some convictions of sin, and resolve to leave it and mind the soul. Nourish these,

take heed of smothering them. They are the blessed issues of heaven; will you stifle, murder them in the conception, make them like an untimely birth? They are buds springing from the immortal seed; will you nip them? They are sprigs planted by the hand of Christ, which would grow into a tree of life; will ye pluck them up by the roots, expose them to the frosts, break them while young and tender? They are sparks kindled by the breath of God, heavenly fire; will you quench it? They are the Spirit's breathings, strugglings, he will not always strive. They are Christ's knockings, you know not how long he will stand; will you send him away without admission? They are the Bridegroom's wooings; will you repulse him, and cause him to make no more motions? They are Christ's messengers; he sends these for trial, prepare the way before him. What became of them who stoned and killed the messengers? Matthew 21:35, Matthew 21:41-43.

Nourish these, encourage them; the children are come to the birth, get strength to bring forth, concur with the Lord. Overwhelm them not with worldly employments, choke them not with cares, quench them not with pleasures. Drown not the voice, as the Israelites the noise of the sacrificed children; nor, as Cain, run to build cities, busy yourselves in the world, stop your ears, till God's voice be heard and accomplished. Go not from this place into worldly company, &c.; retire to your closet, blow up the sparks into a flame with prayer; digest it with meditation, cast it not up till concocted.

(6.) Come with resolution to do whatever ye shall hear, to comply with the whole will of God without reserves. There must be no more respect of truths than respect of persons. You must not deal with duties as Nebuchadnezzar with his subjects, Daniel 5:19, which you will set up, and which you will pull down. This is to exalt yourselves above God. There is a concatenation of truths and duties; if you take one link out of the golden chain, you break the whole, James 2:10. Obedience is the sweetest harmony the Lord can hear on earth, the perfection of it is a consonancy to the divine will; if every string, every act be not screwed up thereto, there can be no concert, nothing but discord, harsh and unpleasing in his ear. You must present yourselves before the Lord as Cornelius and his company: Acts 10:33, 'We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God;' to hear all things commanded, and to do all things we hear. You must believe every truth revealed, avoid every sin forbidden, practise every duty commanded, without exceptions; you must not pick and choose. Every fruitful hearer has a good and honest heart, and this is a heart after God's own heart. The character of such a heart we have in David, he fulfilled π■ντα τ■ θελ■ματα, Acts 13:22.

Resolve to do what the people promised the prophet: Jeremiah 42:5-6, 'The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God;' whether it seem good or bad to us, great or little, difficult or easy, pleasing or harsh; though it cross carnal reason, lusts, interests.

Say not, Is it not a little one? the Lord will dispense, he is not so precise as the minister. There is nothing little which the great God commands. His pure eye sees atoms, the least will damn. He is jealous; he that offends in one of these little ones, better a mill-stone were tied about his neck.

Think not anything difficult: to avoid all sin and the occasions, to exercise every grace, to keep a constant watch over heart and ways. Is anything too hard for God? He is engaged: Isaiah 40:31, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,' &c. The more difficulty, the more honour.

Abraham is ready to obey in that which was grievous. Did not Christ suffer more grievous things than you can do? Is not the penalty more intolerable? Would the damned think anything too hard?

What if it cross reason? Paul consulted not with flesh and blood. Say not as the Jews, σκλ■ρος λ■γος: 'It is a hard saying, who can bear it?' John 6:60. 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' Romans 9:20. Art thou wiser than he? Is not infinite understanding the rule of his will? Captivate reason, bend the understanding to his mind.

What if it ruin thy lusts, pluck out thy right eye? Is it not better, 'more profitable, that one member should perish, than that the whole body be cast into hell?' Matthew 5:29. An honest heart counts that word most pleasant which wounds his lusts: Psalms 141:5, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.' He says to the word, to the minister preventing sin, as David to Abigail, 1 Samuel 25:32-33, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, who hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood.' Lay thy conscience bare; say, Speak, Lord; smite, Lord, with a deadly wound these thine enemies that would not have thee to rule.

What if it comport not with thy interests, profit, pleasure, credit? Is any interest dearer than thy soul's? Is it not better to deny thyself than that Christ should deny thee? What lost Zaccheus by restitution? Ask him now in heaven. What lost Moses by choosing afflictions rather than the pleasures of sin? What lost the apostles by exposing themselves to contempt? περικαθ■ρματα. They are so far from repenting, as, if they were on earth again, they would say with David, 2 Samuel 6:22, 'I will yet be more vile than thus.' If thou make exceptions against any command, God will except thee when he dispenses eternal rewards.

It is not enough to promise God to the half of the kingdom; halting obedience will never come to heaven; all, or none. Say not, 'The Lord be merciful to me in this.' The Lord will never be merciful to any allowed disobedience: 'If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy,'—from the words expressing God's will,—'God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city,' &c., Revelation 22:19.

(7.) Mix it with faith: Hebrews 4:2, 'The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' Faith is a necessary ingredient to all spiritual services. Without faith it is impossible to please God; and that which does not please him cannot profit us. Get faith, and exercise it. Believe, 1, that God speaks; 2, to you; 3, that which is true; and, 4, good. Of the first and second I spoke formerly.

Believe the truth and goodness of what you hear; true in itself, good to you. There are two acts of faith, assent, consent; that in the mind, this in the will; the object of that, truth, of this, goodness; both necessary; that ineffectual, insufficient without this. Get to be assured of the truth and goodness of the word; all truth is excellent, this transcendent, of a higher descent; chara Dei soboles, it is divine, derives its original from God; comprises all other truths, and adds, de proprio, unspeakable excellency to them. Not only logical or moral, but divine; consists in a conformity not only with the mind of men and angels, but of the mind of God; divine intellect, infinite understanding. So is its goodness in consonancy to the divine will; it is appetible, ■ρεκτ■ν, to God, so convenient and agreeable to his will, as it is called directly the will of God.

It has all degrees of goodness: καλ■ν, ■δ■, χρ■σιμον.

[1.] Holy and just, perfectly so; the rule of all holiness and justice in the world; primum et perfectissimum in unoquoque genere, mensura reliquorum.

[2.] Sweet: honey, manna, bread of life, water of life. It is to the soul as these would be to one dying, ready to expire for hunger or thirst.

[3.] Profitable: to make perfect, happy. Both these are applicable to assertions, commandments, promises, threatenings. The truth none but an atheist can deny. The goodness is unquestionable, if that which seems most doubtful be certain, viz., that the threatenings are good. That is clear in Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:19. Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, 'Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken;' notwithstanding, we may take up the prophet's complaint, Isaiah 53:1, 'Who hath believed our report?' If we did believe 'the wages of sin is death,' 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' 'Except we repent, we shall perish,' 'He that is not in Christ is a reprobate,' we should follow Jehoshaphat's advice: 2 Chronicles 20:20, 'Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.' Let it dwell in your hearts by faith.

(8.) Receive the truth in the love of it: 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 'Because they received not the love of the truth,' i. e., truth in love, 'that they might be saved.' He that would hear savingly, must hear it with love; not out of fear, custom, not for by-ends, for credit, profit, preferment; but out of love to the naked truth, for its own native loveliness, without extrinsecal consideration; as the truth is in Jesus, of him, from him.

If you are moved by base ends, when these are removed, the word will be rejected. But if you are moved by the intrinsecal excellency of the word; that being eternal, your actings for, and affections to, the word will be constant. This was the cause of the inconstancy, the apostasy of the stony ground; they believed, received the word with joy while the word was in credit, while they might do it with safety, applause, and outward advantage; but when persecution arose, they fell away.

It is love that gives the word rooting. Love would have made the rock open, not content to receive it in the superficies. It unites the word to us, us to it; it is affectus unionis, Psalms 119:31; it incorporates it, it transforms us into its likeness, assimilates us to it.

Some truths challenge a special love, evangelical, spiritual, above those common to us with heathens; such as discover our happiness or misery, moral virtues; the excellency of Christ, necessity of him, way to him, privileges by him. Practical, not notional; only such as may awaken sin, nourish grace, and teach us to order our conversation. Searching; such as discover our condition, pierce conscience, unmask the soul, detect hypocrisy, and offer to our view the more refined and less visible stains of the spirit: pride, selfishness, earthliness, and other secret and little discerned evils. OF TAKING UP THE CROSS Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.—Luke 14:27

These are the words of Christ. The occasion of them you may see, Luke 14:25. He seeing multitudes following him, takes occasion to tell them upon what terms they must follow him, if they would follow him to purpose. Lest any of them should deceive themselves, and think that a bare outward profession of Christ would be sufficient, a safe, easy, external following him would serve

their turn, he tells them what he did expect from every one that would be his follower and disciple. It was not so safe and easy a thing to be a Christian as they might suppose. It would cost them more than they did imagine. He deals plainly with them, and lets them know the worst of it. If they would be his disciples, his followers, Christians indeed, they must be so upon these and these terms, which he expresses in two propositions.

1. They must leave all for him. They could not follow him, unless they were content to forsake all to follow him, Luke 14:26. If any man seem willing to be a disciple of mine, he must have such an affection to me as to hate all other things for my sake, otherwise I will never own him, he is but a pretender; he is not, he cannot be a Christian indeed. But has Christ no disciples but such as these? Are none Christians but upon these terms? Alas! who then is a Christian? Who then can be saved? Can none be disciples of Christ but those that will hate their dearest relations, their best worldly enjoyments, yea, their own lives, for Christ's sake? Will he own none, will he admit none to follow him, but upon these terms? Sure this is σκλ■ρος ■ λ■γος, this is a hard saying indeed, who can bear it?

Why, but thus it is, Christ will admit none to be his disciples, he will own none for Christians, upon other terms than he here expresses. Only you must not mistake. He requires not that you should hate these relations absolutely; for that would be to contradict his own law, the law of God and nature, which requires natural affection. But this is it which he requires, you must hate them,

(1.) In effect. You must as freely part with them for Christ's sake, as if you did hate them. You must be as willing to relinquish them, when he requires it, as you are to part with a thing that you hate. You will part with a hated thing freely, readily, cheerfully; even so must you part with your relations, enjoyments, and life too, not out of hatred to them, but leave them all as readily, when Christ calls, as if you did hate them. To hate them here, is freely to forsake them for Christ's sake. And so it is expressed, Matthew 19:29. Part with them as freely for Christ, that the world may judge you do hate them, because you quit them so easily, without murmuring, repining, reluctancy.

(2.) Comparatively. You must love Christ more than all these, more than the dearest of these, and shew you do so indeed by quitting all of them, rather than forsake, or dishonour, or displease Christ. If you do not, you love these more than Christ: Matthew 10:37, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' And to love anything more than Christ, is to hate him. A less degree of love is called hatred in Scripture, Genesis 29:30-31. Because he loved Leah less than Rachel, he is said to hate her. Even as you may be said to hate your relations, enjoyments, lives, when you love them less than Christ, so much less as you will be content to part with them for his sake, whenever he requires it. And in this sense you must be able to hate them, or else you cannot be the disciples of Christ, or else you are not Christians; for upon these terms, and no other, will he own you for such. The second proposition, wherein he expresses upon what terms we must be disciples, is in the text, Luke 14:27. It is not enough to part with all, but you must be willing to suffer all; to undergo sufferings not only privative, but positive: the cross includes the former, and something more. It signifies all afflictions for Christ's sake. It denotes all sufferings, calamities, torments, even those that are most ignominious and most grievous; in allusion to those sorrows and tortures which Christ on the cross suffered for his people. Whoever does not bear these, he is not, he cannot be, a disciple; i. e., he that does not actually bear the cross when it is laid upon him, or he that is not fully resolved to bear it, how heavy and grievous soever it may be,

whenever it shall be laid upon him, he is not, he cannot be, a disciple of Christ. A disciple, what is that? Why, he cannot be a Christian. A disciple and a Christian are all one, Acts 11:26. A disciple of Christ is one that gives up himself to be wholly at Christ's disposing; to learn what he teacheth, to believe what he reveals, to do what he commands, to avoid what he forbids, to suffer what is inflicted by or for him, in expectation of that reward which he hath promised. Such a one is a disciple of Christ, and he, and none else, is a Christian. Such as these, who give up themselves to be taught and governed by Christ in all things, were at first called disciples, and afterwards at Antioch they were called Christians; they are two names of the same persons. Many descriptions you have of them in Scripture, and here you have them described by one of their essential properties. Christiani sunt cruciani, says Luther, Christians are cross-bearers. So they are always, though they be not always in a suffering condition; they ever bear the cross, either quoad actum or quoad propositum. It is in their hearts to bear the cross, whatever it be, whensoever Christ shall require it; and they do actually bear it whenever they are called to it. They do not flinch from it, nor decline it, nor turn from it, by any indirect or unlawful course. They had rather lose all they have in the world, and suffer all that an enraged world can inflict on them, than deny any truth of Christ, or decline any way of Christ, or commit any sin against Christ. This is their temper, their practice, who are Christians. And those who are otherwise disposed, let them call themselves what they will, they are not Christians. Nor can they be Christians upon any other terms. They have not given up themselves to him, they have no interest in him, they can have no benefit by him, they shall have no reward from him. So that you see the words contain the terms upon which you must be Christians, if you will be Christians indeed, and not in name, and show, and profession only. They afford us this

Obs. He that doth not, will not bear the cross, he is not, he cannot be, a Christian. He that is not ready to suffer for Christ, he is none of Christ's disciple. You cannot be Christians upon lower, upon easier terms, than bearing the cross, and undergoing sufferings for him. So Christ himself tells us over and over: Matthew 10:38, 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.' 'Not worthy of me,' i. e., he is not for my turn. If he pretend to be one of mine, he does but disparage me, he deals unworthily with me. It was never my intention, nor is it for my honour, to own any who are not content to undergo the sorest and heaviest afflictions and calamities for my sake. He speaks again, Matthew 16:24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' Let no man offer to follow me unless he be resolved to follow me in this posture, unless he will follow me under the cross. A third evangelist tells us the same thing: Mark 8:34,' Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' And once more we have it, Luke 9:23. To follow Christ, and to be a disciple of Christ, is all one; for scholars or disciples do not go before, but follow their masters. And to be a Christian is all one as to be a follower of Christ. As the scholars or disciples of Plato, Aristotle, Galen, Paracelsus, are called their followers, so the disciples of Christ, or Christians, are the followers of Christ, those that follow his doctrine, and are as ready to follow him in his sufferings. And those that will be Christians indeed must thus follow him daily, take up the cross daily, always, continually, every day. But how can this be? (Let this be noted, lest any of you should think this truth unseasonable at this time.) How can the cross be taken up daily, since every day does not trouble us with the cross? The people of God have some lucida intervalla, some times of joy and peace. The rod of the wicked doth not always lie upon them. Though a great part of their voyage through the world be stormy and tempestuous, yet now and then they may have

calm, and serene, and halcyonian times. This is true, and yet the cross must be taken up daily. It must be taken up actually every day when providence brings it to us. And those days of peace and security, when it is not brought to us, we cannot take it up actually indeed; but even every of those days must the cross be taken up in the preparation and disposition of the mind; it must be in your hearts to bear the cross every day, even when it is not actually laid upon you. So that this concerns you every day while you are in this world, if you be concerned every day to shew yourselves Christians.

Let me a little more particularly explain to you what is meant by the cross, and what by bearing of it.

1. The cross includes loss and damage, the greatest losses as well as the least; the loss of all outward things, as well as the loss of any. When Christ was nailed to the cross, he was bereaved of all, and fastened to it naked; he had not so much as his garments left; they who brought him to the cross divided these amongst them. He that is not willing to part with all, to follow Christ, when he cannot fully and faithfully follow him without quitting all, he is not worthy of him, unworthy the name of a Christian.

He that is not content, when he is called to it, to be separated from nearest friends and dearest relations, to part with his country and habitation, to be stripped of his estate and outward accommodations, to be deprived of his liberty, and what else is dear to him in this world, he is not for Christ's turn, he cares for no such followers. The foregoing verse leads us to this particular: ver. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' He that is not content to follow Christ, so as to leave all these behind him, he does not follow him as a disciple, as a Christian; for he that is a Christian indeed, he loves Christ above all, but he that will not part with relations, estate, country, liberty, for Christ's sake, he loves them better than he loves Christ; for that a man loves most which he will least part with. He that will not part with them all rather than sin against Christ, has not the love of a disciple for Christ, and so is not indeed a Christian.

2. It speaks shame and reproach. It was servile supplicium, a base, ignominious suffering, to which none were exposed but the vilest of men. It was a suffering proper to slaves and fugitives; there was not the meanest freeman amongst the Romans but was above it. Hence shame and the cross are joined together, Hebrews 12:2. Hence that expression, Hebrews 13:13, 'bearing his reproach,' i. e., bearing the cross. No coming to Christ but in this posture, when the Lord calls to it. He that is not content to bear the scorn and contempt of an insolent world; he that cannot be content to be jeered and derided, to be vilified and set at nought even by vile persons, to be abused and reviled, even for doing good to those that so abuse him, to be made the scorn of men, and reproach of the people, as Christ was, to be counted as the filth and off-scouring of all things, περιψ■ματα and περικαθ■ρματα, as the apostles were; he that cannot, will not digest this when he meets with it in the world for Christ's sake, he is not fit to be a disciple of Christ; for we cannot be his disciples upon other terms.

3. It imports pain and torture. The cross was a most grievous and painful suffering. Ausonius calls it pœnæ extremum, the extremity of torture. And Cicero, crudelissimum teterrimumque supplicium, the most cruel and horrid suffering. If you be not content to bear the hatred and cruelty of an enraged world, to endure any pains and tortures, the most exquisite torments that the malice of

man can invent, or their cruelty execute, rather than deny Christ or his truth, rather than leave his ways and worship, never think of being Christians, never take on you the name of his followers, you cannot be his disciples upon other or easier terms. When Ignatius was going to be exposed to the fury of wild beasts for the name of Christ, he cries, νν ρχομαι μαθητς ναι, Now I begin to be a disciple.

4. It imports death itself. The cross was ultimum supplicium, the last thing that could be suffered. Cruelty was herein terminated, and could go no further, at least to the sense of the sufferer. It was the worst kind of death. Illa morte nihil pejus inter omnium mortium genera. Of all kinds of death there was none worse than this: Php 2:8, 'That humbled himself to the death of the cross.' To no less than death, and the worst kind of death. If you be not willing to die for Christ, and to die the worst kind of death, to drink up this cup, and to be baptized with this baptism when his cause, and honour, and interest requires it; to drink up the cup of death, and to be baptized in your own blood, rather than be disobedient or unfaithful to him; if your hearts cannot say as the apostle, 'Neither count I my life dear, that I may win Christ.' Acts 20:24; I am not only ready to be bound, but, Acts 24:13, to die, whenever and wherever he shall require it; not only ready to sacrifice my name and reputation, but my person for Christ; not only ready to suffer some pain and torment, but to suffer death, rather than the honour, and truths, and worship of Christ should suffer by me; not only ready to part with relations, liberty, country, enjoyments, but to part with my life whenever he calls for it;—if this be not the resolution of your hearts, you are not his disciples; for this he requires of all, Acts 24:26, 'He that does not hate his life,' i. e., is not as free to part with it for Christ as if he hated it, he loves his life more than Christ; and he will never count them Christians, whatever they may count themselves, who love anything, though it be life itself, more than him, or equally with him.

Thus you see what the cross is. Let us inquire what it is to bear it. Bearing the cross supposes or includes these four things:

1. You must make account of it. If you will follow Christ indeed, make account you will meet with the cross. This Christ presseth and illustrates by two similitudes in the verses following the text, Luke 14:28-34. To taking upon you the profession of Christ, without casting up what it is like to cost, that which is like to prove both shameful and dangerous in the issue. If you make account of better fare in following Christ than you are like to meet with, you will go near to repent your bargain, to tack about to save yourselves, and so come off with shame and ruin in the issue; and make it appear that whatever you did profess, you were never Christians in reality.

Sit down, then, and cast up what it is like to cost you. If you will give up yourselves to Christ entirely, to follow him in all his ways seriously, and closely, and faithfully, you are like to meet with all the hatred, and opposition, and hard usage that he expected from the implacable enmity of hell and the world. I must look to meet with many a bitter taunt and jeer. I am like to be hated, scorned, reviled, and reproached, and trampled on in the world. I may have trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. It may cost me the loss of all that is dear to me in the world, relations, liberty, country, estate, yea, life and all. You must make account of this beforehand, if you mean to be Christians indeed. And then see what your hearts say to it. Can you endure this, or can you not? If not, your profession of Christ is vain. If you promise yourselves ease, safety, respect, plenty, and a quiet enjoyment of what is grateful to the flesh, and think the

cross will not come near you, or at least fall so heavy on you, but you may be able by one shift or other to avoid it well enough; if this be your temper, though you may make fair shows, you are never like to hold out, and so had better never pretend to be Christians. He is far from following Christ under the cross, who does not so much as make account of it.

2. A resolution to bear the cross, whatever it be, how heavy, or grievous, or tedious soever it may prove; a firm, and hearty, and settled resolution to bear it, is a virtual bearing of it beforehand, Luke 14:33. Whosoever he be that is not resolved to part with all that is dear to him, to undergo all that is grievous to him, rather than flinch from Christ his cause, truth, worship, interest, whatever he seem to be, he is no disciple indeed; he is far from bearing the cross as becomes a follower of Christ, who is not yet come to a point so as so resolve to bear it without dispute, doubting, or hesitation, whatever come of it. When the account is cast up, this and this it will cost thee, this and this thou must part with, these and these things thou must suffer, if thou wilt be Christ's disciple; and then the question is put, Wilt thou give up thyself to him on these terms? Wilt thou take him for better and worse? Wilt thou follow him through good report and evil report? Wilt thou make after him, though stripped, and wounded, and overwhelmed with shame and reproach? Wilt thou follow him through fire and water, yea, through the valley of the shadow of death? Wilt thou follow him alone, though all forsake thee, though no friends or relations may accompany thee? When the question is put, he that is a Christian indeed will resolve on it fully and freely. In re tam necessaria non est deliberandum. I need not take time to think upon this; I am at a point; I will follow Christ whatever befall me, though my way lie through poverty, and banishment, and prisons, and solitude, and pains, and tortures, and scorn, and contempt, or death itself. I will never leave him, I will never turn aside from him, let Satan and the world do their worst. He resolves to follow him as Ruth did Naomi, when her mother-in-law tried to divert her by so many arguments, and such as prevailed with her sister to turn back, Ruth 1:16-18. She was stedfastly minded to cleave to her in her poor, forlorn, desolate condition. Such a resolution is, by interpretation, a bearing the cross before it come. So Abraham is said to offer up his son Isaac, though he was not actually sacrificed, Hebrews 11:17, because he did fully purpose and resolve to do it; it was in his heart to do it. Though he was not sacrificed upon the altar, yet he was already offered up in his heart. To be fully, heartily resolved to bear it, is a kind of bearing it before it comes. And in this sense there may be many martyrs who never suffered death for Christ. If they be so resolved to die for Christ as nothing hinders but want of opportunity, they are martyrs in heart, though not in act; the Lord accepts the will for the deed in such cases. When the mind is so resolved on it as nothing hinders the deed but want of a call or an occasion, the Lord looks on it as if it were done. A disciple thus resolved to bear the cross, will be accepted as one that bears it, though it be not actually laid on him. But he that is not come up to this full and sincere resolution to part with all, to suffer all for Christ, he is not so much as a Christian intentionally; he is not, he does not intend to be, a disciple of Christ, whatever he may pretend to.

3. You must be always ready for the cross, always preparing for it, whether it seem near, or whether it seem further off. One paraphraseth the words thus, 'Whosoever doth not come to me with a preparation of mind to suffer anything rather than part with me, he is not for my turn.' This is to bear the cross daily, as Christ requires, Luke 9:1-62. Though every day do not afford a cross, yet every day we bear the cross by daily preparing for it, 1 Corinthians 15:31. I protest by that which I take most joy in of anything in the world, viz., my fidelity to Christ; which appeared not only

in that he every day ran the hazard of death for Christ, but in that he was every day ready to die, 2 Timothy 4:6. ■γ■ γ■ρ ■δη σπ■νδομαι, I am now offered up. He speaks of it as done, not only because it was near, but because he had made himself ready to be sacrificed for Christ whenever he should call him to it. Genesis 22:9-10, Abraham was prepared, had made all things ready to sacrifice his son, and therefore, though he was hindered from doing of it, yet the Lord accepted of it, and spoke of it as done, Genesis 22:16; James 2:21.

Even when the cross seems far off, much more when it is in view, you must be preparing for it, if you be Christians indeed; and the Lord will take your readiness to bear it for a bearing of it, when he sees good to prevent it. A man that is ingenuous, if his friend have made all things ready to entertain him, though he come not, will take it as kindly as if he had partaken of the entertainment. Christ will resent your faithfulness to him, as if you were always bearing the cross for his sake, if you be always preparing for it. If you be still loosening your hearts more and more from the world, your relations and enjoyments; if you be still dragging the flesh, with its affections and lusts, unto the cross; still fortifying your souls against a day of trial; still crucifying the world, and crossing your carnal and worldly inclinations; it may be the cross you expect will not be laid upon you, but whether it be or no, you shall not lose the reward of those who are faithful in bearing it, because you are as ready to do it as those that are actually under it. Christ looks on you as taking up the cross, because you are so ready to take it up; whereas those who mind it not, prepare not for it, put the thoughts of it far from them, they are so far from bearing the cross before it come, as they are never like to touch it (though it may be heavy on them) as becomes the followers of Christ. They are like to deal unworthily with him.

4. It speaks actual undergoing it when it is laid on us. The followers of Christ, whether the cross be far off, or whether it be near, they must make account of it, resolve on it, prepare for it. There is no bearing the cross without these; these are included, and are, as it were, some offers at it at a distance. But when the Lord brings it to us, we must actually take it up. He is no disciple for Christ that will not do it. He whose heart is so linked, glued to his relations and outward enjoyments, that he cannot tell how to part with them; who must have the flesh pleased and gratified in its inclinations and desires; who must have the ease, and plenty, and respect, and favour of the world; he is not of a temper fit for a Christian, he is not for Christ's turn. He will not own him for a disciple who will not endure the cross, whatever it be, when he is called to it. But when are we called to take up the cross? Why, when it cannot be avoided without sin, then are you clearly called to it. When you cannot shun the cross without dishonouring Christ, deserting his cause, or betraying his interest, or denying his truth, or declining his way, or transgressing his will one way or other, then are you called to shew yourselves disciples by taking up the cross. When this dilemma is before you, either you must suffer, or sin; if, then, you decline suffering, whatever it be, you are unworthy the name of Christians. And so I have explained the object, and shewed what is meant by the cross; and the act, as to the substance of it, what is meant by bearing. Let me inquire a little into the manner: how does he who is a Christian bear the cross? He endeavours to bear it,

1. Patiently. That while the cross oppresses his outward man, he may possess his soul in patience. Not the patience of the Stoics, a senseless stupidness; nor the patience of the heathen, a mere yielding to necessity; but a due sense of the pressure, with a quiet submission to the hand of God, whoever be the instrument, without murmuring, repining, disquietment, or despondency. 'Good is the word of the Lord,' though that word bring a real cross. So the judgment submits, takes

it kindly that it is no worse, Isaiah 39:8, accepting the punishment of their iniquity. So the will submits, as knowing it may be from sin, though it be for Christ too. And the inward man being thus possessed does influence the outward, Leviticus 10:3, Psalms 39:9. This is to bear the cross, so as to come after Christ, to tread in his steps, to imitate him 'who was led as a lamb to the slaughter,' &c., 1 Peter 2:21, 1 Peter 2:23.

He that follows Christ in bearing the cross will 'let patience have its perfect work,' James 1:4. The perfect work of patience is its most eminent act, i. e., a submissive but resolute perseverance, holding out, and bearing up, notwithstanding the sharpness, the tediousness, the variety of crosses and calamities. 'That you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing;' i. e., defective in no part, in no grace, which is requisite to a soul that is entirely Christian. It is a perfection of parts here spoken of. When a Christian has all the graces of the Spirit in exercise, he has all the parts of a Christian; and having all his parts, he is entire, and so is wanting in nothing necessary to his Christian constitution. But if patience be wanting, he wants a necessary, an essential part, and so is not entire and complete. And therefore as you have other graces, so be sure you get also the grace of patience. This is essential to a disciple of Christ. If this be not exercised under the cross, you bear it not as Christians, you do not come after Christ in bearing it. Patience is the noblest piece of valour; that which those who have been most cried up for their valour in the world have not attained to; they were indeed daring rather than valiant. True valour appears more in bearing pressures and sufferings without disturbance, than in attempting dangers or encountering difficulties. The world places valour in a resolute attempting of dangers, the Scripture places valour in patient enduring of sufferings. 2 Timothy 2:13, κακοπ■θησον. Endure patiently the cross, so shalt thou shew thyself an excellent soldier: ■ς καλ■ς στρατι■της. He is a good soldier that will follow his leader close, whatever come of it. So doth he follow Christ who runs after him with patience, Hebrews 12:1-2. He that endures the cross with patience, runs after Christ, follows him closely.

2. He endeavours to bears it cheerfully. That which is bearing the cross here is taking up the cross, chap. ix. Now, to take up the cross, imports not only a patient bearing of it when it is laid upon us, but also a ready and voluntary undergoing it. Christ bore his cross willingly; Simon of Cyrene was compelled to bear that cross. Christ would have us come after him, imitate him, bear it as he did. It should not be a forced, but a voluntary act. Not that we are to pull crosses upon ourselves, as some of the primitive martyrs did—whom yet we should not censure, because we know not by what spirit they were acted—but we should cheerfully undergo it, when the Lord imposeth it. When the honour and interest of Christ requires it, we should take up the cross as we would take up a crown. We should receive it as a gift: 'To you it is given.' We should meet it with joy, look on it as our glory, Gal. That cross may denote not only the sufferings which Christ endured for him, but also those sufferings which he endured for Christ; for in these he gloried, Romans 5:3, 2 Corinthians 7:4, ■περπερισσ■υομαι. He was more than full, he did more than overflow with joy; it did run over into glorying in all his tribulations. We may glory in them as in a triumph, the greatest occasion of joy and glorying in this world, Romans 8:37. We may glory in them as our happiness, a greater happiness than all the victories and triumphs in the world can afford us, being the beginnings and pledges of an eternal triumph in heaven, Matthew 5:1-48. When those who suffer for Christ sink into sorrow, dejection, despondency under the cross, they deal unworthily with Christ, they shew themselves no way worthy to bear his name, Matthew

10:38.

3. He endeavours to bear it fruitfully. The cross is dry wood, and so was Aaron's rod; but as that blossomed, so does this bring forth fruit, when improved, Hebrews 12:11. It is no miracle for honey to be found in the carcase of this lion; the goodness of God has made it ordinary, the promise of God gives assurance of it; and this puts the followers of Christ upon seeking the sweet fruits of peace and holiness in the bowels of devouring calamities: to get spiritual gain and advantage by outward loss; to grow richer unto God by worldly impoverishment; to converse more with God when separated from friends and relations; to value more the love of Christ when they smart by the world's hatred; to partake more of holiness when he partakes less of the ease, peace, plenty of the world; to make use of the cross for the crucifying of the flesh; to make sin more hateful and dreadful, the conscience more tender, the world less tempting, more contemptible, grace more active and lively, the word more sweet and effectual, prayer more fervent and affectionate, the appearing of Christ more lovely and desirable, the conversation more heavenly. To bear the cross as a disciple of Christ, is to bring forth more fruit in bearing of it. So much for explication; we shall confirm this truth by these three propositions:

I. The cross is the ordinary lot of Christians.

II. A Christian cannot ordinarily avoid the cross without sinning against Christ.

III. He that will ordinarily sin against Christ to avoid the cross, cannot be a Christian. This being proved, it will appear an evident truth, that he that doth not, will not, bear the cross, is not, cannot be a Christian.

I. For the first, the cross is ordinarily the lot of Christians. The cross is so inseparable from a Christian, as he seems to be nailed to it, Psalms 34:19, John 16:33, Acts 14:22, Matthew 10:34. So it was under the Old Testament. The prophets and people of God had not troubles and persecutions only from the heathen—the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians—but from those who professed themselves to be of the church, Matthew 23:31, Matthew 23:34, Acts 7:51-52. And so it hath been under the New Testament, not only in the time of Christ and the apostles and primitive Christians, but in all ages. Search the records of all times, and you shall find that persecution and troubles have always attended the people of God. And so it will be while there is rage and malice in Satan, and enmity in the world, and necessity even from the sufferers that it should be so. The first three hundred years after Christ, to go no higher, are divided into ten persecutions. It was no less than death to bear the name of a Christian. And though there were some lucida intervalla, some breathing times, yet were they usually short, always uncertain; they had rather some truce than any firm peace, and the longer respite they had, the more grievous was the cross when it came. Witness the last of those ten persecutions, which succeeded an intermission of about forty years; but was so cruel when it came, that lasting ten years, there was in thirty days no less than seventeen thousand put to death for the name of Christ. So for the three first ages, the Christians were seldom from under the cross. The fourth century is accounted more peaceable and favourable to the Christian name, Constantine the emperor being a Christian. Yet were not the people of Christ free from the cross all his time, much less in the time of his successors. In the beginning of his reign they suffered grievous things from Maxentius, Maximinus, and Licinius, who of a professor turned a persecutor, alleging the Christians prayed for Constantine and not for him. And in the latter end of his reign, great troubles

were raised by the Arians; so that Eustathius, Athanasius, and others suffered persecution even to banishment in the time of Constantine.

After his decease, his son Constantius, seduced by the Arians, persecutes the orthodox Christians; and therein survived his brethren, who were of a better temper.

After him the apostate Julian shewed all the enmity to the Christian name that his subtilty could devise, and sought to root it out by fraud, which he saw had been in vain attempted by force.

After him, Valens opposes them as much in the east as Valentinian favoured them in the west. And so far did violence prevail in that and the other Arian persecutions, that the sincere professors of Christ were driven from the public meetings into dens, and caves, and solitudes. Num si alicubi sunt pii, &c. If there be any that are godly, says Athanasius, and affectionate to Christ, they are hid with Elias the prophet; they secure themselves in dens and caves, in cavernas et speluncas terræ se abscondunt; or they continued wandering about in exile and solitude, aut in solitudine oberrantes commorantur. So Hilary complains, and Augustine after him: qui erant firmiores reliquis, those that were stedfast and faithful; illi partim pro fide fortiter exulabant, partim toto orbe latitabant; they were either banished or hid themselves, and that was their condition through the whole world. So heavy did the cross lie upon the people of Christ, in the fourth age, which seemed to promise the greatest freedom from it. It is almost incredible, which the ancients affirm of those times, that there were scarce five pastors left in the whole world that were true Christians, truly Christian; and those in banishment too, and the church laid thus desolate by those who professed themselves to be of the church. In the fifth and sixth ages the Goths, and other barbarous nations in the west, the Vandals in the south, the Persians in the east, made havoc of the church. And in the seventh, Mahomet riseth in the east, and Antichrist appears in the west, under which character Gregory, a pope himself, describes Antichrist; and these have made it their business in the following ages, that the faithful followers of Christ should be always under the cross.

Thus it has been, and thus it will be. And the reasons of it are evident.

1. The malice of Satan, who knowing himself to be cast off by God, he hates God with an implacable hatred; and since the Lord is above the reach of his malice, he falls upon those who are dearest to him, the people of God. Christ having excluded those apostate spirits from any benefit of his redemption, they are filled with rage against him, but being not able to reach the head, they let out their rage upon his members: Genesis 3:15, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.’ His commission, or rather permission, is no larger, and he will not fail to go as far as he can; he will be always bruising the heel, since the head is above him. It is his business to multiply crosses, and to make them as heavy and piercing as may be. All his fury, for which he is called a lion, and all his subtilty, for which he is called a serpent, will be employed to this purpose, 1 Peter 5:8. He is watchful upon all occasions to let out his wrath upon the woman, Revelation 12:4. He would have stifled Christianity in the birth, but being then prevented, he makes another attempt, Revelation 12:13. And when this succeeds not, he will cross her another way, Revelation 12:15. He pours whole floods of calamities upon her. And when these do not the execution he desires, yet he desists not, his wrath still boils up, Revelation 12:17.

2. The enmity of the world. The world will be sure to cross, to afflict and persecute what it hates; and the disciples of Christ are hated by the world, John 15:19. Not only that part of the world, which evidently lies in wickedness, but the more refined part of it, which dresseth up itself in a form of godliness. Those who have no more but the form, hate those that have the power, because this is a real reproof and conviction of the vanity and insufficiency of outward forms, how specious soever; and that which detects them is hated by them, 1 John 5:19. Open wickedness makes open war with the people of Christ, but the form of godliness will not persecute the power of it openly, but under some disguise or other, which may afford some plausible excuse for its hatred and violence. But enmity there is in all the seed of the serpent, Genesis 3:15. And this enmity will find vent one way or other; sometimes openly, so as the devil may be plainly seen in it; sometimes covertly and subtilly, so as Satan conceals himself, as he did in the form of a serpent, and acts in the shape and form of innocent creatures. But however it act, the tendency of it is to keep the people of Christ always under the cross.

3. There is a necessity of the cross upon a manifold account.

(1.) To distinguish true disciples from hypocrites and pretenders. When Christ may be professed and followed with ease, and safety, and credit, multitudes will follow him, even many will profess him, whose hearts are not with him. But when the cross comes, that makes a distinction. When it comes to this, if you will stick to the truth of Christ, if you will worship him according to his own rule, if you will be true to your engagements, the cross will be upon you; you are sure to suffer for it; you cannot escape hatred, reproach, poverty, imprisonment, exile, or death itself. Will you be at such cost and hazard for a small truth, a rite, a circumstance, a disputable point? No; this is counted folly with those who are wiser for the world than for their soul. Here the formal professor, how forward soever he was before, plucks in his horns. Now will it appear who are really for Christ, and who are but pretenders, Matthew 13:20-21. Before the storm, the chaff and the corn lie together in one heap, but when the wind riseth it blows away paleas levis fidei, the chaff, and makes the heap less in the garner. The cross is expressed by a fiery trial. Now it is the property of fire and heat, segregare heterogenea, to separate those things which, though they be of differing natures, yet are congealed together in one heap; but when the heat comes, that dissolves and separates them. This is the property of the cross. It separates false-hearted professors from faithful Christians, and makes it appear they are of different natures and tempers, though before the trial they lay together in one lump. As the apostle says of heresies, 1 Corinthians 11:19, ‘There must be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest.’

(2.) To try his disciples, that he may have an experiment of their affection and faithfulness to him: ‘Who is on my side? Who?’ says Jehu, 2 Kings 9:33. So says Christ, when he brings out the cross; let me now see who is for me, let me see who it is that will bear the cross for me. The sharper, the heavier, the more grievous it is, the more love will he shew that takes it up cheerfully for my name’s sake; the more faithfulness will he shew that will continue under it, that will not use shifts, and excuses, and distinctions, and pretences, to keep it off, or throw it off, when the interest of my truth, and worship, and honour requires him to bear it. You profess you love Christ above all, that you love him more than father, and mother, and wife, houses, ease, plenty, life; well, but how shall it be known that you have such an affection for him indeed? Why, hereby shall it be known that you love him more than all, if you will part with any of these, with all of these, for his sake. That is the clearest way to decide the question, and to give Christ, and the world, and your own

consciences a convincing evidence, that you have such a transcendent affection for Christ. ‘Lovest thou me more than these?’ says Christ to Peter. So he asks you in the day of trial, Lovest thou me more than these? Every one will be ready to answer, Yes, God forbid but I should love Christ more than all the world. Oh but the heart is deceitful, how shall this be discovered? Why, Christ has a trial for you; when the cross comes, he brings you to the test. You have often said you love me so and so, let me now see it; I shall now perceive what is in your hearts. If you love me more than relations, come follow me into exile or solitude, and leave them all behind you. If you love me more than riches, be content with want and poverty for my sake. This and this you must do, or else you are like to be ruined and undone in the world, and this you cannot do without offending me. Now shall I see whether you love me better than your estates. If you love me more than liberty, you will freely go to prison for me; if you love me more than life, you will freely die for me, when you cannot have liberty or life but upon such terms as will dishonour me. Hereby it will be known whether you love Christ indeed, or whether you do but talk of it. The cross is to try your sincerity, faithfulness, affection, it is needful upon this account, Daniel 11:35, Revelation 2:10. That is true love indeed, which all the waters will not quench.

(3.) For the advantage of grace. A Christian is not complete unless he have on his whole armour; and it is the cross puts us upon putting of it on; it would lie rusting by us, if we were not roused to the use of it by the frequent approaches of the cross. We should be at a loss as to suffering graces, and a great part of the whole armour is wanting, we are far from being complete and entire when these graces are to seek. Samson roused up himself when he heard that the Philistines were upon him. The soul would grow drowsy, and grace would lose it strength for want of use, were we not awakened by the cross. Grace gets or loses as it is more or less exercised. ‘To him that hath shall be given,’ &c. We have no more grace, in effect, than what we use, and the more we use the more we shall have. He that is much in the exercise of what he hath, be it little or much at first, he shall have abundance in a little time. Nothing more strengthens and increases holiness than the frequent exercise of it, and the cross calls it forth into exercise in all the means of grace. What a difference is there betwixt the prayers of one at ease, and the prayers of one under the cross? Isaiah 26:16. The soul is melted and runs forth in every such prayer. And the word makes a far greater impression upon a soul under trouble, it has more sweetness, and power, and efficacy.

It is not out of love to our souls that we are so much in love with outward prosperity; it is hard and rare for the soul to prosper in such a condition. It does so much befriend our corruption, and yields it such advantages, that grace would be borne down and overpowered thereby, did not the Lord prevent it by frequent mixtures of the cross. The heart would be overgrown with weeds were it not often ploughed up by sufferings. And hence is it that men are suffered to make long furrows upon the backs of his people. Those crosses which seem to threaten our ruin do often prevent our ruin; so that one may say of the cross, as Themistocles in his banishment, Periissem nisi periissem, I had been undone unless they had undone me. It had fared ill with my soul if I had fared better in the world.

(4.) To take us off from the world. The cross embitters the world to us, and confutes those vain conceits which make us fond of it. The vizard falls off by which it had deluded us, and now we may perceive what an impostor it was, when, for all its fair promises, we meet with nothing but vanity, and enmity, and vexation, and hard usage. And will it not seem lovely? Or can we doat on it any longer? The cross lets us not only see, but feel what the world is. When we find that while we are

in it our souls are amongst lions, and we dwell with briars and thorns, which tear away what we have from us, and pierce us besides, how can we be in love with it any longer? Those, Hebrews 11:37-38, ‘who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth; who wandered in sheepskins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;’ I warrant they were as willing to be rid of the world as the world was to be rid of them. The cross is the best instrument to crucify the world, Galatians 6:14. The crosses that we meet with from the world may be made use of for the crucifying of the world itself. It would go near to ruin us if the cross did not help us against it. If we were not emptied from vessel to vessel, our hearts would settle here upon the lees.

(5.) To tame the flesh, and keep it under, which otherwise would grow headstrong, and bear down all the restraints of grace, and hurry us into carnal excess: John 15:1-27, ‘Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it.’ He lops off the luxuriances of natural corruption. And how is this done? Why, a sharp cross will be effectual to do it, when the Lord takes it into his hand and useth it for this purpose! Isaiah 27:9, Nothing will better hinder corruption from taking its course than a hedge of thorns, Hosea 2:6. A condition of ease, and peace, and plenty in the world cherishes our lusts; it thrives best when we thrive most in the world. There would be no dealing with it were it not curbed, and taken down by the cross; it then pines away and languishes when it is fastened with us to the cross.

(6.) To endear heaven to us. The ark was more acceptable to Noah’s dove, when she found no rest to the soles of her feet on the face of the earth. The thoughts of the promised kingdom were sweeter to David when he was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains. Canaan was more acceptable to the children of Israel when their burdens, oppressions, and sufferings increased in Egypt. There remains a rest for the people of God: with what joy will they think of that, when they find no rest here below! How sweet will the thoughts of that eternal rest be to those who are still labouring under the cross; how sweet will it be to think of a day of redemption for those who are still oppressed with the hatred and malice and insolence of the world, Romans 8:23. How sweet will those days of refreshment from the presence of the Lord be to them who are vexed, and troubled, and harassed here below! how sweet the thoughts of approaching glory to those who are here reviled, and abused, and covered with shame and reproach! how sweet the thoughts of an eternal triumph to those who are still conflicting under the cross! 2 Timothy 4:7-8. A sharp sight of afflictions is an effectual means to make us in love with the appearing of Christ; whereas when all things succeed with us in the world as we desire, heaven is neglected, the thoughts of it are not so sweet, our desires after it are more faint and cold, we are apt to forget that we are pilgrims and strangers here below.

II. Proposition. The cross cannot ordinarily be avoided without sinning against Christ: 2 Timothy 3:12, ‘All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’ He must suffer, even when the times are peaceable, as well as when they are troublesome. He will suffer persecution, either of the hand, or of the tongue, or of the heart; he will be hated if he be not reproached; he will be reproached if he be not smitten; he will be smitten if he be not slain. He is sure of it if he will live godly. Indeed, if he will comply, or dissemble, or swim with the stream, or soothe men in their sinful humours, or stretch his confidence to serve his worldly interests, he may shift it off; but if he will live godly in Christ Jesus, if live like a Christian, he shall suffer persecution.

III. Proposition. Those that will sin ordinarily, to avoid the cross, they are no Christians. I say not he that does at any time sin, for we see Peter did it, but it was against his resolution, and upon surprisal; and he recovered himself by a quick and deep repentance, and we hear no more of any such fall afterwards. But the case is otherwise with those who sin ordinarily to avoid sufferings; ordinarily, i.e. as often as temptation comes, whether it come frequently or seldom. Those that will sin, to avoid danger, as often as their relations, estates, or lives are in danger, they are no Christians; for to sin ordinarily is to commit sin. And he that commits sin is the servant of sin, not the servant of Christ, John 8:34.

Those that will sin, rather than suffer, Christ renounceth them here, and he will do it solemnly hereafter. Though they may possess, and pretend to the name of Christ, he will have nothing to do with them; he will express himself ashamed of them, Mark 8:3, Luke 9:26, whether they be the words of faith or obedience. He that, to avoid shame or reproach from a wicked generation, forbears to give his testimony to any truth of Christ, or forbears to yield obedience to any command of Christ, Christ will be ashamed to own such a man for a Christian, he will renounce him as one that has no part in him, Matthew 10:33; 2 Timothy 2:12.

Christ is denied either when faith or obedience is denied. Faith is denied either expressly or tacitly: expressly when any truth of Christ is disclaimed, to avoid sufferings, when the party knows it to be a truth, and is called to bear witness to it; tacitly, when the truth is betrayed by our silence. So he denies Christ, says Fulgentius, qui silendo non adstruit veritatem, who, by holding his peace, does not assert the truth when his testimony is required. Christ is denied too when obedience is denied him: Titus 1:16, they ‘profess to know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient.’ He that will disobey Christ ordinarily, rather than venture suffering for obeying him, he is no Christian; Christ will disown him. He looks upon such not as Christians, but as enemies, Php 3:18. Many there are who bear the name of Christ and yet are of a most unchristian temper; such as will not suffer anything for Christ, will not stand by any truth or practice that may bring sufferings on them, but will comply with Jews or Gentiles to avoid persecution. The Christians in the apostles’ times were in danger of suffering, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles. Now, some that professed themselves to be Christians, but, indeed, preferred the accommodations of this life, ease, safety, credit, plenty, before Christ, rather than they would be exposed to sufferings, they did comply with both.

They complied with the Gentiles, to escape persecution from them, by sitting with them at their feasts in their temples, and there eating things sacrificed unto idols; pleading, this was a thing indifferent, ■διαφορε■ιν ■ιδωλοθ■των, as Eusebius tells us the Gnostics did.

They complied with the Jews, to avoid persecution from them, by being circumcised themselves, and urging others to be circumcised, Galatians 6:12. And yet they made a fair show of a profession; but they would comply rather than suffer persecution. And for this they are branded by the apostle as false teachers, and false Christians, and, indeed, whatever they pretend, enemies to the cross of Christ. Those that will sin, though under never so fair and specious pretences, rather than suffer, rather than bear the cross, they are no Christians, Christ and his apostles disclaim them.

Quest. What is it to suffer for Christ? How may I know that I suffer for him, that my suffering is the cross of Christ? The resolution of this is necessary, both for the comfort of the sufferers and for the

explication of the doctrine. For the cross is properly a suffering for Christ; and, therefore, that we may know what the cross is here mentioned, and when we bear it, we must understand what it is to suffer for Christ. Non pœna, sed causa facit martyrem.

Ans. In general. The Scriptures describe this to us in several expressions. It is to suffer for the gospel, Mark 10:29; 'for Christ' and 'for the gospel' are joined together as terms explaining one another. To suffer for the truths of the gospel, for the profession, the promoting, the maintaining of, adhering to the gospel, is to suffer for Christ.

It is to suffer for the kingdom of God, Luke 18:29. For acknowledging and promoting the kingdom of Christ inwardly or outwardly, in those ways and means whereby he exercises his regal office in his church under the gospel. It is to suffer for righteousness, Matthew 5:10. This is suffering for his name's sake, Luke 18:11; so 1 Peter 3:14; for doing that which is righteous; for obedience to any of Christ's commands, in observance of any law of God. It is to suffer for the discharging of a good conscience, 1 Peter 2:19. It is to suffer for well-doing, 1 Peter 3:17; explained by another expression, 1 Peter 4:19. To suffer according to the will of God, is to suffer for doing anything that he would have us do, whatever the will and judgment of men be concerning it.

Now these general grounds being laid down before us in Scripture, we may by the light and help thereof proceed to a more particular resolution of the question, and such as may tend more to remove the doubts and scruples whereby Satan has been wont (and will be ready) to rob sufferers of their comfort under the cross. We shall attempt this, 1, negatively; 2, positively. In the negative observe these rules:

1. It cannot be concluded that sufferings are not for God, because those who profess themselves to be the people of God are the instruments of them; or that it is not the cross of Christ which is borne, because it is laid on by those who profess Christ. Abel is called the protomartyr, the first sufferer for God; and he suffered by the hand of one who worshipped the same God, with the same kind of worship: both Abel and his persecutor offered sacrifice. Isaac suffered by Ishmael, Galatians 4:29; yet Ishmael was Abraham's son, and by him circumcised, and so admitted to the church and its privileges. Who were those that persecuted the prophets of old, but they who professed themselves to be the peculiar people, and true worshippers of the true God? Jerusalem, the chosen city, killed the prophets, and stoned God's messengers, Matthew 23:37. Amongst this people, though there was no other people that owned the true God in the world, some persecutors were found in every generation. Even when they utterly disclaimed this, as thinking themselves far enough from being persecutors, yet then are they charged with this guilt by Christ himself, Matthew 23:30-31. Christ himself suffered by those who took themselves peculiarly to be the people of God. And since the profession of Christ became general, ordinarily a man's enemies are those of his own house. The bitterest persecutors are those of the same profession.

2. It cannot be concluded that sufferings are not for Christ, because those who inflict them will not acknowledge it; for they will always plead it is for evil-doing, though it be really for Christ and righteousness. If persecutors may state the cause of those whom they persecute, none amongst Christians will ever suffer for Christ; for though they love the thing, yet they hate the name of persecutor, and therefore will pretend always some other cause of their hatred and violence. They think themselves concerned, not to let it appear that they persecute any for Christ's sake, or for righteousness, or for the gospel, though that be the cause indeed. As it is said of the heathens in

primitive times, they covered the Christians with beasts' skins, so that the wild beasts, to whom they exposed them, might with more fury seize on them; so it is, and has been with persecutors in all ages. They shew the people of Christ in an odious habit, state their cause otherwise than it is, that so they may let out their malice and cruelty more freely upon them.

Thus Ahab persecuted Elijah, not for his faithfulness in reproving his wickedness, and calling back the people from their idolatry and apostasy to the sincere worship of God: no, that had been odious; but he falls upon him as a troubler of Israel, 1 Kings 18:17. He charges him as one that brought trouble upon the church and state, as one who dissuaded the people from the religion established, and so disturbed the peace of the land, Ezra 4:12, Esther 3:8.

Thus Jeremiah was persecuted as a seditious preacher, an enemy to king and state, when, indeed, he sought to secure them from ruin, by bringing them back to God, from whom they had revolted, Jeremiah 37:12-13, and Jeremiah 38:4. And upon such an account must Paul and Silas suffer, as disturbers of the peace, breakers of ancient customs, and opposers of Cæsar, as evil-doers, if their persecutors may be judges, Acts 16:20, and Acts 17:6-7.

Yea, Christ himself must suffer for sedition, and as an enemy to Cæsar, if Pilate and the Jews may state his cause. The Jews thus accuse him: Luke 23:2, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, That he himself is Christ, a King.' And they cry out, John 19:12, 'If thou let him go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.' And the cross was the punishment in use for that crime. Authores seditionis aut tumultus, pro qualitatis dignitate, aut in crucem tollentur, &c. But because he died the death of a seditious person, shall we judge he died for no better cause? The primitive Christians were persecuted as incendiaries, enemies of the emperor and empire, κατεψ■υσαντο ■μ■ν θυ■στια δε■πνα κα■ ■ιδιποδε■ους μ■ξεις, as the French churches in those times complain (Euseb. lib. 5), accused of inhumanity and horrible uncleanness, as causes of all the evils that befell the empire: and, therefore, when any calamity befell them, they were wont to cry out, Christianos ad leones; for this they must be cast to wild beasts, as though they suffered for no other cause, but as being causes of the world's calamities. No people ever suffered more clearly for Christ than the Christians in those times; and yet their persecutors fasten on them for other causes of their sufferings.

3. It cannot be concluded that their sufferings are not for Christ, because their sins have provoked God to leave them to sufferings. Though sin should raise the storm, yet he who is ready, in that tempest, to have himself, and what is dear to him, cast overboard, rather than Christ should be further dishonoured, will not want the comfort and honour of suffering for Christ.

Cyprian tells the elders and deacons in an epistle, lib. 4, that the persecution came upon them for their sin. Intelligendum est enim et confitendum, secundum peccata nostra venisse. And yet then such multitudes suffered for Christ, that the persecution, Gregem nostram maxima ex parte populata est, et usque populatur, had even laid their churches desolate. Eusebius, in the beginning of lib. 8, going to describe the tenth persecution, gives an account of those sins which brought those sufferings upon them; yet never was there greater multitudes in any age who gave up themselves to be sacrificed for the name of Christ. Though the sins of God's people may provoke him to let loose the rage of hell, and the world upon them, and to bring them into a suffering condition, yet, if in this case they humble themselves, and return to him, and in the day of

trial part with all, rather than flinch from him, they will be owned as sufferers for him. Nor need it seem strange that the same suffering should be both for sin and for righteousness. Here is no contradiction: these are very well consistent in different respects. The same suffering may be for sin in reference to God, who may leave his people to sufferings, because they have sinned against him; for pride, worldliness, slothfulness, security, lukewarmness; for their contentions, divisions, want of brotherly love; or for their backsliding, declinings, or their non-proficiency and unfruitfulness, or other sinful miscarriages. And yet these very sufferings may be for righteousness, in reference to their persecutors, who afflict them, not because they have sinned against God, but because they will not sin more; not because they have been unfaithful to Christ, but for their faithfulness to him, because they will not further provoke him by complying with their sinful impositions, or serving their wicked designs. The hard measures which the believing Hebrews met with from the unbelieving Jews, when they were reproached, and their goods spoiled, were sufferings for Christ, else they could not have endured this joyfully, and yet the apostle speaks of these sufferings under the notion of chastisements, Hebrews 12:1-29. Now chastisings are properly for sin; take the word in a proper sense, and none are chastened but in reference to some miscarriage. The two last particulars I shall a little more insist on, adding what the time would not then permit me to offer to you. And the rather because I find I am apt to be mistaken, and such constructions put upon my words as the expressions will not bear, and my thoughts were never guilty of.

It may be of some use to take notice of those sins which Cyprian and Eusebius mention, as the provocations which brought the Christians in their times into a suffering condition.

Eusebius tells us that the Christians, under some of the governors before Diocletian, had much liberty, many encouragements, and some of them great preferments. But ■κ τ■ς ■π■ πλ■■ον ■λευθερ■ας; they as it were surfeiting of too much liberty, grew wanton and slothful, contented themselves with a specious outside holiness, fell into divisions and contentions, envying and reproaching one another, and strove who should get uppermost to lord it over their brethren, ■■α τε τυραννι■δας τ■ς φιλαρχ■ας ■κθ■μως διεκδικο■νπες. That which he most insists on, and repeats over and over, is their divisions and contentions amongst themselves, τα■ς πρ■ς ■λλ■λους ■νεφλ■γοντο φιλονεικ■αις. The fire of contention broke out amongst them; discord, threatening, emulation, and mutual hatred did increase among them. For these sins did the Lord wax angry, and involved them in that dreadful persecution. Yet afterwards he gives an account of hundreds and thousands that suffered for Christ. So that hence it is clear that men may suffer for sin, and for righteousness too.* The sins that Cyprian tells us brought the Christians in his time under persecution, were their too much minding their estates and riches, patrimonio et lucro studentes; pride, superbiam sectantes; emulation and dissension, emulationi et dissentioni vacantes; neglecting the faith and simplicity of the gospel, simplicitatis fidei negligentes; worldliness, seculo verbis solis, et non factis, renunciantes; self-pleasing, and offensiveness to others, unusquisque sibi placentes, et omnibus displicentes. These sins brought them into a suffering condition; for he adds, vapulamus itaque ut meremur, we have deserved these scourges, cum scriptum sit, servus, &c., Luke 12:1-59. Yea, he instances in the confessors themselves, who were already under sufferings, that were also under guilt, and yet owns them as confessors, i. e., sufferers for Christ, though they had not yet resisted unto blood. But it may be you will be better satisfied with a domestic instance. Let me give you one nearer home, and which some of you are

better acquainted with. In Edward the VI. his time a reformation was happily begun, the main body of popery was cast out, and the gospel had a free passage. Yet the reformation being so opposed as it could not be perfected, and the gospel not being duly esteemed, and obeyed, and improved, these and other sins, as the martyrs confess, brought those black and dreadful days of Queen Mary's government; so that sin brought those suffering times, and yet those times afforded many hundred martyrs. The martyrs acknowledge that their sins had some hand in kindling those flames wherein so many were sacrificed for the testimony of Jesus; so that it is clear to any one that will not shut their eyes that men may suffer for their sins, and yet for Christ too.

4. It cannot be concluded, they do not suffer for Christ, who have some sin mixed with that which is made the cause of their sufferings, if it be the cause of God indeed, for the substance of it, and they sincere in it for the main. When the people of God are ready to offer up themselves, and what they have for him, he will not reject such a sacrifice for every blemish. Christ had something against the church of Ephesus, something to charge her with as matter of provocation, even when he is speaking of her sufferings, Revelation 2:4. And yet he owns her as one that had suffered and laboured for his name's sake, Revelation 2:3. Nor can this be concluded, because of some miscarriage under their sufferings. David, while he was persecuted by Saul, miscarried divers ways, as you may see 1 Samuel 21:2, 1 Samuel 21:12-13, and elsewhere; yet this did not hinder him from being a sufferer for righteousness. As the Lord has provided a way, that what his people do for him may be accepted as done for him, though there be too many sinful mixtures therein, so he has provided an expedient, that what they suffer for him may be accepted as suffered for him, though there be many flaws therein, both for matter and manner. The Lord Jesus, the advocate of and sacrifice for his people, is effectual for both. When they apply themselves to him, in the exercise of faith and repentance, through his mediation, that which is therein evil shall not be remembered, that which is good therein will be accepted, Romans 12:1. How acceptable, see Ephesians 1:6-7.

Licinius, as you may read, Eusebius De vita Constantini, makes an edict, that whosoever did relieve the imprisoned and distressed Christians should suffer the same things that were inflicted upon them. Now, suppose some, out of love to Christ and his afflicted members, should have ventured (as many did indeed) to have relieved them, and yet should have done it too sparingly, or too fearfully, or with some selfish reflections, and should, according to the edict, have suffered for relieving them, here had been some sin mixed with the cause of their sufferings. And yet in this case, since their cause was good, and the cause of Christ, for the substance of it, who would deny but they suffered for Christ? Or suppose one should suffer because he would not leave praying (which was Daniel's case, Daniel 6:1-28), and yet in his prayer should have some mixture of unbelief, and lukewarmness, and other distempers, which the best cannot always escape, here would be some sin mixed with the cause of sufferings; yet who would deny but that, suffering for doing his duty, he is a sufferer for God? To proceed a little further: suppose some godly Lutherans should suffer for those great truths of the gospel, which they maintain against the papists, and together with them should suffer for consubstantiation, which indeed is an error, here would be a sin mixed with the cause of their suffering; yet I suppose their laying down their lives for those other great truths of Christ, notwithstanding this sinful mixture, would be accounted a suffering for Christ. So much for the negative rules. Proceed we now to the positive.

1. They suffer for Christ, who suffer for the truths of Christ. He suffers for Christ who suffers for the gospel, who will part with all, rather than deny any truth of the gospel, Revelation 2:13. To ‘hold fast Christ’s name,’ and ‘not to deny the faith,’ are all one. So that to suffer, as Antipas did, rather than deny the faith, is to suffer for Christ’s name, Php 1:27. To stand striving for the faith of the gospel, συναθλο■ντες τ■ π■στει, striving as combatants, resolving to uphold the truth, or to fall for it, is to suffer for Christ; for he adds, Php 1:29, ‘To you it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer for his name.’ Jude 1:3, ■παγων■ζομαι, struggling for it, as with the pangs of death. It is taken pro luctu in morte, says Gerard. Those that strive for the truth as for life, being ready to part with life and all rather than quit it, in such contests they are suffering for Christ. He that parts with all, rather than deny the least truth, for the name of Christ is concerned in all, and he is faithful indeed who will not be unfaithful in a little. So the Christians in the fourth age would suffer rather than yield a title, an ■ωτα, to the prejudice of the truth they were then called to contend for, viz., the divinity of Christ; rather than they would put ■μοιο■σιος for ■μοο■σιος, in their confessions of faith (though there be but the difference of the least letter in the alphabet), they would be exposed to the rage and cruelty of the Arians.

Some think that which is said here of the church of Pergamos is a prophetical description of the state of the church under popish corruptions, that apostasy being a falling from the faith; so suffering for the truths corrupted or subverted by the papists will be a suffering like Antipas, which wants but a syllable of Antipapas.

2. They that suffer for the worship of Christ. The name of Christ is put for his worship, 2 Timothy 2:19. To suffer for his worship is to suffer for his name’s sake, to suffer because they will not neglect the worship of Christ. So Daniel, because he would not forbear praying, though there was a law to the contrary, Daniel 6:7, was cast into the den of lions; he suffered for God. Or because they will not give the worship of God to any other, so the three faithful Jews would be cast into the furnace rather than fall down before an image; they would not give outward adoration to an image, though they were free to keep their hearts and inward man for the true God, Daniel 3:1-30. So those that have suffered by the papists’ cruelty, for not bowing to altars, and images, and crucifixes, have suffered for Christ. ‘Mine honour will I not give to another,’ Isaiah 42:8. He is jealous of it, and takes it as a kindness to himself when others are jealous of it too. So the primitive Christians that suffered, not only for not sacrificing, but rather than they would throw a little incense into the fire with respect to an idol, as those did who are called by the ancients Thurificati; yea, rather than they would receive a ticket signifying they had done so, though indeed they had not, thereby to escape suffering as those did whom they call Libellatici. Or because they will not worship God otherwise than he has prescribed, according to the devices and inventions of men, who are so presumptuous as to think their own inventions may take place of God’s institutions, and will not be content to serve God as the apostles and primitive Christians served him. Those that have suffered for opposing the superstitions and will-worship of papists, and popish innovators, have suffered for God; they are amongst the number of those who, as the apostle expresses it,‘suffer according to the will of God,’ 1 Peter 4:15, when they run all hazards rather than not worship God according to his will. The children of Israel, while they retained their integrity, are ready to hazard their lives, even against their brethren, upon an apprehension that they had innovated upon the service of God by setting up an altar, Joshua 22:11-12, as the apostles did for not observing the Jewish ceremonies. Or because they will not be present at false worship, though

they do not join in it. So the Reformed divines determined upon the question, that those who would be faithful should suffer rather than be present at the mass, though their hearts were against it, Daniel 3:1-30. They might have directed their inward worship to the true God, and to him they might have referred their outward adoration too, without intending to give either to the image. But such relative worship they did not know, or could not swallow, though modern idolaters and their advocates think theirs sufficiently excused and justified upon this pretence, that what honour they seem to give the image is directed and referred to God in Christ.

3. Those that suffer for the discipline of Christ. For hereby Christ exercises his kingly office in the church; and to suffer for his kingdom is to suffer for himself, Luke 18:29. Christ has left us not only ordinances of worship, but ordinances of discipline, probation, and trial of officers and members, ordination, admonition, excommunication, that the societies of Christians may be visibly holy, and their administrations not profane. They that suffer for observing the orders Christ has left us, for keeping out those who have no visible right to church-membership and privileges, or casting out those who are scandalous and impenitent, lest the church of Christ should become a nest of unclean birds, to the profaning of his ordinances and the dishonour of the Christian name, they suffer for the name of Christ, Revelation 2:2-3. He owns what they had done or suffered in trying pretenders, and not enduring those that were evil amongst them, as done for his name's sake. Those who are acquainted with the practice of the churches in the first three hundred years after Christ, may observe a remarkable strictness and severity both in their admissions and censures.* Nor were they deterred therefrom by all the sufferings in those times.

4. Those that suffer for acts of mercy or justice. These in Scripture pass frequently under the name of righteousness, and so to suffer for them is to suffer for righteousness' sake; and that is all one as to suffer for Christ's sake, Matthew 5:1-48. To suffer for such acts as those of the two famous virgins Prazidis and Potentiana, who hazarded themselves to bury the bodies of the martyrs, and laid out their estates to relieve those that were in distress: Matthew 25:40, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;' consequently, inasmuch as they suffer for doing this for the least of Christ's members, they suffer for him. Such an act was that of Obadiah, 1 Kings 18:34. Now if he had suffered for this act of mercy and charity, he had suffered, not only for relieving men, but fearing God, for that was the rise of it. So for acts of justice. Elijah causes the priests of Baal to be slain. For this cause Jezebel persecutes him, 1 Kings 19:1-2, and puts him to fly for his life. Now, herein he suffered for God, and so he apprehends it: 1 Kings 19:10, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts.' This will be more evident and unquestionable when those acts are done out of love to Christ, or in obedience to him, or with respect to his honour, or in subserviency to his interest; for acts of a lower nature thus done, are done for Christ, and to suffer thus is to suffer for Christ. Elijah had warrant to do thus by the law of God; for, by the judicial law, idolaters and seducers were to be put to death, Deuteronomy 17:2. And this was done with the concurrence of the elders and the people; for there was met in Carmel a general assembly of all Israel by Ahab's order, so that, if the prophet was not a magistrate, we need not have recourse to special and extraordinary instinct to justify the act. He, according to the law of God, requires the assembly, consisting of magistrates and people, to do execution, and they do it; but for this Jezebel threatens and persecutes him.

5. You may suffer for Christ, though the cause for which you suffer be a civil act. That a person may suffer for God, it is not always requisite that the cause for which he suffers be merely and

strictly religious. The cause of David's sufferings from the hand of Saul was his title to the kingdom, and that was a civil thing; yet when for this he was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, he is counted as one that was persecuted for righteousness' sake. A man may suffer for God when he is persecuted for a civil act, if that act be his duty, if he was called to it by God, if it was that which God would have him do; for in this case he suffers for well-doing. He suffers according to the will of God, he suffers for righteousness, which expressions are all one in Scripture with suffering for God. He that is persecuted for doing the will of God, whether it be in a matter religious or civil, he is a sufferer for God. And so he may be more comfortably when the cause is mixed; when, for the matter of it, it is civil, but the end of it is religious (and so indeed it should be always), when the end is the advancement of Christ, promoting his gospel, depressing of wickedness, encouraging of holiness; when it has a special tendency to these or like ends, and is undertaken in order thereto, then is their suffering for it more evidently for God. I say, it will more evidently be a suffering for Christ if the civil act be directed further, and so is of a higher tendency than otherwise in its own nature it would be. For substance, the choice of officers or magistrates in a corporation is a civil act. Now, suppose a man should endeavour, in his place and station, so far as lawfully he may, to get such chosen as will oppose popery, give free passage to the gospel, discourage wickedness, decline persecuting, and be true to the interest of Christ, and the nation, and the people of Christ in it, if he should suffer for such endeavours, though he act but in his civil capacity, yet he would constructively and really suffer for Christ; and so far as he acts sincerely with such intention, Christ will own him as one that suffers for his name's sake, and he may have the comfort of such a sufferer. And those that decline such endeavours, for fear it should expose them to suffering, they thereby decline the cross when they are called to take it up, and are so far guilty of disobedience and unfaithfulness to Christ.

6. A man may suffer for Christ in refusing to do that which in itself is lawful to be done; and that in two cases, to instance in no more.

(1.) When the doing of that which is lawful in itself may be an offence to others; i. e., an occasion of sin to one or other, either to weak brethren or to false brethren. The apostle is an example to us in both, 1 Corinthians 8:13. Though it was lawful for him to eat this or that, yet rather than he would lay a stumbling-block before those whose weakness was not satisfied of the lawfulness of it, he would not eat, whatever came on it, whatever he suffered for it. And as careful he was not to lay an occasion of sin before false brethren, as appears in another instance. Circumcision was in his time lawful; and so being in such circumstances wherein it might be done without offence, he circumcised Timothy, Acts 16:3. But when it was like to prove an occasion of sin, he refused to circumcise Titus, Galatians 2:4-5. He saw, if he should then have used that rite, which otherwise was lawful, it would have confirmed the unbelieving Jews in their opinion of the necessity of it, when indeed it was not necessary, and it would have encouraged them to impose and obtrude it as necessary upon others. The case being thus, rather than he would do it, he exposed himself to the malice and rage of those false brethren who persecuted him upon this account. Yet, Galatians 5:11, what he suffered for this cause he suffered for Christ, insomuch as he glories in his sufferings.

Obj. Whereas it may be objected, that there is a twofold offence, scandalum acceptum et datum, an offence taken, and an offence given; it is the offence given that is of pernicious consequence, when a dangerous occasion is offered, such as tends to the prejudice of another's soul. This

offence the apostle condemns, and would have avoided; and we ought to suffer (as he would have done) rather than offer it to any. But an offence taken is another thing; when one takes occasion when no just occasion is offered; when he is scandalised, stumbles, and falls, because another does that which he may lawfully do.

Ans. It is an eating to this latter sort of offence which the apostle forbids and condemns (that which seems more innocent and more tolerable), the meat which he speaks of, the eating of it was lawful in itself; he declares it so, and was persuaded of it by the Lord Jesus, Romans 14:14; and yet he would have it forborne when thereby a weak brother is offended, though the meat being not forbidden, and so the eating of it innocent in itself, the weak brother had no just occasion of offence offered; nor could he reasonably take it, it was merely his mistake to judge it unlawful. He would have every one avoid occasion of such offence, this tending to destroy him who takes it, Romans 14:15, Romans 14:20. And we ought rather to suffer than do what is otherwise lawful, when it may prove destructive to another's soul.

(2.) When the thing is lawful, yet he who is put upon the doing it is doubtful whether it be lawful or no, Romans 14:23; while he doubts of its lawfulness, if he should do it, he would sin; and therefore if he should suffer for not doing of it, he suffers for avoiding sin, and consequently suffers for conscience towards God, which indeed is a suffering for God, Romans 14:23. He that eateth or does anything not of faith, i. e., as he explains it, while he doubteth of the lawfulness of it, if he be not fully persuaded that he may do it lawfully, as Romans 14:5, he sins. He does that for which he may be damned, that which exposes him to condemnation; and therefore he ought to suffer anything rather than to venture on anything with a doubting conscience, for any suffering from man is far more tolerable than condemnation by God. And those who enjoin anything, not only apparently sinful, but which is suspected and doubtful, and those under penalties, instead of that love they should have for souls, take the course to damn them.

7. Whatever be alleged as the cause of good men's sufferings, whether it be a matter religious or civil, whether it be a duty or a thing indifferent, yea, though it be some sin or miscarriage that is pretended to be the cause why they are hated, and reproached, and persecuted, yet if the great motive, the main inducement, be their godliness, their strictness in following Christ, their zeal for his interest, their severity against sin, their endeavours for reformation, and the like, though their persecutors would have it believed that they suffer as evil doers, yet Christ will own them as suffering for him.

Polybius tells us that statesmen have their causas justificantes, some plausible reasons, which they publish as the cause of their actings, to put the fairer colours upon them; and some causas reales, which though they conceal, yet really set them a-work, and are the true reason of their proceedings. Just so have persecutors something specious, which they give out to be the cause of their acting against the people of Christ, whenas they conceal that which has the greatest influence on them, and is the true cause indeed. It would not be for their credit to let it be known that they are so fierce against any that profess Christ for their strictness, and holiness, and faithfulness to Christ.

Now, whatever be alleged as the cause of any man's sufferings, if the causa realis, the true reason, and the great inducement, that sets them against him, be his strictness, holiness, faithfulness in discharge of his place, &c., endeavours to reform what provokes God; so that were

it not for this, notwithstanding anything alleged against him, he might be passed by, he might escape hatred, reproach, persecution as well as others; in this case, however the cause of his sufferings may be disguised, yet is it for Christ that he suffers indeed, 2 Timothy 2:9. When the panther flies upon a picture, and tears it, because it has some resemblance of a man, the picture suffers, but it is for the man's sake. If persecutors fly upon you for the image of Christ in you, for any resemblance you have of him, whatever you suffer, it is for Christ's sake.

Whatever Cain might pretend why he fell upon his brother, the Scripture tells us the true cause: 1 John 3:12, 'Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' And upon this account Cain passeth for a murderous persecutor, and Abel for a martyr.

Whatever the wicked Jews pretended of old for their persecuting the prophets, and fair pretences they had to delude their own consciences and justify their actions before others, yet the true cause was because the prophets reproved them for their backsliding, and corrupting the worship of God, and endeavouring their reformation. And upon this account Christ brands the Jews as persecutors, and honours the prophets as sufferers for his name's sake, Matthew 5:1-48. The primitive Christians, as Eusebius and others tell us, were accused of sedition, sacrilege, murder, meeting privately to conspire against the emperor, putting out the lights and committing filthiness together, &c.; and by these and the like pretended crimes the persecutors sought to justify their rage against them, whereas the true cause was because they were Christians, worshippers, and followers of Christ, and would not join with them in their worship of idols. And now the other odious and false aspersions being wiped off, the true cause of their sufferings appears, and is acknowledged; and they are, and will be in all generations, honoured as the martyrs of Jesus, as sufferers for Christ, even by those who otherwise follow the steps of those persecutors in their false accusations of the people of God, and in their real enmity to purity and holiness. To go a little further: suppose one should speak or act something without due cautiousness, such as prudence requires, and thereby occasion be taken to draw him within the compass, or make him obnoxious to some law, rigidly and so injuriously interpreted, and thereupon he suffer grievously; if there be sufficient ground to believe that this advantage would not have been taken against him, it might have been overlooked, but that he had before appeared steady for the interest of Christ, or in opposition to mischievous designs and attempts against it; in such a case, though this be never alleged, nor so much as mentioned, as the cause of his sufferings, yet he may be justly reputed to suffer for Christ, though another occasion was taken to make him suffer. This and the other I thought it requisite to insist on for the ends fore-mentioned. Other doubts and scruples that perplex any under the cross may be reduced to these, and so hereby be removed. It concerns you to take notice of them, and remember them, against any hour of trial and temptation, when Satan, and subtile and malicious persecutors, would rob you of the comforts you may have in suffering for Christ; or want of a clear understanding of the true cause of suffering may hide them from you, and render a suffering condition dreadful. Nothing can hinder it from being formidable, unless you be satisfied that you suffer for Christ.

Use. Information. If he that will not suffer for Christ is no Christian, this shews us that Christianity is another thing than many take it to be; a harder thing to be a Christian than it is supposed to be. Many (it is to be feared) take themselves to be Christians who are not so indeed, think themselves complete Christians when they want that which Christ himself hath made essential to a Christian. That thou mayest be a Christian indeed, it is not enough to be baptized into the name of Christ, nor

to take up the profession of Christ, nor to believe the truths of Christ, nor to partake of the outward privileges of Christians, nor to expect the reward of Christians, nor to do the acts and perform some duties of Christians, to pray, hear, communicate with them, and minister to their necessities, &c.,—these are some things indeed that belong to Christians; but these are not all, all this is not enough. When the young man told Christ that he had observed all the commandments, 'All these,' says he, 'have I kept from my youth,' Mark 10:20, one would have thought this had been enough. No, says Christ; for all this, 'One thing thou lackest,' Mark 10:21, 'sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' So say I, or rather Christ in the text says it to you, notwithstanding all the truths which you believe as Christians, notwithstanding all the duties you perform as Christians, yet one thing you lack; and for all the good conceit you have of yourselves, if this one thing be wanted, indeed, all that you profess you have will be nothing to prove you Christians. This one thing will try what your professions and pretences are. And what is this one thing upon which so much depends? Why, it is the cross. What think you of that? Here is the test. Are you willing to take it up? Are you willing to be hated, and reproached, and impoverished, and tortured, and ruined for Christ? What say you to this? Do you think it a hard saying? Must you hate* the ease, and the plenty, and the credit, and the friendship of the world, or else no bargain? You like not to be Christians upon other terms; you are ready, with the young man, to go away sorrowful when you hear that it is like to cost you so much; or, you will not believe that Christ is so strict, or that it is so dangerous a thing to be a Christian. Well, I know not upon what grounds you go, but I am sure these are the words of Christ, and such as you will find true hereafter, however you may evade them now. He that taketh, &c. He that is not willing, ready, resolved to part with all that is dear to him in this world, to suffer all that is grievous to the flesh for Christ's sake whenever he shall be called to it, let him please himself with what fancies he will, Christ will never own him for a Christian. If you be not ready to entertain the cross for the name of Christ, whatever you are, or do, or believe, you are but almost Christians; what progress soever you seem to have made in Christianity, you are not so much as fully persuaded to be Christians if you be not resolved upon the cross, Acts 26:28-29. Except these bonds, says Paul. We may wish, indeed, that there were such an exception, that the sufferings which attend the faithful profession of Christ might not deter any from being Christians; but, whatever we may wish, Christ has made no such exception. He tells us plainly, if we will have him, we must have him with the cross; if we will take him we must take him with bonds, and imprisonment, and poverty, and disgrace, or whatever we may be put to suffer for his sake. He would not have us mistaken in promising ourselves better usage than we are like to find: Matthew 10:34, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.' Do not deceive yourselves with a conceit that I came into the world with any design to secure those that follow me in a quiet and peaceable possession of outward prosperity. No; if you will follow me indeed, you must rather expect the sword; not only lesser sufferings, but death itself, Matthew 10:35. No bonds, sacred or civil, shall restrain those from whom you might expect better usage, from exercising their malice and cruelty against you; the nearer they are to you the more bitterly will they persecute you. These are the terms which Christ makes known to you. Now are you Christians upon these terms? Can you welcome Christ with the cross? Will you bear it for him? Are you ready to be nailed, to be fastened to it, for his sake, whenever you have a call to it? If not, delude not yourselves, you are no Christians. Qui timet pati, non est ejus qui passus est, says Tertullian; he that will not suffer for Christ is none of his who suffered so much. And by this it is too manifest that there are few

Christians indeed, how many soever take up the profession. And we shall endeavour to convince you of it in some particulars, since such conviction is exceeding necessary; for while men persuade themselves they are what they really are not, they will never seek to be what indeed they should be.

(1.) What shall we think of those, who are so far from bearing the cross themselves, that they are ready to lay it upon others; those who hate, and revile, and reproach, and persecute the servants and ministers of Christ; whose hearts are possessed with hatred, and malice, and bitterness against them; who are so far from bewailing and resisting these unchristian distempers, and striving to suppress them and root them out, as they nourish them, and are pleased with them, and encourage one another therein, and desire more power and liberty to let them out more freely, and take all occasions to express their malice and enmity against them? What think you, are these Christians? Another question may resolve this. Were they Christians who persecuted Christ himself? Were those Jews Christians who cried out, 'Crucify him, crucify him'? If they were not, no more are these; for those who hate, and reproach, and persecute the members of Christ, they, in Christ's account, do this against himself. 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And upon inquiry it will appear they have little more to excuse themselves from this guilt than those wretched Jews had; for if some should plead that they do not hate, or reproach, or persecute any, because they are Christians, or ministers, but because they are hypocrites, and pretend to be what indeed they are not, why, just this did the Jews: they did not persecute Christ because he was the Messiah (they abhorred the thought of such a crime), but because (as they wretchedly alleged) he was an impostor, one that deceived the people, and pretended to be the Christ, the Messiah, when they could not believe he was any such person. And if any should plead that they are far from persecuting any, they abhor the name, the thing; they detest those wretches who burnt the martyrs in Queen Mary's days; if they had lived in those times, they would have used those faithful people otherwise. Why, but just this did those Jews, who persecuted Christ and his followers; even while they were eagerly persecuting, they detest the name of persecutors. They condemn their forefathers for killing the prophets; if they had lived in their days, they would have been far from so abusing the Lord's messengers, Matthew 23:29-30. This they said, whenas they were walking in the steps of their fathers, ready to express the same persecuting spirit which possessed them. Yet they would have been taken for the people of God, as persecutors since would be accounted the people of Christ. But he tells them what they are indeed: Matthew 23:33, 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?' The poison of malice and hatred which fills their hearts, the sting which these put forth in their words and actings, shews what they are: not Christians, but a generation of vipers; not the seed of the woman, but the seed of the serpent; not the disciples of Christ, but the followers of those who persecuted Christ and the prophets of old.

(2.) What shall we think of those who will not part with their lusts, will not forsake their sins for Christ, will live in them, however he forbid them, however he threaten them? Are these Christians? No, certainly; whatever they may think themselves, whatever others may account them, Christ will never own them as his disciples. Are they no Christians, who will not part with father and mother?' &c. And are they Christians who will not so much as part with their lusts for Christ? Will they take up their cross for Christ, who will not lay aside their cursed sins for his sake? Will they obey Christ, when he calls them to lay down their lives for him, who will not obey him, when he commands

them to leave their swearing, and drunkenness, and Sabbath-breaking, and worldliness, and uncleanness, and revengefulness, and malice, for his sake? Can you think that servant will go an hundred miles for you, who will not so much as stir out of doors for you, when you command him? Will they suffer so much for Christ as the bearing of the cross amounts to, who will not do so little for him as the leaving of a sin comes to? Will they suffer all extremities for the name of Christ, who will not forbear profaning that blessed name by their oaths, and irreverent use of it in common discourse? Will they endure to be tortured for Christ, who will not deny their carnal ease and sensual pleasures, who will not cross their carnal appetite and inclination for his sake? Will they part with all in the world for Christ, who will not be restrained, at the command of Christ, from such an immoderate pursuit of the world, as makes them neglect heaven and their souls? Will they drink up the bitter cup of death for Christ, who will not leave their intemperate cups at his command?

What clear convincing evidence is here, that those who allow themselves in any known sin are no Christians! If men were not under a strong delusion, they would never think themselves Christians while they go on in any sin. But, alas! the God of this world has blinded their minds. What clearer reason than this? Those that will not bear the cross of Christ are no Christians; but they who will not leave their sins for Christ, will never bear the cross for him; (Are they like to suffer for Christ, who daily make him suffer by their sins?) Ergo, those that will not leave their sin for Christ are no Christians.

(3.) Others there are who will bear but some part of the cross. The whole weight of it is too heavy, too grievous, they must be excused if they will not endure that.

Some cannot endure to be vilified, and reviled, and reproached for Christ. They will decline those ways that are covered with shame and reproach. They forbear good company, and neglect good duties, lest their wretched acquaintance should jeer and deride them. That way, which is everywhere spoken against, shall have none to walk in it for them. But are they Christians who will not bear the lightest part of the cross? What lighter than the froth and spawn of malicious hearts and tongues? Are they worthy the name of Christians, who will not endure to be abused and reviled for his sake, who gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to the nippers, and withheld not his face from shame and smiting?* That was a Christian temper in David, who, when he was jeered for his zeal for God, could answer, 2 Samuel 6:22, ‘I will be yet more vile than thus.’ Others can better bear reproach; but to lose their estates, their places, their livelihood, to have their relations ruined, to be brought to a low, poor, necessitous condition, this they cannot bear. They will stoop to unworthy shifts, and stretch their consciences, and not stick at a small matter, to prevent this. Why, but if you have given up yourselves to Christ, you give up your estates, and all you have, to be at his disposing. You promised to be content with him alone, so you might but have him for your portion. If, therefore, when it comes to the trial, you will not part with all rather than offend him, it signifies you did never heartily enter into covenant with him, yea, but did flatter with your lips. That was a temper truly Christian in the Hebrews, who, as the apostle testifies, did suffer the spoiling of their goods with joy, Hebrews 10:34.

Others can better endure the loss of outward comfort; but when life is endangered, when a shameful or cruel death is before them, though they have been forward before, yet then they recoil, they relent, they comply, here they will be excused. ‘Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life.’ Why, but Christ himself tells you, in the verse before the text, that life itself

must be hated if you will be Christians. If you love life itself more than him, you are none of his. If you be Christians, you are not your own, neither your estates, nor your bodies, nor your spirits; all that are called yours before are now his, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Now, if they be all his, you are no more true Christians, if you do not part with life and all when the honour and interest of Christ requires it, than he is a truly honest man who will not give every one his own. You are his, all you have is his, not your own; and do you deal as Christians, do you deal honestly, if, when he calls for it, you will not give up that which is his own? An honest heathen would not deal thus with you. And can they be counted Christians who will deal thus with Christ.

(4.) Others are confident that they will be ready to suffer for Christ, whenas there is not any probability that ever they will suffer for the truth of Christ. This is too evident in those who are ignorant of the main truths of the gospel, and will not spare time, nor take pains to get a competent knowledge thereof, for all the means of knowledge which are at hand. Is there any probability that such will suffer for the truth? Is it likely that men will suffer for they know not what? Or count that worth the dying for which they count not worth the knowing? or endure the pains of death for that which they will not take the pains to understand? Is it likely they will take up the cross, rather than deny the truth, who count it a cross to labour for the knowledge of it? How far are these from being Christians, if none be Christians but those that take up the cross, since there is no likelihood that such will ever take up the cross whatever become of the truth.

Others presume they will suffer for Christ and the gospel in the gross; suffer rather than turn Turks, or Jews, or papists. But single out any particular truth, and rather than they will suffer for it, they will deny it, or yield it up for peace' sake, or overlook it as a point of small consequence, or give half of it away by some distinction, or betray it by concealment, when it requires a plain and open confession; this argues more fear of the cross than love to the truth, this is not to deal with it as Christians. Christ will not own these as his disciples, he will be ashamed of them who are afraid or ashamed to bear witness to his truth: Mark 8:38, 'My words;' whatever he hath delivered to us.

(5.) How few are there who would suffer for the worship of Christ! How manifest is this, since there are so many who wilfully neglect the worship of God in their families, are so far from instructing them, that they do not pray with them, though they have all liberty and encouragement to do it, no danger yet of suffering for it, these are more like heathens than Christians. The prophet makes it the character of heathens, Jeremiah 10:25. Though some would suffer rather than yield to gross and palpable idolatry, yet how few would suffer for that which is only probably and in appearance such?

How few would take up the cross rather than yield to superstition and will-worship, since so many run into it of their own accord! How few would suffer for the purity and spirituality of gospel-worship, as freed from carnal rites and ceremonies, and from the mixtures of man's devices and inventions! And yet this is the character of true worshippers, i. e., of true Christians, John 4:23-24.

(6.) How few would suffer for avoiding of sin, unless some gross and notorious abominations!

[1.] How few would suffer rather than offend in a little? The general looseness of men's lives, and largeness of their consciences, gives occasion of jealousy in this particular. How few of the temper and tenderness of that famous sufferer Marcus of Arethusa, who would die rather than give a

halfpenny for the repairing of an idol temple! Ne obolum quidem. He would be tortured to death rather than give two farthings for such an unlawful use, Sozomen. lib. 5, cap. 9. How far are many from the temper of Valentinian, that great captain under Julian, and afterwards emperor, who, having a drop of water sprinkled upon his garment, which was cast about by their priest in their heathenish services (much like the papists' holy water), to shew how far he was from approving their superstition, cut off that piece of his garment upon which the drop fell, and that in the sight of the heathenish emperor, ■υτ■κα περιτεμε■ν κα■ ■πορρ■ψαι σ■ν ■υτ■ τ■ ψεκ■δι ■σον ■βρ■χη τ■ς ■σθ■τος, and hereupon was afterwards banished by Julian, pretending (says Sozomen. lib. 6, cap. 6) that he was negligent in looking to his soldiers; for he would not seem to punish him for his religion, lest he should have the honour of a martyr or confessor, p. 371. In the primitive times, they excluded such from the communion of Christians who had yielded to an officious lie that they might avoid suffering; nor would they re-admit them till they had satisfied the church by an exemplary repentance. This was the case of those who, in Cyprian's phrase, did libellis conscientiam suam maculare, purchase tickets, signifying that they had complied with the heathen in their worship, when indeed they had not, and so avoided suffering by a kind of officious lie. Those that did thus they looked upon as lapsi, such as had fallen from the faith, and therefore they would not own them as Christians, nor admit them to the privilege of the church without a deep and solemn repentance; yea, they would not look upon them as Christians who would make use of a lie for the avoiding of the greatest extremities.

[2.] How few would suffer for avoiding the appearance of evil! Not only for shunning apparent evils, but the appearance of them; apparent sins, but sins in appearance. The ancient Christians would not conform to the rites and customs of the heathens when abused by them to idolatry, though they might have been otherwise lawfully used; they would suffer rather than do this, because there was an appearance of evil in it, viz., a seeming compliance with the heathen.

It was lawful in itself to set up lights and bays at their doors, but because the heathen did this out of respect to their idols, therefore the Christians would rather suffer than do it, in gratiam magistratus, though the magistrate enjoined it. Igitur quia lucernæ præ foribus, et laurus in postibus, ad dæmones pertinent; accendantur lucernæ quibus lux nulla est: Affigant postibus lauros, postmodum arsuras, quibus ignes imminent.*

It was lawful in itself to wear garlands upon their heads, yet because the pagans did it, the Christians, to avoid the appearance of that evil, would suffer rather than do it. Hence the soldier, for whom Tertullian pleads, in lib. de Corona Militis, when he came to the tribune for his donative, would not wear the garland upon his head, but brought it in his hand, by which, discovering himself to be a Christian, he was haled to prison and executed. How far are they from this temper and tenderness, how far from suffering upon such accounts, who are zealous for a conformity to the papists in those rites, ceremonies, and gestures which they apparently abuse to idolatry!

Diocletian, having a design to root out the Christian religion, gave order that the Scriptures should everywhere be burned, whereupon multitudes suffered in that tenth persecution because they would not deliver their Bibles to the flames. Amongst the rest, Secundus being commanded to deliver his Bible, makes answer, Christianus sum, non traditor, I am a Christian, I cannot do it. Then he is required to give up some riff-raff, aliqua ecvola, to be burnt instead of his Bible; this also he refused, and would rather suffer than do it; for though it was lawful, yet it had some

appearance of that evil which they were guilty of who are called Traditores; he would die to avoid the appearance of sin (Park. p. 11).

[3.] How few would suffer for avoiding that which is evil by construction and interpretation; for avoiding that which others put an ill construction on, though themselves see no hurt therein. Julian, above others, infamous for endeavouring by subtilty to overthrow Christianity, used many artifices in a cunning way to ensnare Christians, and to debauch their consciences. He would dress up that which he required them to do in the fair shows of innocency and lawfulness; but, when he had drawn them to do it, then he would construe it to be a compliance with him in his idolatrous services. And since they could comply in one thing, why not in another? Thus, like an angler, he hid the hook till he could catch them. And some indeed he did ensnare. But when the hook was discerned, his design discovered, they would suffer anything rather than be tempted by the fairest baits he could lay before them. To give some instances pertinent to our purpose. The Christians thought it lawful to give some honour to the emperor in his picture; Julian taking an advantage by this to ensnare them, together with his own picture, sets up some of the images of the heathen gods, ■κ■λευσε, &c., says Sozomen, lib. v. cap. 16, παραμ■γνυσθαι τα■ς ■ικ■σιν. Now the Christians, while they suspected no hurt, continued their civil reverence to the emperor in his resemblance; but some of them understanding that he accounted this an adoring of his heathenish images, ο■κ ■ν■ιχοντο προσκυνε■ν, would give him that reverence no longer, when so ill a construction was put upon it; but rather chose to suffer, though he made them suffer upon this account, ■ς κα■ ■ις πολιτ■ιαν κα■ βασιλ■α ■ξαμαρτ■νοντες, as offenders against king and state, for so are the historian's words.

Theodoret gives us another instance. When the soldiers were to receive donatives from Julian, he had ready before his throne a fire with incense; and those who would receive the gold from him, must first throw some incense into the fire. This divers of them did, looking on it as a civil custom, and suspecting no hurt in it, τ■ν δ■ τ■ν π■γην ■ι πλε■στοι μ■ν ■γν■ησαν παντελ■ς, lib. iii. chap. 15. They understood not that it was a snare. But when it was told them that this was not agreeable to the Christian profession, τα■τα γ■ρ τ■ς χριστιανικ■ς ■μολογ■ας ■ντ■παλα, they lamented bitterly, and tore their hair, and cried out in the streets, that they were ensnared by the emperor's fraud, βασιλικο■ς παρακεκρο■σθαι τεχν■σμασι; and run to the palace, and desired that they might be cast into the fire, since they had dishonoured Christ by casting incense into the fire, chap. 16.

It is to be feared, then, many amongst us would not be so ready to suffer for such a thing, as to excuse it, and plead its lawfulness, as Marcellinus did, non Diis sacrificavi; that which I did was no sacrificing unto idols, sed tantum grana thuris, &c., but only throw a grain of frankincense into the fire. But this excuse did not hinder Marcellinus, the Bishop of Rome, from being condemned as an apostate. Nor is he worthy the name of a Christian, who, to avoid suffering, will do anything (howsoever excusable by fair pretences) which may be interpreted to be a denial or dishonour of Christ.

Another pernicious device of Julian's to ensnare the Christians was this, all the meat which was to be sold in the market at Constantinople, he mixeth secretly with that which had been offered to idols (as Baronius relates it) that so the Christians might either perish by famine, or else eat that which might be interpreted an honouring of his idols. This they perceived, abstaining from buying

any meat in the market, and contented themselves cocto frumento, with boiled corn. And though some may think this a nicety, and more scrupulousness than was needful, yet if that of Augustine be allowed, it will justify them; for he determines that it is better to die by famine than to eat an idolothyte.

It is to be feared that many who bear the name of Christians would make use of the Nicolaitans' plea, rather than suffer in such a case: Though I eat the idols' meat, yet my heart is free from all idolatry and superstition; though I do thus and thus, &c., as papists and superstitious persons do, yet, &c. Ay, but there is something else to be minded, if you will demean yourselves as Christians indeed; not only what the act is in itself, or what you intend in it, but what others may judge of it, and suffer rather than do that which is like to be judged evil. He that sees thee eat meat dedicated to idols, existimabit te nonnihil idolorum cultus deferre, says Chrysostom. And we must suffer rather than do that which may be judged a countenancing of idolatry.

[4.] How few would suffer for avoiding of that which is but accidentally evil? In itself lawful, but by accident evil, as it may be an occasion of sin to others; because it is ædificuns ad delictum, as Tertullian defines scandal, may build up others either in erroneous opinions or unlawful practices. We think it enough if we are ready to suffer rather than sin ourselves; but the apostle thought it a sufficient ground to suffer rather than give occasion of sin to others; he would take up the cross, and bear it, rather than venture upon a thing lawful in itself, in case of scandal. In the interval betwixt the death of Christ and the destruction of the temple, the ceremonies of the law were indifferent, and in themselves lawful; yet the apostle would rather suffer than use them, when the use of them was like to prove an occasion of sin to others, viz., when the Jews were like thereby to be confirmed in their opinion of their necessity, which was an error; or encouraged to press them as necessary upon others, which was a sin to the prejudice of Christian liberty. In such cases the apostle would suffer persecution rather than use them, Galatians 5:11. As if he had said, Some report that I am for the urging of circumcision, but this report appears to be evidently false, because I suffer persecution for this very thing. If I would use circumcision as others do, I should be no more troubled with the cross; the wrath of the Jews would be appeased, and the cross would cease. I should escape it as well as others. The main cause why the apostle was persecuted and suffered so much from the Jews was his non-conformity to the ceremonial law; because he would not practise himself, and press upon others, those ceremonies which were indifferent in themselves, but could not be ordinarily used without offence, i. e, without being occasion of sin.

It was sometimes lawful to eat that which had been sacrificed to idols, viz., in case the party that ate thereof did not know it had been idolatrously abused; for so it could not be countenancing idolatry. Or in case none present with him knew it to have been so abused; for so it could not prove a scandal. But in case of scandal, however otherwise it might be lawful, it was no ways allowable, 1 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Corinthians 10:25, 1 Corinthians 10:28. If it be a Gentile that tells thee, avoid it, lest thou confirm him in his idolatry. Or if it be a weak Christian that tells thee, one not satisfied of the lawfulness of it, avoid it for his sake, lest by thy example he be drawn to eat thereof with a doubting conscience, and so be betrayed to sin. Or if it be one in the way to Christianity, not fully taken off from his idols, avoid it for his sake, lest by thy example he be turned back again to his idolatrous practices, κα■ ■δ■ς ■π■ ■ιδωλολατρ■αν τ■ πρ■γμα ■γ■νετο, Chrysost. in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33. He would have them avoid even that which in itself is lawful in such cases as

these, though they suffer for it; for he more than intimates that, 1 Corinthians 10:13. Though some motives you meet with may tempt you to comply herein with idolaters, viz., the persecution of the heathen, yet let not this fright you into such a compliance; for this is the common lot of Christians to be persecuted, and God will moderate their rage, and deliver you. And therefore avoid this evil, and fear not, whatever may befall you for so doing. And to be brief, those who, to avoid persecution and the cross, would eat things sacrificed to idols, whatever offence came thereby, Christ himself thinks them unfit and unworthy to be continued in the fellowship of Christians, and reproves the church of Pergamos for not casting them out, Revelation 2:14. There was some amongst them who bare the name of Christians, and after ages called them Gnostics, whose principle it was that they might comply with idolaters, to avoid persecution; and therefore rather than suffer, they would eat things offered to idols, though thereby they laid a stumbling-block (like Balaam) in the way of others, and occasioned their falling into sin. He reproves the church for tolerating such among them; he would not have them owned as Christians.

Many who now profess Christ are too much of this temper, as far from taking up the cross of Christ, since they shew themselves so ready to comply with things that have been as much abused to popish idolatry as those meats that were offered to heathenish idols. To conclude this use, since it is essential to a Christian to bear the cross rather than offend Christ, to suffer rather than sin, how few true Christians are there to be found, since so many who bear the name will rather sin, in one kind or other, than bear the cross, and undergo anything grievous for the name of Christ.

Use II. For Exhortation. Let this stir you up to prepare for the cross. He is not a Christian that will not bear the cross; and he that doth not prepare for it never means to bear it. The disciples of Christ are always liable to the cross, and that which we are always liable to we should be always ready for. Christians should always make account of the cross; so the apostle, Acts 20:22-23. And what we should always make account of, we should always prepare for. Christ would have his disciples take up his cross daily. Now you do not, in the remotest sense, take it up daily, if you do not daily prepare for it. It is certain the cross will be upon you if you will be faithful to Christ, but when it will fall upon you is uncertain; you cannot promise yourselves one day's exemption from it, and therefore you should be every day ready. Christ having discoursed of the troubles which were like to befall his disciples in the general calamities that were coming upon that generation, concludes it with this use, 'Watch ye therefore,' 'be ye always ready,' Matthew 24:42, Matthew 24:44; Mark 13:33, Mark 13:35-37; Luke 21:34-36.

Obj. But some may say, I see no danger of the cross, no danger of persecution, and therefore what need so much talking of it? What need so much preparing for it?

Ans. 1. Is there no danger because you do not see it? Did no evil ever befall you but what you foresaw? Has nothing fallen out in your days but what you saw beforehand? or rather, has anything remarkable fallen out in these times which you did expect a year before it came?

It does not become a Christian to say he need prepare for no danger but what he sees. He is in most danger who sees least. If you be Christians, you are engaged in a spiritual warfare. Now if a soldier should tell his captain that he will not prepare, he will not be ready for danger till he see it, he would think him more fit to be cashiered than to be trusted. Even so may Christ, the Captain of our salvation, deal with such secure professors. What, are there no ambuscades, no surprisals in

your spiritual warfare, nothing that may be upon you before you are aware of it? You run quite counter to Christ's advice. He would have his disciples watch always, be always ready, because they know not at what hour the master of the house will come, at what hour a calamity will come. He will have them always ready, because it may come at such an hour when they are not aware of it. You think it needless to be ready, because you know not the hour; needless to prepare for it, till you see it and be aware of it. Nec tamen remittendæ sunt excubiæ, si quando hostis simulabit tranquillitatem. If you will demean yourselves as Christians indeed, you must not neglect your watch; you must not neglect to be in readiness, when there is fairest show of tranquillity; that is the way to be surprised.

Ans. 2. Grant you see no danger of public and open persecution, yet there may be much still of the cross, and much persecution where it is not open and public, and by authority. You may meet with enough of the cross, enough of persecution, in a private way, if authority do discountenance it. You may, said I; nay, you must, says the apostle, either of the heart, or the countenance, or the tongue, or the head. There was no persecution by public authority till the latter end of Nero's reign, above thirty years after Christ's death; yet in that time of connivance and indulgence the Christians had a heavy share of the cross, escaped no kind of sufferings, as you may see in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the catalogue of Paul's sufferings, 2 Corinthians 11:23-25.

Ans. 3. If you will not prepare for the cross till it come, you will not prepare for it till it be too late. What, prepare to take up the cross when it is upon you! Preparation is a readiness beforehand. If it be upon you before you are ready, preparation comes too late. Then it is most necessary, most seasonable, before the cross comes; and because it ordinarily comes before men can or will see it, it will be necessary to prepare for it before it be seen.

It may be, some of you feel not the pressure of the cross. Oh, but if you be Christians, this in general you must make account of, that it will be upon you one time or other, and when, or how soon that time will be, you know not; and therefore, if you would not be surprised, you should always watch, i. e., as Christ himself explains it, you should be always ready, always prepared. It may come as a thief in the night, who chooses to come when his coming is least looked for, least feared or suspected. It may come as a snare which is laid out of sight, and catches him who thinks he treads safe and discerns no danger. Therefore be always watchful, always prepared. The watchful soldier will stand upon his guard, and have all things ready, even when he sees no danger, because there may be danger when there is none seen, he may be surprised; but if he perceive danger near, and see an enemy approaching, even though he be disposed to sleep, he will not then give way to it, he will not then need any warning to have all things ready for his defence. You should be always preparing for the cross, even when you see no danger of it; much more when it is visible, and the approaches of it are apparent. But how shall we prepare for the cross? I shall give some directions.

1. Make your peace with God. Romans 5:1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' What follows? Romans 5:2-3, 'We glory in tribulations,' &c. Peace with God will enable you not only to bear the cross, but to triumph under it. John 16:23, Christ promises peace as the best means to bear up his disciples under the cross. Without this, tribulation will be unsupportable, the cross will be intolerable.

Now, though Christ promise peace, yet this, as all other promises, will have its accomplishment in his own way. You must use the means that he has prescribed, walk in the way that he has directed you to, if you will have the peace he has promised. And therefore, if there be any controversy betwixt God and you, make haste to get it taken up; fly to the blessed Umpire, the great Mediator betwixt God and you. Mourn that you have given him any offence; apply the blood of Christ by faith; beseech him with all importunity that he would interpose and make your peace, and rest on him for that purpose as the great peace-maker.

If your conscience check you for any act, or any neglect, which may be the matter of a controversy betwixt God and your soul, bewail it with grief and anguish of spirit, humble yourselves for it to the dust, get your hearts filled with hatred and indignation against it, and yourselves for it; get your souls raised to strong and vigorous resolutions against it. Shew the sincerity hereof, by avoiding all occasions, by watching against all temptations, by diligence in the use of all appointed means, that you may never return to it. Or if it be some secret corruption which hath not broken forth into open act, but disturbs your peace by its inward motions and solicitations, engrossing your thoughts, or drawing your hearts to inclinations towards it, why then rise up with all your might for the subduing of it, fly unto Christ for more strength, be diligent in the use of all means to get it mortified. Shew that you look upon it as an enemy (though it be in your quarters, and you cannot get it dislodged), by making a hearty, a constant, a resolute resistance. Let the Lord see that you look upon it as a greater grievance than any outward pressure or suffering. Or if your conscience do not check you for outward acts, or inward corruption, take heed it be not because conscience is asleep. And therefore be diligent in searching conscience, lest anything escape you that may make a difference between God and your souls. It will be sad to have conscience asleep, till it be awakened by the cross. The pressure of the cross and the pressure of guilt falling on you together, is like to prove a burden too heavy for you. The cross, when it falls upon a guilty soul, it is like a heavy burden upon a galled shoulder, the pain and anguish of it will scarce be tolerable. If conscience be not pacified, if God be not at peace with you when the cross comes, the coming of it will be terrible. Jeremiah 17:17.

If men accuse, and reproach, and revile you, and conscience accuse you too; if they frown, and through guilt you can expect no smile from God; if they threaten, and you find yourselves under the Lord’s threatenings also; if the world’s rage and hatred break out against you, and the Lord withdraw the sense of his love; if the world smite and wound you while conscience is lashing you; if the Lord be a terror to you while the terrors of sufferings are before you; if you have no peace with the world, nor no peace with God neither, what will bear you up in such a condition? If the cross lie heavy on you, and, through guilt, you cannot with any confidence expect support from God, the pressure will be unsupportable. And therefore, if you would not sink under the burden, get this laid as the foundation to bear up all: whatever you do, mind this above all, your peace with God. Whatever you neglect, neglect not to do this, for so the cross may undo you. No matter how much water there may be without the ship, the more sea-room it hath, the safer it is in the storm; but if water get within the vessel, then it is in danger of sinking. It will be less matter how many troubles soever you meet with from without, if there be peace within. And therefore keep the way of peace, if the Lord have continued you in it; or if you have swerved, make haste to recover it. Search out your sins, especially those that have had any influence upon the public, that have contributed anything to the loss of gospel liberties, or the bringing of national judgments. Apply

yourselves seriously to the exercises of repentance and the actings of faith upon Christ, for we have peace, being justified, and are justified through Christ, and that is by faith, which acts not in this case without the exercise of repentance.

2. Get much love to Christ. A strong affection will carry you after Christ when you cannot follow him but under the cross, will make you follow him wherever he goes, though the way be deep, and rugged, and thorny, though it lead directly to the cross, and bring you to mount Calvary.

Much love will make you willing, ready, resolute to suffer for Christ; and it is want of will, more than want of strength, that disables us from bearing the cross. Christ uses not to deny strength to those who are resolutely willing to suffer for his name's sake. There is a strength in love which is too hard for death itself; love is strong as death.

Much love will make you suffer much, for it is affectus unionis, that which makes the soul cling to Christ; and the more it is, the faster it cleaves to him, and the more hardly will it part from him; no small matter will part them. A servant that has some affection to his master will suffer something for him, but an affectionate wife will suffer far more for her husband, because the conjugal love is stronger.

If you mean to suffer much, you must learn to love much. A little love will go but a little way under the cross. If love be weak, get it strengthened; if it be cooling, get it inflamed; if it be declining, get it repaired. A declining love is a step to apostasy, and will be in danger to end there in a day of trial. When the Church of Ephesus has lost her first love, Christ speaks of her as fallen, Revelation 2:4-5. There are some amongst these churches who professed Christ, but, for want of love to him, gave way to a principle which was more for their own safety than his honour. They would hold all those things indifferent for which they were like to suffer, that so none might condemn them for yielding in things indifferent, rather than be ruined. These held it indifferent to be circumcised, to escape sufferings from the Jews; indifferent to eat things offered to idols, to escape sufferings from the Gentiles; and, when they had no other way to escape, they would hold it indifferent to deny the faith. So Eusebius, lib. vi. chap 11, tells us, it was the opinion of their followers, ■τ■ τ■ ■ρν■σασθαι ■δι■φορον ■στ■, indifferent ■ν ■ν■γκαις, in great necessities, to deny with the mouth, provided they do it not with the heart. Now it is probably thought that this principle had made some impression upon the church of Ephesus. Hereupon she is charged with losing her first love, because she was not so ready to suffer for Christ as at first. This principle, inclining her more to comply than suffer, she was not so disposed to do her first works, and undergo her first sufferings, for which she is commended, Revelation 2:3. And why? Her first love was lost, she was fallen. If you would not decline the cross, or fall under it, keep up your first love; or, if it be declined, make haste to get it repaired. Follow Christ's advice to Ephesus, Revelation 2:5, 'Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent,' &c.

Content not yourselves with some small degree of love to Christ; that will not serve you when a day of trial and suffering comes. A little water will quench a spark; it must be a flame, indeed, that all the waters will not quench, nor the floods drown and extinguish, Song of Solomon 8:6-7. Get your love kindled into a vehement flame, and then you will follow Christ, and may safely do it, though all the waves and the billows go over you.

Labour by all means to raise your affections to a higher pitch. That love, which will make a fair show, and makes a shift to go after Christ, while it is encouraged by outward prosperity, will not serve your turn when the cross comes. The apostle, 1 John 4:18, speaks of a perfect love; not that there is any love in this life free from imperfection, but there is one degree of love perfecter than another; a love which will embolden a man to appear for Christ in the face of discouragements and dangers. Such a love he calls perfect, as being nearer to perfection than that which startles at the cross. And thus he describes it, 1 John 4:17, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment;' that we may have boldness, viz., in confessing Christ and his truth. It is παρρησ■α, a bold, and open, and fearless confessing of Christ in the face of dangers. He had been speaking of confessing Christ before, 1 John 4:13; not every one that professeth this upon any terms, for every professor dwelleth not in God, and God in him, but he that thus confesseth Jesus when he hazards the loss of all by so confessing him. The perfection of this love expresseth itself in such a boldness for Christ, ■ν ■μ■ρ■ κρ■σεως, in the day of judgment, i. e., not the final judgment, but when we are brought before the tribunal of men, to be judged or sentenced for faithfulness to Christ, because as he is, so are we in this world; as he was exposed to sufferings in this world, so are we; and our love to him should carry us through these sufferings, as his love to us did him. He adds, ver. 18, 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear.' Such a degree of love makes us fearless of sufferings, renders the soul bold and valiant for Christ, so as he will not shrink from him and his interest for any danger; he will not think any cross so dreadful as to decline it when Christ calls him to bear it. So Tertullian fourteen hundred years since explained this text. John denies, says he, that there is fear in love: Quem timorem intelligi præstat, nisi negavimus authorem? What fear may we here best understand but that which is the cause of denying Christ? Quam dilectionum perfectionem, what perfect love, nisi fugatricem timoris, et animatricem confessionis, but that which banisheth fear and animates to a confession of Christ. So that love, thus freeing the heart from the fear of the cross, is an excellent preparative to the bearing of it. But how shall our hearts be raised to such a degree of love? Why, I know nothing more effectual in the world than frequent and fixed thoughts of the love of Christ. If that will not kindle your hearts into flames, vehement flames, I know not what in heaven or earth will do it, 1 John 4:19. Set some time apart frequently to meditate on the love of Christ, and the wonderful transporting expressions of it.

Say to thy soul, Was he, in whom there dwelt the fulness and riches of the Godhead, content to become so poor for my sake, as he had not whereon to lay his head? And shall I think much to hazard my estate and outward enjoyments for his sake? Oh what had become of my soul if he had stood upon such terms! Was he, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, content to become the scorn of men and reproach of the people; to be jeered, and buffeted, and spit upon? Was he willing, when he was the King of glory, to be reviled and abused, as the vilest of men, for me? And shall I think much to be vilified, and scorned, and reproached for his sake? Was he content to leave the delights and joys of heaven, that he might become a man of sorrows? Was he willing to be scourged, and nailed, and wounded, and endure such grievous things for me, as made his soul heavy unto death, and forced him to cry out to heaven, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and to cry out to earth, 'Have ye no regard, all ye that pass by?' &c. And shall I think much to endure any pain or torture for him? Was he content to bear the wrath of God, and the rage of men and devils for me? And shall I think much to endure the rage and malice of men for him? Was he content to suffer a cruel, a shameful, a cursed death for me? And shall I refuse to suffer a blessed

death, a death that himself hath blessed, for his sake?

Oh what had become of me! in what a hopeless and helpless condition had my soul been in, if he had stood on the honour, and ease, and plenty, and respect of the world, yea, or his own life! And shall I stand upon these, when his honour and interest requires me to forego them?

Make such use of the love of Christ to provoke your hearts to a more ardent and vehement affection. ‘The love of Christ constrains us,’ says the apostle. There is something in it that is irresistible; a sweet and powerful force therein, when the Spirit of God impresseth the sense thereof upon the heart, to constrain you to such a love as will compel you to take up the cross, and bear it for his sake, notwithstanding any reluctancy of flesh and blood.

3. Learn to deny yourselves. Be still practising of self-denial. It is self that is pinched by the cross, and so makes us loath to take it up, and impatient to bear it. Till self be renounced, the cross will not be endured, Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23. The order and connection of these in all the evangelists shews us plainly that self must be first denied before ever we will take up the cross. Self-denial is the first letter (as you see in these texts) in the Christian’s alphabet; he that hath not learnt this is far from the highest form, which in the school of Christ is the place of sufferers. When the cross comes, Christ and self are brought into competition, either self must be denied or Christ will be denied. He that cannot deny himself, rather than take up the cross, will deny Christ, either in point of faith or obedience. If ever you would bear the cross, as becomes the disciples of Christ, you must learn to deny,

(1.) Your own worth and excellency, the apprehensions and conceits thereof, whether the ground of it be your accomplishments or enjoyments. If this be not denied, you will think yourselves too good to suffer for Christ. He that is high in his own apprehension will never stoop to the cross; he will count it intolerable, to be vilified, and set at nought, and trampled on, and reproached, and counted (as the apostles were) the refuse and off-scouring of all things: Matthew 11:29, ‘Take my yoke, &c., for I am lowly.’ If you will follow Christ, and take up the cross as he did, you must be qualified as he was, meek and lowly.

(2.) Your own judgment and wisdom; else you will be too wise to suffer for Christ. You will think it foolishness to be undone in this world, rather than yield in a small matter, offend Christ in a little; you will think it folly to suffer, when you may avoid it by straining conscience a little. The cross is foolishness to the wisdom of the world, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 1:22-23.

(3.) Your own reasonings, else you will reason yourselves out of the reach of the cross. This is too small a matter (will carnal reason say) to lose all for; and this is not clear, it is controverted amongst great names, persons of great learning and judgment; and this is yielded to by men of great repute for piety and strictness; and this few stick at, the whole stream runs against it. Which was the great reasoning against Luther of late, and Athanasius of old; what pertinacy, for one man to hold against the whole world! Or this may be connived at now, it may be retrieved hereafter. To tack about is not to go backward (not to backslide), but to make our way so well as the wind will serve; when it serves fairer, we will keep a more direct course; but now we must do as we can, though we do not what we should. If such reasonings had not been renounced heretofore, the world would have had but few instances of such as would follow him under the cross.

(4.) Your own wills. ‘Not my will, but thine be done,’ says Christ, and yields up all when the question was about his suffering. He that cannot follow Christ in this, will never take up the cross, unless per force, will never bear it as a Christian. Accustom yourselves daily to make yourselves yield to God when his will lies cross to yours, which if you will not do now you are not like to do it when the cross comes, when it cannot be done but upon harder terms, and more contrary to flesh and blood. If your wills be flexible now, and you are accustomed to submit at every beck, at every intimation of the Lord’s pleasure in the way of obedience, there is no such danger that they will be stiff and inflexible when the Lord tries you in a way of suffering.

(5.) Your own inclinations. If you give way to these, they will carry you far from the cross, even when Christ calls you to it. He that cannot endure to cross his own natural inclinations will never endure the cross.

(6.) Your own ease and contentments. The cross of Christ and your own ease are inconsistent; if you cannot forego these, you are never like to bear this as becomes the followers of Christ. If respect to your ease make you neglect holy duties, or cut them short, so that you do not watch to them, and continue in them; if the exercise of repentance and duties of mortification be waived, or slightly passed over, because they cross your ease, how will the cross be endured, which is more inconsistent with your ease? As the prophet, Jeremiah 12:5, ‘If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?’ &c. The apostle would have Timothy to inure himself unto hardship, 2 Timothy 2:3. If it seem a hardship, and contrary to the ease which the flesh would have, to be much in prayer, meditation, self-examining, watchfulness, the exercise of repentance, the duties of mortification, if this seem a hardship, inure yourself to it; forego your own ease herein, and that will be a good preparative to greater hardships. It will not go so much against the hair, to quit your ease when the cross will not give way to it, if you have been accustomed to it before. He that has found his inclinations commonly denied, will not think much to be denied upon special and extraordinary reasons.

(7.) Your own interest. When the question is, Whether you shall bear the cross or no? the question is indeed, Whether the interest of Christ shall be preferred before your own interest? For a carnal heart counts it his interest to have ease, plenty, safety, which the cross would bereave him of; but the interest of Christ is, that we should suffer rather than displease or dishonour him. Now he that can deny his own interest will readily take up the cross and bear it; but he that is wedded to his own interest, and will not be divorced from it, will deny Christ one way or other, expressly or implicitly, directly or by consequence, less or more, rather than let his own interest be crucified, as it must be if he yield himself up to the cross. The more you can deny yourselves in all respects, the more are you prepared for the cross, the more ready for sufferings; and therefore, if you would bear the cross as followers of Christ, be much in the practice of self-denial. If you be to seek here, Christ will have you to seek when he calls you to suffer.

4. Die to the world. Get your minds and affections disentangled, your hearts loosened more and more from worldly relations and enjoyments. An inordinate affection to the things of the world, arising from an overvaluing of them, is a main reason which keeps men from following Christ in bearing the cross, and puts them upon sinful shifts to avoid suffering: 2 Timothy 4:10, ‘Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.’ He left him, and would not partake with him in his sufferings, which he is there speaking of, because he loved this present world. A man who is in

love with the world will run into the embraces of that strumpet, far more readily than follow Christ in a way of suffering. Hence worldlings are called adulterers and adulteresses for their excess of love to the world, James 4:4. This friendship is enmity to God, enmity to Christ, especially to the cross of Christ. Die to the world; for he that is alive to it must needs look upon the cross as dreadful. Now he is alive to the world whose mind and heart is upon the riches, and delights, and splendour of it; whose soul, by a high esteem of these, and an immoderate affection to them, is linked and united to the world. For as natural life is from an union of soul and body, and spiritual life from an union of the soul with Christ, so this moral life is from an union of the soul with the world; which union is affected by love to worldly things; for love is affectus unionis, and this love is begat and nourished by a high esteem of worldly things. So far as you overvalue and overlove the world, so far you are alive to it; and so far as your esteem thereof is taken down, and your love thereto is taken off, so far you die to the world. So far as you are dead to the world, so far you will less fear or regard the cross, as that which only can bereave you of what your heart hath already quitted, and from which your soul is already separated and divorced, which you have inwardly relinquished as a worthless, unlovely object, as a dead thing. The more you are dead to the world, the less sensible will you be of sufferings in your worldly concernments; the loss of them will but be as the removing the dead out of your sight. It would have been a great affliction to Abraham to have been bereaved of Sarah while she was alive, but when she was dead, ‘Give me a burying-place,’ says he, ‘that I may bury my dead out of my sight.’

While you are alive to the world, riches, and honours, and the pleasant things of the world will be lovely and amiable, you will be apt to doat upon them, know not how to be without them, cannot bear the loss of them, count that an insupportable cross; but you being dead to them, and they to you, you will not then think much to have them removed, to have them buried out of your sight.

It was an evident symptom of this death in the apostle, when he was so indifferent as to outward things, indifferent whether he did abound or was in want, Php 4:11-12. Make this your business, your great endeavour, so far to die to the world, to get mind and heart so far separated from it, as to be indifferent whether you be high or low, whether you want or abound, whether you have much or little, whether you be respected or despised; and then you will be fit indeed to bear the cross, yea, and ready to welcome it. ‘I can do all things,’ as he adds, Php 4:13. No cross will be too heavy for you if you could once come to this. The apostle could not only bear the cross, but triumph under it, glory in it, yea, and in nothing so much, Galatians 6:14. But how was he enabled thus to entertain the cross with triumph and glorying? Why, the following words shews us: ‘By whom I am crucified,’ &c. He was dead to the world, and the world was as a dead thing to him. Now what means you should use to this purpose, I have shewed at large on another subject.

5. Get freed from fears of the cross and the instruments of it. Fear not men, fear not sufferings, if you would bear them like Christians. Give not way to diffident, distracting, perplexing, discouraging fears. There is no one thing that you have more frequently from the mouth of God in Scripture than this, ‘Fear not,’ ‘Be not afraid.’ Labour to be obedient to this heavenly call, to the command of God, if you would not decline the cross, or sink under it, or under something worse than any cross can be; for such fear makes the cross worse than it is, and makes a Christian less than he is, and exposeth him to that which is far worse than the cross.

(1.) Fear makes the cross worse than it is. Many a man has sunk under his fears, who might have been otherwise able to have stood upright upon the cross. When we look upon suffering through our fear, it is like a magnifying glass, which represents it greater than it is, makes a mole-hill seem a mountain. And besides, fear often troubles us more than the troubles that we fear. A man suffers more by his fears than by the sufferings he is afraid of. Fear many times proves the heaviest part of the cross, so that he that gets his fears removed is already freed from the weightiest part of the cross, that which is often most oppressive. Many have been more oppressed with the fears of a low afflicted condition than with the condition itself when they have come to try it; many more afflicted with fear of a prison and exile than with imprisonment and banishment itself, when the Lord has vouchsafed them his presence in such a state; many more troubled with fears of death before it came than with death itself when they have come to it, which occasioned that saying, Mortis timor est morte pejor, the fear of death is worse than death. This is a remarkable difference betwixt the enjoyments of the world and sufferings for Christ. Those enjoyments promise more than ever they perform, these sufferings threaten more to a fearful heart than they ordinarily execute. Those enjoyments prove not so good as we expect, these sufferings prove not so bad as we fear. Our fears are often the worst part of them, and tortures a man more than what he suffers. ‘Fear has torment,’ says the apostle. Get fear removed, and the sting and torment of the cross is in a great part gone, you will more easily bear it.

(2.) Fear makes a Christian less than he is, less fit to bear the cross than a weaker person whose fears are less. It makes him both unable and unwilling either to take up the cross or to bear it; it makes him unable, it deprives him of his strength, or makes his strength useless. Fear dispirits and discourages him; and when his courage and spirits are down, the strongest Christian is like Samson when his locks were cut, he becomes like other men, no more fit to bear the cross than if he had no strength to bear it. A strong and numerous army, when they are under fears, and their courage gone, are easily routed, a small matter will put them to flight. A weak Christian, when he has a spirit of courage raised above fears, will venture more, and may undergo more for Christ, than a Christian, otherwise strong, when his spirits are sunk under the burden of his fears; even as a stout stripling may shew more gallantry than a fearful, cowardly giant. Fear weakens the hands, and makes the knees feeble, so that he can neither take up the cross nor undergo it. And as it disables, so it makes unwilling. The more fearful any one is, the more loath to venture upon anything hazardous; it makes him draw back when the cross approaches. No greater obstacle in the way of sufferings than fear: 1 John 4:18, ‘Fear hath torment.’ The expression may be three ways taken, and so may serve to illustrate all the three particulars before us; κ■λασις may be as much as κ■λυσις, an impediment or hindrance. Fear stops a man, and keeps him back from suffering; and it is an impediment, because it is tormenting; there is a kind of rack in it which awes men, so as they will not, dare not venture upon anything noble and heroical for the name of Christ. You will never be able, never be willing, never dare to venture on the cross further than you prevail against the fears of it.

(3.) Fear exposeth you to that which is far worse than any cross you can meet with; Jeremiah 1:8, ‘I am with thee,’ that is one motive. But he adds another kind of inducement, Jeremiah 1:17, ‘Fear not their faces,’ their stern countenances, their wrathful dispositions, which are wont to appear in the face. Fear not to deliver my message to them, fear not when thou shalt be convented before them for delivering it. Why so? Lest I confound thee; or, as the word signifies, lest I break thee to

pieces before them, lest I destroy thee utterly; and that will be worse than anything which they can inflict on thee. So Matthew 10:28, Luke 12:4-5. To fear what you may suffer from man, to fear the cross which they may lay on you, so as to offend God by shifting it off, is as if a man should fear the sting of a wasp, whenas a dagger is at his heart, or as if he should fear the wetting of his clothes, when he is in apparent danger of drowning. If you will be unfaithful out of fear to suffer, there is something more to be feared in such a case, and that which is so dreadful, as should swallow up the sense of your other fear, 1 John 4:18, κ■λασιν. Fear hath punishment. The Lord will dreadfully punish that fear which keeps you from taking up the cross when he calls you to it. What punishment, says Tertullian, Nisi quam negator relaturus est, but that which he that denies Christ shall suffer; cum corpore et anima occidendus in Gehennam, when he shall be destroyed body and soul in hell. This is the portion of the fearful, of those whose fears make them unfaithful to Christ, Revelation 21:8, δειλο■ι, the cowardly. Those that are so cowardly and fearful as to deny Christ rather than suffer, so fearful as to be ■πιστοι, unfaithful to Christ in the day of trial, have something worse to fear than the cross, viz., their part in the second death. Inter reprobos, imo ante omnes; amongst others, nay, before others, says Tertullian, Timidis particula in stagno ignis. But how shall we get above these fears, which are so dangerous in themselves, and such heavy aggravations of the cross, and such great impediments to the bearing of it? Why, briefly, if you would be freed from fears of man, set God before you; it is the means which himself does everywhere direct us to. How often do we meet with that, ‘Fear not, for I am with thee’? Let your eye be much and often upon the infinite greatness of God, and man’s nothingness; upon the absolute sovereignty and power of God, and man’s impotency; upon the unlimited goodness of God, and the restraints of man’s mischievousness, Isaiah 51:12-13. Man is not much feared but when God is out of sight and not remembered.

[1.] View much the greatness of God, and man’s nothingness in comparison. See how the Lord describes himself, and how inconsiderable all the world is when set before him, Isaiah 40:15, Isaiah 40:17, Isaiah 40:22-24. What proportion do they whom you are apt to be afraid of bear to this drop, to this dust! How little are they, how little to be feared, when all nations are so little, of which they are but a small part, and, as it were, the thousand part of this drop! What fear of such a thing as this! What, be afraid of that which is not so much as nothing, be afraid of that which is less than nothing and vanity, be afraid of those which are not so much as grasshoppers compared with that great God who is your security!

[2.] Upon the sovereignty and power of God, who has all things at his beck, and rules the hearts, and tongues, and hands of all men, so as they cannot so much as move without him, nor move any farther, nor any otherwise than he will give leave, no more than the rod can move without the hand; and therefore the hand of God should be feared, and not men, who are but as a rod in his hand, and cannot stir without him, Isaiah 10:5, Isaiah 10:24.

[3.] Upon the unlimited goodness of God, who is so good that he can turn evil into good, and none can hinder him; let the actings and intentions of men be never so mischievous, the issue of them, in despite of hell and the world, shall be good to his people; a greater good than the friendship of the world could do them, or the enmity of the world can deprive them of; a good that will more than countervail all the evil that men can bring upon them, Romans 8:1-39, Jeremiah 24:5, Genesis 50:20. Now, if all they can do shall turn to good, why are they so much feared? A wise man does not use to fear a good turn. But these things I must but point at.

6. Get corruption mortified. The mortified Christian is the best suffering Christian, the willingest to take up the cross, and the ablest to bear it, so as to honour Christ in bearing of it. Carry on the work of mortification with all speed, with all diligence, for mortification affords many advantages for enduring the cross.

(1.) There will be less reluctancy to the cross the more you are mortified. When corruption is subdued, there will be little left to lift up itself against the will of Christ, calling you to the cross; for though nature not corrupted would be averse to that which is afflictive to it, yet corruption very much strengthens this reluctancy. And though outward prosperity would be desirable to innocent nature, yet corruption desires it excessively, doats upon it, knows not how to be without it. And no wonder, for this brings in provision to the flesh, and cherishes corruption, and gratifies our lusts; whereas the cross rather straitens, and pinches, and starves them. So that the voice of the flesh is always that of Peter's to Christ, when he was speaking of his suffering, 'Master, spare thyself.' It cannot endure to hear of the cross. An unmortified soul is like an untamed heifer, a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; it will not be brought to the cross without much struggling, it will fling every way to avoid it; and when it cannot be avoided, will fling it off as soon as may be, whatever come on it. But so far as corruption is mortified, there is a quiet submission to take the cross when Christ calls to it, and to bear it, whatever it be, during his pleasure. You see it eminently in the apostle: he being dead to sin, could die daily for Christ, and could rejoice in so doing.

(2.) There will be more strength to bear the cross, for corruption is the soul's sickness and distemper; and the stronger a distemper is, the weaker is the subject. A soul little mortified is in a sickly, and weakly, and languishing condition, not able to support itself, much less to bear a cross, a heavy cross. Where corruption is unsubdued, there is but little spiritual strength; and a little strength will be apt to sink or faint under an oppressing cross, Proverbs 24:10. A soul of small strength will be ready to faint in the day of adversity; and where corruption is strong, spiritual strength is small. A mortified soul is of a healthy, strong constitution, having purged out those distempers under which others languish, and so is the more able to bear up under the cross. The more you are mortified, the more strength you have both to do and suffer.

(3.) Mortification is a kind of martyrdom, it has some resemblance of it, and the expressions which represent it to us in Scripture import as much; for our natural corruption is called our old man, and a body of death, Romans 7:24; a body of sin, Romans 6:6, Colossians 2:11. And our lusts are called the members of that our body, Colossians 3:5; and naturally are as dear to us, and we as tender of them, as of the members of our bodies. And then to mortify them, as the word tells us, is to kill them, to lay them dead, νεκρ■σατε, Colossians 3:5; to put them to death, θανατο■τε, Romans 8:13; to put them to the worst kind of death, to crucify them. So that he who is daily mortifying his lusts is daily suffering for Christ's sake; and so it will be no new, no strange thing for him to suffer; he has this lesson ready, he daily learns and practises it. Hence when Christ calls him to part with relations, or estate, or liberty, he can say he hath parted with that already which he loved as much as these; he hath parted with the life of his lusts, which naturally are as dear to us as our lives. When Christ calls him to suffer pains, or tortures, or death, why, he hath suffered some such things as these long since, he daily suffers it; he is cutting off his right hand, and plucking out his right eye, and wounding the members of his body of sin; yea, he has sacrificed his Isaac, his darling sin, for Christ's sake. And he that has suffered thus much, what will he stick to suffer for Christ? He has parted with one life already, the life of his lusts, and so has learned the

better to part with the other life too when Christ requires it. You are dead, says the apostle, Colossians 3:4; and I am crucified, says he of himself, Galatians 2:20. He hath suffered one death already, the death of his body of sin, which is indeed another self, and so is the readier to suffer the other death when he shall be called to it. He has given up his old man within him to be crucified for Christ's sake, and so will not think much to give up his whole man to be crucified, or otherwise martyred, if the honour and interest of Christ should require it. None so ready, so fit, so willing, so able to suffer for Christ, as he that is most mortified; and therefore if you would be thoroughly prepared to bear the cross, get thoroughly mortified. The book which goes under the name of Cyprian, De duplici Martyrio, is express in this: Si deest tyrannus, si tortor, si spoliator, non deerit concupiscentia, martyrii materiam quotidianam nobis exhibens: if there be no tyrant, no tormentor, no spoiler, yet concupiscence (our natural corruption) will be present always to afford us a continual occasion of martyrdom, p. 365. And afterward: Apud Deum tamen quicunque carnem suam crucifixerunt, &c., martyres sunt, nec martyrum corona fraudabuntur. In God's account, those who crucify the flesh, quicunque Christo vere commortui sunt, those who are truly dead with Christ, they are martyrs, and shall not be deprived of the crown of martyrdom.

7. Keep conscience tender. Be tender of his truths, of his worship, of all his ways, of every part of his will, so as not to offend in the least; to avoid the appearance of evil, to hate the garments spotted with the flesh; not only the flesh, and the spot of it, but the garment that is spotted with it. He that is fearful of all sin, afraid of the least, will be ready to suffer rather than offend in a little. Fear sin more than suffering, and then you will welcome the cross rather than give way to any sin.

Want of this tenderness has made way for many to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, cast these over board to save themselves from suffering. Want of this tenderness is the highway to apostasy, the highway to deny Christ, and betray his cause, and renounce his truth; for he that will be drawn to sin in a small matter, to escape suffering, may by degrees be drawn to yield to anything rather than suffer. We may observe it in experience: some, by bending their consciences to comply in less things, by degrees have made them so flexible as to yield to anything; by admitting of small evils, have made way for the greatest. For every degree of evil brings a degree of hardness with it; so the conscience in a little while becomes as it were paved, so that anything may pass it without scruple, when it would have scrupled a little thing at first. By often swallowing, the passage becomes wider and wider, so that anything will down at last, especially when fear of suffering enforceth it. Qui modica contemnit, &c., says Augustine; he that slights smaller evils, by little and little falls into greater; and he instanceth in his mother Monica, who by sipping of a little wine at first, came by degrees to take large draughts. Turn but a bowl down a steep hill with the least touch, and you will scarce be able to stop it till it comes to the bottom.

Thus the ancients, by giving too much way to ceremonies and human inventions in the worship of God, made by degrees a way for popery, as protestant divines observe; and by giving way to an exorbitant prelate in a particular church, made a way for a pope in the universal church. Though they saw no harm in prelacy to make them scruple it, but thought it a prudential expedient to prevent divisions in the church, as Jerome tells, yet the premises being laid by them, after ages thought such a conclusion did necessarily follow as they little dreamed of: if a prelate be necessary to prevent divisions in a particular church, then a pope is necessary to prevent divisions in the universal church. This consequence had never been swallowed, if men had been so tender as not

to yield the antecedent. And to this day the papists rely upon the connection of these, and thereupon ground some hopes and expectation of prevailing; insomuch as Contren the Jesuit is bold to say, in his Politics, lib. ii. cap. xviii., that were all England once brought to approve of bishops, it were easy to reduce it to the Church of Rome. The want of this tenderness, too, has let in idolatry amongst those who profess the name of Christ; and has made them so far from being sufferers, as the primitive Christians were, for not yielding to the appearances of idolatry, that they are transformed into persecutors of those who will not join with them in their idol worship. At first there was such tenderness, as they thought themselves greatly defiled by the touch of an idol: seque putant contactu simulacri vehementer contaminari. They would rather suffer death, as the supposed Cyprian tells us, than to defile themselves: Ut mortem oppetant citius, &c., p. 364. Non est dubium, says Lactantius, quum nulla religio sit, ubicunque simulacrum: without all doubt there is no religion where there are images. And the Council of Eliberis, Can. 36: Placuit picturas in ecclesia esse non debere: let there be no pictures at all in the church. And Epiphanius, when he found a picture in a hanging at a church door, he tore it in pieces. But by degrees this tenderness was remitted; pictures were admitted into the church for ornament, and, in Gregory's time, in the seventh century, for instruction. And then in the eighth century the second Council of Nice decrees that images should be adored, and those that opposed this decree were persecuted. So that when at first they would suffer rather than touch or see an image in their churches, this tenderness being lost by degrees, it came to this in the conclusion, they must suffer who would not adore those images which the primitive innocency detested and abhorred.

Those that will not preserve their consciences tender, so as to avoid the occasions, the beginnings, the appearance of evil; instead of suffering for Christ, are in danger to prove persecutors of such who are faithful to him; instead of taking up the cross themselves, are in the highway to lay it upon others. If you would be faithful to Christ in bearing the cross, preserve that tenderness of conscience, which will be alarmed at the first approaches of any corruption, either in doctrine, worship, or daily practice.

8. Acquaint yourselves more with God. Get effectual apprehensions of him, what he is in himself, and what he is to his people. Walk in the sight, in the view of God; have him often in your eye. This enabled Moses to endure the cross, Hebrews 11:24-28. Study much the all-sufficiency, the power, the goodness, the unchangeableness of God.

(1.) The all-sufficiency of God. What fulness there is in him to make up all you can lose for him; what refreshments there are in him to sweeten all you can suffer for him.

What fulness. You may as well doubt that all the waters of the ocean cannot fill a spoon, as that the divine fulness cannot be enough to you, if you should have nothing left in this world; for all the waters that cover the sea are not so much as a spoonful, compared with the boundless and infinite fulness of all-sufficiency.

What refreshments in him, &c. One drop of divine sweetness is enough to make one in the very agony of the cruellest death to cry out with joy, The bitterness of death is past. Now in him there are not only drops, but rivers; not a scanty sprinkling, but an infinite fulness.

What is there you can want under the cross, but all-sufficiency can supply! What is there you can fear under the cross, but all-sufficiency can secure you! And that which can secure you from all

wants, and from all fears, is enough, well considered, duly improved, to make you willing to take up the cross, and make you able to bear it.

(2.) Eye much the power of God, how it can support under the cross, what it can bring to pass for you by the cross. No cross so sharp and grievous, but he can make it sweet and comfortable. No cross so heavy and intolerable, but he can make it light and easy. No cross so ignominious and reproachful, but he can turn it to your honour. No cross so fastened to you, but he can easily remove it: Ephesians 3:20, he is 'able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think.' A man may ask much, so much as men and angels cannot give; but how much soever he ask, he can think more than he may think fit to ask. Yea, but let him ask or think as much as ever he can, the Lord can do more than he can either ask or think, abundantly more, exceeding abundantly more, ■π■ρ π■ντα ■π■ρ■κπερισσο■ more than superabundantly more.

You may be apt to think, Oh if such a cross befall me, such disgrace, or poverty, or imprisonment, or such tortures as the primitive Christians suffered, I shall never endure it, I shall sink under it, it will be my utter ruin. Oh but look to the power of God. He can make the cross prove quite another thing than you imagine it to be; far more easy, far more comfortable, far more advantageous, than you can imagine; far better to you every way, than that part of your life wherein you have fared best in the world.

He can make a ruining, impoverishing cross, the way to the greatest riches and advancement. See it in Joseph: what a grievous cross was that for him, who was his father's darling, to be sold by his own brethren for a slave; to be slandered by his mistress as a rogue; to be thrust into the worst dungeon as the vilest malefactor, where his feet were hurt in the stocks, and he laid in irons! Would you think this a way to preferment? Yet so the Lord ordered, as thereby he was advanced to be lord of Egypt, and, which was more, the preserver of Israel.

Nay, which is stranger and better too, he can make the cross a means to advance the soul nearer heaven. Never was David's soul in a more gracious and heavenly temper, never nearer to God, nearer to heaven on earth, than when he was bereaved of all that was dear to him, not only outward comforts, but public ordinances, and hunted as a partridge upon the mountains; which plainly appears by the psalms he penned in that condition.

He can make a poor and indigent estate most rich in inward comforts and sweet contentments, as you see in Paul.

He can turn a prison into a most delightful paradise. So Pomponius Algerius found it, who, being imprisoned for the gospel, dates his letter from thence, ex delectabili carcere, from my delightful paradise.

Finally, What more terrible to flesh and blood than fire? What more dreadful to nature than a tormenting flame? Yet this the Lord can make as full of ease as a bed of down, as full of delight as a bed of roses. So our English martyr found it, and tells the papists out of the midst of the fire, when his body was all of a light flame, I feel no more pain in this fire, than if I were in a bed of down; it is as pleasant to me as a bed of roses.

Look to the power of God; if you would be encouraged to take up the cross, if you would be enabled to bear it, he can make it as tolerable, as comfortable, as that condition which most likes

you.

(3.) His goodness. His all-sufficiency and power make him able, his goodness makes him willing to do for his people under the cross what his all-sufficiency and almighty power can afford. His goodness sets his mighty power a-work for his suffering saints. His goodness sets his all-sufficiency, his fulness, a broach for them, so that it runs freely upon them; and never more freely than when they are under the cross: Psalms 27:13, 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord,' &c. What is it that makes you ready to faint under the cross, or thoughts and foresight of it? Look to the goodness of God, there is support.

[1.] Fear you the pain of the cross, the weight, the pressure, the tediousness of it? Why, but the Lord is too good to lay more on you than you are able to bear. He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able. He knows your frame, he remembers that you are but dust. He spares you, as a father spares his son that serves him. He stays the rough wind in the day of the east wind: he afflicts in measure; and though the wicked know no measure, nor no end, he will make them know both; the rod of the wicked shall not always lie upon the back of the righteous. He will not contend for ever, lest the spirit should fail. He is too good to let the cross lie too heavy, or to let it lie too long. He is so good, as he will suffer with you, and as it were, bear his part of the cross. In all their afflictions he was afflicted. He cries out, as touched with the sense of the pressure, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' As though it were not goodness enough for Christ to admit us to the fellowship of his sufferings, he is so good as to come himself into the fellowship of our sufferings. As we suffered in him then, so he suffers with us now, and so head and members are all along fellow-sufferers. And fear you to suffer, when Christ will suffer with you? Will you not take up that cross, whereof Christ himself will bear a part? Oh what honour, what happiness is this, to suffer for Christ, nay, to suffer with him! Who had not rather have a share in such a cross, than in all the glory of the world? Or [2.] do you fear want under the cross? Why, but hear what Goodness itself says to this: Matthew 6:26, 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?' If you have a servant that works for you, you will think yourselves obliged to provide for him, much more if he suffer for you. Why, but here is a greater engagement the Lord lays upon himself. Those that take up the cross for him, he looks on them as children, as children suffering for him. Now will not he who provides for his ordinary servants, yea, for the very birds, provide for children when under the cross for his sake? Sure, if ordinary means fail, he will provide for them in an extraordinary way: he that feeds the ravens, will send the ravens to feed his children, as he did the prophet, rather than that they shall not be provided for. What special care may not they be confident of, since he sometimes feeds the ravens in a way little less than miraculous, if we may believe what some good authors report. They tell us, that when the young ravens are forsaken of their dams, and so in danger to be starved, out of their own dung there ariseth a worm, which creepeth to their mouths, and becomes nourishment to them. Has the Lord such a care of ravens? will common goodness do so much for them? what then may children, suffering children, expect from the special goodness of a heavenly Father? Are ye not much better, much dearer to him than they? If you would be encouraged to take up the cross, and bear it, look to the goodness of God.

(4.) The unchangeableness of God. He is the same God to you, though your condition be not the same, and therefore you may have as much peace and contentment, as much joy and comfort, under the cross, as in a prosperous condition; and if so, there will be no reason to dread the cross,

or to decline it. This may make you as ready to embrace the cross as to embrace outward prosperity.

Those exhortations, whereby the apostle calls us to rejoice evermore, and to rejoice always, may seem strange. What, rejoice in poverty, disgrace, in losses and sufferings, in wants and dangers, when destitute, afflicted, tormented! What, can we rejoice as much then as when all things succeed with us in the world according to our desires? Why, yes; if your joys and contentments be those of Christians, and not those of wordlings, you may have as much joy and contentment in a suffering as in a prosperous condition, because the Lord, who is the ground of your joy, is still the same. Where there is the same ground of contentment, contentment may be the same, but the Lord is the same in every condition. Indeed, if your joys and contentments arise from earthly things, they will alter as those things suffer alteration. But if they arise from God, as they do if they be such as become Christians, they may be the same under the cross, because God is the same still; though your condition be changed, yet the Lord, who is the ground of your comfort and contentment, is not changed. 'I the Lord change not.' His all-sufficiency, his power, his love, his goodness, is without variableness or shadow of change. If there be any change, it is not in his nature, but in some outward expressions; and even in these, when you come under the cross, there will be no change unless for the better. The Lord may be better to you in a suffering condition than in any other condition; and indeed so he is wont to be far better to his people under the cross than in outward prosperity; they find him then a thousand times better than ever. And this we may expect from that promise, whereby he engages himself to return an hundredfold for whatever they suffer or part with for his name's sake. He will be an hundred times better to them under reproach for his sake, than when they are cried up by the world; an hundred times better in wants and losses for his sake than when they have the greatest abundance; an hundred times better in prison and sufferings than at ease and liberty. To be still looking thus upon God is an effectual way to prepare you for the cross. Such a view of God will make you ready to take it up, and willing to bear it.

9. Get more spiritual strength. Make it your business, before the cross comes, to strengthen yourselves for it. Be diligent in the use of all means to get all the strength that may be; and the more, to use the apostle's expression, as you see the day approaching.

There is an habitual strength, which consists in the grown and confirmed habits of grace, strengthen that which is weak, Revelation 3:2. And there is an actual strength, which consists in the exercise of grace, which the Scripture expresseth by girding up the loins, denoting agility. And there is an auxiliary strength, which consists in divine influences and assistances, Ephesians 6:10. And there is an external strength, which consists in extrinsecal advantages, such as a staff is to a man under a burden, and such as wind, and sun, and armour, and fortifications, are to a soldier. And there is a strength proper for a suffering condition, which consists more peculiarly in suffering graces, faith, and patience, &c.

Now, if you would be prepared for the cross, you must endeavour to strengthen yourselves every way; all will be little enough to enable you to demean yourselves as the followers of Christ, and so as you may honour your leader. The less strength you have, the less will you be able, as to do, so to suffer for Christ. Nihil agit ultra vires. A little cannot do much, suffer much, 1 Corinthians 16:13. If you will 'quit yourselves like men, be strong.' The less strength, the more danger sinfully to

decline the cross, or shamefully to sink and fall under it. You know what befell Peter when he encountered the cross in his weakness. The less strength, the more afflictive, the more painful, will any cross be. A man of strength will carry that with ease which will be a grievous oppression to a child or a weakling. The less strength, the more weaknesses and distempers will you shew under any cross whatsoever, so as Christ and his cause and interest may hereby come to suffer by you when you are called to suffer for him.

(1.) Get more habitual strength. Get the habits and principles of grace strengthened and confirmed. The cross will try your strength.

[1.] Content not yourselves with the infancy of grace, with the first beginnings of it. Think not that enough which will barely give you a title to heaven. If you will come there, you must keep the way, and the way lies through many tribulations; and it will require more than the strength of an infant, to hold on in deep and rugged paths, to bear up under many and heavy crosses, Ephesians 4:14. As there is a wind of temptation from the sleight and cunning craftiness, so there is a temptation from the hatred, malice, and violence of men; those that are but like children will be in danger to be tossed to and fro with every wind. It must be a strong cable that will ride out a storm. Labour to be rooted and grounded in every grace. A weak plant, not well rooted, will hardly bear up against a fierce blast, Matthew 13:21. Those that have no root, when tribulation and persecution ariseth, will never stand; those that are but weakly rooted will be in danger to fall.

[2.] Take heed of inward consumptions and declinings, which waste the strength already attained. Take heed there be no carnal, or worldly, or spiritual distemper insensibly consuming the inward man. A languishing consumptive soul is very unfit to bear a cross, Revelation 3:1-2. Some of them had already fallen under persecution. Though they seemed to be alive, yet when the cross came they appeared to have no more strength than dead men. Others of them were ready to die, ready to fall; their weakness was not like to bear up under the cross. To prevent the danger, he calls upon them to strengthen that which was weak and languishing.

Make this your great business, to grow in grace. While others make it their business to grow rich and great, or to entrench themselves so as their worldly interest may be secured; while they trouble themselves about the many things of this life, mind you this, as that one thing needful, to grow in grace.

Keep up eager desires after the increase of grace. The hungry soul is, above all other, the growing and thriving soul. ‘He filleth the hungry with good things.’ He is wont to do it, to fill them that hunger with the strength and riches of grace. And he is engaged to do it, Matthew 5:1-48. Never look to thrive and grow strong, if you keep not up an eager appetite after more and more spiritual strength. ‘The rich he sends empty away.’ Who are the rich? Those who think themselves rich, who demean themselves as though they had enough already. Be diligent in the use of all appointed means for the increase of grace. It is the diligent hand that makes rich. Spiritual riches is spiritual strength. Be the more diligent, because the time is short and your opportunities may be shorter. Suck in the word, as those that know your life, and strength, and growth, depends on it, 1 Peter 2:2. Labour to retrieve what you have lost by former sloth and negligence, and be much at the throne of grace; there it is you may find grace to help in time of need, Hebrews 4:16. Come with faith, with fervency, with importunity. You are encouraged by the promise of God and the experience of his people, Psalms 138:3, ■■■■■■, Thou shalt strengthen me. He hath done it, and he will do it. Let

this encourage you, and provoke you, not only to pray, but to cry as he did.

(2.) Get more actual strength. Be much in the exercise of grace. A man that hath strength and useth it not, loseth it for want of use; he will be able to do less when the trial comes than he that hath less and useth it more. A soul well furnished with grace is like a good instrument, but if grace be not kept in exercise, it is out of tune. He that hath a worse instrument may play a lesson in less time and with less pains than the other can tune a neglected instrument. When Christ would have his disciples prepared for the troubles he had been foreshewing them, he calls upon them to have their loins girt and their lights burning, Luke 12:35, i. e., keep your graces still in exercise. No matter how much match soever a soldier have, if his match be out when danger is upon him, he is not like to do any service. If grace be not kept in exercise, your light is not burning, your match is out; you are more like to run than stand to it when danger comes. ‘I sleep, but my heart waketh,’ says the spouse. ‘I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?’ Song of Solomon 5:2-3. That is the posture and condition of a soul that hath not grace in exercise; how much soever he be furnished with, yet it is as it were put off and laid aside when it is not used and exercised; and in that case he will be unready to entertain Christ, when he comes with a visit of love, much more when he comes with the cross. The strongest man, when he is asleep, may be more easily mastered and baffled than a weaker person upon his guard. If the cross surprise you when you are asleep, i. e., when grace is unexercised and laid down in a sluggish rest, it will find you unprepared, unable, unfit to bear it.

(3.) Get more auxiliary strength. Look up to God for divine assistance and influences. The strength of inherent grace, though it be necessary, yet it is not sufficient to support you under the cross, unless it be continually empowered and influenced from above. We are not sufficient of ourselves, 2 Corinthians 3:5. Who had more inward strength than the apostle? And yet that was not sufficient, without a further aid, to think of bearing the cross, to resolve on it, much less actually to endure it. But our sufficiency is of God. It is the name of God, 1 Samuel 15:29. He is ‘the strength of Israel.’ And so he is, not only by planting strength in the soul, but by a continued conveyance of strengthening influences. For the strength implanted in the soul is but a dependent strength, something like a staff in a man’s hand, which depends upon the hand both for its support and motion. Remove the hand, and the staff falls, and will stand him in no stead who formerly leaned on it. If you rely upon inherent grace, without looking higher, it will prove like a broken reed; it will fail you when the pressure of the cross is upon you. The earth hath a vegetative power in itself, whereby it brings forth herbs, and flowers, and fruit; but without the heat and influence of the sun, this power will be fruitless. Even so will the power of inherent grace. It will be fruitless, and stand you in no stead, unless it be excited, and quickened, and fortified by renewed aids and influences from above: Ephesians 6:10, ‘Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.’ There is the fountain of your strength. That which you have in the cistern has no virtue nor power otherwise than by a secret intercourse betwixt it and the fountain. Apply yourselves then to the Lord for those divine aids and influences: engage him to vouchsafe and continue them, by a continual dependence on him for them. ‘Those that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.’

Take heed you provoke not God, by high conceits or self-confidence, neglects of him, or any otherwise, to suspend these influences of assisting grace. Not only Peter, a man compassed with like infirmities as we, but Adam in the state of innocency, of perfection, and the angels in a higher state both of grace and glory than he, when they were left to themselves, found all their strength to

be mere weakness, not able to support them a moment. They fell by a less temptation than the cross may prove; for the impressions of fear, proper to the cross, are more forcible than those of the other affections wherewith they were overpowered.

(4.) Make use of strengthening advantages. I shall name some of them, which will contribute much strength and support under the cross.

[1.] Keep the sense of former comforts. To comfort is confortari, to strengthen, as the word imports. The joy of the Lord is your strength, Nehemiah 8:10. Comfort is that strength which the object contributes to the heart, as one describes it; and the strength is proportionable to the object. The Lord being the best object, brings most strength to the heart. He that can comfort himself in the Lord, will be thereby so strengthened as he will not faint under the cross.

[2.] Make use of former experiences, both your own and others'. Remember what the Lord hath been, and what he hath done for yourselves and others under the cross. Experiments are great encouragements, and that which encourageth the heart doth strengthen it. When the psalmist was ready to sink under the pressure of his troubles, he fetches strength and support from hence, Psalms 77:10-12. From the experience of times past, he draws encouraging presages of future mercies, and had thereby strength and relief under the infirmity and weakness he there mentions.

[3.] Stay yourselves on the word, the promises of God. No such cordials in a fainting fit. Treasure up those promises which are suited to the cross. No condition hath so many promises, nor any of a sweeter import. Let these be your delight, and they will be your strength, Psalms 119:92. He had fainted and sunk under the weight of his afflictions, but that the promise was his support, and that which he delighted to stay upon.

[4.] Keep in God's way. The strength of a soldier is in his intrenchments and fortifications. While he [is] within his works he is in his strength, whenas a straggler may be easily cut off. While you straggle not, but keep God's way, you are within your fortifications; 'The way of the Lord is strength,' Proverbs 10:29. If a cross meet you there, it may trouble you, but it cannot easily hurt you. If a storm rise while you are at anchor in the channel, or in the harbour, you may ride it out more safely; but if it take you while you are amongst rocks and shelves (as you are always when you leave the way of God), you will be in danger to be wrecked. When a man is under a heavy burden, it is a great advantage to him if his way be fair; but if he be upon a bog, the weight of his burden will go near to sink him. Every step out of God's way is over a quagmire. There is no bearing a heavy cross where you can have no sure footing; but the way of God is firm; it will bear you up under any pressure.

(5.) Labour for that strength especially which will serve in a more peculiar manner to fortify you under the cross, that strength which consists in suffering graces. Let me insist a little upon two, faith and patience. Every grace may contribute something to enable you for the cross, but these two more than any of the rest, more especially, more immediately.

[1.] For faith. The apostle commends this to us above all the rest, with an ■π■ π■σιν, as that which above all the rest will enable us to stand in a day of trial, Ephesians 6:13-14, Ephesians 6:16. Above all, get the shield of faith, if you would stand. Get faith strengthened, get it exercised; act it upon the attributes, upon the promises of God; encourage it by your relations to him, by your experiences of him, by the acts of his providence for you and others under the cross in all ages.

Those worthies of whom we have a catalogue, Hebrews 11:1-40, were by faith enabled both to do wonders, and to endure wonderfully. All that they acted, all that they suffered, is by name ascribed to faith, Hebrews 11:24-25. By faith Moses took up the cross out of choice; he did choose it, rather than all the pleasures, riches, and honours of Egypt. And by faith, when he had taken it up, he bare it, he endured it, Hebrews 11:27; and others were enabled thereby to endure things more grievous, Hebrews 11:35-38. And all by faith. This enabled them to encounter death in all shapes, to bear all kinds of crosses, even those that seem most intolerable to flesh and blood; and so to endure them, as they were not only admired by men, but the Lord himself breaks forth into their praises, Hebrews 11:39. If you would tread in their steps under the cross, you must get their faith; for faith affords the greatest advantages to fortify you for bearing the cross. Let me instance in some briefly.

First, Faith engages the strength of God with you; and they are strong indeed who are fortified with his strength. What cross is there that the strength of the Almighty will not enable you to bear? Now faith will make you sure of this. It will oblige the everlasting arm to bear you up, and to keep you upright under the cross, how heavy and oppressing soever it be, 1 Peter 1:5-7. What kept them in such a temper under the cross, as they could rejoice under manifold sufferings, so as they lost no more by their sufferings than the gold loseth by the fire, which comes out more bright and precious and orient than it goes in; yea, so as their manifold crosses, and their undergoing them, was to the praise and honour and glory of God, exceedingly every way to his glory? What is there that could keep flesh and blood thus under the cross? Why, it was the power of God, to which nothing is impossible, nothing difficult, being kept by the power of God. And how came this power of God to be engaged with them? Why, through faith. Never fear the heaviest cross, if there be the power of God to bear it. And this will not be wanting if faith be not wanting. Faith is a relying upon God for strength. Now those that rely on him oblige him; he will not fail them, Psalms 9:18, ■■■■■. The oppressed, those that are ready to sink under their pressure, if they expect the Lord’s strength to bear them up (and faith doth expect it), he will not disappoint them. That would be a great dishonour to him, to disappoint those whom he has encouraged to depend on him. Honest and ingenious men will not deal thus, much less the faithful God. If you believe, the Lord and his power is engaged.

Secondly, Faith stays itself upon God, Isaiah 50:10. Believing is a leaning on him, Song of Solomon 8:5. The words ■■■ and ■■■, whereby faith is ordinarily expressed in the Old Testament, signify to stay or lean upon. One of them is used when Saul is said to lean upon his spear. And from ■■■■ comes ■■■■, a staff, such a staff as a man leans upon, and supports himself by, when any pressure is upon him; so that the words which the Holy Ghost makes use of to express faith clearly teach us thus much, that by trusting God, by believing on him, the Lord himself becomes our stay, our staff, our support. And what cross can be too heavy when there is such a support under it? when the Almighty becomes, as it were, your staff, your stay, to bear you up? Psalms 55:22. The burden of the cross is too heavy for thee; why, but it is not too heavy for the Lord, and he would have thee cast both thyself and thy burden upon him. He can and will sustain both; and so sustain it, that how heavy soever it be, it shall not so much as move thee. He will bear it himself, rather than it shall move; only cast it upon him. That is the way to be eased of the pressure, to cast it upon God. But how is this done? Why, by believing. It is cast upon God by trusting him. So it is explained, Psalms 37:5, Psalms 37:40. And the same word is rendered

trusting, Psalms 22:8; so that faith is a compendious way to give you ease under the cross. When it grows heavy, you may relieve yourselves by rolling it upon God, which is done by believing. And he commands you thus to ease yourselves, by casting the burden upon him. You can never be oppressed, let the cross be what it will, if faith be thus employed.

Thirdly, Faith brings strength from heaven into the soul, fetches supplies from above for the strengthening of the soul under the cross, Psalms 27:13; faith strengthened his heart, kept him from fainting. Psalms 27:14; so Psalms 59:9, because of his strength ■■■; because of the strength which I have from God, I will wait upon him; for that is the way to have it; thereby God becomes my strength and defence. It was by faith that the suffering saints, Hebrews 11:1-40, out of weakness were made strong; so strong, as nothing was too hard, too heavy for them, Isaiah 40:31. Those that rest upon God for his aid, and rely on him for the accomplishment of his promise, they shall have new supplies of strength, enabling them to bear up and hold out when they seem to be quite spent; they shall as easily surmount all the grievances and difficulties that encounter, as if they were carried above them upon eagles' wings; they shall be above the cross even while they are under it; they shall run when the cross lies heaviest on them; it shall not weary nor retard them; they shall walk with it and not faint. Such are the wonderful effects of faith, and the efficacy of that strength wherewith it empowers a believing soul.

Fourthly, Faith strengthens by its representations, Hebrews 11:1; it makes those things visible and evident which are not seen, gives the believer a clear prospect of them, and represents those things as present which are yet to come, gives them, as it were, a present subsistence, and consequently shews him those things as past which at present are grievous; represents to him the crown as though it were present, and the cross that is upon him as though it were already past.

First, Faith represents Christ to one under the cross, as though he were standing by him, as though he saw and heard him, and felt him. It shews him Christ, as though he saw him before his eyes smiling on him, and expressing himself highly pleased that he will express such love to his Saviour as to suffer for him.

It sets Christ before him as though he felt him putting under his almighty arm to ease and support him under the pressure; as though he felt him holding his head and wiping off the sweat or blood, as one of the martyrs testified, and embracing him with all affectionateness and tenderness.

It sets Christ before him as though he heard him speaking in his ear, Well done, good and faithful servant; I see thy love, thy faithfulness to me, and I will never forget it. Oh if you did but see Christ standing by you, and hear him with an audible voice speaking so to you, you would think nothing too grievous to suffer for him! Why, faith will represent him as effectually as if your eye saw him, and your ears heard him, as though you heard him whisper in your ears those sweet words, Matthew 5:11-12, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.' It was such a representation of faith that enabled Moses to endure, Hebrews 11:27; by faith he saw him, and so endured, as 'seeing him who is' otherwise 'invisible.'

Secondly, Faith represents heaven to him, as though it were set open to his eye; shews him all the glory that is approaching, as though it were already present; helps him to such a prospect of heaven in a promise, as Moses had of Canaan from mount Pisgah: 'If we suffer with him, we shall

also reign with him.' 'Henceforth is laid up for me a crown,' 2 Timothy 4:8. 'The sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us,' Romans 8:18. It is already revealed to faith, though not to sense. Faith can draw the veil, and get such a sight of glory as will make the sense of sufferings to vanish. Faith sees the crown, as though he were already crowned; sees the kingdom, as though he were already reigning; sees the glory of it, as though he were already shining in it: looks upon these things as matters of as great reality and certainty, as any thing that he hears, or sees, or actually enjoys.

Faith gave Moses such a sight of heaven, as enabled him both to take up the cross and bear it, Hebrews 11:28, ■π■βλεπε γ■ρ; he looked upon it, ha had a sight of it. And so had the apostle; and that made him think light of all the crosses that befell him, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. How came the apostle to such a sense of glory as made him speak so slightly of all his afflictions and sufferings; to make nothing of them, as light, momentary, and inconsiderable? Why, 2 Corinthians 4:18, he looked at things not seen: he saw the exceeding greatness and eternity of an unseen glory. And nothing but faith could give him such a sight.

Thirdly, Faith represents the cross as if it were past, looks upon it as that which is but for a moment, and can easily overlook a moment when the boundless length and breadth of eternity is before it, 'These light afflictions, which are but for a moment,' says the apostle, when the eye of faith was upon that unseen eternity. Faith compares the time of suffering with the time of reigning, and sees that that is but as the twinkling of an eye, when it is set against an infinite duration. 'Mine age is nothing before thee,' says David of his life, compared with God's everlastingness, Psalms 39:5. If the cross should lie upon us while we live, yet that is nothing to the eternity of glory with which it shall be recompensed, and faith will not think much to endure that which it looks upon as nothing.

If you would be prepared for the cross, get such a faith as this, and thus exercise it. Let it represent to you Christ and heaven as if they were present, crosses and sufferings as if they were past; since it is but a moment, and they will be no more. Make use of it to engage the strength of God with you; though a small cross may be grievous to you, yet nothing can be too heavy for that. Make God your stay, your support; lean on him by faith; and if the cross grow too weighty, cast it, roll it upon him: he is ready to sustain you, if you will but trust him. At what an easy rate may you be eased of all your pressures! And when you are ready to faint, make use of faith to bring in new supplies of strength. If you have not such trials now, yet you cannot want occasions to exercise it every day; and the more you exercise it now, the readier will it be to serve your turn in greater necessities, under heavier pressures. This will hold the head above water in the fiercest storms: no cross will ever sink you while faith bears up.

[2.] Patience. Get yourselves stored with this: a quiet submission to the hand of God, without disturbance or discomposure, without murmuring or repining; not thinking it too heavy, or too tedious; not giving way to a thought of revenge, or of making the least ill return to the instruments of your sufferings. This is a grace, serving in a special manner to fit you for the cross. There is no bearing it like the followers of Christ, unless in patience you possess your souls. Hence it is so frequently required, and so highly extolled. The apostle glories in the Thessalonians: 2 Thessalonians 1:4, 'We glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.' And indeed, it is a great advantage under the cross:

it makes the cross far more easy. Levius fit quicquid corrigere est nefas: that which is otherwise intolerable, is easily endured by a patient soul. A weak Christian, armed with patience, will better bear a heavier cross than one that has more strength and less patience. This secures the soul against that inward disturbance and discomposure, which is the very sting and malignity of any outward suffering. But how shall we compass this patience? Why, briefly, follow the apostle's advice: Hebrews 12:1-2, 'Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,' &c. Look upon Jesus, see with what patience he bore the cross in all forms, and endured all kinds of persecution.

First, The persecution of the heart, that is hatred. He was hated, and hated with cruel hatred, as the effects of it shewed; and hated without cause. David therein was a type of Christ, and hated by those to whom he expressed the greatest love, John 15:18; and yet he was the greatest expression of love to the world that ever the world saw, John 3:1-36.

Secondly, The persecution of the countenance, when scorn and derision appears in it. For this is Ishmael branded as a persecutor, Galatians 4:1-31. And how did he persecute him? Genesis 21:9. By mocking. The word is metsahhak, which signifies derision, or laughing to scorn. And with this, as some conceive, begin the four hundred years of the Egyptian affliction. Such persecution Christ endured. They fleered at him, and derided him; they scorned him when he preached against their wickedness; Luke 16:14, ■ξεμυκτ■ριζον, they blew their noses at him, as the word signifies; they nodded their heads at him when he was in the greatest extremity.

Thirdly, The persecution of the tongue. He was reviled and vilified, falsely accused, and horribly reproached. They called him a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, Matthew 11:19; a Sabbath-breaker, John 5:16, John 5:18; an impostor, a deceiver, John 7:12; a Samaritan, and one that had a devil, John 8:48; a conjuror, and one that cast out devils by the help of the prince of devils; Matthew 12:24, Βεελζεβο■β, a blasphemer; Matthew 26:65, a traitor, an enemy to Cæsar. And upon these accusations he suffered, and all this falsely. He infinitely abhorred the very thought of what they laid to his charge. They might as well have charged the sea with want of moisture, or accused the sun itself of darkness.

Fourthly, The persecution of the hand. They thrust him out of their synagogues, and out of their city, Luke 4:29. They apprehended him as a thief, Matthew 26:55; arraigned him as a malefactor; they stripped him, and buffeted him, and smote him with the palms of their hands, ver. 67. They tore his flesh with scourges, and pierced his head with thorns, and wounded his side and heart with a spear, and drove great nails through his hands and feet, thereby fastening him to the cross, and putting him to a painful, a cruel, a lingering death.

Now how did he demean himself under all these sufferings and abuses, which were the more provoking and the less sufferable with any patience, because they were offered to a person of perfect innocency, of infinite worth and excellency. Could he endure this with patience? Could the Lord of glory put up such things, when vile worms thus used him? Why, yes; the prophet shews us how he endured: Isaiah 53:7, 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.' Not an impatient word, not an impatient motion; and the apostle, 1 Peter 2:22-23, 'Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again,' &c. And thus he suffered, that he might teach us thus to suffer, 1 Peter 2:20-21. If you would learn patience, look upon Jesus; if his

example will not teach it, there is nothing in heaven or earth can help you to learn it.

Thus much for direction. Let me now remove some pleas which carnal reason is apt to make use of, and flesh and blood, when it is consulted with, will be ready to lay hold of, to excuse itself from bearing the cross, and to decline it when Christ calls for the taking of it up.

Some may be ready to say, I would willingly take up the cross, rather than deny Christ, or renounce the religion I profess; I would suffer rather than quit the substantial and fundamental truths of the gospel.

Obj. But when the question is about circumstantials and smaller matters, about rites and ceremonies, gestures and postures, this or that form of worship or discipline,—here I must be excused,—these are not worth the contending about; no wisdom to run any great hazard for such small matters as the Arians of old. What needs so much stir, propter duas vocales, for two small words, and those not found anywhere expressly in the Scripture? In answer to this, let me present to your consideration these four things.

1. He that is a Christian indeed, and follows Christ fully and faithfully, will not, in the day of trial, inquire whether the matter be small or great that is imposed on him, but whether it be lawful or unlawful. If it be unlawful, not warranted by the law of God, how small soever it may seem, he counts it an occasion great enough to suffer anything rather than yield to it; he will submit to anything, how great soever it be, provided it be lawful; he will yield to nothing, how small soever it be, if it be a sin against God. In this case, nihil obstinacius Christiano (as the ancient says), nothing more obstinate than a Christiam. Let the thing be never so small, if he discern but the least sin in it, do what you will with him, he will never yield to it while he acts like himself.

He counts no sin small, whatever the world may judge of it. Though one sin be less than another, yet no sin to him is little absolutely; as the earth, though it seem but a small point compared with the heavens, yet absolutely, and in itself considered, it is of a vast bigness. So are those sins to him which the world counts little. He sees something of infiniteness in every sin, as that which is committed against an infinite majesty, as that which makes him obnoxious to infinite justice, as that which deserves infinite or eternal torments, as that which cannot be expiated without a satisfaction of infinite value. Let them make light of sin who never saw its sinfulness, who never felt its weight and grievousness. The true Christian has seen and felt that in sin which will not suffer him to look upon it as a light matter, in what diminutive shape soever it appear; and therefore, when it comes to this, either you must do such a thing, forbear such a thing, or suffer for it; he inquires not whether this thing be small or great, but whether it be sin or no; as a man that is careful of his life will not inquire whether a suspected potion be less or more, but whether it be poison or no; if it be deadly poison, he knows a drop is too much, and may destroy him as well as a large draught, and therefore will not meddle with a drop of it. A true Christian looks upon every sin as deadly poison, how finely soever it be gilded over; in how small quantity soever it be offered him, he dare not venture his soul to take it, he will rather venture body and all outward things under the cross.

Thus Daniel would hazard his life rather than not open his window towards Jerusalem; though this was but a circumstance, and the main duty might have been done unobserved, and so without danger, if this had been omitted, Daniel 6:10. So Laurentius the deacon, in the primitive times,

would die rather than discover the church's treasure to those that would have seized on it, though it is like the church would have been willing to lose their treasure to have saved the life of such a person. So the man of Berne, that Melancthon speaks of, would be martyred rather than observe a fast in the popish manner, though that may seem a small matter. So divers Christians, in Diocletian's persecution, would suffer rather than yield to the appearance of evil; they would not redeem their lives by giving a piece of paper at the command of the officers, lest thereby they should have seemed to have delivered their Bibles to the fire. And the Christians in Tertullian's time would suffer rather than use the rites, and ceremonies, and customs of idolaters, though they might have used them to another end, and with another mind, than they did.

They thought these sinful, and therefore, though they might seem small matters to others, they counted them matter sufficient to suffer. And so is the smallest matter which is but in the leastwise sinful to every true Christian; he that will be faithful to Christ must choose the greatest sufferings rather than the smallest sin, and take up the heaviest cross rather than offend in the least.

There may be great evil in that which passes for a little sin, a small matter. Vain thoughts are counted the smallest sins, but the Scripture otherwise represents them: Jeremiah 4:14, 'Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?' There is pernicious wickedness in vain thoughts, such as may hinder those who allow it from being saved. An idle word passes for a slight fault, many will count it none at all; but we are told, Matthew 12:36, 'Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' Is it not better to be condemned at man's tribunal for avoiding of that which, how small soever, may be matter of condemnation at the judgment-seat of Christ? The apostle would have us avoid all appearance of evil, 1 Thessalonians 5:22. He would have us avoid nothing but what we may comfortably suffer for, yet would have us avoid not only apparent evils, but the appearance; so Jude 1:23, 'hating the garment spotted with the flesh.'

2. A small evil in itself may become a great evil in consequence; by giving way to the least we may make way for the greatest. He that will yield to small evils, rather than endure the cross, may thereby lay the foundation of the greatest mischiefs. Solent et minima paulatim despecta in malum magnum trahere. The least evils slighted are wont to draw us into the greatest. This is evident in all experience. The greatest abominations in the Christian world have had their rise from small beginnings, and such as it would be counted a nicety to scruple at. What greater abomination was there ever amongst Christians than the popish mass, as we find it now in the Roman missal? Pursue this to its original, and the first step to it will appear to have been a stinted, imposed liturgy. No such thing as a common prescribed liturgy can be found in the first and purest ages of the church. Nay, Socrates the historian tells us, that in his time (and he lived about the middle of the fifth century), lib. v. cap. xxi, page 698, παρ■ π■σαις θρησκε■αις τ■ν ■υχ■ν ο■κ ■στιν ■υρε■ν (■λλ■λαις) συμφωνο■σας δυ■ ■πι τ■ ■υτ■, that amongst all the sorts of worshippers there were not two to be found that used the same prayers. But in the beginning of the seventh century Gregory the Great, who is called the last bishop and the first pope of Rome, imposed the Gregorian form upon the Church of Rome,* thrusting into it the invocation of saints.† And in the ninth century it was urged upon the other western churches by Charles the Great: and in the eleventh century upon the churches of Spain by Alphonsus the VI. And still, as it proceeded, some additions were made, the additions bringing in new corruptions, and the universal imposition making the corruptions generally received, till at last it came up to that height of superstition,

idolatry, and error, which we see it now consists of, and which all true protestants cannot but greatly abhor and detest. And so we perceive what a mischief may arise from a small and seemingly innocent thing. Nor can any deny, but if way had not been given to a stinted, imposed form, the popish mass had never taken place in the world. So that hence it is manifest that a small and seemingly innocent thing may make way for a dreadful mischief. Let me add another instance. The first step to the pope's throne was the inequality introduced amongst ministers, by one degree after another, rising to a papal height. There was granted to one person, first a presidency over others, then a sole power of ordination, then a sole power of jurisdiction over the rest; and that first over all in a city or diocese, then over all in a province, then over all in divers provinces, and at last over all through the whole world.

If this inequality, in the former degrees of it, had not been yielded to, the man of sin could never have advanced himself above all that is called God. If that egg had never been laid, or had been crushed when it first appeared, this cockatrice had never been hatched; it had never become a dragon, or such a fiery flying serpent as we now find it. The papists' invocation of saints is apparently idolatrous, and yet the beginnings of it seemed modest. They first began with a commemoration of the saints, naming them, and praising God for them. From thence they proceeded to the suffrages of the saints, beseeching God that they might have the benefit and advantage of the prayers and supplications of the saints departed. And so, in fine, they came to direct their prayers immediately to the saints, making them mediators of intercession. Now if they had at first scrupled those commemorations, they had never gone so far as intercession; but yielding to the one as harmless, made a more easy way to the other, though grossly idolatrous.

Nay further, some words, though less material than things, being incautiously used, have been the foundation of pernicious errors. The ancients using the words merit and satisfaction in a tolerable sense, the papists upon those words have hatched their blasphemous opinions of the merit of condignity and human satisfactions, challenging heaven as that which they have deserved, and presuming they can make God a recompence for the injury sin has done him.

There is danger in words, not only in rites and actions. Change in words may occasion some change in religion; which the Jesuits apprehend, and therefore advise their followers not to use the words of protestants. So the Rhemists, 'While they say ministers, let us say priests; and when they call it a communion-table, let us call it an altar. Let us,' say they, 'keep our old words, and we shall keep our old things, our religion.' So jealous are they of their religion, indeed their superstition, as they will not hazard it by the change of a word; whenas both names and things as hazardous to our religion, are swallowed down freely by many who are accounted protestants.

Basil was more cautious, who would not abate one syllable to keep his place and purchase the emperor's favour. It is remarkable what Theodoret relates of him, lib. iv. cap. xvii. The emperor Valens being desirous to win Basil over to a compliance with the Arians, sends a governor to him, with instructions, either to prevail with him or cast him out of his place. The governor applies himself to Basil with all persuasive words, exhorting him to yield to the time, ■■ιξαι τ■ τ■ καιρ■, and not to run so great a hazard for so small a matter, δι■ ■λ■γην δογμ■των ■κριβε■αν; promises him the emperor's favour, and great advantages thereby, both to himself and others. Basil answers him, 'These words are fitter for children, whose weakness is apt to be taken with such things; but those who are nourished up with the word of God, ο■δ■ μ■αν ■ν■χονται

συλλαβ■ν, will not quit so much as one syllable of divine truth; nay rather, they will suffer, π■σας το■ θαν■του τ■ς ■δ■ας, all kinds of death. As for the emperor's favour (says he) μ■γα γ■ρ ■γο■μαι μετ■ ■υσεβε■ας, I value it highly when it is consistent with piety; but without this I count it pernicious, ■λεθρ■αν ■ποκαλ■.

If the ancients had foreseen that their incautiousness in some smaller matters would have been of such pernicious consequence to after-ages, they would have kept closer to the rule, both in rites and words, though they had suffered for it. And we, being warned by such experiences, will be left inexcusable, if we do not endure the cross rather than yield to the least thing which may be of dangerous consequence either to present or future generations.

3. Small things may be accompanied with such circumstances, effects, and attendants, as may swell them into a monstrous and very formidable bigness. Those things which seem small, when you consider them in themselves simply, yet behold them in their concomitants, and you may discern them to be exceeding great evils. As,

(1.) If we stand obliged against them under sacred and solemn bonds, if we be engaged against them by solemn oath and covenant, in that case there is no yielding to them without perjury and perfidiousness to God and men. And that is no small thing which involves us in the guilt of perjury, and that vengeance which will follow it. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' And such perfidiousness will bring us under the hand and stroke of divine vengeance; for the Lord threatens he will avenge the quarrel of his covenant, and avenge it with the dreadfullest judgments, sword, and famine, and pestilence, Leviticus 26:25-26. And you may see one part of the threatening executed with severity in David's time: 2 Samuel 21:1-2, Saul had slain some of the Gibeonites, and thereby violated the covenant made with them some hundred years before, in the days of Joshua. And for the breaking of that solemn league, though it was rashly made, and the Israelites were drawn into it by fraud and dissimulation; and it was questionable whether it was lawfully made, since the Lord had commanded to destroy the Canaanites, part of whom by this oath escaped the sentence of destruction; nevertheless the Lord's wrath broke forth against Israel, nor would he be atoned till David had punished that perfidiousness upon Saul's house by the sword, as he had punished it upon all Israel by famine.

There is some comfort, if we fall into the hands of men for our faithfulness; but what comfort can there be if we fall under the hand of God for perfidiousness? The faithful found some comfort and support in a desolate condition, upon this account, because they had been faithful in the covenant, Psalms 44:17, Psalms 44:19. Though they were brought into the most desolate condition of horror and darkness, the very next degree to death itself, yet this supports them, they had not dealt falsely, &c. But perfidiousness will leave us under the revenging hand of God, without support. That is no small thing which will bring us under such a horrid guilt, and under such a dreadful danger.

(2.) If they make us like idolaters. It is no small evil to be like those whom God abhors, in small matters. The Lord will not have the Jews to use the rites of the idolatrous nations. Because the Gentiles worshipped towards the east, he will have his temple built westward. He forbids the shaving of their heads, because he would not have them like the Gentiles. Longum divortium mandat Deus ab idololatria (says Tertullian, de cor. Mil.) The Lord commands us to keep the greatest distance from idolatry. In nullo proxime agendum, We must not in any thing come near it.

Draco etiam terreus de longinquo hominis spiritum absorbet, The dragon can kill a man at a distance, and therefore need to keep far off. The idolatry of the papists is as odious to God as the idolatry of the Gentiles, and in many respects more abominable; and therefore it is dangerous to borrow their rites, and habits, and forms, lest in imitating them we partake with them, Revelation 18:4. To have fellowship with them in their ceremonies and manner of worship, may be ill resented, 2 Corinthians 6:14-17. The Lord is a jealous God: he will have the relics of idolatry to be abolished; those that will retain them, provoke him to jealousy. Though the brazen serpent was set up by his own appointment, yet when it was once abused to idolatry, Hezekiah breaks it down, and is commended for it by the Lord. How much more should the inventions of men be cashiered, after an apparent abuse, when the Lord will not have his own appointments spared, after once they have been idolatrously abused? Hosea 2:17. Though the names Baali and Ishi signify both of them an husband, and Baali is an appellation of God himself, Isaiah 54:4, yet since it had been abused and given to idols, he would have it no more used. The Lord is so jealous of his service, that he will not endure an abused name to be made use of in his worship. And will it not provoke the Lord to jealousy, to use not only names, but things, which have been popishly and idolatrously abused? Or is it a small matter to provoke the Lord to jealousy?

(3.) If they give scandal, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of others; if they induce others to sin, or confirm them in sin, or hinder their spiritual edification and comfort, they are scandalous. That which hardens the papists in their way, and makes them apt to think, that those who have left them are again returning to them. That which disposeth others to a better liking of popery, and abates their detestation of the Roman antichrist, which is a principal means to secure them against his impostures; that which confirms any in their superstitious, formal, and heartless devotions; as though the worship of God were but a bodily exercise, a lip-labour, or a ceremonious complimenting with God: that which is of this tendency is scandalous, and that which is scandalous is no small matter. The apostle makes it murder, Romans 14:15; and Christ burdens it with dreadful woes, Matthew 18:7, Luke 17:1-2.

(4.) If they tend to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel. Rites, and ceremonies, and forms of worship, borrowed from the papists, in use amongst them, seem small things; but the Reformed churches abandon them all, lest the doctrine of the gospel should be hereby endangered. Utinam vidissent (says P. Martyr) qui hæc conservanda censuerunt; I would they had seen, who would have these things retained, evangelium, iis manentibus, non satis esse firmum, that while they continue, the gospel is not secure. The divines of Hamburgh, in their epistle to Melancthon, call the popish mixtures in the German Interim, though they passed under the name of indifferent things, semina corruptelæ, the seeds of Romish corruption; intimating, that in time they were like to bring forth a large popish crop. They looked upon them as cuniculi, as secret mines, through which the papists would convey themselves under their foundations, and so overthrow their churches. (Vid. Park. of the Cross, page 67.) The divines of Saxony looked upon it as a design of Satan, qui ab his parvis initiis ceremoniarum, &c., who, from those small ceremonious beginnings, was making his way to corrupt their doctrine. Now that is no small evil, how small soever it may seem, which tends to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel.

If any ask, why we may not imitate the papists in their ceremonious worship, what hurt, what danger in that? We may have an answer from Augustine: In multitudine ceremoniarum periclitatur fides, the faith itself is endangered by such ceremoniousness. We shall be put to borrow Roman

principles, that we may defend Romish practices. Why may we not imitate them in the government and discipline of the church, rather than tie ourselves strictly to primitive rules? Why, that of Cyprian may deter us from it: ‘It cannot be,’ says he, ‘that Novatus should keep the doctrine of the church, if he break the discipline.’

(5.) If they be a hindrance to the gospel, and the powerful preaching of it, they are no small things; for that which is an impediment to the gospel strikes at the interest of Christ: for this is the main instrument to advance him in the world, by casting out Satan, and beating down sin, and promoting holiness. Yet so have those small things been managed heretofore, to the great prejudice of the gospel; being made use of for the thrusting out, or keeping out many able and faithful labourers, and making many congregations desolate, leaving them in darkness, or without any more light than some stinking snuff would afford them, like those Gileadites, Judges 12:6. They have served, like those Gileadites, to keep the passages of the church, so as no minister, how able or worthy soever, could pass, unless he could pronounce this Shibboleth. That is no small thing which has been the cause of so great mischief to the souls of men, as the want of the gospel comes to. Boniface, the martyr, wished for the golden preachers which were in the church when they had but wooden chalices; he would have counted it an ill bargain to have exchanged golden preaching for wooden ceremonies.

It is the observation of learned and moderate Bucer, one of the principal reformers both here and in Germany, ‘That the ceremonies and the preaching of the word, do mutually for the most part expel one another. Where knowledge prevaileth through the preaching of the gospel, there the love of them withereth; and where the love of these prevail, there knowledge decayeth.’ And therefore, in his judgment, though they were small things, they were great mischiefs. To conclude this, Bellarmine himself is forced to confess this much, that when a man hath more care to adorn the church with outward ornaments than with a preacher, though his mind be not Jewish, yet doth he repræsentare Judaicam superstitionem, he acts as superstitiously as a Jew. To hinder the preaching of the gospel, or to discourage or disable the ministers of it for rites and forms, is the way to make these small things intolerable mischiefs, and such as we had better suffer any thing than yield to.

(6.) If they be made engines of persecution; if they be made use of to vex, and afflict, and oppress, and ruin those that are truly conscientious. And this is no new or strange thing either here or in other parts. Such small things have been made the instruments of great oppression and cruelty. You may see it in the persecution of the Interim by Charles the Fifth in Germany. I instance so far off, because some men see better afar off than near at hand. There divers popish rites were urged as adiophora, under the notion of things indifferent. And though they called them small, yet they made them heavy, imposing them under great penalty. And the pressure lay heaviest upon those who were most conscientious, especially the ministers, who, for a modest refusal of what their consciences could not digest, were reproached as turbulent and seditious, deprived of their places and estates, driven out of the country; and so many congregations were laid waste, and left as sheep without a shepherd; and the shepherds were scattered, or left to wolves in priests’ habits.

Now let such things as these be counted never so small, they will be found grievous things in the conclusion, which involve men in the guilt of persecution; especially since Christ counts himself persecuted in the sufferings of his people. He resents it, as though himself were reproached,

indicted, arraigned, banished, imprisoned, when his servants are thus used for conscience towards God: ‘Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me.’ It holds as well in doing them hurt as in doing them good. And thus you see everything is not small that is so accounted. That which seems little may be exceedingly big with guilt. He that will not bear the cross, rather than yield to things thus aggravated, under a pretence that they are matters of small moment, never intends to bear the cross at all.

(7.) When they are instruments of division, and engines to make breaches amongst Christians, as they are, and will be, when they are generally and rigorously imposed. And hence it comes to pass that those are the greatest dividers who most cry out against divisions, and the greatest enemies to unity who are most violent for uniformity. For when they will not be content to worship God, and order the churches, as the apostles did, and will not satisfy themselves with the primitive simplicity, with those few plain things which the Scriptures make necessary, but will urge such things, and so many, as no general concurrence can be expected, they must needs cause a falling off of many particulars, and so they become the greatest schismatics who most declaim against schism; for they are the schismatics, not who withdraw when they have just cause, but who give the cause of withdrawing. As our divines justify themselves against the papists, when they charge them with separating from Rome. We are not fugitivi, but fugati; they stirred not till they were chased away, and had just cause given of withdrawing from them. When a necessity is laid upon things which are not necessary, and such small things are rigorously imposed, they make great breaches; and if that be a great evil, these things so urged are not a little guilty.

4. The less the evils are for which any bear the cross, the more faithful they are in following Christ. This is to follow him fully, when you will rather suffer than swerve from him in a small matter. He is faithful indeed who will bear a heavy cross rather than yield to the least evil. He is exactly faithful who will not be unfaithful in a little. This is the greatest trial, and he that quits himself well here will give a signal testimony that he is a good and faithful servant. This shews the greatest love to Christ, gives the greatest encouragement to others, and will have the greatest reward. For what Christ promises in another case he will make good in this: Luke 19:17, ‘Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities;’ Matthew 24:23, ‘Thou hast been faithful in a little, I will make thee ruler over much,’ ■π■ ■λ■γα ■ς πιστ■ς.

# 02 - Volume 2

The Works of

DAVID CLARKSON

Volume II

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SERMONS, &c. THE NEW CREATURE For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.—Galatians 6:15. The apostle does, in this epistle, dispute against the false doctrine wherewith the Galatians were in danger to be bewitched. In the conclusion of it, he gives some characters of those false teachers who broached that doctrine; that the doctrine itself being discovered to be an imposture, and the teachers impostors, the Galatians might be undeceived, and so return to the truth, to this apostle, the preacher and witness of it; both which they were tempted to reject. The description of these erroneous teachers begins, Galatians 6:12; and he gives such characters of them as will be useful to us for discovering such deluders as they were.

He describes them, 1, by their hypocrisy. They desired to make a fair show, ε■προσωπ■σαι, to put a fair face upon their foul opinions and practices. Error is of an ugly shape, and if a handsome vizard be not found to cover its deformities, it will fright any whose eyes are opened from embracing it. Ε■πρ■σωπα are plausible arguments; such they used, arguments plausible to the flesh, such as were suitable to carnal hearts, inclinations, humours, interests. And this was the paint which they used to make the face of their errors more comely and taking; and, indeed, the Galatians, though an eminent church of Christ, were even bewitched with it. The simplicity of the doctrine of a crucified Christ, of justification by faith alone in him, which Paul, without paint or varnish, nakedly published, seemed not so lovely; they questioned both Paul's doctrine and his calling. Thus they prevailed, and this was their act.*

2. By their carnal policy, Galatians 6:12. They would urge the ceremonial law with the doctrine of Christ, that they might seem Christians, and yet avoid the fury of the Jews, who, being zealous of the law, persecuted to the death those who cried down the observance of it. Though they pretended conscience, yet it was carnal policy that moved them; though they urged circumcision, as though without it there was no salvation, yet the true reason was their desire to avoid persecution.

3. By their partiality, Galatians 6:13. Though they pressed circumcision, as an engagement to observe Moses's law, yet they would not observe the law themselves, preposterously urged the means, and neglected the end. They were frequent and violent in their disputes and endeavours for circumcision, which was but a rite, a circumstantial, a positive ordinance, and now out of use, while they neglected the great things of the law, the keeping of Christ's commandments, the great things of the gospel, faith, love, holiness, mortification; whereas that which they drove at was nothing in comparison of these, as the apostle tells, Galatians 5:6, 1 Corinthians 7:19. And oh how sadly does this humour prevail amongst us, to the neglect of holiness and mortification! Some cry up a form of government, some an ordinance, that which they fancy; some an opinion, as the fifth

monarchy. But, alas, what are those but the mint, anise, and cummin of the Pharisees, in comparison of those βαρ■τερα του ν■μο■, those weightier duties, studies, employments, which the gospel calls Christians to? Oh the power of Satan, who can prevail the same way now as he prevailed formerly with the Pharisees, and here with the false apostles, that the same snare should take in all ages!

4. By their vainglory. They affected multitudes of followers, strove to draw many to their opinion and practice, to submit to their supposed ordinance of circumcision, that they might glory in their flesh; that multitudes having received that sign in their flesh, by their persuasion, they might therein glory. But this was fleshly glorying, such as becomes such carnal teachers. The apostle was of another spirit; he had another object for his glorying, Galatians 6:14. Express a true gospel temper, a right frame of spirit, according to the mind of Christ, which we should drive on as our greatest design, and aim at as our highest attainment. Cross of Christ, not the material cross, as some blind papists fancy, but the sufferings of Christ crucified, the love of Christ expressed in those sufferings, the precious benefits purchased by those sufferings. Such excellency he saw in Christ crucified, as cast a shadow upon all the glory of the world, rendered it contemptible in his eye. He gloried in Christ crucified; here was his treasure, his joy, his glory, yea, his life too, for he was dead to the world, and the world unto him. 'By whom,' &c. He was as a dead, a crucified man, to the world, and the world was a dead thing to him. He was a dead man to the world; he did no more regard the pomp and glory, the plenty and power, the pleasures and honours of the world, than a dead man. A dead man he esteems not, he admires not these things; they are not his study, his projects, his designs. He is not affected with them; he neither loves nor desires them, neither delights nor rejoices in them, neither discontent when he wants them, nor grieved when he loses them; they are neither his hope nor confidence. A dead man he sees no worth, tastes no sweetness, feels no weight, no substance, in worldly enjoyments. So was the apostle disposed to the world, and so should we be to it, and the things of it, when compared with Christ.

'World is crucified,' &c. As he was dead to it, so it was but a dead thing to him; saw no more excellency in it than in a dead thing, took no more pleasure in it, &c. That which is most delightful when alive must be removed out of our sight, buried, when dead. He looked for no more profit and advantage by it than a lifeless thing can afford. So did he look upon the world, and so should we rely on it for no pleasure, no advantage; see no worth, no excellency in it, in comparison of Christ crucified; and further, than we may make use of the world to be serviceable to him. This is that high attainment which should be our study, endeavour, design, and leave those to dispute and contend about trifles and circumstances, and doat upon groundless opinions, who have no experimental knowledge of Christ crucified. Thus we should learn Christ, so as to look upon him, and conformity to him as that one thing needful; that one thing above all in the world, glorious, excellent, delightful. But how did the apostle arrive at this high attainment? And how must we attain it? Why, by him, by Christ. So we see, 'By whom,' &c. By him these five ways.

1. Efficienter. By his efficacy, the mighty working of Christ within us. Nothing but the power of Christ can work this great effect. Naturally, as we are dead towards God, so we are alive to the world. As he only can raise us to spiritual life, so he can only dead our hearts to the world; we must look up to him for it; he purchased this.

2. Exemplariter. By looking upon him as our effectual, engaging example. Thus lived Christ for our sakes, as one dead to the world while he lived in it; despising not only the shame, but the glory, of the world; lived contemned, not regarding the world's honours; poor, as not esteeming riches; low, as not affecting power and authority. He regarded none of those things which worldlings prize and admire, and this for our sakes; and therefore so should we much more for his sake. There is a force, a constraint, in his example, to work our hearts to this.

3. Objectivé. By looking on him as an object in whom we may find infinitely more, better things, than the world can afford. In him there is richer treasures than the treasures of the world, sweeter delights than the pleasures of the world, greater honours than worldly preferments, more excellent glory than the pomp of the world; choicer, more satisfying, abiding, enhappying enjoyments than the world can afford. In Christ crucified spring such joys, from him flow such excellencies, as overflow all worldly things; they lie under it, as weeds unseen, unregarded. Now, what need is there to live on a broken cistern, when the fountain of living waters is set open in Christ crucified? What need we feed on husks, when the pleasures of a Father's house are offered in Christ? What need they covet treasures on earth, who have all the treasures in heaven tendered to them in Christ? Paul desired to know nothing, to enjoy nothing, but Christ, to be found in him; counted all that the world counts gain to be loss, all that men count excellent to be dung, all that we think precious to be dross, compared with Christ. And those who have such a sight of Christ as he had, will be of his mind; he that knows what it is to live so upon Christ, will easily be dead to the world.

4. Impulsivé. The beholding of Christ crucified is a strong motive to get our hearts crucified to the world; for why, it was our sinful living to and upon the world for which Christ was crucified: 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' is all that is in the world, 1 John 2:16. For these was Christ crucified, and shall not we be crucified to that which crucified him? Shall we live to that which was his death?

5. Representativé. Christ, representing his people on the cross, undertook this; engaged himself to his Father, that those whom he represented, those in whose stead he was crucified, should be crucified to the world; and in this sense he says, Galatians 2:20, 'I am crucified.' As Christ, as our Surety, suffered in our stead, so, as our Surety, he engaged in our name, in our behalf, that we should die to the world. And if he engaged for us, then are we deeply engaged; and if he undertook this in our behalf, then will he (if we seek to him, depend on him) enable us to answer his engagement. This was the apostle's blessed temper, in opposition to the false apostles, and he gives a reason in the text; as if he had said, These false teachers, they lay out the main of their strength, time, thoughts, endeavours, about a rite, a thing of less moment. All their disputations are about circumcision, all their conferences, discourse is taken up with this; but I have not so learned Christ, I mind that which is more weighty, of greater concernment, and that which Christ more regards and better accepts. If Christ may be admitted umpire betwixt us, he will judge that I have chosen the better part; that it is incomparably more available to mind the new creation, than circumcision, 'for in Christ Jesus,' &c.

Before I describe to you the nature of this new creature, let me, from the pre-eminence the apostle giveth it before those other privileges and duties, propound to you this

Observation. Except a man be a new creature, no privilege or religious duty will avail him anything, as to acceptation with God, or salvation. Uncircumcision was now a duty and privilege to the

Gentiles, and circumcision was formerly both a duty and privilege to the Jews; for thereby they were solemnly admitted members of the church, thereby the covenant of grace was sealed to them. This was a badge whereby the Lord owned them, and separated them to himself above all people in the world. By virtue of this, ‘to them belonged the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, and the promises,’ Romans 9:1-33. In these respects, circumcision did profit them much every way. As to this, it was available; but as to acceptation and salvation, it availed nothing to any one whose heart was not circumcised, i.e. who was not a new creature. So baptism, and hearing the word, and prayer, they are privileges and duties commanded by God, and necessary to be observed, yea, and many ways profitable; but as to acceptation with God, and salvation of the observer, they avail nothing, except he be a new creature. Dost thou hear? It is well; God requires it; it is necessary, profitable. But this is not enough to evidence that the Lord accepts thee, or that he will save thee, unless thou be a new creature. Dost thou pray? art thou baptized? art thou of this or that form of church government? Why, this is nothing as to the great concernments of acceptation, &c.

Reason 1. Because he that is not a new creature, he wants faith; and he that wants faith cannot be saved, he cannot please God. The apostle tells us it is impossible: Hebrews 11:6, he cannot be saved; for ‘he that believes not, shall not see life,’ John 3:1-36. Now, he that is not a new creature, he wants faith, for faith is a principal part of this new creation; and therefore the apostle speaks in the same language of faith, as here of the new creature, Galatians 5:6.

Reason 2. Because he that is not a new creature, he is not in Christ; and he that is not in Christ, can neither be saved nor accepted. No man whatsoever is accepted but in his beloved, Ephesians 1:6; and for salvation, ‘there is no name under heaven,’ &c, no coming to God but in Christ; as Joseph said to his brethren, Unless you bring Benjamin, come not in my presence. Now, he that is not a new creature is not in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Reason 3. Till then ye can do nothing that is good; and that which is not good cannot be accepted. Nothing can be done by him that is not a new creature that is spiritually good; for, till the heart be good, nothing that is good can proceed from it: ‘A good man, out of the good treasure,’ &c., Matthew 12:35; we cannot gather grapes of thorns, Luke 6:43-45; ‘How can you, being evil,’ &c. Now, the heart is not good till it be renewed, till it be new created. Till this, there is no goodness in the heart, for creation is the making of something out of nothing, productio rei ex nihilo. The heart is not good till it be new, and so no good can proceed from it, and therefore nothing done till this can be accepted.

Use. Information. See the misery of those that are not new creatures. Whatever ye do, whatever ye enjoy, till then ye cannot he accepted, ye cannot be saved. If it were possible for an unconverted man to steal into heaven, as he without the wedding garment to the marriage chamber, yet would he be cast forth into outer darkness. Profession, and outward performances, if you rest here, will make you no better than foolish virgins. If you want renewing grace, new natures, you want oil in your lamps, you will be shut out of Christ’s presence, and left in darkness. Every one that is not a new creature must hear that dreadful word from Christ’s mouth, ‘Depart from me, I never knew you.’ You hear, you pray, read, it is well; you would sin more grievously, your condemnation would be heavier, if ye neglected, omitted these duties. Ay, but this is not enough to save you, or to evidence your title to heaven. He builds upon the sand that raises his

hopes of heaven upon outward performances. And if he be not a new creature, woeful will be the ruin of his hopes in the day of trial. These duties must be done, but more than these must be done; one thing more is needful, a new nature, a sanctified heart, else no acceptance, no salvation.

Obs. Unless a man be a new creature, nothing will avail him to salvation: ‘Except a man be born again,’ &c., he cannot be saved. This is a truth which will hardly be digested, not easily believed; therefore hear how the Lord bears witness to it in other scriptures, John 3:3. He that is truth itself affirms it, and affirms it with an asseveration; and to put it out of all doubt, he doubles the asseveration. Now, to be born again, and to be a new creature, is the same thing in diverse expressions. It is all one as if he had said, Verily except a man be a new creature, &c., 2 Corinthians 5:17. In Christ, if any man be united to him, justified by him, partake of the benefits purchased by him, saved by him, Romans 8:30. Now, whom God calls, thereby he makes them new creatures.

Now, because this is a truth of great concernment, and far above the reach of nature, which natural men are more apt to deride as a fancy than receive as truth;—

Man is made a new creature when the Lord creates new and gracious qualities in his whole soul. I shall prove each part by Scripture.

1. Cause efficient. It is God; he alone is able for this work. All the creatures in heaven and earth cannot work the least gracious quality in man’s soul. It is above the power of nature, of men, of angels, to make such a new creature; it is God’s prerogative, ascribed only to him, Ephesians 2:10; his workmanship, and therefore he that is made a new creature, is said to be born of God, 1 John 3:1-24.

2. The act, creation. The act that makes a creature is creation; and this is called a new creature, 2 Corinthians 5:17. A new heart cannot be had till it be created: ‘Create in me,’ &c., Psalms 51:1-19, Ephesians 2:10.

3. The effect, new and gracious qualities. New qualities; hence, when this work is done, all things become new, 2 Corinthians 4:17. And a new creation is called a new man, Colossians 3:10.; and he that is regenerated is said to be renewed, Ephesians 4:23-24. Gracious: not natural endowments nor moral qualifications, but divine. Hence these qualities are called the divine nature, holy, sanctifying qualities. The new man is created after God in holiness, Ephesians 4:24. It is a conformity to the image of God, and therefore must be holy qualities, Colossians 3:10.

4. The subject, the whole soul; not any one part or faculty, but the whole, all, and every one. Hence it is called the new birth when every member is formed and so brought forth. And this new creature is called a new man; not a new mind only, or will, but a new man; not one part, but the whole. These qualities are at first infused, and after increase in every part, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. This in general. Now, from hence we may give you a more exact and particular account of the nature of this new creature.

1. Negatively, what it is not, that we may not deceive ourselves with counterfeits.

(1.) It is not a common work, but a creation. It consists not in those gifts and parts which the Lord bestows by a common dispensation, nor those motions and workings which are often begot by a common providence; many have these who are no new creatures. It is not a gift of prayer, or

utterance, or tongues, or a gift of unfolding or apprehending difficulties in Scripture or religion, nor assistance, enlargement, dexterity in the exercise of these. Judas had all or most of these, yea, and some gifts extraordinary too, yet was not a new creature, was not born of God, but the son of perdition.

It is not common motions: some sense of sin, some grief for it, some wishes of amendment; a personal affliction, or a national judgment, or some unusual strange occurrence, may raise these and such like motions, and more frequent will such motions be in those who live under a powerful ministry. Herod had some like workings in his heart when he ‘heard John gladly;’ and ‘Felix trembled’ when Paul ‘reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,’ Acts 24:25, and Agrippa was ‘almost persuaded,’ Acts 26:28; and yet these were no new creatures.

(2.) It is no innovating humour. When ye hear of a new creature, you must not imagine him to be such a one as will reject all old things, those which God has prescribed and Scripture delivers, such as will have a new faith, religion, worship, ordinances; such as is weary of old Scripture light, and will be always changing his judgment into new-fashioned opinions. This is a new creature after the image of Satan, not of God’s workmanship. The newness which is of God, will comply with the ancient rule, and walk in the good old way as to doctrine and worship and conversation. Indeed, the old ways of profaneness and ungodliness, the old ways of false worship, and of man’s invention, the new creature cannot digest. When a church is corrupted, and God’s worship adulterated with man‘s traditions, a new creature will endeavour (according to the apostle’s direction, 1 Corinthians 3:1-23), to ‘purge out the old leaven.’ It will not plead for anything in God’s worship merely because it is old, but because it is prescribed by God. Forefathers and former generations (when their error is discovered by the world*), will not mislead a new creature if their ways and worship be not according to the law and testimonies. With the king’s daughter, Psalms 45:1-17, it must forget its father’s house. But when the worship and ways of God are received and established according to Scripture purity and simplicity, then to affect new things is no property, no part of this new creation, for this is of God; but that is of Satan, who changes himself into new forms every day to deceive.

(3.) It is not only a restraint of the old man, but something new. There may be restraining grace where there is not renewing grace. A man may leave his former gross sins, put off much of his former old corrupt conversation, and yet not be a new creature. The apostle speaks of some who had escaped, &c., 2 Peter 2:20. They had left their idolatrous and wicked practices, and yet they were not new creatures, for they were again therein entangled and returned, 2 Peter 2:22. Now, if they had been new creatures born of God, they had not sinned as formerly, 1 John 3:1-24. Fear, or shame, or the light of nature, or moral precepts, or other inferior causes and by-respects, may restrain from gross sins, which are all far below the new creature. The Lord restrains many from sin whom he does not renew. He restrained Abimelech, Genesis 20:6, yet a heathen. It is true, he that lives in gross sins can be no new creature. But yet this is true also, he that is no new creature may avoid gross sins. Though ye cannot conclude that ye are new creatures because ye have left, or because you never committed such and such sins, yet ye may certainly conclude that those who live in such sins are no new creatures. If a man may escape these pollutions, avoid these gross evils, and not be renewed, then certainly they are in their old condition who make a practice of these evils.

(4.) It is not moral virtues, or that which we call good nature. The very names shew this. That of which the new creature consists is gracious qualities, such as are divine, supernatural, sanctifying, far above nature and morality. The new creature is not only a sweet, courteous, candid, meek, patient disposition; this some have by nature. But none are new creatures by nature. Though the flesh make a fairer show in some than others, yet, as Christ tells us, 'that which is of the flesh is flesh,' John 3:1-36. And till it be spiritualised, renewed, the best nature is but an old creature. 'Flesh and blood,' though of the best temper that nature can frame it, 'shall not inherit,' &c. This seemed a wonder to Nicodemus, yet Christ affirms it with an asseveration, John 3:3. Nor is it moral virtues. Temperance, justice, chastity, liberality, prudence, truth, modesty, may he found where there is nothing of the new creature, else Scipio, and Socrates, and other heathens must pass for new creatures, those that were strangers to Christ, the gospel, and the regenerating power of the Spirit. These may be acquired by human industry, but the new creature is the workmanship of the divine power.

It is true, where such virtues are not, there is no new creation; but these virtues may be without it, and ergo, it does not consist in them.

(5.) It is not an outward conformity to the law of God, for this is something inward: the workmanship of God within the soul. There may be outward obedience to the first and second table. A man may hear, and pray, and read, and, as to his outward man, observe the Sabbath. He may be faithful in his word, just in his dealings, careful to do no wrong, and yet no new creature. Such were the pharisees as to outward obedience, else they had never been so generally applauded and admired for their appearing piety and righteousness. Such was Paul before he was a new creature, even while he was a pharisee: Php 3:6, 'Touching the,' &c. He that is a new creature will be strict in outward observance of the whole law, and yet a man may outwardly observe and be no new creature.

(6.) It is not a partial change of the inward man. As it is not an outward conformity, so it is not every inward alteration, but a total change of the whole soul as to its qualities, and of every faculty in it; not only of the understanding, affections, but mind, will, conscience, heart, memory.

There may be a partial change in some one or more parts of the soul, and yet no new creature. There may be much knowledge of the things of God, clear apprehensions of gospel truths, and assent to, with persuasions of the truth of revealed doctrine, and yet no new creature, 1 Corinthians 13:2.

There may be some inclinations in the will towards heaven, and yet no new creature, as in Balaam; some purposes, some resolution to amend, as in Saul. There may be some terrors of conscience for sin, as in Cain; some grief for sin, as in Judas, Matthew 27:3, Ahab, 1 Kings 21:1-29; some delight in the ordinances, Matthew 13:20, Job 5:25; some zeal for God, and yet no new creature, as in Jehu; some faith, Acts 8:13, as in Simon Magus; some repenting, as in Judas, Matthew 27:3. In these instances there was an alteration in some one faculty, but no thorough change in the whole soul. A partial change will not make a new creature.

Use. For conviction. If there may be all these things where there is no new creation, then how few new creatures are there in the world! How many are there who go not so far as these, who yet are far from being new creatures! May there be a common work where there is no new creation? Then

how far are they from being new creatures who have no such work upon their souls! Who will not hear the word gladly, as Herod; who do not tremble when the Lord threatens, as Felix; who are not almost persuaded, as Agrippa, to become Christians, according to the rule of the gospel? Herod and Felix, &c., have more to prove themselves new creatures than these, and shall enter into heaven before them. Does not the avoiding of gross sins make a man a new creature? Then, how far are they from being new creatures who wallow in uncleanness, drunkenness, and such gross evils! Abimelech, a heathen, may rise up in judgment against these, and bear witness that they have nothing of the new creation, nor ought to enter into the new Jerusalem. Does not moral virtues, good nature, make a new creature? How far are they from being new creatures who are so fierce, proud, contentious, malicious, revengeful, who are so unjust, intemperate, unchaste and covetous! Scipio and Socrates may better use this plea for salvation than such immoral Christians. Does not outward conformity to the law of God make new creatures? Then how far are they from being new creatures who neglect the worship of God, call not on his name, in public, private, families; will not hear his word so often as he speaks, pollute his Sabbaths, profane his name by oaths and irreverent use thereof! The Pharisees, whose condition Christ makes so woeful, will pass for new creatures, and enter into heaven sooner than these. Is not a change in some part of the soul sufficient to make a new creature? Then how far are they from being new creatures who are ignorant, wholly inclined to the world; without sense of sin, or grief for it, or purposes against it; without delight in the ordinances, or zeal for the worship of God! Balaam, and Cain, and Ahab, and Jehu, and Judas, are herein more like new creatures than these. Oh that those would lay this to heart who may hence be convinced, that they have not so much as that which is not enough to make a new creature. If none must be saved but new creatures, then what shall become of them, who are so far from being new creatures, as they are not so much as like them?

Use. 2. If these be not sufficient to make a new creature, then rest not in any, in all of these; rest not in gifts, or parts, or common motions; rest not in your avoiding of gross sins; rest not in your moral virtues, or good natures, &c. If you rest here, you rest short of salvation, for these are not sufficient to make a new creature; and except ye be new creatures, ye cannot be saved.

2. Positively. What is a new creature? He is a new creature whose soul is made new in all its faculties; whose whole soul is renewed according to the image of God, in knowledge, holiness, righteousness; in whose mind and heart the Lord creates new and gracious qualities. The Scripture comprises all parts of the soul in these two, spirit and heart: the spirit containing mind and conscience; the heart comprising will and affections. He is a new creature whose spirit and heart is new. This is the tenor of the new covenant, Ezekiel 36:26. The mind, will, conscience, affections, are new in every new creature. Let me give you a fuller account of this new creation in these several faculties. A new creature has,

(1.) A new mind, understanding. Putting on the new man is thus expressed, Ephesians 4:23-24. It is renewed in all its several powers, which we may reduce to six heads.

[1.] New apprehensions. There is a new light shines into the mind, which occasions new apprehensions of what is offered to it, far differing from those of the old man. Before he was darkness, now he is light in the Lord; his apprehensions are more true, more clear; that darkness which blinded his eye is now scattered. Light was the first thing produced in the creation of the world, Genesis 1:3, and spiritual light is the first thing in this new creation. The Lord said then, ‘Let

there be light,' &c. And amongst the effects of the word of Christ, the gospel, this is the first, Acts 26:1-32. Knowledge is one of the beauties of this new creature, Colossians 3:10. This renewed knowledge leads the mind to new apprehensions. He had heard much of Christ by the hearing of the ear before, but now his eyes see him, clearly apprehends a transcendant excellency in him, an extreme necessity of him, a complete sufficiency in him; his present apprehensions of Christ differ as much from his former, as a man's apprehensions of what he sees himself differ from those which only are related to him by others.

He apprehended some pleasure, advantage, safety, in sin formerly; but now he sees it extreme evil, loathsome, dangerous, damnable. His former conceits of the world, and its enjoyments, he now sees to be erroneous, and apprehends no happiness, no contentment, in any, in all; sees they are vain, uncertain, deceitful, ensnaring, unsatisfying. That holiness of heart and strictness of life which he before slighted, condemned, derided, as a needless or hypocritical preciseness, he apprehends now, not only as necessary, but as most beautiful and lovely. That good nature, as it is called, which he once relied on, excused and thought so well of, he now sees to be wholly corrupted, deformed, and swarming with as many base lusts as there are motes in the sun: the light discovers them. That state of nature in which he continued till his new birth, which he apprehended safe and capable enough of heaven, he now sees to be a cursed and damnable condition, in which he had certainly perished if mercy had not changed it by renewing him. His former good deeds and good meanings, for which he thought the Lord would spare him and reward him, he now apprehends to be worthy of damnation, and all his own righteousness as a menstruous cloth. His apprehensions in these and other things being erroneous, formed in darkness, all vanish when light appears.

[2.] New judgment and assent. The new creature having truly apprehended these things, he firmly assents to the truth of them: his assent is both firm, convictive, and lively. He rests not in slight, superficial apprehensions, but comes up to full persuasions, that which the apostle calls πληροφορ■α τ■ς συν■σεως. His judgment is carried with full sails into the truth discovered, and that with particular application, in a lively, sensible manner; he sticks not at, doubts not of, what this renewed light discovers, but concludes they are certain, as things that he sees and feels. He is not almost, as Agrippa, but altogether persuaded, that these gospel mysteries are as true as God is truth.

He is persuaded of such a necessity of Christ, as he whose neck is on the block is persuaded of the necessity of a pardon to save his life. Though formerly, upon hearing the love-sick inquiries of distressed souls after Christ, he was apt to say in himself, as they to the spouse, 'What is thy beloved more than another beloved'? Song of Solomon 5:9; yet now he concludes Christ the chiefest of ten thousand, the peerless beauty of heaven and earth, as certainly, as sensibly, as he judges the sun to be light when it shines at noonday; now he wonders at his former blindness, though then he would not be persuaded of it; now he is astonished at the stupidness of the blind world, that is not ravished with the love and beauty of Christ shining in his soul and the gospel. Formerly, discoveries of Christ's all-sufficiency and unsearchable riches were no more to him than the riches of the Indies viewed in a map, or related in a story; but now he passeth such a judgment on it as he does of his own, where he walks, and feeds, and rests, when it is best furnished and provided; it is no foreign thing to him, but that which he sees, tastes, and lives on, and his judgment of it is answerable. When the ugliness and destructiveness of sin was formerly declared

in the ministry of the word, he looked upon it as a monster painted or wrought in a suit of hangings; but now he judges of the mortal danger of sin, as a man judges of poison when he feels it working in his bowels.

It was a paradox to him that a man cannot be happy in this life if he had all worldly enjoyments that heart can desire; but now he certainly concludes, things of the world can no more satisfy an enlivened soul than stones can satisfy an hungry man, or wind nourish a consuming body; he has found what miserable comforters these are to a wounded conscience.

He was apt to judge, that the new birth, regeneration, the new creature, were conceits and fancies; and whilst he felt no such supernatural work upon his soul, he judged there was no such things. But the Lord having brought him through the pangs of the new birth, and by an almighty power drawn the lineaments of a new creature in his soul, there is nothing that he hears, or sees, or feels, that he is more certainly persuaded of, than this truth, that without regeneration there is no salvation. He has changed his mind; he is quite of another, of a new judgment, in this and other things, than he was formerly.

[3]. New valuations. The estimative power of his mind is renewed; the value of things is quite altered in his judgment; the scales are quite turned; that which was highest is lowest; that which was weightiest in his account, is now lighter than vanity; worldly and carnal things, which were gain before, are now counted loss; spiritual and heavenly things, not before regarded, are now of highest value.

Formerly, the treasures of the world were most precious in his account; but now the reproach of Christ, the very worst condition with Christ, is of greater value than the treasures of the world. Hereby Moses evidenced a new creation in his soul. Hebrews 11:26.

Formerly, interest in Christ he took upon trust, upon common, uncertain grounds, as though it were not worth the looking after; but now that it is assured to him upon gospel terms, he will not part with it for all the kingdoms of the earth; or, if he be kept in a doubting condition, if he walk in darkness, and see no light to evidence his title to Christ, which is the condition of many a new creature, many a child of God, after their new birth, so highly does he value it, as he would be content to live poor, afflicted all his days, upon condition he might obtain it. If Christ would but lift up the light of his countenance, he would be far from envying those whose corn, and wine, and oil increase, Psalms 4:7-8.

Formerly, he counted them happy who have the world at will, a confluence of pleasures, honours, riches, to their heart's desire; but now he pities those who have no greater happiness, no sweeter comforts, than these can yield.

Formerly, he could have heard and read the promises in the Scripture, without much regarding them; yet, if a friend had assured him of a rich estate, he would have accounted that a precious promise: but now he would not part with the riches he spies in some one gospel-promise, for all the mines in the Indies, Psalms 119:127, Psalms 9:10, Proverbs 8:19.

Formerly, he had rather have spent his time in merry company, than in seeking God, or hearing a sermon, or conference about his soul's estate; but now one day, one hour in these holy employments, is better in his account than a thousand elsewhere; rather be a door-keeper in the

house of God, than a commander, a prince in the tents of wickedness, Psalms 84:10.

Formerly, he most esteemed such gifts, parts, as would get most applause and credit, quick wit, profound judgment, free expression, a nimble invention to find out, or set off some taking opinions or notions above the ordinary road. Ay, but now these are vanities in his account, compared with the power of godliness; now he values holiness above the choicest accomplishments in the world. This is the most excellent way in his esteem, as Paul in like case, 1 Corinthians 12:31.

Formerly, his church-privileges or religious performances, his alms-deeds, or outward observance of the law, self or sense, seemed something worth to make his way to heaven. But now he counts all these loss, compared with Christ's righteousness; even those that he counted gain, they are loss, yea, dung, that he may gain Christ, and be found in him, Php 3:7-8. He has a new esteem of things.

[4.] New designs. The designing power of his mind is renewed, he has new plots, new devices, such as troubled not his head before; and those that he formerly pursued, are laid aside. His designs are cast in a new mould, and run in a new method, such as the old man is a stranger to, the unrenewed mind is not acquainted with.

Formerly, his designs were driven towards sin, himself, or the world; now they are for God, for heaven, for his soul.

Formerly, his design was to ingratiate himself with those that might do him good, make him great or safe in the world; now it is to continue in the favour of God, to walk in the light of his countenance, and enjoy sweet fellowship with the Father and Son.

Formerly, his design was to live plentifully and creditably in the world; now it is to get his heart crucified to the world, and the world unto him, to live soberly, righteously, godly in this present world, and walk in it as one redeemed from it.

Formerly, his plot was to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; now it is to mortify his members that are on the earth, to put the old man to death, and in this respect to die daily, to starve his lusts, and crush the interest of the flesh, that though it continue, yet it may not prevail and rule in him.

Formerly, his design was to grow rich, to lay up store for the time to come, to provide plentifully for posterity; now it is to be rich unto God, to partake more and more of the unsearchable riches of Christ, to grow in grace, and abound in the fruits of the Spirit; to lay up treasures in heaven, even that good foundation, for the time to come; to provide for eternity; to get his personal wants supplied, and to bring up posterity in the fear and nurture of the Lord; to bring them up to the terms of the covenant, that they may have a title to the treasures, and may be heirs of the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Formerly, it was his design to make sure what he enjoys on earth, and to secure it from the claims, injustice, or violence of men; now it is to 'make his calling and election sure,' to make clear his evidence for heaven; to get those spiritual distempers removed, which are as moth and rust to his soul's treasure; to keep his heart with all diligence, that sin, and Satan, and the world may not break through and steal.

Formerly, it was his design, either to be famous in his generation, eminent amongst the sons of men, or at least to have a name amongst, or praise from men, for parts, or performances; but now it is, that God above all, and in all things, may be glorified; that the sceptre of Christ may be advanced, and his crown flourish; that his name may be precious and glorious in the world, and all nations, tongues, languages, may acknowledge his glory, and speak his praises; and that all in heaven and earth may lay their crowns at his feet, and give unto him the glory due to his name, due to his love, for he is worthy. These are the designs of a new creature.

[5.] New inventions. Invention is another power of the mind, which is renewed when a man is made a new creature; his mind is busied about far other inventions and devices, than formerly. Not how to find out new opinions or notions, that he may be cried up as a rare man, as τ■ς μ■γας, the humour of Simon Magus; nor how to blast their reputation, who stand in his light and obscure him; nor how to satisfy his lusts in a way of safety and credit; nor how to gratify an ambitious, or covetous, or revengeful, or unclean humour: no, these are the devices and contrivances of the old man, which is corrupt and unrenewed. The inventions of the new creature are quite of another strain, such as the old man, the unrenewed mind, is utterly unacquainted with. I might instance in more than twenty, I will but name them. The new mind employs his invention,— To find out what are his spiritual wants, where the defects of his graces and affections lie, wherein faith, and zeal, and love, and self-denial, are defective; that he may not languish for want of supplies, that his soul may be kept on the wing of desire after Christ; that, living in the sense of many wants, he may not be puffed up with self-conceit, as having attained.

What hinders his soul's prosperity. Why he does not grow answerable to means, light, engagements; whether remissness in duty, or some unmortified lust within, or too eager pursuit of something without. His secret corruptions: those skulking traitors, that lie hid in the dark and secret corners of his soul, which in others are not seen nor regarded; stirrings of spiritual pride, secret motions of self-refined stains of hypocrisy. The decays of his soul at their first rise and appearance; decay of love, zeal, spiritualness of mind, tenderness of heart or conscience; to find out these at first, before they run his soul on into a consumption, which neglected, they are apt to do. The best ways of improving Christ crucified, of drawing powerful and quickening influences from him, knowing that upon this depends the life, strength, comfort, and welfare of his soul.

What arguments may most prevail with God in prayer. Not that the Lord needs these, but that they are needful for himself, to encourage faith, and quicken the soul to fervency and importunity in seeking God.

What thoughts, what objects, do most affect him, make deepest impressions on his heart. What most powerful to quicken, inflame, put his soul upon motion towards God, and effectual to restrain from sin.

What duty every condition he is cast into, and every alteration in that condition, does especially call for. The exercise of what grace is most proper and suitable to every juncture of time, to every occurrence he meets with; that he may be always ready, his loins girded, his lamp burning.

What parts of the word of God, whether promises, or threatenings, or examples are more suitable to his soul's estate, that he may take special notice of them in hearing or reading. Where the new man is weakest, where he lies most open to assaults of spiritual enemies, where Satan gets most

advantage, where sin makes its breaches, that he may fortify that especially, set a strong guard.

What the cause of every cross and affliction is, inward or outward. Why the Lord at any time withdraws from him, denies his presence, assistance in ordinances, in his endeavours after holy walking, that if it be sin, he may subdue it. To find out what Satan's snares are, what his devices, whereby he most prevails in the times and places where he lives, that he may not be ignorant of his devices, nor entangled unawares.

What the deceits of his heart, and the fallacies of sin, these being deceitful above all things, and so intimate with him; that he may not be circumvented, cheated, deluded. Where the strength of sin lies, what are its strongest holds, what carnal reasonings, what promises or expectations, that he may bend all his force against it here, this being the surest way to victory.

What is the beloved sin, peccatum in deliciis, the commander, supporter, encourager of the rest; that this may be chiefly mortified, subdued. He knows if the general fall, the troops will be easily scattered, routed. The root of every sin by the fruits. When he perceives sin breaking forth, he sets his invention a-work, inquires, whence comes this? E. g., wanderings in holy duties, whence are these? Is it not from carnalness, want of delight in holy employments? is it not from some lust within, worldliness or uncleanness? Having found out the root, he strikes at that, thinks it surest to stay the stream by stopping up the spring. Where are corruptions, encouragements, abettors, incentives; where it feeds and gets provision, whether in his constitution, or employment, or company, or diet, or accommodations, that he may cut off these.

How to be most serviceable in his generation; how he may improve his talents most for Christ's advantage; which are the ways, which are the services in which his times, parts, gifts, enjoyments, may be best employed; that he may not bury them, nor use them only for himself, nor spend them in ways less necessary, profitable, advantageous for Christ and his people.

How he may win others to come in to Christ, to renounce sin. What carriage, what acts, what words may be most effectual, according to the several tempers of those amongst whom he lives.

What the design of every special providence is towards himself, or the place he lives in, that he may neither disregard nor oppose it, that he may concur with God, and be subservient to him in his promoting them;

What are the provocations of the times and place he lives in, that he may endeavour to reform, mourn in secret for them, seek pardon;

These and such like are the things about which the invention of a renewed mind is employed. And when his studies succeed herein, he has more reason to cry ■υρηκα than Archimedes; these being inventions that find more approbation in heaven than any on earth.

[6.] New reasonings. The discursive power of the soul is renewed; carnal reasonings are opposed, disclaimed as weak, fallacious; his arguings now are of a new mode. His former inward reasonings were for the flesh against the spirit, now they are for the spirit against the flesh; they were formerly for the world against Christ, now for Christ against the world; for sin and looseness against holiness and strictness, but now the contrary; from the letter of the word against the sense of Scripture, now they are according to the mind of Christ. He draws quite contrary conclusions from formerly abused principles; e. g. God is merciful, long-suffering, and patient, Ergo, there is no such

danger in sinning, no such necessity of a precise reformation; so the old man. But the new creature argues from hence, Ergo, this should lead me to repentance, Romans 2:4. Therefore I should be ashamed, afraid to sin hereafter, and heartily grieved that I have sinned so much before.

Christ is full of love and compassion to sinners, and therefore we need not be so nice and precise in forbearing, renouncing every sin; so the old man. But the new creature thus: Christ loves me, and therefore how can I do that which his soul hates? He 'loved me, and washed me,' &c.; how shall I do that which shed his blood? The grace of God appearing to all in Christ crucified; Ergo, I must deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, &c., Titus 2:11-12.

Christ came to save sinners; Ergo, there is hopes of salvation, though I continue in this or that sin; so the old man. But the new creature argues thus: Ergo, I must get into and continue in the way wherein Christ has declared he will save sinners; I must believe, break off my sins by repentance, and submit to his laws and government, else his death will nothing avail me. But the strict and constant observance of all Christ's laws will be hard, and sometimes dangerous. I may lose my estate, liberty, or life by it; Ergo, it is better to hope well, and go on as I do; it is folly to launch so far into the deep as we can see no shore; it is good sleeping in a whole skin; so the old man. But the new creature thus: If the observance of Christ in all his holy ways and truths may cost me so much, Ergo, it is more proper for me, whom Christ so infinitely engaged. Shall I offer unto him only that which costs me nothing? If Christ had dealt so with me, my soul had dwelt in everlasting flames. Whom should I suffer for, if not for him who suffered all for me? And if I suffer with him, I shall also reign with him; so the apostle. But there are many ways of religion, abundance of errors, divisions, diversities of opinion; Ergo, it is better to keep the old track wherein I was born, bred, and have thus long lived, than to wander and change my old course in such uncertainties; so the old man. But the new creature thus: There are many divisions, wanderings, &c., Ergo, I have more need to keep in the strait way, the way of holiness, which is certainly the way of Christ if there be any truth or certainty in Scripture, and leave those to doat upon questions, less material opinions, positions and circumstantials not clearly revealed, who think they have more time than enough to mind that one thing needful. But some that pretend to holiness and strictness are hypocrites, make a fair show outwardly, when there is no inward reality; Ergo, it is better to be as I am than counterfeit what I am not; so the old man. But the new creature thus: There will be hypocrites amongst those that profess godliness, there was a hypocrite amongst Christ's disciples; Ergo, I have more need to look to my own security, more reason to give all diligence to make my own calling and election sure. This way of strictness and preciseness is everywhere spoken against and reviled; Ergo, no wisdom to enter into it, to meddle with it; so the old man. But the new creature thus: Ergo, it is more like to be the way of Christ, for he himself suffered the contradiction of sinners. The world hates him and his ways, no wonder if they speak evil of them. The Lord accounts the will for the deed. I mean well though I do ill sometimes, Ergo, the Lord will accept me; so the old man. But the new creature thus: Ergo, in the strength of Christ I will put forth myself to the utmost in every duty, in all the ways of Christ, and when I fail through weakness, there is hopes of pardon and acceptance. The time is short, we cannot live long; Ergo, let us live merrily, take our pleasures, follow our profits, while we have time; so the old man. But the new creature thus: Ergo, I must use all diligence to get the work done, for which he allows me this time, for which he sent me into the world; Ergo, I must use the world as though I used it not, rejoice as though I rejoiced not, buy as though I possessed not, use recreations as though I used them not, 'For the fashion of

the world passeth,' &c., 1 Corinthians 7:29. But there are many promises to sinners; Ergo, no reason to despair of salvation though I live in sin; so the old man. But the new creature thus: I have many great and precious promises, therefore I should 'cleanse myself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,' &c. It is the apostle's arguing, 2 Corinthians 7:1. The thief repented at death, and was admitted into paradise; Ergo, why may not I defer my repentance and reformation till the hour of death? so the old man. But the new creature thus: I read but of one amongst many thousands that found place for repentance at his death; Ergo, I will not leave my salvation, my soul, at such a desperate hazard, as, ten thousand to one, it will be lost. But death is uncertain, it may be far off, the Lord delays his coming; Ergo, I may eat, and drink, and take my pleasure; thus the old man, with that wretched servant in the parable, Matthew 24:1-51. But the new creature thus: Ergo, I must be continually watchful; I must be always employed in the Lord's work, lest the Lord come in an hour when I look not for him, lest he find me in an evil way, and I fall into the condemnation of that unprofitable servant, Matthew 24:48. But there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ, and who can tax me as one that is not in Christ? Ergo, though I sin I shall not be condemned: so the old man. But the new creature thus: 'No condemnation to those who walk not after the flesh.' If I walk after the flesh, continue in my old carnal condition, stick to my old, superstitious, ungodly customs and practices, if I be not a new creature, I am not in Christ; to such there is nothing but condemnation. The new mind has new reasonings, as appears in these, and might be shewed in more instances.

[7.] New thoughts. The cogitative power of the mind is renewed, old thoughts are passed away. His atheistical thoughts;—God sees not, he regards not, he will not punish; I may sin securely. Revengeful; he does not meditate mischief upon his bed. Lustful; his heart is not a place for speculative uncleanness. Proud; he is not puffed up with self-conceit; the high, lofty, towering imaginations are pulled down. Worldly; he gives not way to immoderate thoughtfulness about what he shall eat, &c. These engross not his mind; he knows a small share of his thoughts is but due to the world, solicitous, anxious thoughts, distempering his mind with fear and distrust, so much carefulness what to eat, &c. When Christ works this new creation in the mind, these are driven out, as buyers out of the temple; it is a part of this great renewing work to bring every such thought into subjection. So wandering thoughts in holy services, which passed before without restraint, he drives these away, as Abraham did the fowls from his sacrifice, Genesis 15:11. Vain, unprofitable, foolish, impertinent, incoherent thoughts, though they may steal into the mind, they lodge not; he entertains them not as formerly. The thoughts that are now welcome into his mind are holy, spiritual, heavenly; thoughts of Christ, his love, the sweet expressions, the many precious experiments of it; thoughts of his soul's condition, of the great and precious promises. These are his meditation, these are sweet to his taste. Thoughts of his glorious relations to Christ, of those privileges of a new creature, and of those future enjoyments in glory, these are most frequent, pleasing, abiding.

Such thoughts as quicken him to holy motions, stir him up to heavenly inclinations and affections. His former thoughts were as thorns and weeds to choke these, but his present thoughts are as bellows, to kindle and inflame his heart with love to, and zeal for, and ardent desires after, Christ and spiritual enjoyments; quicken him to faith, fervency, heavenliness; engage him to humility, self-denial.

These are the thoughts of a new mind, which the old man will not believe to be in any, because he never found them.

[8.] New consultations. The advising power, that which the philosophers call βουλευτικ■, is renewed. He has now new objects to consult about, new counsellors to consult with. He consults not now whether the Lord shall be his chief good, his last end, nor whether his great idol the flesh shall be thrown down, or pleasures, profits, credit, the unrenewed man's trinity, shall give place to God, and be made the footstool of Christ; no, in re tam sancta non est deliberandum. This is out of question, he is fully resolved upon it, though the greatest part of Christians (whatever they imagine to the contrary) never came up to such a resolution.

It is not the end, but the means, that he consults about, βουλευ■μεσθα ο■ περ■ τ■ν τελ■ν;* not whether Christ shall have the highest place in his soul, but by what means he may be most advanced; not whether the interest of the flesh and the world shall be cast down, but by what means this may be most effectually done; how he may disengage his soul from carnal interests (that have so fully possessed him) so as he may give up himself wholly unto the Lord. And the business being weighty, needs counsel, συμβο■λους δ■ παραλαμβ■νομεν ε■ς τ■ μεγ■λα. The new creature has new counsellors. We see it in Paul; as soon as the Lord had made him a new creature, he chooses a new counsel, rejects the old, Galatians 1:16. So here he consults not with the world, not with the flesh, not with carnal friends, about the things of God. The world and the flesh are enemies and carnal friends, in spiritual things are fools; and who seeks counsel of foes or fools? If carnal friends be consulted with, then in trouble of conscience they will advise you to get into merry, jovial company, to sing, or drink, or cast away those melancholy thoughts, or to follow worldly business with more eagerness, that the noise of the world may drown the voice of conscience. Oh miserable comforters, oh wretched counsellors! When the world or flesh are consulted with, they will advise with much show of wisdom. If sin must be left, if something must, be done for Christ, why then engage for Christ against sin with a proviso, with caution and reservation? Take heed, if you be wise, that no sin be left, no duty be undertaken, to the prejudice of ease, ¦credit, or worldly advantage. And so profitable and delightful sins must still be retained; duties of religion that are chargeable, difficult, dangerous, or reproached by a wicked generation, must be baulked, declined. When persecution arises for any way of Christ or holiness, then wheel about, excuse yourselves here; in this the Lord be merciful to me, I can, I dare follow Christ no further. Here is the counsel of the wisdom of the flesh, which is enmity to God. 'This wisdom descendeth not from above; it is earthly, sensual, devilish,' James 3:15. And so the new creature rejects it. It is the wisdom from above which guides him in his consultation, that which is not only peaceable, but pure, fruitful, and without partiality, &c., James 3:16. He consults with the oracles of God, David's counsellors are the men of his counsel, Psalms 119:24. He goes for advice to the law and the testimony, he inquires impartially; and that which is there delivered sways his judgment, and carries it in all debates, though it be never so cross to carnal interests, though it be to the prejudice of his dearest lusts, though it be to the ruin of his ease, credit, worldly advantages. One glimpse of Scripture light will carry it.

Thus you see explained what a new crenture is in respect of his mind, how the mind is renewed in its several acts and powers. Proceed now to the next faculty,

(2). A new will. A new creature has a renewed will. As this new creation make a new spirit, i.e. a new mind, so it makes a new heart, i.e. a new will. This new creature is a new man, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10. Now there cannot be a new man without a new will, for this is the principal part of a man. The will is the ruling faculty, it commands the whole man; therefore, such as the will is, such is the man, old or new. The most powerful and distinguishing work of renewing grace is in the will, and therefore, that we may understand what the new creature is, we must apprehend how the will is made new, and wherein its renewedness consists. Now this will appear most clearly in the immediate acts of the will, its inclinations, intentions, fruition, election, consent, application, and resolutions. Where there is a new creature, a new will, there are

[1.] New inclinations. That act of the will, which Aristotle calls βο■λησις, and the schoolmen simplex volitio, has a new object. The heart, which was formerly carried after sin, the world and self, has now a new bias, which carries it towards God in Christ as his chief good, towards him as the height of all his glory, the spring of all his pleasures, the treasury of all his riches. Every unrenewed man is an idolater, he makes himself or the creature his idol. And though God usually have the name, yet he moves towards these as his chief good. This is the sad effect of the fall in every son of Adam, an averseness to God, a propenseness to the creature; and this continues in every man from his first birth till he be born again. And when this new creation begins, it finds him in this posture, with the face of his heart towards the creature, and his back towards God. Now it is the effect of this great work to turn the heart from idols unto God, from the creature unto the Creator. Hence it is called conversion; his heart now runs towards a new mark, he has a new centre. Formerly himself or the world was his centre; to these he moved, after these his soul was carried, even as the sparks fly upwards. But now God in Christ is his centre: his heart tends towards God, even as heavy bodies move downwards; his motions towards God are free, powerful, and restless. He has a new nature, and his motions towards God are in these respects natural.

First, He is freely inclined towards God. He is not only forced by terrors, or apprehensions of death, or some great danger; for these may occasion some weak motions towards God in an unrenewed heart; but when there are no such enforcements, yet then his heart is in motion towards God. There is an attractive virtue in Christ, and the discoveries of his love and excellency in the gospel, which draws a new heart to him; a virtue both secret and powerful, such as we see in the loadstone to draw iron. ‘When I am lifted up, I will draw,’ &c. The heart is put upon this motion by an inward principle, not by outward enforcements. When the will is thoroughly touched with renewing grace, it inclines towards Christ; as you see a needle, touched with the loadstone, move and tend toward the north pole. This heart-inclination is better felt than expressed, and it will be a mystery to those who have not experience of it, as this new creature is to all unrenewed men.

Secondly, It is a powerful and prevalent inclination, such as does overpower the inclinations of the flesh to sin in the world. Set the world, in all its pomp and glory, all its delights and treasure, before the soul, on one side, and God, as manifested in Christ, on the other, and a renewed heart will turn its back upon the world, and bend itself towards God. Nor is this,

Thirdly, By fits and starts, now and then, in some good mood; but his inclinations are habitual and constant. His motions may be slackened, and in part diverted, by some violent temptations, even as you may force the needle in the compass towards the south; but then it quivers, and shakes,

and is restless, till it point north again. So the heart, when by some lust or temptation it is drawn aside from God, this motion is not free, it is against the settled bent; the heart shakes and shivers, till that be removed which stops its course, and hinders its motion towards God. The constant bent and tendency of the renewed will is after God, as its happiness, its joy and delight, its treasure and glory. David was a man after God's own heart, and therefore his heart was formed according to the image of God, i. e. it was renewed; and you may feel the pulse, perceive the motions of a renewed heart, in his expressions, Psalms 42:1-2. Paul expresses the temper of a new will under temptations, Romans 7:1-25. He does that which he allows not, that which he hates, that which he would not do, Romans 7:15-16. When his soul is hurried to sin, his heart would have it otherwise; when he is carried down with temptation, he moves as he would not move; his heart, his will inclines to God, while he is carried another way: he is carried as a captive, carried as by rebels; so he looks upon himself and upon them, Romans 7:23. A captive, dragged by rebels, moves not freely: if the force were removed, he would change his motion, alter his course. A new creature has not a heart for sin and for the world; the fixed, usual, constant bent of his will is towards God, as his chief good, only happiness. It is contrary in an unrenewed man.

[2.] New intentions. The renewed will intends God, aims at him in all, and above all things. Christ is to him Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the spring of his happiness and the end of his actings. That which is a man's chief good, is his last end. God is both to a renewed heart: he inclines to him as his chief good, he intends him as his last end.

He has new ends and aims, far differing from his former. Heretofore he aimed at pleasure, to live merrily; riches, not to stand in need of others; greatness, that he might not be an underling in the world; honours, that he might not live obscure or contemned. But now, apprehending his sweetest delights, best riches, greatest honours, are to be found in God, he aims at God instead of these, and intends not these but in reference to God, that by these he may be enabled to do him better and more cheerful service.

God is now his end; and that which he intends above all is, 1, to glorify God; 2, please him; and, 3, enjoy him. God is his aim in these three notions.

First, To glorify him. Every action is raised and carried on for his end, and with this intention, virtually if not actually, that God by it may be glorified; and this universally, not only in religious actions. He hears, and prays, and reads, and meditates; not to stop the mouth of conscience, or to be accounted a good Christian, or to make amends for some sin, whose guilt troubles him, but that God may be hereby honoured. Nor this only in civil actions. The works of his calling, ploughing, or digging, or studying, &c., these he follows for this end; not as formerly, to get his living only, or to provide for his family: his intentions rise higher; that which he principally aims at, is that hereby God may be glorified.

Yea, but even in natural acts. He eats, he drinks, he sleeps, not only for continuance of health and life: he aims at something of greater moment, viz., the advancing of God's glory. This is the law of the new creature, for to such the apostle prescribes it, 1 Corinthians 10:31. And as he intends this universally, by dedicating all and every action to this end, so he aims at it singly, i. e. he acts not that which may glorify God, in relation to himself only, or his own ends. The old man may do this; so did the unrenewed Jews; they had a zeal for God, as Paul testifies, Romans 10:2. They were zealous in doing that which might honour him, as they thought, but it was in reference to

themselves, lest the apostle's doctrine (of justification by faith, both to Jews and Gentiles) prevailing, their law, and dignity, and privilege above the rest of the world, should be overthrown. A new creature may, must seek his own good; but this in subordination to God's glory as supreme, and in a way of subserviency to it as principal. He seeks other things, but he intends this in and above all. And this is a special property of the new creature, which the highest improvers of nature could never reach, nor ever will, till renewed.

Secondly, His aim is to please God. Formerly his aim was to please his flesh, or his senses, or his corrupt humours, or such persons and friends on whom he had dependence; but now that which he intends above all is to please God. He will strive to please others, if thereby he may the better please God, as Paul became all things, &c.; but if any thing come in competition with God, if he must either displease his friends, his flesh, his senses, or displease God, in this case he will displease all, rather than displease God; for to please God is his highest end, and the highest end is best; and so the apostles determine in this case, Acts 5:29. In this case, to displease God, we should not yield a finger's breath, Neque omnibus angelis in cælo, neque Petro nec Paulo, neque decem Cæsaribus, neque mille papis, neque toti mundo latum digitum cesserim, [Luther] Comment. in Galatians 2:1-21.

Thirdly, To enjoy God. He aims at this in all actions and undertakings whatever; and intending this, nothing short of it will satisfy him.

Formerly, in religious duties he could have rested in the work done, or been satisfied with common enlargements and assistances; or content if others esteemed and applauded him, though his heart was at a great distance from God in the duty. But now no duty will please or satisfy him, except he enjoy God in it; except God draw near to him, and witness his presence by the power, efficacy, or delights of it in his heart. So in civil and natural acts; it is the aim, the intent of the new creature, to enjoy God in all. But this leads me to the

[3.] New fruitions. That in which the new creature rests, that which satisfies, contents him, is quite different from what it was formerly. His life was formerly a vexatious wandering from vanity to vanity; all the contentment he had was in sin or worldly accommodations, or at least in outward performances; but now these are as husks to him. That which gives his heart quiet and content, is the enjoyment of God, communion with Christ, fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Nihil potest quietare hominis voluntatem, nisi solus Deus, says Aquinas. It is true, here, nothing quiets a renewed heart but the enjoyment of God; or, as he, irrequietum est cor nostrum, &c. Thou madest us for thee, and our heart will not rest but in thee. The world (as one well compares it) is like a king's court. Unrenewed men are like children, who are taken with the pictures, and please themselves in viewing the hangings and ornaments of several rooms; but a new creature is like a man that has earnest business with the king; he stays not in the out rooms; he takes little notice of the ornaments and rich furniture; his business is with the king, and so he rests not till he come into his presence. Those that rest in outward performances, or worldly enjoyments, they stay in the out rooms. A new heart, like the king's daughter, is then only brought with gladness and rejoicing, when she enters into the king's presence, Psalms 45:15; then only satisfied, when Christ leads her into his banqueting house, when he fills the tabernacle of her heart with the glory and power of his presence. Even as a hungry infant will not be content; though ye give it chains of gold or bracelets of pearl, nothing will satisfy it but the breast; so a renewed heart, in the absence of Christ, all that

the world can afford will not quiet or satisfy it, none but Christ, none but Christ.

Formerly, he could rest in a religious duty performed, or at least in the plausible performance of it; but nothing now contents him, except he there find him whom his soul loves; nothing satisfies him, except the presence of God go along with him in these duties; except he find the Spirit of God moving in them, affecting his heart, and working upon his soul in the use of ordinances. His heart raises itself in the ordinances, as Zaccheus, Luke 19:4, got up into a sycamore tree, that he might see Jesus passing by. It will not satisfy him, no more than Absalom, to return to his house, except he may see the king's face, 2 Samuel 14:32. It is that which he seeks, as the angel told the woman: Matthew 28:1-20, 'I know that ye seek Jesus that was crucified.' Ay, this is it which a renewed heart seeks; nor will it ever rest till it find Jesus that was crucified.

Formerly, if by labour and industry in worldly employments he could gain well, and increase his estate, and thrive in the world, he was herewith content (so far as such things can give contentment); but now, whatever he gains, whatever he gets, he is not satisfied, except, while his outward man is busied in the world, his soul enjoy communion with Christ, except his labour and travail in these outward things be a walking with God.

Formerly, he was apt to say, as that rich man, Luke 12:19, 'Soul, thou hast much goods, &c., take thine ease,' &c. But now he will rather say, with that famous Marquis of Vico, 'Let his money perish with him, who prefers all the gold of the world before one day's communion with Jesus Christ.'

Formerly, he was apt to fancy some contentment, if he might have riches and friends answerable to his desire, meats and drinks suitable to his appetite, habit and accommodation suitable to his fancy; but now all fulness is empty, if Christ make it not up; the sweetest accommodation is distasteful, if the presence of God sweeten it not; no enjoyments satisfy him, but those in which he enjoys Christ. And when he has found him, he can let out his heart's contentment in David's expression, 'The Lord is my portion, I have enough; return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee; my lines are fallen in a pleasant place,' &c., Psalms 4:6-7, Psalms 63:1-11.

[4.] New elections. The will shews its renewedness, in its choice of means for promoting of the ends on which it hath pitched: προα■ρεσις ■στ■ τ■ν πρ■ς τ■ τ■λος. Election of means, the former acts were about the end. His choice is different from what it was heretofore. He brings not down that which should be his end, to serve his turn as a mean, as those do, who make religion a stirrup to advance them in the world. Nor does he choose unlawful means to promote his ends. Formerly, so he might compass his intentions, he stood not much upon the quality of the means, whether good or bad, allowed or disallowed of God. How visible is this in men of the world! But now he pitches upon none but such as Scripture has sealed to be acceptable unto God. He will not set up calves, false worship, to gain or secure a kingdom, nor make priests of the meanest of the people to strengthen a faction, as Jeroboam did, who made Israel to sin, and is so branded. He will lose his ends, rather than accomplish them by deceit, falsehood, injustice, or what reflects on his profession. His choice is regulated by the word, and what it prescribes he will pitch on, though it seem to his own prejudice. He will choose to cross his own humour or offend his dearest relations, rather than offend God. He chooses afflictions for Christ, rather than the pleasures of sin. It was Moses's choice, Hebrews 11:1-40

He chooses those for his companions that fear God, Psalms 119:63, and those above all that are most conscientious, most eminent for holiness, strictness, watchfulness over themselves and others. Those that he did formerly hate, jeer, abuse for strictness, holiness, they are now his delight, as David, herein a type of Christ, Psalms 16:1-11. Spiritual conference of godly persons, which was formerly a burden, he now prefers before vain worldly discourse; and the company of profane men are his burden, as it was to David, Psalms 120:5-6. He had rather have a friend that will reprove him for sin, than a companion that will soothe him in an evil way, Psalms 141:5. In choice of a minister, he will not incline to one who will sew pillows under his elbows, cry peace to him while he lives in sin, or encourage him by doctrine or practice in any evil course; nor to him who will please his fancy with quaintness, notions or niceties; but he prefers him that will search his conscience, deal faithfully with his soul, not suffer him to live at peace in any wickedness, that delivers sound, searching, quickening truths, and teaches Christ, as the truth is in Jesus.

If he find ordinary means not sufficient to subdue his lusts, remove soul distempers, keep his heart in a spiritual heavenly temper, or to prevail for public mercies and deliverances, he then makes choice of extraordinary. If his usual praying every day be not effectual, he will set apart whole days for prayer and fasting to obtain those blessed ends.

He chooses not only those means, duties which are most plausible, but those also that are most spiritual; not only public exercises of religion, but secret duties; such wherein common gifts are not so much exercised, such as have nothing of outward form or pomp wherewith an unrenewed heart may be taken; for example;—

Secret prayer, in his closet, where no eye is witness. I mean not an heartless repeating of words got by rote, without fervency or affection; but the strivings, wrestlings of the heart with God in secret, in a humble, reverent, importunate, affectionate manner. This he chooses, and it is his practice.

Secret meditation of spiritual things. Not for increase of knowledge only, or to enable him to discourse or dispute; this an unrenewed heart may choose; but to quicken his soul to spiritual motions, holy inclinations, heavenly affections; to find out the state and temper of his soul, communing with his heart, Psalms 4:1-8, that he may judge or encourage himself, according as the condition of his soul requires.

He chooses not only such duties as are easy, but those that seem difficult; rather forego his own ease, than leave his soul in a remiss, lukewarm, unthriving temper.

Nay, he will not refuse those duties that are chargeable, reproachful, or dangerous, when the Lord requires them. Daniel would pray to the God of heaven, though the penalty was casting into the den of lions. The primitive Christians would sell their estates rather than the poor should want, to the dishonour of the gospel. The apostles would preach Christ crucified, though therefore they were accounted the outcasts and offscouring of all things; rather expose his credit, break with friends, or make a breach in his estate, than break his peace with God by neglecting his duty.

[5.] New consents. This is another act of the will, which when it is renewed, has a new object. I might give many instances, but I shall only instance in that one which is the vital act of a new creature.

He now consents to enter into covenant with God upon the terms propounded in the gospel. Formerly, he consented to sin and the world, yielded to their terms, upon condition he might enjoy them; his heart, though hardened against God, yet was as wax to receive the impressions of sin; and he was a voluntary fugitive to Satan and his lusts, led captive by him at his will. But now his heart is hardened, his will is obstinate against sin and the world, yet it runs freely into the mould of the gospel, and consents to take Christ upon gospel terms, to take him as Lord, for holiness, power against sin, &c. He is so sensibly convinced of his misery without Christ, of that happiness which is to be enjoyed in Christ, he so clearly apprehends the infinite worth of Christ, his extreme necessity of him, that he will yield to anything the Lord propounds, if he will but give him Christ. The Lord tells him in the gospel, if he will have Christ, he must part with all, with every sin: 2 Timothy 2:19, 'Let every one that nameth the name,' &c.; those sins wherein thou hast so much delighted, whereby thou hast got, or expectest so much gain or advantage. He that is Christ's must crucify the flesh, &c. The renewed heart answers, Yea, Lord, and happy were I if I might be quite freed from all sin. Oh, happy exchange, to part with sin to gain Christ! What have I to do any more with idols? How much better is it to part with those sometimes dearest lusts, than, by retaining any one member of that body of death, to have both soul and body cast into hell! The will freely yields to this proposal. The Lord tells him further in the gospel, he that will have Christ must deny himself. 'If any man will be my disciple,' &c., Matthew 16:24. He that will be Christ's must deny his ease, his humours, his credit, his gifts, his own righteousness, his own interests, inclinations, accommodations, for Christ's sake. The heart answers, all these are nothing compared with Christ; yea, verily, and I count them all loss that I may gain Christ, as Php 3:1-21. Yea, and let him take all, if my Lord Christ will return to my soul. The Lord tells him in the Gospel, he that will have Christ must take up the cross, must be willing to endure reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions; must be willing to suffer in his relations, in his estate, in his liberty, and in his life too: to lose all these, if the glory, and ways, and truth of Christ call for it, Luke 14:26, Matthew 10:37-38. He that will have Christ must make account to have the cross. The soul answers, Welcome the cross if Christ come with it: I can never suffer anything so grievous for Christ as he has suffered for my soul. There is enough in Christ to make up all losses, to sweeten all sufferings. Mallem ruere cum Christo, quam regnare cum Cæsare, as the father. None ever was a loser by Christ, whatever he seemed to lose. The greatest sufferers now in heaven could rather wish they had endured more, than repent that they suffered so much for their dear Redeemer. Nothing more true in all experience than Christ's promise, Mark 10:29-30.

Thus the renewed will comes off freely, and consents to take Christ upon any terms, whatsoever the gospel offers, π■ρ κα■ στα■ρος, θηρ■ων τ■ συστ■σεις, &c., ■ν■ Χριστο■ ■πιτ■χω.

[6.] New applications. The renewed will applies the rest of the faculties to prosecute what it has pitched on. The will is the commander of the whole man; the primum mobile, that which sets all the rest on motion. It is ruler in the soul; the rational, sensitive, and moving faculties are subject to it; and part of them with some freedom as to their sovereign, the rest more absolutely as to a master. Now, when it is renewed, having pitched on the chief good for its end, and chosen the best means for the attainment thereof, it sets the rest of the faculties to work to prosecute these, and diverts it from what might hinder the soul in the pursuit thereof; being moved by the Spirit of Christ, and fortified with renewing grace, it diverts the mind from carnal reasonings, vain thoughts, wicked plots and devices. Formerly, the mind could employ itself in these without control; but now, when

these appear, the will gives a check to them, commands the mind to better employment, turns the current of the understanding into a new channel. It applies the mind to spiritual designs and inquiries; and when holy thoughts are offered, it commands their entertainment; they are not checked, discountenanced, thrust out, as formerly they were. The fancy is now restrained, the folly and vanity of it receives check from the will, it has not such license to bring in provision for lust, or to bring fuel into the soul for corruption to feed on. The sensitive appetite is now curbed. That which too often ruled the soul is now overruled; that which hurried the rest of the faculties to a blind correspondence with its motions towards objects of sense is now controlled, and is put to obey instead of commanding. Sensual proposals are spiritualised, made subservient to holiness, or occasions of it.

It exercises authority over the outward senses. They are employed in a way of serviceableness to Christ, and set to work for that end. These, which formerly were as windows to let in temptation, as doors to let in sin, are now closed at the renewed will's command,—it sets a guard upon them. A covenant is made with the eyes, as we see in Job; the tongue is bridled, and the door of the lips kept warily. Not only wicked, but idle words are restrained; if they get passage, it is by surprisal.

[7.] New purposes and determinations, new resolves. A new creature is resolved against every way of sin, and for every way of Christ; being by renewing grace become Christ's disciple, he resolves not only to deny himself and take up his cross, but also to follow him. And he that follows Christ must resolve to walk in every way of Christ, and to abandon every evil way; for he that resolves upon any way of sin, resolves to leave Christ, not to follow him. Christ cannot be followed but in his own ways, those wherein he went, or which he prescribes. He is not only willing, content, but resolute, fully determined; and his resolutions are impartial and permanent.

Impartial, to leave all, every sin. Not only open sins but secret, sins of mind and heart; not only gross sins, but those that are more excusable, refined; not only chargeable, expensive, but advantageous; not only those that are disgraceful, reproached, but countenanced, in credit; not only burdensome, troublesome, but pleasing, delightful; not only dangerous, such as are punishable by law, but safe. Resolves to strive against every known sin, and to entertain any light that may discover what is sinful; and to endeavour not only to reform his conversation, but to get his heart cleansed; not only to crucify the members, but the body of death; not only avoid actual sin, but subdue natural corruption. This is to put off the old man; this is to act like a new creature; this is to become a new lump.

Resolve to walk in every way of Christ, even in those that seem difficult and painful, require diligence and trouble, and crossing the flesh; that are hazardous, by which ye may lose friends, credit, or accommodations; that are reproached, disgraceful, make you censured, reviled, jeered; that are chargeable, make a breach in your estates, may cost your liberty, expose to indignation of great ones, or endanger life; as Paul, Acts 20:24.

Permanent and fixed, too. This resolution is not some fit to which his will is forced by some rousing sermon, or some awakening providence, or some sharp affliction, or some apprehensions of approaching death. Even unrenewed men will resolve much upon such occasions; but when the enforcement is removed, the fit is over, the will returns to his former posture, as a broken bow. When the affliction is removed, or the sermon forgotten, the fear of hell or death vanished, these purposes vanish, too; no more resolvings then against sin. Such unconstant resolutions, though

they pass for goodness, yet they are but like that of Ephraim, of which the Lord complains, Hosea 6:4. But when the will is renewed indeed, these resolutions are constant, habitual, durable; not to-day resolved for Christ against sin, and the next day unresolved, as the Jews in that particular, Jeremiah 34:15-16: ‘Ye were turned to-day, and had done right; but ye turned again, and polluted my name.’ Or as Pharaoh resolved to let Israel go while he lay under the plagues, but when they were removed he was again unresolved. This inconstancy argues there is no new creation, but only some common superficial work. This is essential to a new creature; though there may be some declinings in respect of degrees, yet this is the constant bent of his will, he is resolved against every way of sin, and for every way of Christ.

Use. 1. Conviction. If none can be saved but new creatures, and so much be required to the constitution of a new creature, then how few shall be saved! If the gate be so strait that leads into the New Jerusalem that none but a new creature can enter into it, then few there be shall enter, few in the world, few amongst Christians.

Few shall enter, because there are few new creatures; for it appears from what has been delivered, that they are no new creatures,

1. Who are ignorant. When God begins this new creation, he says, ‘Let there be light, and there is light;’ therefore, where the darkness of ignorance, covers the face of the mind, there is no new creation. Those that sit in this darkness, they sit in the shadow of death, of eternal death; the way of life they have not known, they are far from it. This darkness, this ignorance, is the suburbs of hell; this is inner, and hell is but outer darkness. When Christ comes to give the children of light possession of their inheritance with the saints in light, he will come with flaming fire, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12. Yet how few are there that know Christ, his excellency, all-sufficiency, savingly, effectually! How few are there that know this new creation, the new birth, experimentally; who know what a new creature is, by what they find of it in their own souls!

2. Who are not convinced of what they know, who, though they apprehend something of Christ, and of sin, and of the new birth, yet not so apprehend as to bring their minds under a sensible, effectual conviction.

Those who think this new creature a mere conceit, a fancy of some singular men, or else that it is needless, a man may be saved without so much ado, think they may safely continue in the condition wherein they were born and have lived, without any such almighty work as this new creation, without any such universal change, such a mighty alteration. These make it plain enough that they have neither lot nor portion in this matter; those who never were convinced that themselves were unrenewed, or not effectually convinced of the danger in so continuing.

They that tremble not at the threatenings denounced against sin, and can rest quietly when the Lord tells them of so many curses hanging over the heads of unregenerate men, though they have no good grounds to believe but that they are the men, like the horse, in Job 39:22.

3. Those that value the world more than Christ, and outward things more than holiness. How evident is this amongst us! Yet who will confess their guilt in this particular? You use not to jeer men for being rich or noble, wise or learned; yet ye can deride some for their strictness and holiness, and brand the image of God with the odious names of puritanism and preciseness. Is it not clear, then, that holiness is vile in your eyes, while the things of the world are too precious? Or

suppose ye be not come to that height of wickedness as to jeer and deride holiness, yet do ye not neglect it? Do ye not think much to bestow half of that diligence and seriousness for obtaining or increasing of holiness, which you lay out for getting or keeping things of the world? You will have the best assurance, the best evidence that can be, to shew for your estates; and yet be content to take your interest in Christ upon trust, upon common, weak, unevidencing grounds. And is it not clear that Christ is of less value to such than their estate?

4. Those who have no higher designs than nature can reach, than sense or carnal reason can propose; whose chief design it is to live in ease, credit, plenty, safety in the world; who mind but God, heaven, and their souls upon the by; spare but little, even of their spare time, to mind these; and then look to this, not so carefully, not so seriously, not with such earnestness, intenseness, as they look to things that concern the outward man; mind spiritual things as though they minded them not; those that seek outward things in the first place, and the kingdom of God, with the righteousness thereof, in the second.

5. They that are strangers to spiritual inquiries, the voice of whose souls is that of the worldlings, Psalms 4:1-8, ‘Who will shew us any good?’ not that of the converts, ‘What shall we do to be saved?’ think it strange that any should busy themselves in inquiring, &c.

6. They whose minds are captivated to carnal reasonings; that will secretly argue for continuance in sin, from the mercy and long-suffering of God; argue for the salvation of unreformed sinners, from the love and sufferings of Christ; against strictness and holiness, from the miscarriage of some professors, or the reproaches of the world; against a gospel profession, from the divisions and diversities of opinions that are amongst us; for voluptuousness and indulgence to the flesh, from the shortness of our lives.

7. They whose minds are closed against holy, spiritual, heavenly thoughts, who know not what it is to commune with their hearts about spiritual things, who are strangers to heart-searching, self-judging, soul-quickening thoughts.

8. They that consult rather how to make provision for the flesh than how to crucify it; how to enjoy both Christ and his sins, his sins here, Christ hereafter, rather than how Christ alone may be advanced in his soul; consults with flesh and blood in spiritual matters, makes choice of the world and the flesh as his counsellors; and if his conscience will not serve him wholly to neglect the service of God, advises how he may serve both God and mammon.

9. They, the inclination of whose heart is not towards God and spiritual communion with him.

10. Who make it not their chief aim to glorify God, to please him and enjoy him.

11. Who can quiet, satisfy his heart in any performance, or any enjoyment wherein he does not enjoy Christ.

12. Who make choice of such means only for promoting spiritual ends, as suit with their own ease and interests.

13. Who are not willing to take Christ, upon any terms, whatsoever the gospel propounds.

14. They whose reason, fancy, appetite, senses, are not taught subjection to Christ.

15. They who resolve not to practise every known duty, and renounce every known sin.

Use. 2. Exhortation. 1. To those that are not yet new creatures. Since without this new creation there is no salvation, therefore, as you desire to be saved, if you would not perish eternally, rest not in anything for salvation till ye be new creatures; till then, ye are out of the way, ye are without hopes of heaven.

Every man fancies hopes of heaven; but upon what do ye raise them? It concerns ye eternally to be careful ye be not deluded. If your hopes should prove delusions at the day of judgment, how woeful will your condition be! And delusions they are if they rise not from this ground. Till ye be new creatures, ye build your hopes without a foundation, for nothing will avail ye to salvation, except ye be new creatures; neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither duty nor privilege, neither opinion nor practice, will be available to salvation, unless ye be new creatures. You that daily hear of gospel salvation, and, withal, know that by nature ye are out of the way to salvation; if ye be not desperately careless, should seriously inquire, what shall we do to be saved? Now if your souls be serious in asking this question, ye will seriously mind what the text answers; if ye will be saved, ye must be new creatures. And this being so, he that is not an infidel as to this truth, or wretchedly careless of his salvation, will be apt to ask,—

Quest. What means shall I use, that I may become a new creature?

Ans. In answer to this, let me premise one thing, to prevent mistakes. It is not in the power of man to make himself a new creature; for creation requires an infinite, an almighty power. No man, no angel can effect it; no, nor be the instrument of it, as the more judicious divines conclude. It is ■περβ■λλον μ■γεθος, an exceeding great power, such as was necessary to raise Christ from the dead, that is required to create faith and holiness in the soul, Ephesians 1:19; it is God's workmanship only, Ephesians 2:10.

Yet, because the Lord is not pleased to effect this work immediately, but has prescribed means as the way wherein he will work it, and without which ordinarily he will not work it, therefore the means that the Lord has prescribed must be used by those that desire to attain the end. And though there be no necessary connection betwixt those means and this end, no sufficient inherent virtue in them, necessarily and infallibly, to create holiness, God having reserved this in himself as his own prerogative, yet there is a probability that the Lord will concur with the means of his own prescribing. And this probability affords hopes to every sinner, encouragement to be diligent in the use of them; whereas there are no hopes, no probabilities in an ordinary way for those who enjoy not the means, or wilfully neglect them. The poor impotent man that lay at the pool of Bethesda, John 5:1-47, though he could not go into the pool, nor convey a healing virtue into the waters, yet he was in more hopeful way to be cured than those who, being insensible of the like infirmity, never endeavoured to come near those waters.

Christ compares the regenerating power of the Spirit unto the wind, John 3:8. The mariner cannot sail without wind, nor can he procure a wind at his pleasure, for it bloweth when and where it listeth; but he may thrust his vessel off a shore, and spread his sails, to take advantage of a gale when it bloweth. Those that wait upon the Lord in the use of means and ordinances, they hereby spread their sails, are ready for the Spirit's motions, which bloweth where it listeth; there is more hopes of these than of such who lie a-ground, neglecting the means of grace, which are both as

sail and tackling. The two blind men of whom we read, Matthew 20:30, they could not open their own eyes; that was beyond their power; but they could get into the way where Jesus passed by, and they could cry to him for sight who only could recover it. Those that are diligent in the use of means and ordinances, they sit in the way where Jesus passes by, who uses not to reject those that cry unto him.

So, then, it is clear, though this new creation be the work of God alone, yet having prescribed means wherein he is pleased to work it, notwithstanding the unrenewed man's woeful impotency, there are no small hopes, there are great encouragements for him to wait upon God in the use of those means and ordinances wherein he puts forth his almighty power in making new creatures: 2 Corinthians 5:17, Let him be. This denotes not man's ability but his duty, not that he is able to make himself a new creature, but that he is bound to use those means wherein or whereby the Lord renews sinners, makes them new creatures. But what are those means and ordinances wherein I must wait upon God, that I may be made a new creature? I will instance in some few:

1. Attend the word preached; attend it carefully, constantly. As we should preach it, so ye should hear it, in season and out of season. Neglect no opportunity that God offers; ye know not what ye lose by losing a sermon. This is the way whereby Jesus passes; Oh be not out of the way when he passes by! The Spirit that blows where it listeth ordinarily blows in this quarter. This is the pool where there is a healing, a quickening, a creating virtue, when the angel of his presence descends into it. Oh, miss no opportunity of getting into the pool, lest your souls languish in their unrenewed state, and perish for ever. It is this by which the Lord begets his children, makes them new creatures, James 1:18. This is the incorruptible seed by which ye must be begotten, or else die in your sins, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 Peter 1:25. Those that contemn the ministry of the gospel contemn the means of life, that which the Lord makes use of in this new creation.

Those that neglect the word to hear it, shew that they are no new creatures, shew that they have no mind to be so, shew they are either atheists, not regarding God in his word, or desperate, not regarding salvation or their souls. Nor is it enough barely to hear; but you must hear so as to remember, remember so as to meditate, meditate so as to apply it to your souls, and mix it with faith, and act according to it.

2. Persuade not yourselves that ye are new creatures, when ye are not. Look upon this as a delusion of Satan, of dangerous consequence. There are two devices of Satan whereby he usually deludes poor sinners about this weighty business. First, he endeavours to persuade them that there is no necessity of this new creation, that this is but a conceit of some preciser men, and that, indeed, there needs not so much ado to get to heaven. This is his first attempt. But if the clearness of Scripture evidence discover this to be a false suggestion, then he endeavours to persuade men that they are new creatures when they are not, and uses false grounds to make them believe it. Their good meanings, their harmlessness, their avoiding of gross sins, their moral virtues, outward performance of some religious duties, some change in their lives, sorrow for some sin, and zeal for some way of worship; all which, and more, may be in those that were never renewed.

Now, if upon these or such like grounds he can persuade them that they are new creatures, while this persuasion continues he will keep them from ever being new creatures. For hereupon he will draw them to neglect the means wherein God works this new creation, or else, if they use the means, hereby they are rendered ineffectual. The conscience is hereby armed against the dint of

the word. Threatenings and exhortations, proper to their condition, are neglected, put off as not concerning them, and the mind is shut up against conviction, which is usually the first step to conversion. Therefore if ye would not fall into, or not be kept entangled in, this snare of the devil, conclude not that ye are new creatures unless ye have clear Scripture grounds for it, except ye have found those lineaments of a new creature drawn upon your souls which I offered to your view in the explication of the doctrine. If upon serious examination ye find no such real universal change in your minds and hearts as I there described, then do not gratify Satan, do not delude your souls, by keeping off the application of it to yourselves. Take it home to thy heart, and say, I am the man: I never had experience of any such almighty work, of any such new creation in my soul; for anything yet appears, I am no new creature. And then, if the Lord please to bring you to this conviction, you are in a hopeful way to this new creation. But then you must

3. Consider seriously and frequently the misery of your present unrenewed state. It may seem harsh counsel to persuade yourselves that you are miserable, and Satan may tell you this is the way to despair; but he was a liar from the beginning. And, though it seem harsh, yet it is necessary, and through the Lord's concurrence it may be saving. Christ came to seek and save those that are lost: lost, miserable, undone, as in themselves, so in their own apprehension. You are never the further from happiness by being sensible of your misery; no, sense of misery is the highway out of it. Meditate, then, seriously of the misery of your unrenewed state; that it is a state of wrath, of damnation, of enmity with God; a cursed state, a hopeless state, against which are darted all the curses and threatenings that are written in the book of the law; that ye can never come to heaven till ye come out of it; and that there is but a step between you and hell while you are in it. And in sense hereof—

4. Cry mightily unto God for renewing grace. Lie at his footstool, and cry, 'Help, Lord, or else I perish!' 'Create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me!' Renew me in the spirit of my mind, renew me in the inwards of my soul! Take away this old mind that is so blind, so vain, so carnal! Take away this old will that is so obstinate, so perverse, so rebellious! Take away this old conscience that is so partial, so seared, so senseless! Take away this old heart that will never delight in, comply with, submit to thee! Let old things pass away, let all things become new! Thou, Lord, who broughtest this world out of nothing with a word, canst with a word work in me this new creation! Oh suffer me not to perish when thou canst so easily make me happy! Speak but the word, and it shall be done I Speak but the word, and this soul, now a dark, a woeful chaos, a lump of corruption and confusion, shall become a new creature! Thus follow the Lord with strong cries, and give him no rest till he hear, till he answer. And, to encourage you, urge the covenant, Ezekiel 36:26. Here is an absolute promise, no express condition to exclude, to discourage. And though ye are not (while unrenewed) in covenant by participation, yet ye are by proposal. Though ye yet partake not of it, yet it is propounded to ye. Plead it then: Lord, give me this new heart, put this new spirit into me. Though I be a dog (as was objected to the Canaanitish woman), yet it is this old heart, this corrupt nature, that makes me so. And this is it I complain of, this is it I would be rid of: Lord, take away this, &c. Oh, if ye were come thus far as that your hearts could put up such petitions frequently, unweariedly, then we might conclude ye are not far from the kingdom of God.

Obj. But while men are renewed, they are wicked, and the prayer of the wicked is sin; God will not accept it, answer it; it is unlawful, they must not pray.

Ans. Unrenewed men are bound to pray. Prayer is so far from being an unlawful practice, that it is their necessary duty. 1. The light of nature discovers it to be a duty. It is an act, not of instituted, but of natural, worship, by which every man had been bound to have acknowledged his dependence upon God, if the Lord had never revealed his will in Scripture. 2. If such must not pray because they sin in praying, by the same reason they must not eat, they must not work, for they sin in eating, in working. ‘The ploughing of the wicked is sin, Proverbs 21:4. 3. Prayer is nothing but the desire of the soul expressed; therefore, if they must not pray for renewing grace, they must not desire renewing grace. And who dare say to such a man, Desire not to be a new creature. The apostle Peter puts it out of question (if no other Scripture did bear witness to it). He commands an unrenewed man, one whom he certainly knew to have no part nor lot in this matter, one whose heart was not right in the sight of God, one who was in the gall of bitterness, &c. He commanded Simon Magus the sorcerer to pray, Acts 8:22.

2. It is not prayer itself, for that is a duty; but the wickedness of their prayers, that is sinful, that is an abomination. When they make prayers a cloak for their wickedness, or pray that they may prosper in wicked practices, or pray for pardon of sin when they do not intend to leave sin, or pray with their lips, speak the words of a prayer but desire not in their hearts what they pray for, this, though ordinary, is a mocking of God; no wonder if it be abominable in his account.

3. Though an unrenewed man’s person be not accepted, though the Lord take no special delight in his performance, though he have not promised to hear their prayers, yet sometimes he hears them; we have examples for it in Scripture. Ahab, though an unparalleled wicked man, yet when he humbled himself, the Lord made some return to his prayer, 1 Kings 21:29. The Ninevites, though heathens, cried mightily to God upon the preaching of Jonah, and the Lord repented him of the evil he had said, and as they desired, turned away from his fierce anger, so as they perished not, Jonah 3:9-10.

4. When the Lord gives a heart to pray constantly, importunately, affectionately, it is a sign he intends to answer. The experience of those that observe the returns of their prayers sufficiently confirm this; no reason then for us to forbear the urging of this means to unrenewed men; no reason for them to be discouraged from the use of it. If ye would be new creatures, seek it of God by earnest prayer.

Second branch of the exhortation, to those who are renewed, who are already made new creatures, who can truly say, the Lord has given them a new heart and a new spirit, that old things are passed away and all things become new. This engages you to several duties.

1. To thankfulness. You ought to praise the Lord for this while you have any being; your hearts should rejoice in him, your lips should praise him, your lives should express all thankfulness to him; you should be thankful according to the greatness of the mercy, so far as your weakness can reach. Now, this is a transcendant mercy, of everlasting consequence, because it avails to salvation, as other things which you are much taken with do not.

If you had riches, and honours, and pleasing accommodations, even to your heart’s desire; if you had success in all your outward undertakings, and all the prosperity you could wish; if you had a kingdom, or as many kingdoms as Ahasuerus had provinces; if you had assurance to live healthfully, delightfully, prosperously, in the enjoyment of these, an hundred years, yea, or a

thousand, you would think all this a favour that calls for exceeding thankfulness. Oh, but all this is nothing in comparison of what the Lord has done for you if he have made you new creatures, for all this would not avail you to salvation; if you were not renewed, you would be for all this children of wrath, under the curse of God, the objects of his hatred and indignation, condemned already by him, and reserved for execution unto the judgment of the great day. And after those days of outward prosperity were expired, and though they were a thousand years they would have an end, they are little or nothing to eternity; they are but to everlastingness, as a day or an hour is to a lifetime; and being ended, and this shadow of happiness vanished, you must go down to hell and dwell with everlasting burnings. Then, then, what would all those kingdoms, and the riches and splendour of them, avail you? Then you would say, It had been infinitely better for me to have had a new heart than to have had all these, though it had been ten thousand years longer. Better I had lived poor, and despised, and afflicted all my days, than to have fallen short of renewing grace.

Oh, if the Lord have vouchsafed thee this, how low, or mean, or necessitous, or distressed soever thine outward condition be, he has done incomparably more for thee than if he had given thee all that this world can afford, all that is desirable to a carnal heart on earth; he has given thee that which requires unspeakable more than thankfulness. Let thy soul then bless the Lord, and all that is within thee; let thy tongue, let thy life give him the honour his grace calls for.

2. Labour to partake more and more of this renewing grace, to be renewed more in the spirit of your minds, to be daily putting off the old man, Ephesians 4:1-32. If you be born again, see that you grow up; it will be monstrous to continue still infants or dwarfs. Whatever your outward condition be, be sure you may be able to say with the apostle, 2 Corinthians 4:16, ‘Though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day.’ The more ye are renewed, the more will ye have of salvation, the more ‘abundant entrance,’ 2 Peter 1:11. The more assurance you will have of salvation for the future, yea, the more of salvation you will have at present. For what is salvation but freedom from that which makes us miserable, and possession of that which makes us happy? That which makes us miserable is sin, and the effects of sin; and the more you are renewed, the more you will be freed both from sin and the woeful issues of it; the more you put on the new man, the more will the old be put off with its affections and lusts; and as the cause is removed the effects will cease. That which makes us happy is joy, glory, perfection. The more renewing grace, the more joy. Light is sown for the righteous; as this grace grows, joy will grow up with it; the more [grace, the more] glory, for grace in Scripture phrase is glory.

3. Pity those who are not new creatures. Children, relations, whatever you leave, friends, credit, estate, a settled, hopeful condition, you leave them miserable unless they be made new creatures. Travail in birth with them till Christ be formed in them.

## CHRIST’S GRACIOUS INVITATION TO SINNERS

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.—Revelation 3:20.

These words are part of an epistle which Christ sent by the apostle John to the church of Laodicea. In it there is matter of conviction, direction, encouragement, admonition.

1. By way of conviction, he shews her sin, her misery, lukewarmness, Revelation 3:15-16; self-conceitedness and carnal confidence, Revelation 3:17; none so apt to conceive themselves

rich, &c.

2. By way of direction, he shews her the means to escape this misery; from whom, and how redress may be had, Revelation 3:18.

3. By way of admonition, Revelation 3:19; these distempers must be corrected; do not promise thyself security from my love and indulgence, rather expect the contrary.

4. By way of encouragement, to use the means prescribed, improve the providences offered for recovery, and this, Revelation 3:20. Wherein two propositions, 1, simple, categorical; 2, compounded, hypothetical. In the first, 1, The matter of it; wherein considerable; (1.) The agent, Jesus Christ, described, Revelation 1:13, &c.; 2, his posture, stand; 3, act, knock; 4, the place, the door.

2. The momentousness of it, of which he gives us notice by the particle Behold. The Holy Ghost uses the word ■δου frequently to stir up, to attend to something wonderful, worthy of admiration; so Matthew 1:23 and Matthew 2:9, Luke 13:16. It has the same use here. By fixing an ecce in front of this verse, he gives us notice we should attend to that which follows, as worthy of admiration and full of wonder. Hence

Observe, that Christ should thus offer himself to sinners in a way of mercy, is a matter of admiration. It is like himself, whose name is Wonderful. As he is wonderful in himself, his person, his nature, offices, so in his administrations; and amongst the rest, this is wonderful, that he should condescend to offer himself. This is worthy to be considered, and the consideration of it should raise our minds to admiration: Psalms 8:1-9. ‘Lord, what is man’? so Isaiah 9:5. You will see great reason to wonder at this, if you consider, 1, who it is; 2, To whom it is; 3, in what manner it is; 4, what it is he offers.

1. Who. Consider (1.) his majesty; he who is the mighty God; he who is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and Prince of the kings of the earth, Revelation 1:5; who has the keys of hell and death, Revelation 1:18; all power in heaven and earth, who is Alpha and Omega, &c., Revelation 1:6; who is higher than the heavens; who is exalted far above, &c.; in comparison of whom the sun is but a lump of darkness, the heavens are but a span, the vastest regions of the world are but as small dust, and all the inhabitants of the earth as grasshoppers, and the glorious angels little better than vanity; the glory of whose majesty is so far from being expressed, as the apprehensions of the highest angels come infinitely short of it. That this glorious majesty should stoop so low, should condescend thus far, is wonderful, worthy of all admiration.

(2.) His all-sufficiency. He, who has all things within the compass of his own being, whereby he is infinitely happy and glorious; whose glory, whose happiness, had been nothing less than it is, if man had never been created, and would be nothing less, if all mankind should sink into nothing. He who stands in no more need of us, to add to his glory and happiness, than the angels stand in need of men, which is just nothing; nay, he stands in no more need of the angels. He was infinitely glorious and happy before any creature had a being, and had continued infinitely so, if the creatures had for ever continued in the state of nonentity, of nothing. Et infinito nihil addi potest. Our goodness extends not unto him, no, not that of the angels. He is infinitely above both, Job 22:2. All that can be expected from either is to acknowledge him glorious. But an acknowledgment makes no addition, adds nothing to what it sees, only takes notice of what is in him, and would be

no less in him, if it were not at all taken notice of. The sun would have no less lustre, would be no less glorious, if no eye ever saw it. So here, the Lord declares how little need he has of man, Psalms 50:9-12. He stands in no more need of man to make him happy and glorious, than the heavens stand in need of a gnat to move them, or the earth of a grasshopper to support it, or the sun of a glow-worm to add to its light and lustre, or Solomon in all his glory of a nest of ants to make it more illustrious.

If the Lord Christ could not be happy or glorious without man, then the wonder would be less in that he condescends thus far unto him; but since he is infinitely happy and glorious without him, since he can gain, can expect nothing at all by him, stands not in the least need of him, it is wonderful he should stoop so low as to offer himself in such a way unto him.

(3.) His independency. He is so free, so absolute, in his being and actings, as nothing can necessitate him, nothing lay any engagement on him. If man could oblige Christ, if he could deserve anything from him, if he could present any motive effectual to persuade him to offer, &c., the wonder would be less; but there is not, there cannot be, the least merit, the least motive from without, to engage the Lord to any such thing; nay, there is exceeding much to disoblige him, to engage him against any such gracious condescension. But here is the wonder: Christ does this when man is so far from deserving it, so far from engaging him, so far from moving him to it, as he does not so much as request it, not so much as desire it, not so much as think of it. He is ‘found of those that sought him not.’ He condescends thus far, stoops so low when there is no necessity laid on him, no desert, no motive, no desire, no thought of it, in or from the sons of men.

(4.) His sovereignty. This makes this condescension a wonder. Christ might, before he had otherwise determined, without any prejudice, annihilate all mankind, if it had continued innocent, and might have justified the act, upon the mere account of his sovereignty. ‘Shall I not do what I will with my own?’ Matthew 20:15; but after sin, he might have executed the sentence of death upon the sons of men in the very moment when they receive life; and, as he threatens Ephraim, Hosea 9:11, might have made the glory of man to fly away as a bird from the birth, womb, conception. He might have crushed this cockatrice in the egg, &c.; and this, too, with advantage to his glory, and thereby much prevented that dishonour which the continuance of our lives occasions. ‘It is the Lord’s mercy that we,’ to whom he is now offering himself, ‘were not consumed’ in our infancy; a wonder of mercy that we not only live, but live to hear Christ offering life, &c.

What a wonder, when Christ might, with so much glory to his justice, power, wisdom, sovereignty, have destroyed us, he should rather choose to offer salvation! When there was, as it were, a contest betwixt justice and mercy, and when there was so much reason for the execution of justice, so little or none from us for the tenders of mercy, that the Lord should here interpose his sovereignty to prevent man’s ruin, and when there was no other reason to offer him mercy, because he would offer it. As Exodus 33:19, as if the Lord should say; There is no reason in man, why I should thus condescend to him. I see many weighty reasons why I should utterly, entirely, destroy him; my severity will be justified before all the world, and my justice much glorified thereby. Yet for all this, though there be much reason from my own glory, and all the reason in the world from man himself, why he should perish without the least tender of mercy, yet will I spare, yet will I stoop so low as to offer myself unto him. Oh how full of wonder is this condescension of Christ!

How ought we to admire it! How may we be astonished at it, if we consider but who it is that stoops so low; that is the first. More wonderful it will appear, if we consider,

2. To whom it is he thus offers, he thus condescends. If the sovereign Majesty of heaven, so all-sufficient, so infinitely glorious, will vouchsafe to stoop to any, we may think in reason he must be some person of worth and honour; no, it is to men, it is to sinners, it is to his enemies. Here is the wonder, this is it that calls for the Ecce, the Behold in the text. The great God stoops thus low to man. The sovereign Majesty of the world vouchsafes this to a slave. The absolute commander of heaven and earth condescends thus far to an enemy. Behold and wonder, consider this and be astonished, and let your admiration rise by these three steps.

(1.) It is to man, it is not to the angels, it is not to the seraphims of glory; no, it is to man, contemptible man; it is to him who is but dust and ashes; it is to 'man who is a worm, and to the son of man who is but as a worm' compared with Christ, Job 25:1-6; it is to man that Christ thus condescends, in comparison of whom man is not so much as a worm: 'He is but as a moth,' Job 27:18. Nay, compare him with Christ, he is inferior to this small contemptible creature, Job 4:19. 'He is crushed before the moth.' And will Christ wait upon dust and ashes? Will he come to the habitation of a moth, and stand and knock at the door of a worm? Oh what a wonder is this, that the brightness of infinite glory, the mighty God of hosts, should stoop so low! Nay,

(2.) It is to sinners; it is to man by sin made worse than those creeping things, worse than the beasts that perish. Man by creation was but dust, and in this contemptible enough; but by sin he is become polluted dust, and so not only vile, but odious, loathsome, so loathsome, as the Lord is of purer eyes than to behold, cannot endure to see him. A wonder then he will endure to come so near him, that he will stand and knock at the door of such a leper, so deformed, so loathsome, so infectious! See how he describes those to whom he offers love, Revelation 3:17, Wretched and miserable, twice miserable, extremely miserable, and (which makes the gracious offer wonderful), wilfully miserable. Misery, when it is not voluntary, may move pity; but when it is wilful, when a man throws himself into it, is obstinate against freedom from it, rejects the means offered, contemns the offer, slights him that offers it, boasts of his own happiness, when he is admonished of his misery, will not know it, will not seek redress, will not desire it, will not accept it; who will relieve such misery? Such is the misery of a wretched sinner. He has wilfully brought it upon himself, and wilfully continues in it. Christ in the gospel tells him of his misery: he will not believe him; he says, 'I am rich,' &c. Christ shews the way out of it, he obstinately refuses to walk in it; Christ shews the means, he rejects them; Christ offers happiness, he contemns the offer, and despises Christ himself that offers it. Oh woful misery! And yet Christ will come and knock, and stand waiting, to shew mercy to such wilful wretches; and continues thus, notwithstanding their obstinacy, their contempt of those gracious offers, and of Christ himself that makes them. Oh how wonderful is this!

Add to this; Christ offers it to those that are poor, blind, and naked; so poor, as they have nothing to cover their soul's deformity and nakedness, and yet so blind, as they will not see that which has nothing to cover it. And will Christ offer himself to such poor, blind, loathsome, obstinate, miserable wretches? Oh how wonderful is this! See the woful condition of sinners described by the Lord himself, when Christ offers himself to them; behold it and wonder, Ezekiel 16:4-6, Ezekiel 16:8. Will he condescend so far to such wretches, when they lie in their blood and are covered with

loathsome pollution? Will he pity those whom no eye pities, who will not pity themselves? Will he spread his garment over such defilement? Shall the time of loathing be the time of his love? Oh how full is every word with wonder! It is to sinners that Christ stoops, to sinners; and that is the worst, the most odious, the most loathsome thing that earth, nay, that hell, can afford; and will he condescend so far to these?

(3.) It is to enemies. Not only to those that are hateful to Christ, but those to whom Christ is hateful; to those that are his utter enemies, enemies in their minds, in their hearts, in their lives; to those that hate Christ, and all his; hate him without a cause, hate him with a mortal hatred, even to the death; hate him implacably, so as they will never cease to hate him till their old hateful hearts be plucked out of their flesh, Ezekiel 11:19; those that join with his deadly enemies, shew themselves enemies to his crown, nay, to his life. Such an enemy is every unregenerate sinner unto Christ; and yet to such enemies does Christ come, and stand, and knock, that he may shew them mercy. To such does he offer himself, communion with himself; and waits till they will open, waits till he may enter, to feast them with his own joys and comforts, and to entertain them as his dearest friends. Oh the wonder of this condescension! If men will not, heaven and earth will, be astonished at it, to consider to whom. It will appear more wonderful if we consider, 3. How it is he offers himself. He comes, knocks, stands, entreats, importunately, compassionately, again and again.

(1.) He comes. It is the great concernment of sinners, and their duty too, to come unto Christ, to seek him, and not to look that he should come to them. It is thus with men; they stand upon terms, and will have their inferiors to know their duty, or else suffer for it. How much more might the great God stand upon it, and let men perish if they will not come and seek to him for happiness? Are they not more concerned than he? Does he lose anything if we perish? Must he condescend to careless, undutiful wretches, as though he were beholden to us for making us happy? Must he condescend further to man than one of us will stoop to another? Will he come to those who will not come to him, though they die for it? Oh how wonderful is this! yet thus it is. While men mind not their greatest concernment, while they neglect their duty, while they take no notice of their distance, yet Christ stands not upon terms; while they refuse or delay to come to him, he vouchsafes to come to them. Oh wonderful condescension!

If we consider the infinite distance betwixt Christ and sinners, we cannot but count it a wonder that he should suffer such vile, loathsome, hateful wretches to come near him, though they were willing to do it. How much then is it to be admired, that he will stoop so low as to come to them, who are unwilling, as they are most unworthy, to come to him! Will Christ come to make them happy, that will not so much as come to him for happiness? Will he come to save them from death, who will not so much as come to him for life? Will he come to seek and save those that are lost, when they will rather lose their souls for ever than come to him for salvation? This is the condition of every unregenerate sinner: ‘No man comes to me,’ says Christ, ‘except the Father draw him,’ John 6:44; and so he complains, ‘Ye will not come to me,’ &c., John 5:40. Oh if Christ should stand upon terms here, as most justly he might, and the very custom of the world would justify him in it; if he should say, If I be not worth the coming to, if life and happiness be not worth the coming for, why, then, stay where you are, and be without it. Oh if Christ should say thus, why, then, no flesh would be saved. Oh but when careless wretches, forgetful of their souls, unmindful of their duty, regardless of Christ’s honour, will not come to him, rather than they shall perish, he condescends, he humbles himself, to come to them. Here is that we may for ever wonder at: the King of glory

comes to a slave to make him happy, to a slave who refuses to come to him. The sovereign Lord of the world comes to offer peace to his mortal enemy, whom he could crush into nothing; seeks peace with a sinner that refuses peace with God. The glorious Majesty of heaven vouchsafes to come to dust and ashes, which refuse to move towards him. The holy God, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, comes to deformity and pollution, though it be loathsome to him; comes and offers heaven to that which provokes him to spurn it at the greatest distance from him, even into the lower hell. Would you see this wonder? Look into the text, and behold Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Holy One of Israel, coming unto men, to sinners, to enemies; coming with life, and peace, and happiness, to wretched, condemned, deformed slaves, while they refuse to come to Christ for them. But, which adds to the wonder, behold,

(2.) He knocks. That implies the door is shut (as you shall hear hereafter); but though he finds the door shut, though the heart of the sinner be closed against him, though he finds none ready, since none willing to open to him, yet he knocks. Though he sees the sinner sometimes bolting the door faster against him, sometimes taking no notice of him, sometimes stopping his ears that he should not hear, sometimes withdrawing himself, as counting the gracious importunity of Christ troublesome; always admitting his deadly enemies at their first approach when himself is shut out, yet he knocks.

Oh what a wonder is it, that Christ does not depart in indignation, and swear in his wrath that he will never enter under the roof of such a wretch! If Christ expected any great advantage by being admitted, then it would be less wonder that he should knock, and continue knocking. But he desires to enter, that he might make that wretch happy that shuts him out. He expects no costly entertainment; he will put the house neither to cost nor trouble; he brings his entertainment with him, and gives the sinner notice of it: Revelation 22:12, ‘Behold, I come shortly, and my reward is with me.’ He comes not empty-handed: ‘Length of days is in his right hand, and in his left hand riches and honour,’ Proverbs 3:16. He would have entrance, that he might pour out his treasures into the bosom of the sinner; and yet he is shut out, and glad to knock, that he may have admission. He knocks in the ministry of the word; knocks by the law, by the gospel; knocks by the motions of the Spirit, knocks by afflictions, knocks by checks of conscience, knocks by reproofs and admonitions of his people, knocks by variety of providences; and yet seldom, and, if ever, hardly gets admission.

Oh the wonder of Christ’s patience! Would any prince on earth do as the Prince of the kings of the earth here does? Coming to the cottage of some peasant to make his condition rich and honourable, would he stay to knock when he sees himself shut out, and none regard to open to him? Yet will the King of kings digest this affront from dust and ashes, and knock for admission though it be denied; whenas he might fire the house about the ears of sinners, and with the breath of his nostrils tumble them into destruction: ‘The Lord’s ways are not as our ways,’ &c.

(3.) He stands. Continues in a posture not easy to us, not becoming the majesty of men in honour. He waits on vile sinners; he is not weary of waiting, he stands. Though the sinner sometimes plainly refuse to admit him, sometimes puts him off with excuses; though he tell him he is not at leisure, he has something else to do than to run to the door; though he bid him come another time, when he is not busy; though he tells him he has other guests, and those that he likes better; though he see him entertaining sin and the world, so taken up with them as himself is not

regarded: yet he stands. Oh the wonder of Christ's patience! And what heart will not be filled with admiration that considers who it is that thus stands, and at whose door? 'Behold, I stand;' I, says Christ, I stand, whose seat is the throne of glory at the right hand of the Majesty on high. I, 'at whose name every knee should bow, both of things in heaven, and things on earth,' Php 2:10; I stand, before whom all the glorious angels of God bow down and worship, Hebrews 1:6; I stand, at whose feet the glorified, triumphant saints do cast their crowns, Revelation 4:10; I stand, before whom the glorious host of heaven do fall. I stand waiting upon dust and ashes, waiting upon sinners, the very worst of all my creatures, waiting upon my enemies. I stand while they sit in the seat of scorners, while they lie wallowing in lusts and pleasures, while they sleep securely in ways of sin, not regarding me. I stand without, while base lusts are freely entertained, and the worst of my enemies heartily welcomed within. I stand at the door while Satan has the throne; I am shut out while every vanity is let in. And will Christ stand upon such terms, after so many refusals, affronts, after so much disrespect and contempt cast on him? Yes, he stands, and so continues, till his locks be wet with the dew, and his head with the drops of the night! Oh, who would not stand amazed to see Christ thus stand at the doors, at the hearts of sinners!

(4.) He entreats. Here is a wonderful condescension indeed, that the great God, speaking to the vilest of his creatures (so man is by sin) should use the language of entreaty; that he who commands winds and seas, he who has heaven and earth, angels and all creatures at his command, should humble himself so to entreat, to beseech his creature! And entreat what? To do him some favour, to help him to some advantage? Then indeed the wonder were less. No; but the Lord is infinitely above any such thing. That which he entreats is, that they would admit him, admit him whose presence is the glory, the happiness of heaven. That they would be reconciled to him, reconciled to him whose favour is life to them, but no advantage at all to himself, but what he can otherwise procure though they perish. He can as easily get himself glory in destroying the proudest of his enemies, the greatest of sinners, as in pardoning any; and yet he beseeches, he stoops so low as to entreat condemned sinners to accept of a pardon, 2 Corinthians 5:20. If a prince should do this, if he should come to one of his meanest subjects, by whom he had been highly offended, from whose displeasure he fears no loss, and from whose friendship he expects no advantage, and should entreat him to be reconciled and accept of his favour, would not this be the wonder of all that hear of it? Yet thus does the glorious God to those that have shewed themselves traitors, enemies to his crown and dignity; he comes to them, offers them his favour, his pardon, stands waiting for their acceptance. And when they are slow to accept it (who are most concerned to sue for it), he beseeches, he entreats them to accept of his favour, not to refuse a pardon, whenas without it they perish, soul and body, eternally. Oh how wonderful is this condescension!

(5.) He bewails their unkindness to him, their cruelty to their own souls. When other means are not effectual, he takes up a lamentation. Here is a wonder indeed! He stoops so low as to take the weakest of our infirmities that can without sin be expressed. When sinners regard him not, his knocking, his entreating; when they continue obstinate against him, and resolute to continue in sin, notwithstanding all the means used to reclaim them, he lifts up his voice and weeps over them. When he prevails not by coming, by standing, by knocking, by waiting, by beseeching, why this is his grief, his sorrow, and he vents his sorrow in tears. Behold the compassions of the Lord to obstinate sinners, as he expresses it over Jerusalem. Behold it, and wonder! He represents

himself as clothed with the weakest of man's infirmities; he falls a-weeping, Luke 19:41-42. Behold the wonderful compassions of a dear Saviour. Now if one should ask him, as he did the woman, John 20:15, Blessed Lord, 'what seekest thou? why weepest thou?' we may suppose this would be returned: Why, I seek not myself, I weep not for myself, there is no need of that; I shall be infinitely, eternally glorious; though sinners be not gathered, I am infinitely happy, whatever become of them. But this is the grief of my soul, that sinners will rather cast their souls into hell than give me admission into their hearts; that they will rather force me to forsake them than forsake their sins; that they will rather part with me, who am their life and hope of glory, than part with the world, than part with their lusts, which will certainly ruin them. When I come, they do not admit me; when I knock, they open not to me; when I stand, they do not regard me; when I entreat, and beseech, and promise, they do not believe me. I know what this will cost them, it will be bitterness in the end; and if my compassions move them not, nothing remains for them but weeping and gnashing of teeth for ever. This he foresaw in Jerusalem, and this he foresaw in others disobeying the gospel as they did. And hereupon his bowels were turned within him, his compassions vented themselves in tears. And O, did the Lord weep for them who will not weep for themselves? Oh how wonderful is this compassion! how full of wonder this condescension!

(6.) He does this frequently, again and again. He comes, and though sinners provoke him to depart, he comes again; he knocks, and though they will not open, he knocks again; he stands, and though they force him to remove, he returns and stands again; he entreats, and when he is not regarded, he doubles his entreaties, he enforces them, by presenting his tears, his blood, to the view of sinners in the gospel. The preaching hereof, in season and out of season, is his appointment, that therein sinners may see him daily set forth as crucified before their eyes, that they may behold him stretching out his hands all the day long unto them, that they may hear him, as though he were now, as in the days of his flesh, mourning, complaining, and weeping over them, Luke 13:34. How often would the Lord have gathered you! how often has he come, knocked, stood, waited, entreated, lamented! If it be a wonder that he will condescend to any of these for once, how wonderful is it that he should condescend to these so often! This will be yet more wonderful if ye consider,

4. What it is that he offers. Behold what it is the great God offers to men, to sinners, to enemies, with such condescension, affection, compassion, importunity, and you will see matter of highest admiration. He offers (1.) his love; (2.) himself; (3.) his blood, and all that he purchased by it; (4.) his comforts; (5.) his glory; and (6.) his kingdom. He comes, to give these; he stands, to offer these; he knocks, that these may be admitted; he entreats, that these may be accepted; he laments, when sinners regard not these offers. And this day by day, year after year; and that to those that have made themselves the vilest of his creatures. Let all these things meet together in your thoughts, and you will apprehend Christ wonderful. You will get some acquaintance with the employment of heaven, admiration of Christ in his tenders of mercy to sinners. You will see there was reason to begin this verse with a note of admiration, Behold!

(1.) His love. Such a love as it is a wonder any creature should be the object of it; more wonderful that Christ should offer love to the vilest of creatures. Consider what love it is that Christ offers.

[1.] An ardent love. Many waters could not quench this love. Not the floods of reproaches, injuries, sufferings from men; not the waves and billows of God's wrath and indignation. All these went over

him, yet did this love flame forth in the midst thereof; nor was it ever more ardent than in the height of sufferings.

[2.] A transcendent love. No love found in the breast of any creature is worthy to be compared with it. We may say of it with more reason than David of Jonathan's, 2 Samuel 1:26, 'His love was wonderful, passing the love of women.' Greater love than this was never visible in the world, John 15:13. His love, like his ways and thoughts, is far above the creature's, John 15:9. There is not an equality, but there is resemblance. No love comes so near the love of the Father to the Son as the love of Christ to his people; greater love than a man bears to himself, more love than Christ shews to heaven or earth. He left heaven to manifest, to offer this love. He refused all the kingdoms of the earth, offered to stop the current of this love, Matthew 4:8-10. If [thou wilt] desist from this great work, render thyself incapable of redeeming man, and so lay aside the thoughts of loving him.

[3.] An everlasting love, John 13:1; Isaiah 54:10. Such a love it is that Christ offers to such creatures. He stays not till they sue for it, but offers it; and that to worms, sinners, enemies; those who have no love in them to Christ when he makes this offer, no, nor anything lovely. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, nothing but bruises, &c.; the face of his soul covered with a filthy leprosy; as full of noisome sores as Lazarus's body, whose sores the dogs licked; full of more loathsome boils than Job's body, when he sat in the ashes and scraped himself. A soul polluted wtth sin is far more loathsome in the eye of the holy God than that which is most loathsome to us in the world. And will Christ offer love to that which is so loathsome? such a love to such a deformed wretch as man is become by sin, especially seeing the soul is as full of hatred as it is of deformity? Will the glorious Majesty of the world, the brightness of infinite glory, the beauty of heaven, the wonder of angels, love such deformity, love that so much which is so much an enemy to him? Will he come and stand, and knock, and sue, and entreat that this love may be accepted? Oh how wonderful! How may we break forth into admiration with the Psalmist, Psalms 8:4, 'Lord, what is man?' What is he but a lump of pollution, a mass of deformity, as full of hatred to Christ as a toad of poison? And is this a thing to be loved, to be loved of Christ, to be loved with such a love? Would it not be a wonder if such a creature should prevail for any love from Christ if he should sue for it to eternity? Oh what wonder is it then that Christ should of his own accord make the offer!

(2.) Himself. It is not some lesser expression of love, but it is the highest, the greatest that heaven can afford. It is himself, it is no less than himself, which is more than ten thousand worlds, that he offers. He offers himself to be theirs by covenant, by marriage covenant, and that for ever; to be thine assuredly, intimately, eternally; to be thy God, thy friend, thy husband, thy Jesus, thy Saviour, thy Christ, thy king, thy priest and prophet, thy advocate, thy intercessor. Oh what infinite riches is there in this little pronoun thine! Canst thou say, Christ is mine? Why, this is more than if thou couldst say, All the treasures of the world are mine, all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them are mine. Why, this is it that Christ offers, no less than himself, to be thine for ever. This is it which he offers when he stands and knocks at thy heart: Open to me; I will be thy God, the Lord thy Redeemer. Though thou hast rebelled against me, and followed after strange gods, yet now renounce those idols, open to me, I will be thy God, and that by covenant more durable than heaven and earth.

Open to me, thy Redeemer will be thy husband. Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, thy unkindness, disrespects, disobedience, ingratitude, disloyalty shall not part us. I will marry thee to myself in an everlasting covenant that shall never be broken; I will rejoice over thee as a bridegroom over his bride.

Open to me, I will make over no less than myself unto thee. Thou shalt have that which it is the glory and happiness of heaven to have, myself, communion with me; I will come and sup with thee, and thou with me. Art thou poor? Open to me; the commander of heaven and earth will be thine to enrich thee. Art thou vile and contemptible? The King of glory will be thine to honour thee. Art thou deformed? The Sun of righteousness will be thine to beautify thee. Art thou distressed? The great Redeemer will be thine to relieve thee. Art thou weak? The Lord of hosts will be thine to strengthen thee. Art thou dejected? The God of all consolations will be thine to comfort thee. Art thou in darkness? The bright Morning Star will be thine to enlighten thee. Art thou wretched and miserable? The Fountain of bliss and happiness will be thine to enhappy thee. Thus Christ offers himself; and oh how wonderful is it, that he should come to vile worms, and knock, and wait, and entreat that himself may be accepted!

(3.) His blood. He offers not himself in a common, easy, cheap way, but himself as dying for those that will open to him, Ephesians 5:2. He offers that which the sons of men will least part with, skin for skin, &c. He offers his life, his blood, Revelation 1:1-20. It is not silver, or gold, or wealth, or honours only that he offers; it is something of more value than sceptres, or crowns, or earthly kingdoms: it is ‘his precious blood,’ 1 Peter 1:18. Take those things which the sons of men do most value, and they are but corruption compared with what Christ offers: it is his blood. so transcendently precious is the blood of Christ, as all the treasures of the earth are so vile compared with it, as that which the Scripture counts vilest, as corruption itself. Christ comes, and stands, and knocks, to offer his blood, when he comes to the hearts of sinners. He comes, as he is described, coming from Bozrah: Isaiah 63:1-2, ‘with dyed garments, red in his apparel; with garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat, dyed with his own blood.’ This he offers, and all those infinitely precious things which are the purchase of his blood. If thou wilt open, all shall be thine. Is the wrath of God kindled against thee? My blood shall pacify him. Is the justice of God incensed against thee? My blood shall satisfy it. Is heaven shut against thee? Open to me, my blood shall open it. Is thy conscience a terror to thee? My blood shall speak peace to it. Fearest thou any thing? My blood shall secure thee. Wantest thou, desirest thou any thing? My blood shall purchase it, procure it for thee. This Christ offers. He will not think his blood too dear for sinners that will open to him. Oh what wonder is it that Christ will offer his blood for vile worms; nay, his blood for his enemies; that he will come, and knock, and stand, and wait, and entreat, that his precious blood may be applied, may be accepted! If a physician, having a patient desperately sick, and knowing no other remedy for him but his own blood, should come, and knock, and entreat, and after affronts and repulses, and many expressions of hatred and contempt from the patient, should yet continue importunate that he would accept of his own blood for his cure, would not this astonish all that should hear of it? Much more wonderful is this, that the King of glory, though despised and hated by sinners, should offer his own blood to save them from death; and when the offer is slighted and neglected, should yet knock, and call, and cry, and beseech, that it may be accepted. Oh, if any thing affect us, this must needs be wonderful in our eyes.

(4.) His comforts. Those comforts which flow from his presence, in whose presence is fulness of joy. Those joys which spring from communion with himself. ‘I will come in, and sup with him,’ &c. The well-spring of heavenly joys, the fountain itself will flow in, if the sinner will but open. And this is it that Christ intends, when he comes, knocks, and stands, and waits, that joys unspeakable and glorious may fill those souls who have been a grief, an affliction, a dishonour to him. You have made him a man of sorrows, he offers you everlasting joys. You have given him gall and wormwood, he brings you the foretastes of heaven, the first-fruits of the land of promise. He stands, and calls, and entreats, that this may be accepted. Oh how wonderful is this!

(5.) His glory and kingdom, John 17:22. He offers glory to dust and ashes; his own glory to despised worms. Such glory as himself enjoys, not equal to it, yet much resembling it. When David promised Mephibosheth the honour to sit at his table, how is he transported! How does he express his sense thereof! 2 Samuel 9:8. Oh how much better does this admiration, this expression become those to whom Christ offers his glory! What is thy servant, that thou shouldst take notice of him? What is dust and ashes? What are poor worms, that they should sit at thy table as one of the King’s sons? That the great God should offer this great glory to vile creatures, and that by way of entreaty, oh how wonderful is it! Not only to sit at his table (which Mephibosheth, though a king’s son, thought so great an honour from a king), but to sit on his throne, 2 Samuel 9:2; and now we are so high, as admiration should be raised to the highest. The King of glory stands, that vile sinners may sit; stands knocking at their doors, hearts, that they may sit on his throne, on his own throne; entreats those who are enemies to accept of his kingdom, his own kingdom.

Use. 1. Information. This shews the reason why sinners are so much, so exceedingly affected at their first conversion. No wonder if they be astonished, transported with admiration; for herein they have a clear discovery of these wonders; a deep sense of their own vileness, misery, enmity against Christ; a clearer view of his transcendent excellencies; a more tender resentment of his condescensions in coming, standing. They are as one born blind; when he recovers his sight, every thing almost is a wonder to him, much more the sun. When men’s eyes are opened, all the carriage of this business is wonderful, especially Christ. Why do they see so much to astonish, transport them, whenas others see little or nothing, or are little or nothing affected with what they discover in Christ, in themselves? Why, till converted, they are in darkness; but upon conversion are ‘translated into marvellous light,’ 1 Peter 2:9.

Use. 2. Reproof. Those that slight, neglect, despise these condescensions of Christ in offering these things. Are things so wonderful thus to be undervalued? Do ye neglect to hear? Regard ye not, when Christ comes, knocks, stands, entreats? Can you withstand all his importunity, and resolve for sin, put him off with excuses, delays? Oh take heed! You take the course to provoke the Lord to make your plagues wonderful, Deuteronomy 28:59.

Use. 3. Exhortation. Since it is a wonder in itself, let it be so in our eyes. Be much in meditating on those things that represent Christ wonderful. Consider him, how glorious, all-sufficient, &c. Consider thy own vileness, sinfulness, how wretched. Let these things lie on thy thoughts till they affect thy heart, till they raise thy mind to admire, adore, as the queen of Sheba, 1 Kings 10:5. Consider how often Christ has come, how long stood, how much entreated, how many motions, providences, convictions. Consider what he offers, as Elizabeth, Luke 1:43; and then break forth in praises, rise up into admiration, fall down astonished at the wonders of Christ’s condescension.

This is the employment of heaven; hereby you will do the will of God as it is done in heaven. This is it which Christ calls for by the first word, Behold.

Pass we from the consequence of this proposition, Behold, to the matter of it; wherein, 1, the person; 2, his posture; 3, the place; 4, his action. The person is Christ; his posture, standing; the place, man's heart; that is the door, and there he knocks. These, put together, afford two observations, one implied, the other expressed. That implied is this:

Obs. The hearts of sinners are shut against Christ; every soul by nature is closed against Christ. If it were not, there would be no need for Christ to stand and knock, there would be no ground to represent him in such a posture. That the strength and evidence of this truth may appear, we will take it in pieces, and so explain and confirm it by opening and proving two propositions contained in it. 1. Christ is extra; 2. exclusus. 1. Christ is without, there he stands, there he knocks; 2. The sinner is unwilling to let him in. He is not only without, but shut out; therefore he stands, he knocks.

1. Christ is without, he is not in the soul of a sinner naturally. While a sinner is in the state of nature, he is without Christ, so described, Ephesians 2:12. We are born without Christ, live without him, nor has he place in us, till an almighty power, which the Lord usually puts forth in the ministry of the gospel, make way for him in our hearts. Till conversion, till the Lord open the heart, as he did Lydia's, Christ is not present in the sinner, nor entertained by him; he is not present in respect of his special and gracious presence (so understand it).

He is not in the mind, he is not present there as a prophet, to instruct, to enlighten it; darkness covers the face of it; the Sun of righteousness shines not there with a saving, a spiritual ray; the Day-star does not there arise. Though he may apprehend much by natural light, yet nothing spiritually, savingly, effectually. The things of the Spirit of God are not discerned, 1 Corinthians 2:14

Christ is not in the will, he is not present there as a king; his throne is not there established, his sceptre is not there advanced; the heart submits not to him, complies not with his laws, is not ruled by him, breaks his bonds, casts his cords from him, says, I will not have this man to rule over me.

Christ is not in the conscience; he is not present there as a priest; his blood has not yet been there sprinkled, does not purify it, mollify it; does not free it from guilt, nor make it tender. If it scruple at sin, restrain from it, accuse for it, the love of Christ, the blood of Christ, does not constrain it so to do; it is from some other enforcement, some more foreign consideration.

Christ is not entertained; other things are admitted before him, take place of him. And this leads me to the reason of this point.

Christ is without, because the soul is so taken up with other guests, as there is no place left for him. The like reason why Christ is not admitted into the heart of a natural man, as there was why he was not admitted at his birth into the inn, Luke 2:7. Christ finds no better entertainment, when he comes spiritually to a sinner's heart, than when he came in the flesh to Bethlehem. He lodges without, because there is no room within. The soul of a sinner is full of other guests; sin, and the world, and Satan have taken up every room in the soul. The mind, the will, the heart, the conscience, they are full of sin, full of corruption, crowded with multitudes of lusts; and intus existens prohibet alienum, so much corruption within keeps Christ without. Man brings into the

world a soul full of corruption, a nature wholly depraved, a heart abounding with all manner of lusts, full of pride, unbelief, worldliness, uncleanness; full of rebellion, obstinacy, security, self-love: these and many other so take up the heart as there is no room left for Christ; these must be whipped out before the soul can become a fit temple for Christ; it must be emptied of these in some degree before the glory and power of Christ's presence will fill the tabernacle of the soul.

While these strong men armed keep the house, as Luke 11:21, Christ stays without, these cannot rule together; no serving of two such masters; no entertaining of these so differing guests; one heart cannot hold them, because these lusts of corrupted nature are in possession and rule within, Christ is without. That is the first.

2. Christ is shut out. He is not only without, but the sinner is unwilling to let him in. The heart is closed against him, and many means are used to make it fast, many bolts and locks are added to make it sure. Were not the heart closed, the door shut, Christ would not need to knock; were not the sinner unwilling to open, Christ would not be put to stand knocking, the heart would open to him at his first approach, at his first knock. But the Holy Ghost, by these expressions, plainly declares to us the sinner's unwillingness to open to Christ. The reasons of it are many, I shall but mention three; prejudice against, distrust of, disaffection to, Christ.

(1.) Prejudice against Christ. This shuts Christ out of the mind, makes the sinner unwilling to admit him into the outer room. The mind of every man naturally is full of prejudice against Christ; it is part of that enmity of which the apostle speaks, Romans 8:7. Hearing in the gospel upon what terms Christ will be admitted, it forthwith judges his admission dangerous, troublesome, or needless, and so shuts him out. This prejudice shews itself by judging it.

[1.] Dangerous. If I open to Christ upon these terms, I must forego all my unjust gains, all my forbidden pleasures; I must be no more wanton, intemperate, or revengeful, how much pleasure soever I have taken herein; I must not commit the least sin to gain the greatest advantage; I must cut off every dear lust, though it be to me as my right hand, &c.; I must not leave a hoof behind if Christ be admitted; nay, I must not only part with my pleasing and gainful sins, but be ready to sacrifice my estate, credit, liberty, life, when he calls for them. Hereupon the sinner thinks Christ offers him loss when he offers to come in upon these terms, and so shuts him out.

[2.] Troublesome. If I open to Christ, I must bid adieu to my carnal ease, humours, interests; I must be diligent in mortifying duties, which are so irksome to flesh and blood; I must spend so much time in prayer, meditation, self-examination; I must be always watchful over my heart, thoughts, ways, senses; I must beat down my body, bring it into subjection; maintain a continual combat with my own corrupt nature; expose myself to the reproaches and scorn of the world, by strictness, scrupulousness in matters which they judge of small moment; I must live in continual exercise of repentance, self-denial, mortification. These, and such like, Christ requires if he be admitted. And so the sinner looks upon him as a troublesome guest, and shuts him out.

[3.] Needless. Think it not needful to admit Christ further than they have done. They are baptized in his name, submit to his ordinances, profess him openly, have a name to live; sometimes pray, read, and hear his word; order their outward conversation, as they think, inoffensively; so conclude they are Christians good enough, that it is not needful further to admit or entertain Christ, and so close their hearts against him, when he should enter to purpose and take full possession of them.

What needs all this stir? Cannot a man be a Christian, &c., except so strict, precise? This is to be hypocrites. Do ye not see what becomes of them that profess and pretend to so much? Christ is not so scrupulous as some men would make him. He may be in my heart as well as theirs, though I make not so great a show. How many content themselves with such thoughts as these, and are ready to express it upon occasion? Prejudice against the holy ways of Christ makes them willing to judge, that an outward profession of Christ is a sufficient admission of him; account more needless, are not willing to open to him further, and so indeed shut him out. This is the first bolt whereby the soul is made fast against Christ.

(2.) Distrust, unbelief. This shuts him out of the will. Man by nature has neither that faith, which is consent to receive Christ as he is offered, nor that faith which is an assent to what Christ has delivered. The first is a belief on Christ, which the Scripture calls πιστε■ειν ε■ς τ■ν Χριστ■ν. The latter is belief of Christ, which we call πιστε■ειν τ■ Χριστ■. Every man by nature is defective of both. The consent to receive Christ on gospel terms, is either the essence of saving faith, or a property inseparable from it; for to believe on his name, and to receive him, pass for one and the same thing, John 1:12. Now, unbelief in this sense is such a bar to keep out Christ, as nothing but an almighty power can remove, Ephesians 1:19.

Now that a natural man consents to receive Christ upon the terms offered, will appear further, in that he assents not to these terms as delivered in the gospel. The terms on which Christ will be admitted, are laid down by Christ himself, Matthew 16:24. Let him renounce every sin forbidden, though as dear to him as himself; this is to deny himself. Then let him endure every suffering for my sake inflicted; this is to take up his cross. Let him practise every duty commanded, even as Christ was obedient in all things; this is to follow him. These are the terms. Now, either men will not believe that Christ will not enter but upon these terms, fancy some of their own, more suitable to their corrupt inclinations, humours, interests, or if they yield that they are Christ's terms, yet they will not believe that they are so pleasing, so advantageous as the gospel declares them to be. Whatever he say, if this be his burden, they will not believe it is light; if this be his yoke, they cannot believe it is easy, and upon this account reject these terms; and since he will not enter upon any other terms, they shut him out. Thus does unbelief close the hearts of sinners against Christ. That is the second.

(3.) Disaffection to Christ. Men naturally are so well pleased with the guests that they have already entertained, as they are loath, by admitting Christ, to dispossess them. This shuts Christ out of the heart. They are more in love with the world than with Christ, take more pleasure in fulfilling their lusts than they can expect delight in communion with Christ. They affect not spiritual enjoyments, relish not those pleasures which Christ promises upon his admission, value not Christ's offer to sup with them in comparison of what the world and their lusts afford them. Hence, Matthew 10:37, 'He that loveth father or mother, &c., is not worthy of me.' He hereby refuses Christ, prefers what he enjoys before what Christ offers, shews himself unworthy of Christ's company by excluding him, James 4:4. He that is so much a friend to the world as he will not cast it out of his heart for Christ, hereby shews himself an enemy to Christ by shutting him out.

Use. 1. Information. This shews us the misery of every man by nature. Christ is not in him. He shuts him out, in whom is all the hopes and comforts and happiness of sinners. How miserable is he who is without happiness, without hopes of it! He that shuts out Christ excludes all happiness,

all hopes of it. Yet this is the condition of every man in the state of nature; he is without Christ, Christ is not in him. Oh, take notice of the misery of this condition, that you that are in it may be affected with it, that you whom mercy has delivered from it may pity those who languish under it! But because generalia non pungunt, we are not affected with generals, take a survey of this misery in some particulars. He that is in the state of nature, he that excludes Christ, is—

1. In the possession of Satan. Christ and Satan, they have divisum imperium, they divide the world betwixt them. Where Christ rules not, there Satan has his throne. He that shuts out Christ shuts in Satan. The soul that is not in the possession of Christ is possessed by the devil. And oh how large are his possessions! You think a diabolical possession dreadful. Why, this is the dreadful estate of every unrenewed man; Satan has possession of him! That this may be evident, observe the Scripture speaks of a double diabolical possession: one corporal, when Satan enters into the bodies of men, and there immediately exercises his power by or upon them; of such there is mention, Matthew 4:24, Matthew 8:28, Matthew 15:22. Another spiritual, when Satan enters into the souls of men, and there exercises his power by and upon them. And this is the possession we speak of. Satan does thus possess the soul of every natural man. So he did Ananias, Acts 5:3, ■πλ■ρωσεν, he was possessor. So he possessed Judas, Luke 22:3. Not that Satan was not in him before, but because he did then more manifest his presence by that devilish act. As Christ is said to be with his people in special (though always in them), because he manifests his presence by some special influence or assistance. Satan is always in the hearts of sinners, though he manifest his possession of them at some time more than other. And lest we should think this diabolical possession of the soul to be peculiar to some notorious sinners, such as Judas was, the apostle speaks it both of himself and of all the Ephesians, before they were regenerate (Ephesians 2:2-3), and all disobedient sinners. He is in all disobedient sinners, and he works in them. He is in their souls, in like manner as he is in the bodies of those miserable creatures whom he possesses; for the apostle uses the same word. Those that are bodily possessed are called ■νεργο■μενοι, and those souls that are in the possession of that spirit το■ ν■ν ■νεργο■ντος. The spirits that possess men are called ■νεργο■ντες. Satan has as much possession of the souls of sinners as he has of the bodies of those we call demoniacs. Nay, soul possession is more dangerous, makes a man more miserable than bodily possession. This is more sensible indeed, but the misery of soul possession is upon this account also greater, because the sinner is senseless of it. What more miserable spectacle can you see than that man bodily possessed! Mark 9:18, Mark 9:20, Mark 9:22, Mark 9:26. What more rueful than to see the devil tear and rend that wretched creature, sometimes casting him into the waters and into the fire! to see him foaming, and gnashing of his teeth, and pining away, and brought to the gates of death! This is a woeful sight indeed, and such as may draw tears from and strike compassion into the heart, not only of a father, but of a stranger. It is sad indeed. Ay! but there is one spectacle more woful, if we could see it. A soul possessed by Satan, grievously vexed, wofully rent and torn by him, sometimes cast into the water, sometimes into the fire, into such dangerous evils as are more dreadful than any water or fire. Satan exercises more tyranny, more cruelty, upon the souls of sinners than upon possessed bodies, only we see it not, and therefore are so slow to believe it, so insensible of it, so little affected with it. But the misery is nevertheless for the sinner's senselessness; nay, it is the more, his misery is so deep, sense cannot reach it. And this is the misery of every soul that shuts out Christ; he hereby makes sure Satan's possession. Oh, consider it, ye that are yet in the state of nature! Till Christ be admitted, you are under the power, in the possession of Satan. When the

heart opens, then, and not till then, is the soul ‘turned from darkness to light,’ &c. Till then Satan dwells in him, works in him, uses him as his slave, oppresses him as a tyrant, employs him as his own, has full possession of his soul.

2. Under the curse of the law, without redemption. For it is Christ only that redeems, Galatians 3:13. And those that are without Christ are under all the curses and threatenings, without redemption. Every sin is attended with many curses, and every curse (if we were sensible of it) more intolerable than the hills and mountains. Therefore, when the Lord comes to execute them, and the soul is awakened out of the lethargy whereinto sin brings it, he shall call to the mountains to fall upon him, and the hills to cover him. The Scripture speaks no peace to such a sinner. What peace to that rebel who shuts the Prince of peace out of his soul? The gospel speaks no comfort to such a sinner. What comfort when Christ, the God of all comfort, the spring of all consolations, is rejected? There is no promise wherein he can claim interest, for all promises are in Christ yea and amen. No comfort, no peace, no promise of either, while Christ is shut out; nothing but curses and threatenings are the portion of such a sinner, and no redemption from these till Christ be entertained.

3. Under the wrath of God without mercy. The wrath of God abides upon him while Christ is not entertained by him, John 3:36. The children of disobedience are children of wrath, Ephesians 2:1-22. This is their portion. And who are children of disobedience but those who will not hearken to Christ when he calls, not open when he knocks, not entertain him when he entreats for admission? Their portion is wrath: it is entailed on them; no cutting it off till Christ come in. As all the ways of God are mercy to those who admit Christ, so all his ways are wrath to those that reject him. Even those things that are given to others in love are sent to them in wrath; all their enjoyments, all his dispensations. Their table is a snare, their prayer an abomination, the word the savour of death. Prosperity hardens their hearts. Afflictions, the first drops of that deluge of wrath, which will one day overwhelm all those that persevere in rejecting, excluding Christ.

4. Under the sentence of condemnation without pardon. He that believes not is condemned, John 3:18-19. This is the condemnation, light is come, the gospel is preached, Christ is discovered. You see him standing, waiting; you hear him knocking, entreating for admission; yet are so much in love with the works of darkness as to shut out the light, shut out Christ the light of the world, the glory of heaven. Here is ground enough of condemnation. No wonder if such a man be condemned already, if the sentence of eternal death be past! Does not that man deserve to die without mercy, who shuts him out of doors that brings him a pardon? All men by nature are condemned persons; Christ is sent to some with a pardon; he comes, stands, knocks, entreats condemned sinners to open to him and accept of this pardon, this pardon which cost him so dear, his own life, his dearest blood. Oh, but sinners will not hearken, will not regard, will not believe his report, are not willing to receive him; this is not to believe him; and therefore are condemned already, yea, and will continue so to eternity if they continue to shut out Christ; for what pardon without him?

5. Near the confines of hell, without a Saviour. Upon the brink of that pit which is bottomless destruction. Every one that runs on in sin is posting towards eternal ruin. Every sin is a step towards hell, and every act of wickedness sinks the sinner some degrees lower. And who shall save him from going down into the pit, since Christ, who only can do it, is rejected? It is Jesus only

that delivers sinners ‘from the wrath to come,’ 1 Thessalonians 1:10. There is wrath coming apace towards sinners, and they are posting towards it; there will be a dreadful meeting, except Christ interpose; and what hopes of that while Christ is shut out and denied admission?

Oh consider this, all you who prefer your sin before Christ; you have long heard the voice of Christ in the preaching of the gospel; who have heard him knock at your hearts in the ministry of the word, and have not yet been persuaded to part with those sins that keep him out. Consider what it is to be in the possession of Satan without a redeemer, under the curse of the law without an intercessor! And if this estate appear miserable, if you have any sense of soul misery, any desire to be freed from it, freed from Satan’s power and possession, &c., make haste, delay not, open forthwith unto Christ, who stands and knocks for admission. Turn out those woful intruders that have kept Christ out of possession; abandon those lusts, renounce those sins that have closed your hearts against Christ. Then shall it be well with you, who are now in the midst of woes and miseries; then shall Satan be cast out, and the prince of the world judged; then shall the curse be turned into a blessing; then shall the wrath of God, which now overshadows you, clear up into beams of mercy; then shall the sentence of condemnation give place to a gracious pardon; then shall you be brought from the confines of hell and the shadow of death into the suburbs of heaven and glory. Oh that to-day you would hear his voice, who still calls on you, who still knocks and entreats you would open to him! Oh that you would hear his voice while it is called to-day, lest he ‘swear in his wrath you shall not enter into his rest;’ lest he swear in his wrath he will never enter into your souls.

Use. 2. Examination. Try whether you be those who keep Christ out of your hearts, whether your souls be closed against him. Those that thus refuse Christ are in a miserable condition, under the power of Satan, &c., 2 Corinthians 13:5. Therefore it highly concerns every of us seriously to examine whether this be our state. Oh, but how shall I know? By these two particulars:

1. If Christ be admitted, thou hast had experience of a great alteration. We seldom read of Christ’s coming in Scripture, but we find some great alterations attending. When he came to the temple, Matthew 21:10, Matthew 21:12, see what follows. Here is work indeed; he seems to turn all upside down; he rectifies disorders to purpose. Indeed, while the strong man armed keeps the house, all is in peace; but when Christ, a stronger than he, comes and disarms him, casts him out, takes possession of the place, then the sinner’s peace is broken. This is not done without contest and opposition. The soul will find a great alteration, it will not be so with it as formerly. Malachi prophesies of Christ’s coming to his temple; see how he describes it, Malachi 3:1-3. He makes clean work where he comes; the soul is purified and refined when he comes. He sits in the soul as a refiner. When Christ comes, old things pass away; old lusts, old sinful practices, old hearts, old ways, they are abandoned. The refiner’s fire consumes them, all things become new. ‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,’ 2 Corinthians 5:17. It is as true the other way. If Christ be in any man, he is a new creature; for this in-being is mutual. When the soul is in Christ, Christ is in the soul. Are ye new creatures? Are all things become new? New judgments, new apprehensions, new thoughts, new hearts, new motions, new inclinations, new consciences, new affections, new delights, new desires, new designs, new conversations. Such a change there is when Christ comes. If you be the same men as formerly, if you be not thoroughly renewed, you may conclude Christ is yet shut out.

2. If you admit Christ, you admit his word. If the word of Christ take no place in you, then Christ himself has no place in you. Where the word is shut out, Christ is shut out; where that abides, he abides, 1 John 2:24. These two are joined together by Christ, John 15:7. Does the word abide in your souls? Is it effectually admitted into every faculty? Does it abide in your minds, to enlighten them; in your thoughts? Is it your meditation? Or are you strangers to meditation? Can other things be carefully ruminated, and what Christ speaks in the ministry of the word easily forgotten? Does it abide in your consciences, to convince you of sin, and restrain you from sin, and stir you up to the practice of what you hear? If it take not hold on your conscience, but you go on in sin, and neglect the duties urged upon you notwithstanding, how does it then abide? Does it abide in your wills, to bring them to a conformity with the will of Christ there revealed, to lead them to a compliance with what is well-pleasing in his sight? Does it abide in your affections, to quicken your affections, to kindle your love, to stir up your zeal, to fill you with delight, to possess you with hatred against sin, to melt you into sorrow for sin, to raise you to high esteem of Christ and spiritual things? If so, it argues the word abides in you, and consequently Christ himself. But if the word of Christ, which you daily hear preached, pass from you as words of course, pass away as a tale that is told, as an ordinary discourse; if it be no more regarded, no more remembered; if you be no more affected with it, no more ruled by it; if, after sermon is ended, you can lay aside thoughts of it as that which little concerns you; if you can shut out conviction, withstand reproofs, run into those very sins which you hear reproved, neglect exhortations, and neglect those duties to which Christ by his word exhorts you: if it be thus, the word is shut out, Christ himself is shut out. If it be thus with any, I have a sad message for them, but it is a message from the Lord. I must tell them, or be unfaithful. Their hearts are closed against Christ, they are yet in Satan’s possession, under the curse of the law, under the wrath of God, under the sentence of condemnation, in the confines of hell, and will be till Christ be admitted.

3. Observation. Though Christ find the hearts of sinners closed against him, yet he stands at the door and knocks. For explication, let us inquire, 1, what is meant by the door; 2, what by knocking, and how Christ may be said to knock; 3, what by standing, what this expression signifies. For these are all metaphorical, and something is denoted, intended, that the words do not properly signify. Christ does not stand and knock, as men do at a door when they would be let in. We must not understand any bodily approach, or any corporeal action or posture; for Christ, as to his body and human nature, is in heaven, there circumscribed, and will be there contained till the restitution of all things. Yet though he do not stand and knock properly as we do, yet something he does which much resembles our knocking, our standing. Some likeness there is betwixt what Christ does that he may be admitted into the hearts of sinners, and that which we do when we would be admitted into the house of a friend. There is some ground for these metaphorical expressions, and when we know what this is the words will be clear. And this is it we now inquire after.

1. By door, understand the heart of man, as I told you before. The heart comprising two faculties, the will and understanding; the will principally, for the two principal acts of the will, consent and dissent, are as the opening and shutting of the door. When the will consents, it opens; when it dissents, it shuts out that which moves for admission. And therefore opening here is called consent elsewhere, as Isaiah 1:19. Here, if you will open, Christ will sup, &c.; there, if you will consent, ye shall eat, &c. So shutting is expressed by dissent or refusing, Isaiah 1:20. So that by the door is principally meant the will. When this consents to receive Christ as he offers himself,

then Christ is admitted, the soul is opened to him; he comes in, makes the opening soul the place of his abode, he walks in them, dwells in them, feasts them. When this dissents, refuses to receive Christ, &c., the soul hereby shuts out Christ, closes itself against him. Thus the will resembles a door, and therefore is so called. The understanding, that is as a key-hole or a window to the door. Through it light is conveyed into the soul, by which it discerns who it is that stands and knocks, who it is that seeks admission; and according to what it discerns so it moves, opens or shuts. If it like the person, his motion, his business, then it opens, consents, admits him; if it approve not hereof, apprehend it dangerous, troublesome, needless, it refuses, shuts him out. Thus you see what is meant by the door, and why so called.

2. By knocking, understand those means which Christ uses to draw the sinner to come and open. That is the end of knocking with us. When Christ uses means to win the sinner's consent to admit him, to receive him, then he knocks. That this may be clearer, we will shew (1.) how he knocks, what means he uses; (2.) why he knocks, wherefore he uses such means to draw the soul to open.

(1.) For the first, the means are diverse. We will reduce them to these four heads. He knocks, [1.] by checks of conscience; [2.] by acts of providence; [3.] by the ministry of the word; [4.] by the motions of his Spirit. I beseech you, observe them. It much concerns you to know Christ's knock; for what more powerful motive to open than to know that it is Christ that knocks? Christ when he knocks is little regarded, because men consider not, take no notice that it is Christ that knocks. The everlasting gates are not opened when it is not minded that the King of glory knocks thereat. When Samuel knew not the Lord's voice, 1 Samuel 3:4, he runs to Eli. Thus sinners, not discerning that Christ knocks, run another way, and many times further from him, instead of running to open to him. Durst sinners be so bold as to shut their hearts, if they effectually considered that it is Christ that knocks there? Oh no, they have this for their excuse: We never heard, we never remembered, that Christ came and knocked, and yet was shut out, was not admitted by us. Just like those on Christ's left hand, Matthew 25:1-46, when Christ charges them that when he was hungry they gave him no meat, &c., Matthew 25:42, they have an answer as ready as any obstinate sinner amongst us, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered?' &c., Matthew 25:44. Oh no, far be it from us. We never saw thee in such a condition, else we should have been as ready to relieve thee as those righteous ones. We never saw thee; otherwise, if we had not relieved thee, that heavy sentence, 'Go, ye cursed,' had been too light for us. So when Christ now in the ministry, &c., charges sinners with refusing to open to him, I come, and stand, and knock again and again, and yet ye shut me out, how readily will many answer as they, 'When saw we Christ?' &c.; we never saw Christ in such postures; we never heard him knock, and shut him out; if we had, then were we wretches indeed to shut out Christ. Why, but is it so indeed? Did ye never hear Christ knock? Why, sure, then, ye know not when Christ knocks.

Well, we will leave no room for this excuse, when I have shewed you how Christ knocks. There is not one of you but must acknowledge that Christ has long, has often knocked at your hearts. Whether you have opened to him must be referred to your own consciences. Most certain it is Christ has knocked longer, oftener at your hearts than ever man knocks at your doors; for he knocks,

[1.] By checks of conscience. When the sinner's heart smites him, then does Christ knock. Conscience is Christ's deputy; when he employs it to smite the sinner, he then knocks at the heart. When the weight of sin is felt, and the conscience smarts in the sense of the sinfulness of unlawful practices, Christ is then knocking; the wounds of conscience are as dents in the door, they argue forcible knocks. Hereby Christ would draw the sinner to open; for there is no way to remove guilt, and silence an accusing conscience, but by letting in Christ. If he be not admitted, that which now but pricks will gnaw the soul to eternity as a never-dying worm. These checks of conscience, these knocks of Christ, should move the sinner to make haste to open. This was the effect of it in Peter's hearers. When his sermon had awakened them, and brought them to the sense of sin, it is said they were 'pricked in their hearts,' Acts 2:37, and forthwith they were willing to open; they cried out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Now how long, how often has Christ thus knocked at yours? I hope there are none of you in that desperate condition, as to have your conscience seared, and made past feeling, past sense of sin. And if you be not cauterised past feeling, you have often felt the checks of conscience, your hearts smiting you for sin. Why, this is Christ knocking; he hereby seeks admission, and would draw you to open. As often as conscience checks, Christ knocks; and as often as you suppress, neglect those checks of conscience, so often as you disregard Christ, so often you refuse to let him in.

[2.] By acts of providence, whether they be acts of bounty or acts of severity. For the former, all your comforts and enjoyments, all your deliverances and preservations, all the acts of his patience and longsuffering, are as so many knocks at your hearts; Christ hereby would stir you up to open to him. Oh that you would mind them! All the expenses of the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and longsuffering, should draw you to open to Christ. This should be the issue of them, Romans 2:4, 'Lead to repentance.' What is that but leading you to open to Christ? For the great sin you are to repent of is your shutting out Christ, refusing to receive him, admit him. When this is repented of, the heart opens to Christ. And this is it that goodness should lead you to; it calls, it knocks for this.

Now, how much, how long, has Christ thus knocked? Can you reckon up the good things you enjoy? Can you give an account of all your deliverances? Are they not more in number than the hairs on your head? are they not past numbering? Why, then, so often, you cannot tell how often, Christ has knocked all your lives. No day, no hour, no minute, but he has been knocking at your hearts. Oh, how does it concern you to look that he be let in! For the latter, he knocks by afflictions. The knock of mercy makes small impression, hardened sinners little regard it. Therefore Christ knocks in another method,—he lets fly afflictions upon the sinner, and these are as so many stones cast at the door. When the sinner minds not Christ's gentler knockings, he takes his rod (and his rod can make the rocks to open) and beats upon the door, makes the heart of a sinner shake under the weight of his strokes. If ye will hear nothing else, 'hear the rod,' says he, Micah 6:9. He has variety of rods wherewith he knocks at the hearts of sinners. If no other will prevail, he will take his rod of iron, and knock so as he will make the foundations of the house to shake. This was his method with Manasseh, 2 Chronicles 33:10-11. 'In their afflictions they will seek me,' Hosea 5:15. Christ knocks and seeks to them before, and they will not regard. Ay, but if he take his rod, he will make them seek to him; make them run trembling, as the gaoler, open and beseech him to enter. Now, has not the Lord often thus knocked at your hearts, with one rod or other—by sickness, losses, wants, disappointments, crosses, or other afflictions? If you open not, take heed

of his rod of iron. If you belong to him, he will make you regard his knocks, or you shall smart for it, if you sink not under it.

[3.] By the ministry of the word, preaching of the law and of the gospel. This indeed is the principal means whereby Christ knocks. When he knocks the other ways without this, his meaning is not understood, and so sinners open not. The heathens have both checks of conscience and acts of providence to awaken them; but wanting the word, they know not the meaning of those knockings, and so they prove ineffectual. But though these be not effectual without the word, yet these are good enforcements of the word where it is enjoyed. Secure sinners are apt to slight the word, make nothing of it. But when the Lord awakens them by checks of conscience, and some sharp dispensations, the word, shewing Christ's meaning herein, hereby becomes more regarded; it is brought to remembrance, the dent of it is deeper. These joined fall with more force and weight upon the heart, and the sinner hears Christ's knock to purpose. Hence the word is called a hammer, Jeremiah 23:29.

Christ knocks by the law. This discovers sin in its colours, and the dreadful wrath of God as the sinner's portion, and eternal torments into which he is sinking. And as the law was at first delivered with thunder and lightning, so now it falls upon the heart as a thunderbolt, a terrible knock indeed. The experience of many thousands who have opened unto Christ bears witness to it, though carnal hearts will either deride it or not believe it. The knock of the law sounds thus in the ears of a sinner: Wretched creature, the fire of God's wrath is kindled on thy soul, thy sins are a continual fuel to it; if thou open not, that Christ may quench it, it will burn to the bottom of hell.

Thus Christ knocks by the law at the heart of Laodicea: Revelation 3:17, 'Thou sayest, I am rich,' &c. Thou thinkest (and this is the very thought of most unrenewed sinners) thy soul is rich and happy enough, thy condition for eternity is good and safe enough. Thus every natural man before the law knocks at his heart. So Paul says of himself: Romans 7:9, 'I was alive without the law.' I had good conceits of my soul's condition, and made no question of life. Ay, but when the law came, when that discovered the sinfulness of his nature and life, and the wrath of God due to him for sin, why then, says he, I died, all my good hopes and high conceits they withered and died,—one knock of the law overthrew them all; and I then looked on myself as a dead man, even at the gates of eternal death. And so must every sinner before he will open to Christ; he must apply to his soul what Christ applies here to Laodicea. Thou knowest it not, thou wilt not believe it; but as sure as Christ is true, this is the truth of thy soul's condition. Thou art wretched and miserable, as blind as the prince of darkness can make thee, as naked as he that has not a rag to cover his nakedness, as wretched and miserable as the curse and wrath of God can make thee. Thus thou art, and thus more and more thou wilt be everlastingly, if thou shut out Christ, and shut up thy soul in this condition. Thus Christ knocks by the law.

He knocks also by the gospel. This discovers Christ, and the riches of his love, and the all-sufficiency of his redemption, and the overflowings of pardoning mercy through his blood. And this bears upon the heart with a sweet and heavenly violence; and if the sinner open not at this knock, his case is desperate. Thus he knocks by the gospel at the heart of Laodicea, ver. 18. The knock of the gospel sounds thus in the ears of a sinner: Thou art naked: open to me, and I will clothe thee with my own robe; thou art blind: open to me, I have eye-salve that will cure those that are born blind; thou art poor: open to me, thou shalt share with me in my unsearchable riches;

thou art wretched and miserable: open to me, and then if my love, if myself, if my blood, if my comfort, if my kingdom, can make thee happy, thou shall be happy. And oh how often, how long, have you in this place heard Christ thus knocking! How long have you enjoyed the gospel! how has he knocked by the law! how has he knocked by the gospel, day after day, year after year! With what patience, with what importunity! Oh take heed that ye be not found in the number of those that shut out Christ, who regard not when he knocks!

[4.] By the motions of his Spirit; when the Spirit of Christ concurs with acts of providence, or with the word preached, so as these make some impression on the heart, bring the soul to some sense of its sinfulness and misery, and beget some inclinations to leave old, sinful practices, and take a new course. How frequent is this in sickness, when death is before his eyes, and apprehensions of eternity seize on him! How then will he resolve! How many promises will he make, that if he may be freed from the present danger, he will then be another man! Those that enjoy the gospel, and live under a powerful ministry, cannot but have experience of Christ's knockings by his Spirit. When sin is discovered, and the conscience in some degree awakened, and the danger of sin, the wrath of God hanging over it, apprehended, then there will be many times some inclinations, some semi-purposes, to abandon sin. These are the issues of Christ's knocking by his Spirit. So when the necessity, the excellency, the all-sufficiency of Christ is discovered, the happiness, comforts, glory that sinners may receive from him apprehended, there will be some half resolutions to close with him. When you find these, you hear Christ knocking. These inclinations, semi-purposes, they are as it were an opening half way to Christ; but the suppressing of these motions is a shutting the door against Christ when he is entering; as I may say, a thrusting him out when he is half way in, a throwing the door upon his face. A most high affront, a grievous provocation; and yet what more ordinary? Have ye never, while ye have been hearing, praying, found such motions, inclinations? Sure they have hardened their hearts as the adamant that have no such experience. I will not suppose any here given up to such a reprobate sense, or rather the senselessness of reprobates. Well, then, when you find such motions, &c., Christ is knocking; and so powerfully, as you are brought to open in part to him. Oh, but do these motions, &c., vanish? Do the cares, the employments, the pleasures, the thoughts of the world, choke them? Why, then, when Christ is as it were coming in, you shut the door against him; when his foot is within the threshold, you thrust him out. This ye do by suppressing these motions of the Spirit, and suffering them to come to nothing. This is resisting the Holy Ghost, when he is striving to get possession for Christ. Oh how dangerous is this provocation! Verily there is but a step betwixt you and that dreadful sentence,' My Spirit shall no longer strive,' &c. Oh take heed, this is Christ's knock!

Thus you see how many ways Christ knocks. And now I dare appeal to you, if there be any room for that excuse, I would have opened if I had heard Christ knocking. What sinner is there at whose heart he has not knocked many years? There is none wait so long, so often at his posts, the posts of wisdom, as he waits, as he knocks at your hearts. Oh how does it concern you to look that he be let in!

(2.) Why does Christ knock? what need is there of it? That is the next. And so you will have both the manner how, and the cause why, and thereby a satisfying account of Christ's act. Why, what needs this? There is great need every way; if Christ should not knock, we would never open, Christ could never enter. Such is the condition of every man by nature. Unrenewed sinners are not so well affected to Christ, they have no such mind to admit him, as to watch at the door that they

may be ready to open at his first approach. No; there is by nature a strong antipathy against him, and wonderful disaffection to him; but of this formerly. To shew you why Christ knocks, what necessity there is for him so to do if he will enter, let us a little follow the metaphor. It is needful, because,

[1.] Sinners by nature are far off from Christ, far from opening. When we come to a man's house whom we know to lodge in many rooms from the door, we knock, and knock aloud, else we cannot expect he should hear or open. Why, this is thy condition, the state of every sinner by nature; you lodge many rooms from the place where Christ stands. Sin has set every man a great distance from Christ. All are far off, at like distance with the unrenewed Ephesians 2:12 : ο■ ποτ■ ■ντες μακρ■ν. Sometimes; when was that? Why, till they opened, &c. It is the privilege peculiar to those who open to Christ; they are a people, as Israel, near unto God. Till sinners open, they are far off, whatever be their accomplishments, privileges, enjoyments. It is true there is a latitude in this distance, some are farther off than others. The heathens that enjoy not the gospel, they are farthest off; those that have apostatised, outrun their holy profession, they are at a woful distance indeed; those that, by refusing Christ and long resisting his Spirit, have caused him to withdraw from them, these are farther off than at first, their latter end in this respect is worse than their beginning. Yet though some be farther off than others, yet all by nature are far off, and so far off as they are out of hearing, would never be drawn to open but that Christ vouchsafes sometimes to knock with an almighty force. Since sinners are at such a distance, Christ must knock, or else not enter; they will not hear him, not open to him.

[2.] Sinners are very busy. Their heads, and hearts, and hands are full of business; such a crowd, as leaves no room for thoughts of Christ. He may stand long enough, if he knock not, before he be admitted. They have something else to do than to wait for Christ's approaches, so as to be ready to admit him, without putting him to the trouble of knocking. They are so taken up with the world or their lusts, as it must be some loud importunity that will draw them to the door. When we come to a man's house who we know is full of business, we expect not to be admitted till we knock again and again. Sinners are full of business, even those who seem least employed; Satan will be sure to find them employment enough, on purpose to keep them from attending Christ's approaches. One is busy in the world to get and increase an estate; his thoughts, his affections, are all taken up. Another has a design to be great and eminent; his heart is filled with this. Another, making provision for the flesh, &c., plotting, contriving how to satisfy a worldly, unclean, revengeful lust. Here is such a crowd of business, such a noise, as it is a wonder if Christ be regarded when he does knock; he might stand long enough unregarded if he did not. The sinner thinks much to leave his business and run to the door, till the loudness, the frequency, of Christ's knocking, enforced with his mighty power, draw him to it. He is too busy to open to such as will not knock.

[3.] Sinners are at rest; they are asleep; yea, in a dead sleep. This is their condition by nature, which I express by this gradation. The Scripture holds it forth in these expressions, to shew a sinner's carelessness of Christ and of his soul's concernments; his loathness to rise out of it, his impotency to open, till he be roused and awakened by Christ's knocking. He is at rest, stretched upon the bed of security. He is at ease, well contented with his natural condition; takes pleasure and delight therein; fancies his spiritual estate safe, good enough; counts it a needless trouble to rise out of it; thinks it a disturbance to leave his present repose to go and open to Christ. When he in the parable was desired by his friend at midnight to open to him, Luke 11:5, the man counts it a

trouble, Luke 11:7. It is midnight with every sinner in the state of nature; he is in darkness, sees not his miseries, however they encompass him; he lies down on the bed of security, and is at rest, and now it is a trouble to him to rise and open; it must be no easy knocking, or little importunity, that will draw him to it. If it was thus with the spouse when Christ came to give a special visit, much more is it thus with natural men. But thus it was, Song of Solomon 5:2. Thus Christ came, thus he knocked, thus he entreated, but he is put off with excuses: Song of Solomon 5:3, 'I have put off,' &c.: Oh what trouble is this! 'I have washed:' Oh what disturbance is this! If it were thus with the spouse in a fit of security, oh how much more is it thus with sinners in the state of nature! They are well enough, so they conceive; they have ease, quiet, repose enough in their outward accommodations, worldly enjoyments; it seems unseasonable, it is night, a time of rest and darkness too. Alas! they see not the necessity of Christ; it is a trouble, &c. Things being thus, Christ must knock, and knock to purpose, before they will come and open.

Further, they are not only at rest, lain down, but asleep. No opening, till they be awakened, and no awakening unless Christ knock. The state of nature is a night, a state of darkness, and sinners in that state are answerable thereto, said to be asleep, 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6. Though they be busy as to natural employments, and the things of the world, yet to anything that is spiritual they are asleep. The steam, the gross vapours that arise from the corruption of our natures, obstructs all passages, so as there can be no conveyance, no operation of the Spirit, and consequently all the senses are bound up. A sinner in this state can no more, in a spiritual way, hear, see, smell, relish spiritual things, than a man asleep is sensible of outward objects. He must be awakened, else no opening, and nothing can awake him but Christ knocking, therefore he knocks. The sinner is asleep.

Nay, further, he is in a dead sleep; a sleep indeed which is no less than death in a spiritual sense. A dead sleep has seized on every sinner, such a sleep as the Holy Ghost calls death, Ephesians 5:14. His sleep is so deep, as he is counted amongst the dead. Stand up from the dead! It must be a loud knock indeed, that will rouse a man out of a dead sleep; a powerful knock, that will raise a man from the dead, a knock from an almighty arm. Why thus must Christ knock, else sinners cannot, will not hear, much less open, John 5:25. Great need to knock, and knock aloud, when those that should open are in a dead sleep. This for the second.

3. What by standing? We must not conceive anything outward or corporeal in this posture of Christ. He speaks to our capacities, and vouchsafes to represent himself after the manner of men. But what are spoken of God, of Christ, who is the mighty God, ■νθρωποπαθ■ς, we must understand θεοπρεπ■ς. What he speaks after the manner of men, we must conceive in a way becoming the majesty of God. Thus standing imports some or all of these five things:

(1.) Christ's condescension. He stoops low indeed, when he vouchsafes to stand at our door. It is infinitely more than if the greatest prince in the world should humble himself to stand at the door of a beggar. He is wonderfully gracious, when he will stand, when he will wait to be gracious. But of this in the first.

(2.) His approach. He is come near to a sinner, when he stands at his door, stays at his heart, and knocks. Nor does this disagree from what I said formerly. Those may be absolutely far off who are comparatively near. All are far from Christ by nature; but he is nearer unto those to whom he comes in the ministry of the gospel, than to those whom he leaves to sit in darkness, &c. When the

gospel comes to a people, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and Christ the prince of that kingdom does approach. Yet are sinners far enough from the kingdom, far enough from Christ. While he stands but at your hearts, he is not near indeed absolutely till you let him in. Though he stand at your hearts, and the kingdom of heaven in the gospel come to your doors, yet shall ye never enter into it unless you let Christ enter into your hearts. Christ coming so near, nearer to you than others, if you let him not in, will cast you further from him in hell than others. Outer darkness is for them who shut out greatest light; and the greatest destruction from Christ hereafter for them to whom he came nearest here, and was excluded. For the present, here is a blessed opportunity, Christ is near you, he stands at your hearts, he is at hand. This is the second intimation of this posture.

(3.) His desire; his readiness to enter. He is even at the door, so near he is come, there he stands. If any man will open, he is willing, he is ready to enter. What more can be expected on his part, to shew him willing to come in? If you see one standing at your door and knocking, how can ye interpret this, but that he is willing, desires to enter? Christ is more ready to come in to sinners than they are to open to him. There is no bar, no backwardness on his part; he is at the door, and there he stands and knocks. That which keeps him out is the unkindness, the obstinacy of sinners, who will not open. That Christ is thus ready to enter, is unquestionable, in respect of those whom he has purposed from eternity to take possession of. How it holds in respect of others, we may have occasion to shew hereafter. And what a strong motive, what a great encouragement should this be to open? Christ stands at your hearts, ready to enter, to take possession, if you will but admit him.

(4.) His patience. This posture denotes the exercise of patience. He stands at the door. When he comes to the heart of a sinner, though he find it shut against him, he does not presently depart in a fume, as he might justly, to see himself thus slighted, and all the happiness that attends his presence disregarded; he does not instantly for all this leave the heart, but he stands. Though those who resolve to open are slow in coming, though others put him off with delays and excuses, nay, though some give him plain denials, yet he stands. Though this be the voice of sinners generally, yet a little more sleep, &c. He stands notwithstanding, and that long. Sometimes whole days, yea, day and night; sometimes whole years, yea, sometimes many years: ‘All the day long do I stretch out my hand,’ &c.; ‘These three years have I come, seeking fruit;’ ‘Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.’

(5.) His readiness to depart if he be not admitted. Though he stand long, he will not stand always. As his standing shews he is ready to enter, if the sinner will open, so it shews, if the heart be obstinately shut against him, he is as ready to be gone. He sits not, as though he would make a continued abode before the hearts of rebellious shiners; he stands, and that implies a readiness to depart, if admission be denied. Though the patience of Christ be wonderful, and his condescension to sinners exceeding great, yet he is more tender of his honour than to endure it should be always slighted. If ye will not open to him, he will be gone. When he had stood some hours knocking at the door of the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:1-16, and she put him off with excuses, he stands no longer, but departs; though she opened, she found him not, he was gone, as she sadly complains, Song of Solomon 5:6. And if Christ deal thus with his spouse, the people of his love, engaged to him by marriage covenant, what may they expect who have no interest in him, no such affection to him?

It was a day he waited on Jerusalem, a long day indeed. But when they would not make use of the light of it to discover their concernment to entertain Christ, away he goes and leaves them in darkness. That happy sight should be for ever hid from their eyes, they should never see him standing more; instead of Christ's visits, they should be encompassed with devouring enemies. Utter desolation should succeed the day of their despised visitation, Luke 19:41-42, &c. Christ came often, and stood long, to gather Jerusalem, to take possession of them, but they would not be gathered, Matthew 23:37. But what follows? That house that will not entertain Christ shall be left desolate. Desolate must that place be that Christ forsakes. Those that will not see Christ standing shall find him departing, and so departing as they shall see him no more, Matthew 23:39. When he had come unto the fig-tree three years, and found it still barren, what follows? Luke 13:7, 'Cut it down.' When he had stood forty years waiting on the Israelites, and they still grieved him with hardening their hearts against him, what is the issue? 'They err in their hearts,' and a fatal error it is to shut Christ out of the heart, while Satan and base lusts are shut in. 'They have not known my ways,' they consider not effectually that Christ was come to them. They considered not, so as to open to him, to hear his voice. 'Wherefore he sware,' &c.

Oh consider this. Christ now stands, but if you open not, he is ready to be gone. Has he not stood many hours, even till his head be filled with dew? &c. He will not stand always, the spouse herself cannot expect it; he will be gone, and then, though ye seek him, ye shall not find him, and whither he goes shall ye not come. Has he not long sought to gather you? &c. Well, if ye will not be gathered, your souls that will not entertain him shall be laid desolate; shall become cages for unclean birds, dens for the devouring lion. Ye shall no more see him till he appear in the clouds to render vengeance for this disobedience. Has he not long stood, discovering to ye in the gospel the things that concern your peace, of which this is the sum in short, to admit Christ? If ye will not know, if ye will not obey, the day will come when desolation and misery shall seize upon those hearts that would not give Christ possession. This day of Christ's visitation, wherein he stands at your hearts, will be turned into a dismal night, wherein Christ shall be hid from your eyes. Has not Christ come to you these three years, yea, many threes, seeking fruit? If he find not this the fruit of his coming, of his standing, if the issue of it be not your opening to Christ, that dreadful sentence will follow, 'Cut them down.'

If you will still harden your hearts, if this error still prevail, Christ is admitted far enough, more of him in your hearts and lives is needless. If you will not know his ways; his ways of conversion and regeneration, wherein Christ is admitted; his ways of holiness and gospel obedience, wherein Christ is entertained and honoured, his patience will end in wrath. He will swear, those sinners that will not let Christ enter into their hearts, shall never enter into his rest.

Now he stands, this is the day wherein Christ draws near your hearts; if ye will not know, &c. Christ the light of life, of hope, of glory, of happiness will be gone, you shall see him no more. He stands now for your answer, and his posture tells you, if he be denied, he is ready to depart.

Use. 1. Information. This observation acquaints us with several other truths, which, as so many corollaries, follow from it:

1. The riches of the goodness and compassion of Christ to sinners. Does he, though he find the hearts of sinners shut against him, yet stand and knock for admittance? Oh what riches of mercy are here! It may justly seem much that the Lord, after such an affront, should vouchsafe but a look

to such sinners; how much more to come, &c. It is more than such wretches could expect, that the Lord should send to us, how much more that he should come himself, &c. For what can the Lord expect from us, or what advantage can he gain by us? That he should come, draw near to us so full of provocations; that he should stand, shew himself willing to come under our roof; that he should wait to be gracious when grace is contemned; that he should knock, use all means to gain admission, knock so long, so loud, so often!—Oh the riches of his goodness, the wonders of his condescension, the greatness of his merey, the infiniteness of his patience! What like proceedings do we find amongst the sons of men? The Lord's ways are not as our ways. The Lord leaves not himself without a witness; gives clear testimony that he is abundant in longsuffering, not willing that sinners should perish, but that they should come to repentance; that they should be as happy as that which is the happiness of heaven, as the presence of Christ can make them.

2. This shews the heinousness of their sin who do not open unto Christ. Oh that ye would consider it and be affected with it! The light of this observation discovers it to be loaded with those aggravations that make sin exceeding sinful, exceeding grievous. Since Christ stands and knocks, if you do not open, you sin against means, against mercy, against knowledge, and that wilfully and inexcusably.

(1.) Against means. Christ comes and knocks; what means is there that he uses not to gain admission? He knocks by checks of conscience, by nets of providence, by mercies and afflictions, by the ministry of the word, by the law and by the gospel, by the motions of his Spirit. Here is a burden of aggravations in one bundle, able to oppress any soul that has but any competent sense of sin. When you open not to Christ thus knocking, you sin against conscience, against providence, against mercies, against judgments, against law, against gospel, against resolutions and purposes raised in you by the Spirit of grace, and against that Holy Spirit itself, grieving, opposing, resisting it. What could the Lord have done more to you, that he has not done? as he says of his vineyard. See the issue, Isaiah 5:5-6.

(2.) Against mercy; mercy in its choice appearances and manifestations to the world; against not only the mercy of God, but the indulgence of Christ. What more grievous offence than that which is against love, against mercy?

[1.] Condescending mercy: he stoops so low as to stand at a polluted heart. [2.] Preventing mercy: against Christ drawing near you, coming to you, standing at your heart. [3.] Free mercy: against Christ, ready, willing to come in. [4.] Forbearing mercy: Christ waiting to be gracious. If ever the Lord open your eyes to see sin in its own colours, this will make it appear exceeding sinful. How does the Lord aggravate Solomon's sins from such a consideration! 1 Kings 11:9. Was he angry because he had appeared to him twice? Oh, how do you provoke him to anger, to whom he has appeared so often, who have so long, so often, both heard and seen him, seen him standing, heard him knocking!

(3.) Against knowledge. You have heard, you have been convinced, that Christ hath both stood and knocked at your hearts. If you would deny it, your own consciences will accuse you. The providence of God in many acts testifies it. The gospel, preached so long amongst you, bears witness of it. The Spirit of Christ, that has so long strived with you, brings in this evidence. It remains as writ with a pen of iron and point of a diamond, writ in great, and large, and lasting characters, in characters of greater, larger guilt. If you open not to Christ, you sin against all this

light; and you know how near a sin against knowledge borders upon that sin that leads irrecoverably to outer darkness, John 9:41.

(4.) Wilfully. Christ comes and stands; he stands and knocks. Why does he not enter? Why, you will not open. He stands, he is ready to take possession; why is he yet without? Why, you will not give it him. If Christ did not stand, did not knock, you might pretend a better reason why ye do not open. But when he stands ready to enter, what can be alleged why he is not admitted, but because you will not open? Oh, methinks any sensible heart should tremble to come so near the brink of that dreadful place, Hebrews 12:26-27.

(5.) Inexcusably. Christ standing and knocking leaves the sinner that opens not to him without excuse. 'If I had not come to them,' John 15:22. If Christ had not stood and knocked, your sin had been less; there had been some excuse why you did not admit him. But since he has come so often, stood so long, knocked so loud, and yet is not admitted, now there remains no more cloak. There is no excuse will be sufficient to cover this sin, so great is it. The height and depth is such as you can say nothing, can do nothing, to cloak it.

If a heathen should be asked at the day of judgment, why didst thou not open to Christ? why didst thou not entertain him? Alas, may he say, I never heard of him; he came not, he stood not, he knocked not at my heart; the gospel never discovered him to me in this posture. Ay! the heathen have a fair excuse; the Lord will proceed with them upon some other account. Oh, but when the Lord, the Judge of heaven and earth, shall turn his speech to thee! Thou enjoyedst the gospel, thou sawest me standing, heardest me knocking at thy heart so many Sabbaths, so many years together, why didst thou not open to me? Why didst thou shut me out? What answer canst thou make? Surely, then, thy case will be like his in the parable. Thou must needs be speechless; here is not the least colour of an excuse for thee. If Christ be not admitted now, nothing will be left thee then but a fearful expectation of judgment and fury. Oh consider it before it be too late! You see the grievousness of the sin; though it seem light now, it will lie heavy one day, and every of these considerations will lie upon thy soul as a mountain. Oh make haste to prevent it by making haste to open to Christ! This shews a reason why the Lord's wrath falls heavier upon those that enjoy the gospel, those at whose hearts Christ stands and knocks, than upon others; why he makes their plagues wonderful; why he appears more terrible, both in his threatenings and executions, against them than the rest of the sons of men. Here is a sufficient plea to justify the Lord's severity. He does more for them: he stands and knocks to be admitted by them, and they shutting him out, it is a righteous thing with the Lord, upon this account, to pour more vengeance upon them.

Obj. We see those who live in drunkenness, swearing, uncleanness, profaneness, disobedience, contempt of the gospel and its ministers, despising of holiness, and hereby they shew they shut out Christ; we see them enjoy health, peace, plenty, and prosper in the world as much as any.

Ans. It is true. God may exempt them from temporal judgments a while, for the elect's sake who are amongst them, who have been persuaded to open. But in the mean time he curses their blessings, Malachi 2:2, Zechariah 5:1-11. Besides, he sends a plague into their hearts; he gives them up to spiritual judgments, blindness of mind, hardness of heart, searedness of conscience, a reprobate sense. And these are the greatest plagues on this side hell; and however the sinner be senseless of them, they are the portion, and will be of every one that perseveres to shut out Christ.

Moreover, he gives Satan a commission to load their souls with chains of darkness, to make them sure against the judgment of the great day. So they lie fettered, and then the furnace of everlasting burnings will be heated seven times hotter for them. This is, and will be, the doom of all that continue to shut out Christ.

Use. 2. Exhortation. The light of this observation leads us to several duties; it calls for several things from all of us.

1. Does Christ stand? And will you sit still in your evil ways, not move towards him when he waits at your hearts? Will you lie down on the bed of security, take your rest in carnal enjoyments, wallow in the pleasures of sin and the world, and not stir out of your old posture, your old courses? Is this all the respect Christ must have from you: to sit still when he stands, to lie down when he stays for you, to rest yourselves in the embraces of the world and your lusts? Must these be entertained while Christ stands without? Must Christ stay your leisure if he will be admitted? Must he stay till you have done with the world, till you have your fill of sin? Is this all you care for Christ? Have you dealt thus with Satan, with the world, with your lusts? Did they stand and wait so long before they had entertainment? Oh, well were it with sinners if they were as averse, as disrespectful of sin, yea, of Satan himself, as they are of Christ! But oh, what guilt is here, what a wickedness is here in the mean time! Christ shall stand without when these are let in. Oh, will you continue in this wickedness? Will you increase this guilt? Will you run farther off when Christ comes and stands so near you? Oh he is patient, says the wretched heart, though I neglect him a little, and follow my worldly sinful humours; he will not be gone, he can bear with sinners and wait long. Oh the dreadful abuse of Christ's indulgence! Is this all the use you make of his patience, to encourage you to let him still stand without? Will you thus provoke the Lord? Will you thus turn his grace into wantonness? When mercy and patience abounds in Christ, will you make your sins superabound? How can you do this great wickedness, and sin against Christ? Far be it from you thus to requite the Lord. Since he stands, cast off sin, cast off the world, cast off every weight that so easily besets you, that is so apt to hinder you. Arise, make haste towards him!

2. Does he knock? Take heed, then, you neglect not his knocking. Will you stop your ears that you should not hear him? Will you busy yourselves so in the world, as the noise of your employments shall make you deaf to Christ's knock? Or, if you hear it, will you turn aside to such cares, thoughts, delights, as shall make you forget it, regardless of it? Beware of this, if either Christ or your souls be dear to you.

Take care you neglect not, when Christ knocks by conscience, of refusing Christ, of going on in sin against checks of conscience. If you do, and persevere so doing, one of these will follow: your conscience will either be wounded or seared. One of these you may expect. The Lord can send a hell into the conscience, and set that soul a fire that shuts him out. We have sad instances of it, and for what, but going against conscience? Or else the Lord will give thee up to a seared conscience. That conscience that will be senseless, shall be senseless. That will be Christ's sentence, 'He that is unjust, let him be so;' he that is senseless, let him be so: so without sense, as if seared with a hot iron, 1 Timothy 4:2. As Christ has his seal whereby he marks his people, 2 Timothy 2:19, so Satan has his; and those that are thus seared, the Lord gives them over to Satan. He hereby brands them, marks them for his own. Beware your disregard of Christ's knocking by conscience; end not thus.

Neglect not Christ's knocking by providence, especially by mercies. These are as sweet-smelling myrrh, which he leaves upon the handles of the lock, as the spouse expresses it, Song of Solomon 5:5. If ye will not regard when Christ knocks by the hand of mercy, you will provoke him to take his rod, his rod of iron: a knock with this may break you to pieces, Psalms 2:1-12.

Neglect not Christ knocking by afflictions. If Christ enter not, after promises, resolutions, either you will provoke the Lord to change his rod into one more weighty, more smarting, and to double his strokes, and to punish yet seven times more, as he threatens, and make your plagues wonderful; or else to give you over as desperate, and to say, He will afflict no more, he will knock no more. And though blinded sinners, not acquainted with the Lord's paths, think that a good condition to be freed from affliction, yet is there scarce any dispensation that speaks more wrath than when the Lord says, as Isaiah 1:5, 'Why should ye be smitten any more?' It is as if a father, after all means used to reclaim a rebellious son prove ineffectual, should resolve to trouble himself no more with him, should say, He regards not me, &c. Let him take his course, let him run on till he comes to the gallows. How can a man testify more anger than thus? Why thus the Lord, as the extremity of his indignation: Hosea 4:14, 'I will not punish your daughters,' &c.

Especially, neglect not Christ when he knocks by the word. If the sound of the gospel move you not, there is little hope for you. If you neglect this, expect that one day Christ will as much neglect you, Proverbs 1:24, Proverbs 1:33.

Neglect not Christ's knockings by his Spirit. These motions are Christ's messengers; they are sent to prepare his way, to try what entertainment the Master may expect. If you resist, suppress, quench, choke these, Christ will look for no better at your hands, if himself were in your power. When men look upon Christ's message by his Spirit, as Elisha did upon the king of Israel, and use these motions as he did the messenger, how, think you, does he resent it? 2 Kings 6:32. If, when Christ's messengers come, these motions of the Spirit, ye do give order to shut the door, take care to hold them fast at the door, and for this reason, because the sound of his Master's feet, &c.; if you shut out the harbingers, and use them so coarsely, Christ knows what himself may expect, he will not trouble you with his company. Take heed this be not the issue of your quenching motions, suppressing inclinations, suffering resolutions to vanish. If you use his harbingers, those that bespeak his entertainment, he may interpret it thus, it is because the sound of my master's feet, &c. Oh how will this provoke Christ! As you would not be found quenchers of the Spirit, resisters of the Holy Ghost, take heed of neglecting, suppressing these motions of the Spirit.

3. Does he stand and knock? Oh make haste to open to him. I shall urge this more largely when the text leads me directly to it. Now a word of it briefly. Why does he stand and knock, but that he may be admitted? Will you still shut him out? Will you still frustrate the gracious intention of Christ? Will you do your endeavour to make him come short of his end? Shall he stand so long, shall he knock so much in vain? Shall all his patience, all his condescensions be in vain, except it be to render you more miserable, to vindicate the righteousness of his wrath in destroying you, and to leave you without excuse in the great day of account? Christ will secure his glory; he will take care it be not in vain to him, whatever you may render it to your own souls.

If the issue of his patience and longsuffering be not the glory of his mercy, in making you happy with his presence, it must be the glory of his justice in making you miserable, by departing from you. And will you provoke him to depart? Shall sin and the world be dearer to you than Christ?

Must Christ be excluded, that these may still have entertainment? Oh what horrible unkindness is this to Christ, what cruelty to your souls! Heaven and earth may be astonished at it, if hardened hearts, if careless sinners will not; and to these the Lord appeals, Jeremiah 2:12-13. You hereby forsake Christ, the fountain of living waters, &c., joy, comfort, peace, glory. You forsake the fountain; and when the spring of all would place itself in your hearts, you shut it out. This is one great evil: and withal you hew cisterns; you prefer the cistern before the fountain, earth before heaven, sin before Christ; broken cisterns before the eternal fountain; cisterns that will hold no water all, before the fountain that flows everlastingly with waters of life. If you will not consider this, if you will not be afraid of such a dreadful evil, if you will not be astonished at it, heaven and earth may be astonished, and greatly afraid, to see their great Creator set at nought by a wretched man. They may be horribly afraid, lest a provocation of this nature should move the Lord not only to destroy man, but the whole creation; and in his just wrath turn heaven and earth, and all wretched man has benefit by, into confusion and nothing. If man will be so senseless as not to consider this, the senseless creatures will rise up in judgment and condemn him. If sinners will make no answer, take no notice of Christ standing, knocking at their hearts, the dumb creatures will find a mouth to justify God, when he sends him to eternal ruin, when he casts him into everlasting burnings.

Oh consider this! Let the wonderful patience of Christ in standing, let the gracious importunity of Christ in knocking, lead you to repent, lead you to the door, persuade you to open. The Lord makes use of the wonderful strangeness of his condescension as a motive, and oh that it might prove a powerful motive to open to him, Jeremiah 31:1-40. See how his bowels yearn to wretched sinners; and suppose him, while he stands at thy heart, to express himself as he does to Ephraim, Jeremiah 31:20; and then hear him expostulating, wondering at thy delay to open to him, Jeremiah 31:22; and then consider what a motive he adds to enforce thee to open. ‘For the Lord hath,’ &c. That Christ should stand and knock, that Christ should seek to thee, it is a new thing, a thing so strange and wonderful, as the like is seldom seen on the earth. It is as if a woman should offer love to a man. ■■■■■ ambit, does solicit, does woo, does seek love, when she should be sought to; forgets herself, her sex, her condition, against all custom, against all nations on earth. Thus far does the Lord stoop, thus strangely does Christ condescend, when he comes and offers love to sinners. It is as if a woman should compass, &c.; it is he that should be sought to, yet he seeks to thee. It is his love that men and angels should desire above life; yet he offers love when it is not desired. He seems to forget himself (if we may so say) when he so strangely condescends to seek to sinners, to stand and knock at their hearts. This is a new thing, a wonderful thing; and since his love herein is so strange, so admirable, it should be a strong motive to sinners to entertain it. Oh how long wilt thou go about, O backsliding sinner? How long shall Christ stand and knock, before he be regarded? When wilt thou open to him, who has stooped below himself to come to thee? Remember, as his condescension is strange and wonderful in seeking admission, so his indignation will be strange and wonderful if thou dost not open. Since Christ comes and stands, make haste to open. So we pass from the positive proposition, the first part, to the conditiona promise, the second part of the text. Herein consider both its form and matter.

1. The form. It is propounded conditionally. Christ’s presence and communion with him is offered upon condition.

2. As to the matter of it. It consists, as do all hypothetical propositions, of two parts; the antecedent and the consequent. In

(1.) The consequent, we have the things promised. These are two; [1.] Christ's entrance, 'I will come in;' [2.] His entertainment, and that is mutual. He will entertain the soul, and will accept of the entertainment which he enables the soul to provide for him: 'and will sup with him, and he with me.'

(2.) In the antecedent, we have the conditions upon which these things are promised, and these are two: [1.] Hearing, 'If any man hear my voice;' [2.] Opening, 'and open the door.' Of these in order.

1. From the form of the proposal, in that these things are promised conditionally, take this

Obs. Some gospel promises are conditional. Not only promises of outward blessings, common mercies, but promises of spiritual, special, and distinguishing mercies. Not only, promises of the law, which belong to the covenant of works, but promises of the gospel, special branches and articles of the covenant of grace. Such is this in the text, a promise of Christ, of the gospel, of spiritual and special mercies, of the presence of Christ and communion with him. These are offered conditionally; and the promise is plainly, expressly, and in terminis conditional. 'If,' &c. I shall not insist long on this, nor enter into the controversy started in this age, but rather explain it in such a way as may prevent mistakes, and leave no room for any controversy; for those who would walk with a right foot in the way of the gospel, and prefer truth and peace before contention, must be careful to avoid controversy.

Those things that are annexed to gospel promises in the form of conditions, they are not conditions in these five respects; remove but those ingredients from them, which indeed the Lord never mixed with them, and there need be no scruple at all in granting the promises to be conditional. They are not conditions in respect

(1.) Of merit. When the condition is performed, we do not thereby deserve the Lord should bestow the mercy promised. 'When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants.' Such conditions are a popish imagination, they never entered into the Lord's thoughts, they are a high disparagement to the freeness of grace, and stain the glory of it.

(2.) Of dependence. It is not in the will, in the power of man, to perform by his own strength what is annexed to any gospel promise. If he that does promise and require did not give strength to perform, neither promise nor condition would be performed for ever. He requires we should hear his voice and open to him, but we can do neither without him; it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do. Conditions depending upon man's will and power are the proud inventions of Pelagians; there is no place, no ground for them in the gospel.

(3.) Of inducement. When that which is annexed to the promise, in form of a condition, is performed through the strength of Christ, the Lord is not hereby moved, induced hereby, as we are, to accomplish the promise. It is inconsistent with his divine perfections to be moved by any thing ab extra, without. Those expressions which seem to intimate our moving of God are after the manner of men; and when we speak properly, they must be explained in a way becoming the perfections, the majesty of God.

(4.) Of uncertainty. Man, when he propounds a condition, is uncertain whether or no it will be performed. But there is no such uncertainty with God; he knows from eternity who will hear his

voice, who will open to him. The accomplishment of the promises is not suspended for the uncertainty of the condition, as it is amongst men, but for the incapacity of the subject, because, till they perform what he requires, they are not capable of what he promises.

(5.) Of obligement. When we perform that which is required in the promise, God is not thereby obliged to accomplish the promise, without the interposal of pardoning mercy, e. g. when we hear, when we open, this lays no engagement upon Christ to enter. Our slowness to open does more disengage him, more provoke him to depart, than our opening, accompanied with such provocation, obliges him to enter. These things I might easily open and prove at large, if I thought it seasonable; but let this suffice at present. If you take not conditions in such a sense as is made up of one or all these respects, it casts not the least shadow upon the glory of free grace to grant some promises to be conditional. By a condition, understand no more than a necessary antecedent, or a duty to which the Lord will enable his people before the performance of his promise; and there need be no scruple, no controversy about the terms, the promises may be counted, with safety enough, to be conditional.

2. And so we pass from the form to the matter of this proposition, and in it first take notice of the antecedent, containing the conditions of this promise; the first whereof is hearing Christ's voice, 'If any man hear.' Here we might observe, that opening depends on hearing, and that men are backward to hear Christ's voice; hence he makes an if of it, 'If any man;' as also that Christ not only stands and knocks, but calls at the heart, makes use of his voice to procure admission. But to waive a particular discourse of each of these, we shall comprise the sense and meaning of these words in this, and a little insist on it.

Obs. Those that will have Christ to come into them, must hear his voice. It is the means to this end, it is the condition of this blessed privilege, and so proposed in the text.

'Hear, and your souls shall live.' Christ's entering into the soul, is as the soul's entering into the body. As that is life to the body, so Christ is life to the soul, when he enters, unites himself to it, and becomes its life, the fountain, the principle of spiritual life. Now the way for Christ to enter is by hearing: 'Hear, and your souls shall live.' So Christ comes not in till the heart be open, and it opens not till it hear the voice of Christ; so that those who will have Christ to come in, must hear his voice.

Two things explained will make this truth clear. (1.) What is the voice of Christ? (2.) What is it to hear his voice? For the

(1.) Christ's voice is that which you hear principally in the gospel. He gives some intimation of his will by conscience, by providence; but in the gospel he speaks out, there his voice is heard clearly, distinctly, there he speaks aloud; particularly, there you hear

[1.] His voice of command. He exercises his authority as King and Lord of the world, sends out his royal edicts, his commands. And this is the sense of them, that sinners would open to him, Isaiah 55:1; come and open that the waters of life may flow into your souls, that the spring of life, and joy, and happiness may seat itself in your hearts.

Oh, but these waters are precious, they cost dear, &c.

He has left his commands on record in the word, in the Scriptures, and he sends his messengers daily to publish them. To disobey him, is to affront him in his highest dignity, in his royal office, to

rebel against the King of kings, &c.

All the commands to believe in Christ, are commands to open to him; for to believe in Christ is to receive him, and to receive him is to open to him. This is the great command of the gospel, to open to him, John 14:1, John 6:26. Christ, who might exercise his sovereignty, &c., had rather shew it by commanding. The whole creation is at the command of Christ; there is not one creature in heaven or earth but punctually obeys him, except wretched man only. And wilt thou be one of these rebels, worse than the plants and trees that grow at his command, worse than the beasts and birds that move at his command? Wilt thou be worse than the beasts that perish? Wilt thou be a rebel especially in this point? Wilt thou shut out the King of glory when he commands thee to open to him? It is no great matter he commands; it is but to open. Nor is it any loss to thee that he commands; it is to open to him whose presence will make thee happy. Oh that you would hear Christ's voice commanding. This is his voice of authority.

[2.] The voice of Christ threatening. He sets an edge upon his command, and that it may not be slighted, enforces it with threatenings. If thou wilt not hear him now, and open, he threatens he will not hear thee hereafter. Thou wilt find sooner or later a day of distress, when thou wilt have need of Christ, at least death is not far off, &c., and judgment is approaching. How much soever you neglect it now, you will be glad to call to Christ then. Ay! but if you will not hear him now, he threatens he will not hear you then, Proverbs 1:27-28. If you will not open to him on earth, he will not open to you in heaven; if you will shut him out here, he will shut you out there. Time may come when, with the foolish virgins, you may knock and cry, 'Lord, open to us;' but those that regard him not now shall have their doom then, 'Depart from me, I know ye not.' Christ would now entertain, 'I will come in and sup,' but if ye shut him out, the same thing he denounces to you which he threatened, Luke 14:24, 'Not one of them shall taste of my supper.'

If you will not open to Christ, who brings with him unsearchable riches, your debts can never be paid; justice will seize on you and cast you into prison, into outer darkness, till you have paid that which can never be discharged, till you have paid the uttermost farthing. If you will not admit Christ, who would make you happy with his presence, you shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. If you will not open to him who brings you life, ye shall die in your sins, John 8:24. Thus the Lord lifts up his voice and threatens sinners, in case they will not open to him: Oh that you would hearken! If ye will not suffer Christ to enter into your hearts, ye shall never enter into his rest. This is his terrible voice; it can rend the rocks, and cause the mountains to tremble. Oh, be not you senseless of it!

[3.] The voice of Christ promising. This is Christ's voice in the latter part of the text. There he promises his presence and fellowship with him to all that will open to him; all the joys, the comforts, the bliss, the glory, that the presence of Christ can afford, or communion with him. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, he dwells not in temples made with hands; yet if thou wilt open, he promises thy heart shall be his temple, 'I will come in.' The presence of Christ is the glory and happiness of all that are happy and glorious; this is it which glorifies the saints, and makes the angels blessed, yet this thou shalt have if thou wilt open. The presence of Christ is light in darkness, and plenty in want, relief in all distresses, comfort in all sad exigencies, life in death, all in all; yet all this thou shalt have, the presence of Christ, and all its blessed attendants, if thou wilt hearken unto him and open.

Communion with Christ is the very heaven of heaven, and that which can make a dark habitation on earth to be as a corner of heaven; but this thou shalt have, if thou wilt hear his voice and open. But of this more fully when we come to the latter part of the text. This is Christ's still voice, the sweet voice of promise; oh that you would hearken to it!

[4.] The voice of persuasion. This is it he counsels, this is it he advises; and he urges it, enforces his counsel with many motives and arguments. This is Christ's voice in the verses before the text, Revelation 3:18.

[5.] The voice of entreaty. He beseeches sinners with a loud voice to open. He who commanded heaven and earth to issue out of nothing; he who commands the winds and the seas, and they obey him; he who commanded the apostate angels out of his presence, and shut them up in the bottomless pit; he who commanded the earth to open her mouth, and swallow those rebellious sinners, Korah and his accomplices; he who could command thee immediately into hell, and shut thee up in outer darkness: he vouchsafes to beseech thee; this is his voice, 2 Corinthians 5:20. Upon what terms an ambassador treats with another state, if by way of threatening, or, which is more strange and unusual, if by way of entreaty, it is as if his master did it. So it is interpreted by us. Ministers of the gospel are Christ's ambassadors; they are sent, employed, authorised by him. He gives them instructions to pray, to beseech sinners, and they do it ■π■ρ Χριστο■, i. e. 'in Christ's stead.' It is as if Christ himself should do it; it is as if he should with his own mouth pray, beseech, entreat you to open to him. When the minister comes and entreats you, beseeches, importunes you to abandon those sins that keep out Christ, it is as if Christ himself should do it in person. So it is in our account in embassies amongst men, so it is in Christ's account. It will be in vain to say at the day of judgment, I never heard Christ use any such language, he never entreated; the ministers that we disregard are but men. Ay, but they are Christ's ambassadors, they speak in Christ's stead; and what they speak according to his instructions, he owns it as though it were spoken by himself, and will accordingly vindicate the contempt of it and disobedience to it. You shall then hear what you will not now regard: 'He that heareth you, heareth me;' 'Inasmuch as you did it to one of these, you did it unto me.' It is Christ's voice you hear when you are entreated to open. If you will have him enter, you must hear. And the wonder of Christ's condescension in stooping so low as to beseech you, should be a strong motive to open, or will be a great aggravation of your wickedness if you open not.

[6.] The voice of reproof. This is Christ's voice too, and that which he frequently makes use of when sinners are so slow, so backward to open to him. It is Christ that speaks, Christ the Wisdom of the Father, and there frequently called Wisdom, Proverbs 1:1-33. And that which he speaks is reproof: Proverbs 1:23, 'Turn you at my reproof.' He tells sinners how they offend, what the nature of their offence is, how sinful, how provoking, how heavily aggravated, when they refuse to open, when they retain those sins that keep out Christ. The Spirit of Christ in the Scriptures abounds herein; take but briefly three or four instances.

He shews it is a grievous contempt of Christ, a most unworthy slighting and undervaluing of him. The sinner that shuts out Christ (as every one does that lives in sin) values him no more than he that sold him for thirty pieces of silver. For which of you would not open your door were it but to gain thus much? And yet will not open to Christ! Do ye not clearly manifest you think Christ less worth, value him not so much? A goodly price indeed that Christ is prized at by you! Zechariah

11:12. Hereby you shew you value him no more than that wretch that betrayed him; you value him no more than a slave, Exodus 21:32. Oh what ground is here for reproof! Will you thus set Christ at nought, and shew yourselves as bad as Judas? Why, this is the way you contemn him as you would do a slave,—nay, as one would not do a slave,—when you will not open to him. This is against all your relations, engagements, professions as Christians. You call Christ Lord; but what a servant is that who will let his lord stand and knock, and call at the door, but will not stir to open to him! You call him Father; but what a child is that who shuts his father out of doors! Malachi 1:6. While you do thus, whatever you speak of Christ as related to him, that you love him, would obey him, are his servants, his children, these are but pretences and dissembling words. You shew plainly you are gross hypocrites, whatever you say or think, so long as Christ is shut out. Can any without blushing call Christ his Saviour, while he will not open his heart to him? Do ye really count Christ so? or does it not hereby appear it is a mere pretence? Will any man shut his Saviour out of doors? All your pretences to Christ are but hypocritical till this be done.

Further, this is a preferring the devil and the rusts of your hearts before Christ. These, though the vilest evils in earth or hell, have more respect, more honour, more service, more obedience from you, than Christ. When Satan does but intimate his pleasure by some wicked suggestion, forthwith he finds admission; but though Christ call and cry, lift up his voice like a trumpet, command, promise, threaten, persuade, beseech, reprove, he is shut out. When a lust gives but an inkling, insinuates by some sly motion, this is instantly, daily entertained, while Christ stands without. Here is a great respect shewed to Christ indeed, when his mortal, deadly enemies are admitted, entertained, and himself refused, rejected! What iniquity, may he say, do ye find in me, that the devil, and that which is worse than the devil, your lusts, should be preferred before me?

Finally, the whole creation may rise up in judgment against such as exclude Christ, and may condemn them. Christ doth whatever he will in heaven and earth; he opens, and no man shuts; he shuts, and no man opens; he finds no resistance, no opposition, till he come to the heart of man. There is not the least creature in the world but will cast in something to make the judgment of that sinner heavier who opens not to Christ, to aggravate his condemnation who shuts out Christ. To this effect doth Christ reprove the generation with whom he conversed, Matthew 12:42. If she would come from the uttermost parts of the earth to see Solomon, sure if he had come so far to visit her, she would with all joy have admitted him. And yet, lo! a greater than Solomon is here excluded. Christ comes not from the uttermost parts of the earth, but from the highest heaven; not to visit the court of some glorious king, but to seek entrance into a wretched defiled heart; and yet is excluded, it shuts itself. Here is not the queen of Sheba, but the King of glory, excluded; not king Solomon, but Solomon’s King, is affronted, excluded by a wretched sinner, by a sinful heart. For this he reproved the Jews then, for this he reproves you now; he comes to his own, and his own receive him not: to his own, to those who have most need of him, most reason to own him. He comes and owns you, by coming to you when he passes by the rest of the world. He comes to his own, &c.

Oh what ground is here for a sharp, a cutting reproof! This is another way wherein you may hear Christ’s voice. Oh let it not be said, ye would have none of my reproof!

(2.) What by hearing. It includes these six things:

[1.] Attendance. When he attends diligently to the word preached. When he is serious and conscientious; not as before, customary and careless. When he listens to it as to the great, the eternal concernment of his soul. When he desists from those things that have hindered him from listening diligently to the word in times past. When Christ's voice puts him to a stand. For example: a man riding, running, or otherwise busied, hears some voice that concerns him; he stops his course, stands, and listens. Thus, when Christ speaks to the heart of a sinner, if he hear his voice to any purpose, it puts him to a stand; it takes him off from his immoderate following the world, from his eager pursuit of his lusts; he hushes those cares, thoughts, delights, and that business which made such a noise before, as Christ's voice was not heard or not regarded.

Thus, when Saul heard Christ's voice from heaven, he fell to the earth, Acts 9:1-43. His former designs were nonplussed. It is true that voice was extraordinary; but whenever Christ's voice is heard, it has some like effect. The sinner is stopped in his career; his mind and heart are at least for the present taken off from sin and the world; he stands and listens. And till he be put to such a stand, though he may seem to hear, he hears not indeed; his hearing is to little purpose. He that will open unto Christ must thus hear.

[2.] Belief. He that hears so as to open, believes it is the voice of Christ he hears. While he counts the word preached the voice of man, he finds many evasions, so as he keeps it off from his heart and conscience. Till he believe it is the voice of Christ, he hears as though he heard not; it is to little purpose, to no great effect, leaves small or no impression. But when he hears it and hearkens to it, as the voice of Christ speaking to him from heaven, then, and not till then, he hears so as he is in the way to open. The men that were with Saul, they 'heard a voice, but saw no man,' Acts 9:7. They knew not whence it came, nor who it was that spoke. But Saul knew it to be Christ's voice: the voice satisfied him of that; and hence the different effect in them and him. Saul opens, embraces Christ; we read no such thing of them. 'It is the voice of my beloved, says the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:2. If she had not perceived this, she had lain still and not opened to him. While you are filled with conceits that it is but man that speaks, and that he speaks his own thoughts only, and such as prejudice against you, or ill apprehensions of you lead him to; while Satan thus persuades you, he cares not how much you hear. He knows, till you hear the word preached as the voice of Christ, your hearing is as good as no hearing, you are far enough from opening. Till Samuel knew it was the Lord's voice, he run the wrong way.

[3.] Application. If thou wilt hear so as to open, thou must hear Christ's voice as directed to thee in particular. Thou must not put it off to others, and say the word met with such a one, it fell foul upon such a man's sin, was suitable to his condition; but bring it home to thy own heart and conscience, and hear Christ in the ministry of the word speaking to thee, as if he singled thee out and spoke to thee by name. Apply what is delivered in general as though thou heardest Christ telling thee, as Nathan did David, 'Thou art the man,' 2 Samuel 12:7. It is I Christ intends, it is myself he speaks to; this is my sin, my guilt. It is I that have shut out Christ; it is I that have been so eager on my lusts, so busy in the world to neglect Christ. He now speaks to me, he now calls upon me to open. Till you hear thus, till you thus apply what you hear, you will never open. The voice of Christ, till thus applied, gives but an uncertain sound (as the apostle in another case) nor will you ever prepare to open.

[4.] Consideration. Hear it so as your thoughts may work upon it, as though ye were always hearing. Christ's voice should have such place in your hearts, should be fixed there by frequent meditation, serious consideration of it, as if it were still sounding in your ears. How many souls has non-consideration cut short of Christ! When you mind but the word while it is preached, it slides away as water falling on a rock; it must stay upon the heart, else it will not open. Remember it when you lie down and when you rise up, whatever ye do, wherever you are; lot your thoughts represent Christ as still lifting up his voice and calling on you to open to him, as that ancient said of the voice of Christ at the last day, &c. What you hear must stay in your thoughts as though ye were always hearing, as though the voice of Christ were still in your ears, 'Arise and open!' Thus you must hear if you will open.

[5.] Conviction. If ye will hear so as to open, ye must so hear as to be convinced of an absolute necessity of opening. Be convinced that thou art lost, undone, condemned, till thou open to Christ. So Christ tells Laodicea, Revelation 3:17. And it is the condition of every man till Christ be admitted: 'Thou art poor, and blind, and wretched, and miserable;' if death knock before thou open to Christ, there is nothing but hell to be expected, nothing but the wrath of God to seize on thy soul, nothing but the bottomless pit to open and swallow thee for ever. This conviction, which sinners are so backward to admit, which Satan uses all means to put off, is the first step to the door. Till the sinner thus hear as to be thoroughly convinced of his misery while Christ is excluded, there is no hope of opening.

[6.] Persuasion. Then the sinner admits Christ, when he so hears his voice as to be fully persuaded to open to him. The former are but motions towards it; when it comes to this, the heart is open. A sinner's judgment may be convinced that he is miserable while Christ is excluded, and yet the will not persuaded to admit him. For the will has three powers: to consent, to refuse, to suspend its acts. When the understanding is convinced that he is miserable if Christ be not admitted, the will so far follows the understanding as it cannot consent to exclude him, it cannot refuse to admit him, yet it may hang in suspense. But when it so hears as to be persuaded, it hangs off no longer, but opens unto Christ. This is the hearing that Christ calls for, to hear so as to obey, to listen to Christ's voice so as to comply with it; Hebrews 3:8 : 'To-day if ye will hear my voice,' &c. When the sinner hears but does not obey, he hears but so as to harden his heart; his heart is stone against Christ; no passage for him through it, no entrance by it. But when he so hears as to be persuaded, so hears Christ's voice as to obey it, to open to him when he calls, then he hears so as Christ enters. Thus you see how many ways Christ makes his voice audible, and how you may hear so as Christ may enter; by which the observation is clear.

Use. Information. This shews the sad condition of many amongst us who profess Christ. Many there are who bear the name of Christians, who yet shut Christ out of doors, who never opened their hearts unto him. Such are they who care not to hear his voice, such are they who are careless in hearing it. The light of this truth discovers these to be such as shut out Christ. If he enter not but by hearing, then those that will not hear, care not how they hear, how seldom, how carelessly, do hereby shew Christ is yet without, he never yet came into them. They are not yet under the influence of this promise, they are far from the condition of it; and consequently without Christ, without life, without hope, without God in the world. Particularly,

1. Those who neglect to hear when Christ speaks, who will not take the opportunities to hear his voice, so often as they are offered. A small occasion will keep them from hearing the word preached; though Christ speaks here, in the ministry of the word, if his voice be to be heard anywhere in the world. Divers there are who think once a day enough (though they have but this day once a week), nay, so profane are some, they think it too much; yet such will think themselves wronged if they be not counted Christians. Do they deserve the name of Christians who shut Christ out of doors? Let your consciences judge. And do not they shut out Christ who will not so much as hear his voice when he calls upon them to open? How often has Christ, by his unworthy messenger, reproved this sin, this woful contempt of Christ in this place! And yet the thinness of our assembly is a sad testimony the voice of Christ is little regarded, the reproof of Christ is set at nought. Can you shew more contempt of Christ than to refuse to hear him when he speaks? And does he speak more plainly otherwise to the world than in the ministry of the word? What! not hear a voice from heaven, not hear the voice of Christ speaking from heaven; not hear the voice of Christ speaking to you, not hear the voice of Christ calling on you to open to him! Shall Christ stoop so low as to utter his voice in all kind of expressions? Shall he threaten, promise, reprove, complain, yea, entreat vile worms? And will they not so much as give him the hearing? Do ye not affront Christ enough by shutting him out? Will you not so much as hear him when he beseeches you to let him in? Oh the wonder of Christ's patience, that some remarkable judgment does not cut off such a Christ-contemner! It is a sad complaint he makes, that his report was not believed. More grievous may his complaint be, that his report is not so much as heard. But it is like many of those whom this concerns are not now in hearing. Well, they will not hear Christ now; but time will come, if reformation prevent it not, when they shall hear Christ speak in another tone. No more 'Open unto me,' no more of that; but 'Depart from me; depart, ye cursed.' In the mean time this is your misery,—you shut out Christ now, and Christ will shut you out hereafter; you will not hear him now, he will not hear you hereafter. Here is misery enough for them, and grief enough for those whom Christ sends to them,—that which was the prophet's of old: 'If ye will not hear,' &c., Jeremiah 13:17.

2. For conviction to those who hear indeed, but so as it is evident they do not open, Christ does not enter. It is not every kind of hearing that makes way for Christ's entering, but that described, that intended. Those, therefore, do not open, Christ does not enter,—

(1.) Who hear carelessly, as though they heard not, as though it were not of such concernment as indeed it is; who hear customarily, negligently. When Christ enters, the blessing enters; but there is a curse hangs over those who do the work, &c., Jeremiah 48:15. If they who are negligent in destroying God's enemies are blameworthy, then sure those who are negligent in saving their own souls are much more so, to which hearing Christ's voice is so necessary.

(2.) Who hear it, but not as the voice of Christ. There is a power, a majesty, in the voice of Christ; and those that hear it as such will hear it so, so as they would attend to what is powerful and majestic. See how it is described Psalms 29:1-11. If you hear it as the voice of the Lord, it will be evident by like effects; it shakes, you will tremble at it. If you never so heard it, Christ never yet entered. It is such a heart which the Lord chooses for his temple, Isaiah 66:1-24. Your hearts are not yet Christ's temple, you never had such respect to him as to open to him, if you do not so respect his word as to tremble at it. He never had such respect to you as to enter, as to take possession of you, if his voice have not been so powerful as to make you tremble at it.

(3.) Who hear it, but apply it not. Christ comes not home to your souls till the word be brought home to your hearts. While you put it off, you shut Christ out; while you do not apply the word to yourselves, as directed to you in particular, Christ comes to your ears, he comes not into your hearts. If the word abides not in you, Christ abides not in you, he comes not there. Now it is so far from abiding, as it has no entrance unless it be applied.

(4.) Who hear, but consider not, make it not their meditation. Where Christ is entertained, he is not contemned. But what contempt is this of Christ, to cast his word behind your backs, and mind it no longer than it is sounding in your ears! Are not the words of Christ worthy to be thought of? Those that shut out the thoughts of his word, so as not to make them their meditation, it is plain they shut Christ out of their hearts. Shall he lift up his voice to the unworthy sons of men, and shall not what he speaks be remembered? Shall it not be laid to heart? So far will he be from blessing you with his presence, as he will even ‘curse your blessings,’ Malachi 2:2. Not only those who refuse to hear, but those who hear and lay it not to heart, are under this curse. Their blessings, their enjoyments, even the gospel itself, will prove curses to such. That is the bitterest curse, which curses our blessings. A blessing turned into a curse is the most dreadful curse. Yet this is their portion who lay not the word to heart; instead of enjoying Christ, they inherit the curse. It is a cursed heart, &c., a heart that Christ never entered into. Though you will not think of his word, Christ will remember. Though you will not find time to meditate on it, Christ will find time to call you to an account for it; for thus slighting him, not giving entertainment to his word in your thoughts, you shut him out of your hearts.

(5.) Who hear not so as to be convinced of their necessity of opening; will not be convinced of their sin, their misery, which should possess them with apprehensions of a necessity to open; will not believe but they have opened already, though the temper of their hearts and course of their lives testify against them; shut their ears against that voice which tells them of sin and wrath; think this is the way to be miserable, when it is the first step out of it; look upon him who would lead them to the sight of their misery, while they live in sin, and so without Christ, as he did on the prophet, ‘Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?’ judge him uncharitable, no friend to them, count him their enemy because he tells them this truth, that they are wretched till born again, miserable while they live in sin, because Christ lives not in them. When thoughts of sin and misery seize on their hearts, they make not use thereof to lead them to Christ, they are not quiet till they have stifled them. While you thus shut out conviction, you shut out Christ, Hebrews 12:13. This is the property of God’s word, the efficacy of Christ’s voice. And this effect it must have before you enter into his rest; as the connection with the 11th verse shews, before Christ enter into you to give you rest. Till this conviction of sin and misery have emptied the heart of high thoughts, good conceits of its natural estate, it is too full of them to open, there is no room for Christ in such a heart.

(6.) Who hear not so as to be persuaded to open; listen to the voice of Christ, but obey it not, comply not with it. This is no hearing, in Scripture language. He that obeys not, hears not. So inseparable should these be, as one is put for the other.

Then you hear Christ’s voice to purpose, when you are persuaded to admit Christ upon his own terms, so as to thrust out every sin, so as to take his yoke, so as to resolve upon all the ways of holiness. Till then you do not hearken unto Christ’s voice, for these are joined, Psalms 81:13. And while you thus hearken not to Christ, you reject him, Psalms 81:11. You declare hereby you will

none of Christ, you shut him out. Christ enters not till his voice be thus heard. And if you thus hear it not, it is plain you have not yet opened, Christ has not yet entered.

Pass we from the first condition, hearing, to the second, opening. ‘And open the door.’ Hence take this

Obs. Those that would have Christ to enter must open to him. It is not Christ’s ordinary way to come in to sinners as he came to the disciples, when the door was shut. No; he requires us to open if we will have him to come in; the everlasting gates must be lift up, &c., Psalms 24:7, Psalms 24:9. The Lord there calls upon his people to prepare for the admission of Christ; their hearts are these everlasting gates; not like those of the material temple, which endured but for a season, but these are immortal, must endure to everlasting; these must be lift up; he repeats the command. And this repetition denotes two things, as we learn, Genesis 41:32; it was doubled for the certainty, the celerity of it. It signifies the like here, certainty on Christ’s part; he will surely enter if admission be granted. Celerity on our part, we must speedily open that the King of glory may enter.

Quest. But what is it to open the door? In what manner must we open? These explained, the truth will be clear. For the 1. Take it in these severals.

(1.) He that will open must come to the door; no opening at a distance. All by nature are far from opening. If ye will lift up these gates, ye must come to them.

They, then, are far from opening, who lie down securely in their natural condition; who are at rest there, and cry Peace, peace to themselves, whatever the word say to the contrary; who are asleep in a sinful state, and there dream with Laodicea, that they are rich, &c. This was her condition when Christ here calls upon her to open; and it is the condition of all men by nature till the voice of Christ awaken them. They say, as those, Jeremiah 2:31, ‘We are lords,’ &c. These are far from coming to the door; this is not the way to open.

Those also that sit in the seat of wickedness, fix themselves in their evil ways, will not be removed out of them; will not leave intemperance, worldliness, profaneness, swearing; neither mercies nor judgments, neither promises nor threatenings, neither commands nor entreaties, neither Christ’s rod nor his word will make them rise out of sin; they sit still, they are far from opening.

Those also, who, when they are roused, awakened, and seem to be in a fair way of coming to open, instead of coming forward, go backward, run another way. Such are those, who, having some sense of sin and misery, some trouble of mind, some disquietment of conscience, instead of coming to open to Christ, turn aside to the world, or run to their merry companions, or quiet their hearts with some outward comfort, or build up some unsound peace upon unsafe grounds. So their latter end is worse than the beginning. They ran well at first, what hindered them? What turned them backward? These are further from opening than before: they run further from the door instead of coming to it.

Those that come but half way. Such are those who, having got some knowledge of Christ, of gospel truths, and having taken up a profession of Christ, and performing some outward duties, such as may quiet their consciences, and get the repute of Christians, they set up their rest here. Oh, but you must go further, else you will never come at the door, never open to Christ. This is but,

with Agrippa, to be almost persuaded to be a Christian. You are yet a great way from the door; you must come to it if you will open.

(2.) He that will open must take away the bars, remove those bolts which make fast the door. No gate in the world can be so bolted, so blocked up, as a sinner's heart is against Christ. Satan is the porter, the strong man armed, he keeps the door. There is a Cerberus in every man's heart; he must be removed, cast out, else no opening.

Then there is the world, that blocks up the door; it is as a rampart of earth cast up against it to secure it. You must make your way through this, turn it aside, that you may come to open to Christ. The thoughts, cares, delights, desires, love of the world and the things of it, how do they block up the way! These must be digged through, cast off, else no opening, no passage to Christ or for him.

Then there is the flesh and all the lusts of it, every one a strong bolt to make the heart fast against Christ. A worldly lust, or proud, or unclean, or intemperate, or revengeful; any one of these, or those many more than can be numbered, is enough to keep the heart shut. Each of these must be plucked out of the heart if it open, if Christ enter.

Then there is blindness of mind, ignorance, spiritual darkness. This is a great security to the door; the sinner cannot find it, and so he is not like to open. He that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes.

Then there is hardness of heart, a heart of stone, as it is called. This is a stone wall raised against the door to strengthen it. This rock must be divided, this stony temper must be dissolved if Christ enter. The heart of stone that has so long continued in thy flesh, that has so long resisted the word, the Spirit, it must be broken that Christ may enter.

Then, to mention no more, there is self-sufficiency, self-dependence, self-confidence, self-conceitedness, imaginations and conceits of his good name, good meanings, honest dealings, religious performances; the heart is so filled with these, there is no room to open, no room for Christ to enter. The heart must be emptied of these, they must be whipped out, before he make thy heart his temple. This course Christ takes with Laodicea that she may open. Whatever thou thinkest, thou, &c. These imaginations are strongholds which make sure the passage against Christ; these must be battered, cast down, and the heart laid low in his own thoughts. Here is need of ordnance to make a breach, here is need of those weapons which are mighty through God, 2 Corinthians 10:4. All these bolts and impediments that block up the way must be removed, &c.

(3.) He that will open, must put to his hand and lift up the latch: there must be the hand of faith; this is the essence of the act we speak of. To open, is to be willing to admit Christ upon his own terms; to consent to receive Christ, &c. What those terms are, I have shewed heretofore.

Obj. But it appears by the premises, that sinners of themselves are not able to open, the heart is too fast shut. There are so many difficulties, so much opposition from within and without, that it exceeds a natural man's power, especially since he is without strength, without spiritual life, not only unable to do this, but to will it. And therefore it seems strange the Lord should make this the condition of a promise, that he should call upon men to do that which they cannot do. Why does the Lord call upon sinners to open, who of themselves cannot open? This seems strange and to no purpose.

Ans. 1. Sinners were once able, but they have disabled themselves; they had power, but have wilfully lost it. The Lord enabled man in his creation to hear his voice and obey it. We all had power in Adam to obey Christ's voice, but in him we sinned that power away. Though we have lost power to obey, no reason to think God should lose his power to command. The proceedings amongst men makes this apparent: if you entrust a man with a sum of money, and he go and spend it in gaming, drinking, and unwarrantable courses; will you not, therefore, think it reasonable to demand it of him? Will you lose power to ask what he owes ye, because he has prodigally spent it? Shall it be thus amongst men, and is not the Lord as righteous in this proceeding? He entrusted us with power to do what he requires, we have sinned it away; no such prodigals as sinners. But shall this hinder the Lord from demanding what is due? No; nothing more reasonable, nothing more righteous; the Lord has many wise and holy ends in thus proceeding.

It may be said, the case is not alike, for he, of whom the debt may be lawfully demanded, did willingly and deliberately spend the money entrusted with him; but the sin whereby our first parents lost the power which we want, was not actually consented to by us, for we were not then in being.

I answer, A loss or penalty may justly and reasonably fall upon those who never actually consented to the fault for which it was incurred, nor were in being when it was committed. For instance, a man has an estate given on these terms, that if he be faithful to the donor, he and his heirs shall enjoy it for ever; but if he prove treacherous, he and his posterity shall lose it in all generations. He proves treacherous, and so is deprived of it, and his posterity in following ages have no benefit by it; yet the proceeding is just and reasonable in the sense of all the world.

Ans. 2. The word of Christ is operative. He many times empowers his word to effect that which he calls for: not only demands this, but conveys a power with his word enabling sinners to perform what he demands. He said, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' he 'sent forth his word and healed them;' he 'works all things by the word of his power.' You think it in vain to call upon the dead, but if you could convey a power along with your voice to quicken them, it would not be in vain so to speak. Thus did Christ: he speaks to Lazarus who was dead, and had lain some days in the grave, 'Lazarus, come forth;' but there was a secret power accompanied the voice which made it effectual; he spake, and it was done. He says to dry bones, Live; but there is a quickening power in his word, and, therefore, though he speak to the dead, he speaks to purpose; he speaks so as to make the dead both hear and live. The dead shall hear, &c., John 5:25, therefore you need not wonder that Christ calls upon sinners to do that which of themselves they cannot, because he has a power to send along with the word, when it pleases him, to enable them to do what he calls for, though as to their own power it be impossible. You need not wonder why Christ calls sinners to open, whenas they cannot do it; the word of his power, by which he calls for this, will enable them to open. He does that by such exhortations which he exhorts to; he puts forth his power with his word, when he pleases, and his word, so accompanied, whoever it be spoken to, never returns in vain. When the Lord intends to enter into the heart of a sinner, he calls upon him to open in the ministry of the word; for he deals with us as with reasonable creatures, by way of persuasion, exhortation, and argument. He not only speaks to him, calls on him by the voice of man, but he puts forth therewith the power of God: the voice we hear, the power we see not. This is the Lord's way, to speak to our ears, but therewith to convey a power to the heart, that he that hears may open. Such calling on us, when it is thus empowered, is to purpose, though sinners that hear it be most impotent.

Ans. 3. The Lord may call upon them to open who are not able, that they may go to him to make them able. Though the Lord do not always accompany the word with a converting power, yet if he thereby convince the sinner of his own weakness, it is not to no purpose; if it make sensible, as he, 'Lord, help my unbelief;' if he be brought to this, Da, domine, quod jubes, et jube quid vis.

It is just with the Lord to condemn men for not doing that which they have lost the power to do, because they will not be persuaded but they are able enough, and yet endeavour not, neglect him who should enable them. Are not these the thoughts of many hearts: Oh we can open to Christ when we please; and therefore put it off till hereafter, neglect the means, think not of going to Christ for strength? What more reasonable than to call on a man to do that which, being his duty, he thinks himself able enough to do?

Now if this be but the issue of those exhortations, to 'hide pride from man,' to bring men to a sense of their own wretched impotency; if it stir them up but to try what they can do, that so, having experience of their own weakness, they may go to Christ for strength; if it bring a sinner to know and feel, and say, I am guilty of shutting out Christ, and yet how miserable am I without him! And though life and death lie on it, I cannot open. Oh if Christ pity me not, if he break not open this stony heart, so fast closed against him, I shall shut him out, and be shut out from him for ever. If they be but thus far effectual, they are not in vain. They tend to lay men low, and shew the freeness of grace, and discover the necessity of it. The promoting of these ends justify such means, such exhortations which tend hereto.

Ans. 4. Sinners may do more than they use to do, than they are willing to do, and therefore there is reason to call upon them. They cannot open; though they can do nothing spiritually that tends thereto, yet in a natural and moral way they may do much more than we see done by any of them. Spiritual good is above the power of nature, without Christ no such thing can be done; but that which is morally good they may do, and that which looks towards opening, though it do not reach it.

They cannot subdue the corruption of nature, nor of themselves crucify the flesh, &c.; but they can avoid the outward acts of gross sins. Mere moral men, we see, can do it, without the power of higher principles.

They cannot free themselves from the miseries into which sin has plunged them; but they can assent to a plain word discovering their misery, and consider and think of it as they do of other things which are of consequence.

They cannot enlighten their own darkened minds, nor mollify their hardened hearts; but they can place themselves in the way where the light shines, and where mollifying influences are wont to fall, and where the Sun of righteousness has appointed to rise.

They cannot meditate, nor read, nor pray, nor hear spiritually; but they can attend the ordinances, as they do any other ordinary business which concerns them.

They cannot convey a healing virtue into the waters of the sanctuary, nor put themselves in when the waters are troubled, no more than the impotent man that lay at the pool of Bethesda could do it; but they can wait at the pool, and there they are in the way where Jesus may meet them and cure their impotency, how long soever they have laboured under it.

They cannot command a gale of wind; but they can put the vessel into the channel, and spread their sails, that they may be ready to take the advantage of a spiritual gale, whenever it shall please the Spirit of Christ to blow.

It seems very hard, and they would make advantage of it, who over-magnify the power of nature to the prejudice of the grace of Christ, that the Lord should condemn men for not doing that which they have no power to do. But I take it for an undoubted truth, that amongst those who are in a capacity to use the means, he never condemns any who really do what they can to be saved; none perish who do their utmost to avoid condemnation. Amongst the most zealous asserters of free grace, I find none that question it. None who shall be found at Christ's left hand at the last day, will be able to say truly, Lord, I used all the power that I had to avoid the misery, and prevent that dreadful sentence. It may seem harsh that any should perish for not opening to Christ when they were not able to open; but there are none perish who do all they can to open to him. Though for the wise and holy ends mentioned, he may require what sinners have disabled themselves to perform, yet he condemns no man but such as neglect what they are able to do.

Obj. But may not the difficulty propounded about Christ's calling on those to open who have no power to open be better satisfied by granting that the Lord vouchsafes sufficient grace to all men, as the patrons of free will do?

Ans. To grant that the Lord vouchsafes sufficient grace for the salvation of all and every man, is both against Scripture and the experience of the world in all ages. For divers parts of the world do not now, nor never did, enjoy the gospel; and what grace can there be sufficient for salvation without the gospel? But we grant that Christ does vouchsafe such sufficient grace, even to many of those who never open to him, as is both sufficient to remove the difficulty, and to shew that we are unjustly charged for too much straitening and contracting the grace of God. For,

(1.) We grant that the Lord vouchsafes all more grace, i. e. more common assistance, than ever they make use of. He enables them to do much more towards opening to Christ, and in order to their salvation, than they are wont to use, or willing to improve; and thereby he is justified in condemning those who open not to Christ, because they are able to do more towards it than they will do; and thereby his calling on them to open is justified, because they can do more in order to it than they are willing to do. If a man cannot pay all his debt, yet if he can do something towards it, it is just and reasonable to call upon him for it.

(2.) We grant that the Lord vouchsafes to those who enjoy the gospel, and to many of those who never open to Christ, all that sufficient grace which the patrons of free will contend for, and more than that to many. For all the grace which they are for, is only that which they call suasive; i. e. the proposal of such things in the gospel as have the force of arguments and motives, and are apt to persuade those who hear them. For this we acknowledge, and also some illumination of the understanding, convictions of sin and misery, some common motions of the Spirit exciting the will to yield to Christ for freedom from this misery. This is all, if not more, than their suasive grace amounts to; and all this we grant is vouchsafed to many that never open. But we say more is needful, and is vouchsafed to all that open indeed. So that we do not straiten the grace of God, we are not for less of it than they; but we are for all theirs, and more too.

(3.) We grant that the Lord vouchsafes, even to many who perish, grace sufficient to make their salvation probable, and their condition hopeful. And this is all the grace that they pretend to, such as makes the salvation of the best only probable and hopeful; they are for no grace, at least ordinarily, that makes the salvation of any certain. For when grace is offered to the soul, they say such is the nature of the will, that it may either accept or refuse it, and so it is uncertain whether it may yield or not till the event shew it; for the will (by their principles) has still power to resist when the grace of God has done what it can. And if it yield to the power of grace to-day, yet it may resist it to-morrow; if it should receive it this hour, yet it may expel it or fall from it the next hour. And the Lord, as they hold, never vouchsafes so much grace, in an ordinary way, as will make the perseverance of any certain, and so never enough to make the salvation of any certain. But we hold that the Lord disposes his grace so as to mike both conversion and perseverance certain; and so as to make salvation not only probable or hopeful, but also certain to his chosen, and probable to others. So that still we are not injurious to the grace of God by straitening it, but are for as much and more of it than they. And therefore, if the grace which they are for be sufficient to justify the urging of those exhortations, then will that which we are for as much, or more, justify, and make them appear as evidently reasonable, if not more.

Use. 1. Reproof. Here is a just reproof for those who open not to Christ, and those that open deceitfully.

1. Those that open not, that keep their hearts shut against him. Oh that Christ should come, and stand, and knock, and call at the hearts of sinners; that he should condescend to come, and be so patient as to stand, and be so gracious as to knock, and be so importunate as to call; use all language, all importunity; that he should command, threaten, promise, beseech, exhort, complain: and yet be disobeyed, slighted, disregarded, denied, rejected! Oh that sinners should thus sin against Christ, thus sin against their own souls; that their hearts should be thus fast shut against Christ, when they are set wide open for sin and for the world; that the happiness of enjoying Christ, the comforts of communion with him, should be thus set at nought; that Christ's presence, which he here offers, should be refused, when all enjoyments without him tend but to make you more miserable; that fellowship with Christ, which he here promises, should be rejected, when all things else, without this, tend but to bring on that woful fellowship which disobedient, gainsaying sinners shall have with the devil and his angels! But who are those that open not to Christ? Far be it from me to do this wickedness, will most be ready to say. Something I must answer to this, that the reproof may come home, that I may not speak to the air. I will shew you who they are who open not.

(1.) Those who are not at home when Christ knocks; whose minds and hearts are abroad; their thoughts, affections, inclinations employed about the world and outward affairs; who enter not into their own hearts, to consider seriously, frequently, effectually, what the condition of their souls is, and to provide accordingly for their eternal state; who have no mind, no heart to such thoughts, to such employments as most concern their souls, can put these off till hereafter, or think of them so slightly, as though they were of less concernment than worldly things. A sad thought it is, that men who believe they have souls, and believe that they shall be happy or miserable to eternity, according as they are provided for in this little time, should spend nothing, or so very little of this time in thinking of, in providing for eternity; should let the world, and things of less moment, carry them so far, so much from that which most nearly concerns them; should be such strangers to

their soul's condition, and so little acquainted with their own hearts, and so little employed about that which is within them, that their estate, their livelihood, their bodies, what they shall eat, &c., should be more minded than their souls. Sure these men are not come to themselves, they are a great way from home, and so not like to open.

(2.) When Christ's voice is not heard. These you see are joined in the text: 'If any hear my voice.' He that will not hear will not open. Ay, but do we not hear? Truly there are too many that will not do thus much, as give outward attendance to the voice of Christ in the ministry of the word. The practice of such proclaims to the world that they shut out Christ with a high hand. But further, for those who are not so impudently wicked, you must know this, the hearing with the ear only is no evidence that you open. Hearing is no hearing in Christ's account, except the hearing of the ear be joined with a compliance of the heart. Non esse, et inutiliter esse, pro paribus habentur. To hear, and hear unprofitably, to hear and not obey, is no hearing in the sense of the text. You may hear so long enough before you open. If you hear Christ reproving, and be not convinced; hear him promising, and be not affected; hear him threaten, and tremble not; hear him command, and obey not; hear him exhort, and are not persuaded: you do not hear so as to open, you will never open till you hear otherwise. If you put off convictions, slight promises, evade threatenings, do what he forbids, neglect what he commands in the ministry of the word; if you continue the same men for all your hearing, do neither more nor less, no more of what is pressed as your duty, no less of what is forbidden as your sin, are no more affected, reformed, no more careful of your souls, no more conscientious in keeping your hearts, ordering your ways, serving the Lord in your families, minding him in your affairs; if thy hearing be to no more effect than this, thou art the man that shuts out Christ. The word of Christ is his messenger; he sends it to prepare the way of the Lord, to make his paths straight, as it is said of John Baptist, Matthew 3:1, that he may come into his temple, that he may enter into the heart of a sinner, and make it his temple. Now, if the word prevail not, if Christ's messenger be shut out, he expects no better entertainment; when his voice is not heard, himself is shut out.

(3.) Those who think it an easy matter to open to Christ; either imagine they have already opened, though they never perceived it, though it be not discernible either in their hearts or lives, or else put it off till hereafter, to do it at their leisure, as though it were in their power to open when they list. How ordinary is it for men to think that it is easy to repent and believe! The two great hinges upon which the door moves when it opens to Christ, they make no great matter of them. As for faith, they think they did believe ever since they can remember, ever since they had any knowledge of Christ. For repentance. They defer it till old age or sickness. Do they not make it an easy matter to repent, who think they may do it when they please; or think it enough to be a little sorry for sinning, and ask pardon for it?

Alas! those men are far from opening, who do not so much as know what it is to open. They are not acquainted with the desperate wickedness of their own hearts; they take no notice of the stone that is in their hearts, and how they are by nature obstinately hardened against the admission of Christ. They never were convinced of the necessity of Christ, and of an almighty power to make way for his entertainment. They never had experience of the mighty workings of Christ in their hearts, which they are well acquainted with who have opened to him. They hereby declare they never yet did so much as try to open, so far are they from having opened.

(4.) Those who are under the command and the dominion of sin. Where sin reigns, Christ is excluded. While sin commands, Christ will have no admission. Those that are under the power of sin are under the power of Satan, for he ‘rules in the children of disobedience,’ Ephesians 2:1-22. There the strong man armed keeps the house, and that is evidence enough a stronger than he is not yet come. Where sin and Satan have possession, so as to reign, they block up the door against Christ. Till the covenant with death and hell be dissolved, there can be no consent to entertain Christ. But those that are under the dominion of sin are in league with hell and death, there is a strong conspiracy against Christ to keep him out. But where, in whom, does sin reign? Why, where it is not mortified, subdued. Where it is obeyed in the lusts thereof. When it says, Go, and the sinner goes; Come, and he comes; Do this, and he doth it. He is under the dominion of sin, who lives in the practice of sin, drunkenness, uncleanness, worldliness, profaning of the Sabbath, neglect of the word and ordinances, public or private. The Scripture is clear in this. ‘He that commits sin is the servant of sin. He that is born of God sinneth not,’ 1 John 3:1-24. Not that sin is not in him, or that he never is guilty of an act of sin; but it is not his delight, it is not his custom, he follows it not with full consent, he makes not a trade of it. He that thus sins, the seed of God abides not in him; and where this is not, Christ is not. Those that live in known sins do but deceive themselves, when they think they have any part in Christ, and it is a wonder those that pretend to any knowledge of the word of God should think so, Ephesians 5:6, 1 Corinthians 6:9. You may as well reconcile light and darkness, or bring heaven and hell together, as entertain Christ while you live in sin.

He that allows himself in the neglect of any known duty, public, private, secret, or in the practice of any known sin, gross or refined, open or secret, small or great, Christ is not in him, Christ is shut out by him. For he that thus lives in sin, is the servant of sin; and he that is the servant of sin, will think he owes not Christ so much service as to open to him. If it be thus with you, you are yet in the gall of bitterness, you are yet in your sins, Christ is not in you, you never opened to him.

(5.) Those that have not felt the effects of Christ’s presence have not experience of communion with him. Whoever opens, Christ will enter, and sup with him. He knows what it is to enjoy Christ, has tasted the sweetness of fellowship with him. Now, what are the effects of Christ’s presence? Why, principally light and holiness. Christ is the light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, the bright Morning Star. When he arises, darkness is scattered, ignorance vanishes, the works of darkness find no place.

Holiness. Christ is called the holy of holies, Daniel 9:1-27. When he comes, holiness comes with him. The heart is sanctified, purity is no more slighted and derided, there appears a singular beauty in holiness. You may as well imagine Christ in hell, as in a heart destitute of purity and holiness. You may as well imagine a day without light, as holiness of heart without holiness of life. By this you may know whether you have opened. Then for communion with Christ, those that open to Christ taste the sweetness of it, an exceeding sweetness, which renders the ways of holiness wherein it is enjoyed exceeding delightful; so that the pleasures of sin and the world, those that have formerly been most delightful, are now rank and unsavoury to him that has opened to Christ. By this you may know whether you have opened. And since it is thus, since all these, &c. do shut out Christ, how many are there who fall under this reproof! As strait is the way and narrow the gate that leads to heaven, so strait is the way, &c., that lets Christ in to us on earth, and few there are that find it; and it is to be lamented, that so many who enjoy the gospel, hear his voice, should shut

themselves out of heaven by shutting out Christ.

2. It reproves those that open deceitfully. Many such there are.

(1.) Those who will let Christ in at the window, but not in at the door; into their understandings, but not into their hearts: such are those of whom we read, Hebrews 6:1-20, who were once enlightened, admit the light, take some pains for knowledge, yea, and rejoice in the light; but when this light should come to be effectual upon their wills, consciences, affections, conversation, to purify their hearts, expel their lusts, quash the motions of sin, reform their conversations in their families and in the world, as becomes children of the light, here they stop; Christ must not enter here, thus they shut him out of their hearts. Light without influence, notion without efficacy.

(2.) Those who will let him in at the outer door, but not into the closet, will admit so much of Christ, as to bring them to a fair plausible compliance in the profession and outward exercises of religion. They will hear, and pray, and read, and discourse too of religious matters. This is easily done, and they get some credit by it; and it stands not in the way of their humours, lusts, worldly interests; but for the power of godliness, the exercise of holiness, close and strict walking with Christ, in secret as well as openly, this they relish not. They will be Jews, such as the apostle speaks of Romans 2:28, ■ν τ■ φανερ■, make a show of admitting Christ in their profession, discourses, and outward performance, but not εν τ■ κρυπτ■, but not let him into their thoughts to lodge there, their wills to rule, their affections to be embraced there without a rival. They will make a fair show in the flesh; but for serving Christ in the Spirit, rejoicing, submitting the whole rule of their souls unto him, here they shut him out.

(3.) Those who let him but in half-way, stand and parley with Christ; will accept of some of those terms he propounds; cannot digest all; will renounce some of their own righteousness, but not count all loss and dung; will part with some sins, those that are gross and disgraceful, those they can gain nothing by, or take little pleasure in, those that are open and out of credit. Ay! but there is some Delilah, some gainful or delightful lust, they cannot live without it; they say of this, as Lot of Zoar, ‘Is it not a little one?’ ‘Oh let my soul live in it;’ ‘the Lord be merciful to me in this,’ I cannot part with it; if Christ will but dispense with this, he shall be welcome. Ay! but Christ will not have a hoof left behind if he enter.

They will comply with some duties of religion, both in secret, and in their families, and in public. Herod did many things, and heard John gladly; Agrippa was almost persuaded; the foolish virgins had lamps as well as the wise. They did not a little who profess so much, Matthew 7:22. They will go far in many duties, and so as they cannot be discerned from those that indeed open to him, in respect of external acts. Oh but for such constancy and fervency in secret prayer, such frequency in secret meditation, heart-examination, and self-judging; for such strictness, and watchfulness, and precise circumspection about their hearts and ways; for the exercises of self-denial, repentance, and mortification: these are hard morsels, they cannot down with them. If Christ will compound with them, and abate something of his demands, they will agree to admit him; they will yield far, they will open half-way. Ay, but Christ will not enter upon such terms, either all or none. He will not creep into your hearts, the gate must be lifted up, else the King of glory will not enter.

You see who are to be reproved. Oh that those who are guilty in any of these respects, would not deceive themselves as though they had opened already, but go about to open!

Use. 2. Exhortation. Since those that will have Christ to enter, must open to him, oh be persuaded to open unto Christ. Let it not be in vain that Christ comes, and stands, and knocks, and calls, and uses all importunity to gain admission. If you shut out Christ, to whom will you open? Will you shut out him who is your life, your happiness, in whom is all our hopes, &c.? Can anything save them who shut out a Saviour? Can they find mercy, who will not open when mercy is offered? Can they expect to live, who will not admit life? Will you prefer sin before Christ, the worst thing in earth or hell, before the King of glory? Shall that dwell in you, rule over you, take up mind and heart, while Christ stands and knocks, and is excluded? Does sin love you? was it crucified for you? or will it save you in the conclusion? Nay, will it not certainly damn you, if it be not cast out, forsaken, crucified? And shall a damning evil find easier entertainment than a Saviour? Is there any love like his love? And can you shew any greater hatred and despite of him, than to keep him out, while his and your deadly enemy is let in, and kept in to keep him out? Is there any patience like to Christ's, who comes so often, stands so long, knocks so loud, calls so importunately? And can there be any provocation like yours, who turn the deaf ear, who will not mind, will not regard; who tell him you have let him in already, he is admitted far enough, when it is plain he is quite shut out? Sin will not be tolerated where Christ is admitted. You affront Christ, and mock him, when you say your hearts are open to him, while your lives testify there is something else rules in you; while swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, neglect of the word, ordinances, families, souls, these cry aloud, God is not here. All his knocking, calling, has not yet prevailed. Is this nothing to you, all ye that pass by? See if there be any love like Christ's love, any condescensions like Christ's, any patience, any importunity; and see if there be any hatred, contempt, neglect, unkindness, like yours. Shall Christ come to his own, and his own not receive him? Would you have him still a man of sorrows and sufferings? Shall he have still occasion to complain, 'Who has believed our report?' Who has hearkened when I have called? Who has regarded when I have stretched out my hands? Who has yielded when I have entreated? Who has opened when I have knocked? Shall it be thus still with Christ? Shall he not have a place whereon to lay his head? Ay! so it may be for you, who will give him no place in your hearts. Where shall Christ have entertainment in the world, if not amongst us? Where shall he be admitted, if shut out where he stands and knocks? He expects no entertainment from the heathens; he knocks not, he calls not there. He expects none as yet from the Jews; they rejected his first offer, and he took them at their word, and never sought to them since. He expects none from Turks and apostate Christians, they have entertained others. Where shall Christ be entertained, if not amongst us? While you shut him out, you do what you can that Christ on earth may have no place to lay his head. Expect you to be entertained by Christ, while you refuse to give him entertainment? Will he open to those who shut him out? Be not deceived, Christ will not be mocked. Open to him now, if ever you expect to see him hereafter. Shut him not out, who has done, who has suffered so much for sinners. Be not thus unkind to Christ, be not thus cruel to your souls. Open to him as King, Prophet, Priest.

Motives. 1. Consider what danger there is in not opening; what equity there is you should open; what advantage you may get by opening.

1. For the danger. Take it in these severals.

(1.) Till you open to Christ, you are shut up in darkness. The state of nature, the condition of a sinner without Christ, is expressed by darkness, Acts 26:18. Till a sinner be turned, converted, i. e. till his heart be opened to Christ, he is in darkness. So Colossians 1:13; they are 'under the power

of darkness, who are not translated,' &c.; and they are not in his kingdom, in whose hearts he rules not as king, and he rules not in them who shut him out.

Now a state of a darkness is a state of misery, a dismal, sad, woful condition. It is frequent in Scripture to express the greatest miseries on earth by darkness. It joins darkness with the valley of the shadow of death. So sad is this condition, as it is even a shadow of death, of that which is most dreadful to men. And well may all miseries on earth be expressed by darkness, since the state of darkness, the condition of a sinner without Christ, is next to hell. There is but this difference: that is outer darkness; this is inner darkness: a hell in the heart, a little hell on earth. No better is your condition, till ye open to Christ, you are even on the confines of hell. It is true sinners are not sensible of this misery, but even this makes them more miserable. Would you not think it a sad condition to be shut up in a dungeon all your days? Such is your condition while ye open not to Christ; and more miserable, by how much spiritual darkness is more dismal than outward. The misery of it is herein evident, that those that are in it know it not, see not where they are, nor will not believe they are in Satan's dungeon.

(2.) Till you open to Christ, your hearts are possessed by Satan. They are cages, not of unclean birds only, but of unclean, of damned spirits. You are in darkness, till the Sun of righteousness arise in your hearts. Now the devils they are called the 'rulers of the darkness of this world,' Ephesians 6:12; not only of that darkness of the other world, but of this. Satan has two dungeons, hell, and the heart that shuts out Christ; he rules, he tyrannizes in both. You are under the power, in the possession of Satan, Ephesians 2:2. You see how they are; Satan has his throne in that heart that opens not; and this will be your state if you do not open. I told you this soul-possession is worse than bodily.

(3.) Till you open to Christ, the wrath of God is shut in. Children of disobedience are children of wrath, Ephesians 2:2-3. Wrath is their portion, all that they enjoy, all that they can look to inherit, while they continue so. And who are children of disobedience, but those that open not to Christ? I beseech you, consider that expression which I have often occasion to mention, John 3:36. It is not anger, displeasure, but wrath; it is not the wrath of a man, or of a multitude, or of a king, but of God; it is not a transient, fading passion, which, though it be high and violent, may soon be over, but it is abiding wrath. And it abides not at a distance, or near unto him only, but upon him; he that believes not, i.e. opens not. To shut your hearts against Christ, is as if a man should shut his doors, that nothing should come in or out, when his house is on fire; this is the way to have it consumed without remedy. The wrath of God is kindling in every disobedient heart; it is often compared to fire, and it abides there. When you shut out Christ, you shut out him who only can quench it. What remains, then, but if you so continue, it will burn to the bottom of hell?

(4.) If you open not to Christ now, he will shut you out hereafter. Time is approaching when, as Christ comes to you, so you will be glad to come to him. He knocks now, you will be glad to knock hereafter. Those who will not now open, shall fare then as the foolish virgins. Oh consider it, when all your outward comforts and supports have left you, when you must expect the sentence of life or death from Christ's mouth, will it not be sad to hear nothing from him but these dreadful words, 'Depart from me, I never knew you'? I called, and you would not hear; do ye expect I should hear you, who stopped your ears against me? I knocked, and ye would not open, and do ye expect that I should open to you, whom you shut out of doors? I stood, and ye took no notice of me, and shall I

now own you? No; ‘Depart from me, I know ye not.’ See now whether it be better to entertain sin or Christ. You would not believe it before, now you may feel it. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; you used me strangely, and shut me out; what follows? ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.’ This will be the doom of all that had rather live in sin than open to Christ. Oh, as you would avoid that sad departure, that everlasting fire, that woful fellowship with the devil, &c., be persuaded now to open.

Means. What means shall we make use of that we may open to Christ?

1. Be convinced that you have not yet opened to him; for those that shut out Christ, the first step to the door is to be satisfied in his judgment that he has not opened. He that dreams the door is open whiles it is shut, will be so far from making haste to open, as he will wonder at, if not deride, those that call upon him to do it. This is one of Satan’s devices to secure the heart against opening, to persuade a sinner he has opened already, though indeed Christ never was admitted. While you are fast in this snare, he has you sure enough. If you would escape, examine impartially by the rules before delivered. Are you not abroad? Do ye not disobey Christ’s voice? Think you it not an easy matter to open? Are you not under the command of sin? Can you shew the effects of Christ’s presence? Search impartially, and judge of your estates, as you expect to be judged. To deceive yourselves herein may be your ruin for ever. Follow the apostle’s rule. To know you have not opened, when it is so indeed, is the first step to open.

2. Consider your misery while Christ is without. Let not the world and these outward things take up all your minds. Shew so much respect to Christ, so much respect to your souls, as to spare some serious thoughts for them. Think seriously what it is to be in darkness, in the possession of Satan, under the wrath of God, in danger to be shut out from Christ for ever. While you think yourselves safe and happy enough in your present condition, you are in danger never to open, being not sensible of your danger in not opening.

3. Be apprehensive of your inability, of your unwillingness, to open; of the desperate wickedness of your hearts, and their obstinateness, averseness to Christ. Bewail this frequently, seriously, heartily, as your greatest misery. Let this affect you, that though you be miserable, yet are you utterly unable to free yourselves from this misery. When a sinner is lost in his own apprehension, this is Christ’s opportunity to be found of him. He is not valued, he is not esteemed, till the sinner see himself lost without him. He comes to seek and to save that which is lost.

4. In sense of your own inability, go to Christ for strength to open. As he comes to thee, so go thou to him; as he calls to thee, so cry thou to him; and when he knocks, importune him to open. Say, Lord, thou hast the key of David, thou shuttest, and no man opens; thou openest, and no man shuts; Lord, open this heart that has been too long closed against thee; break down these strongholds that keep thee from me; cast out sin, cast out the world, that have so long kept thee out of possession; bind the strong man armed, and cast him out. Other lords have had dominion over the, they have made me miserable by keeping my Lord, my happiness, from me. Oh cast out these intruders, take possession of me, and let me be mine for ever! Thou callest for my heart; Lord, it is thine. Though I have dealt treacherously with thee, and given it to other things, it is thine. It cost thee dear; Lord, enter, take possession of it. Thou knockest at this wretched heart, oh why dost thou stay so long without? Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, and bless this wretched heart with thy presence. Oh it would be still resisting thee! but break it open with an almighty power, and

suffer it no longer to shut thee out. Follow the Lord with such cries.

5. Wait upon the Lord in the use of those means which he makes use of to open the hearts of sinners: reading the word, conferring with others whose hearts the Lord has opened, especially hearing, this is the Lord's ordinary way, and that which he is wont to make effectual for the opening of the hearts of sinners. This is the way to open, this is the way for Christ to enter: 'If any man hear my voice, I will come in,' &c.

Pass we from the conditions to the things promised, which offer themselves in two branches: 1, 'I will come in to him.'

Obs. If any will open to Christ, he will come in to him. Those that open to Christ, shall have his presence. When the everlasting gates are left open, the King of glory will come in. Christ will vouchsafe his presence to those that will admit him. To explain this;—

Quest. Some may ask, Is not Christ in every place? Is not this one of his perfections as he is God? If in every place, he is in my heart already. How can he be said to come thither, where he is already? Coming implies he was not there before he comes, it denotes absence; but how can he be absent who is everywhere present?

Ans. There is a twofold presence of Christ: a general presence, as he is governor of the world; and a special presence, as he is a Saviour. As to the former, since he is God, he is in every place in respect of his essence, his power, his wisdom, and other perfections, with the effects thereof. This presence the psalmist gives an account of, Psalms 139:7, &c.; hence he is said to know all things; and to uphold all things, Hebrews 1:3. This is his presence as he is governor of the world, and so he is present with every creature. And in this respect he is not only with the wicked, but with the damned, as he upholds them, continues them in being, orders and proportions their sufferings to his glory. In this sense he does not here promise to come; for he is there, even in the souls of obstinate sinners already. In this respect he can never be shut out, he can never be excluded. But,

2. There is a special presence, a presence of peculiar love and special favour: when he comes as a saviour, as a redeemer; when he is present as a king, as a prophet, as a priest, to this or that particular soul; when he comes in as a friend, a brother, a father, a husband, and shews himself in a way suitable to these sweet relations. So he promises to come in the text, to vouchsafe a special presence; which I call special in respect,

(1.) Of special manifestations. When he will manifest a peculiar love, a redeeming love, the love of a dying, a crucified saviour; such a love as none taste of but his glorified favourites in heaven, and his excellent ones on earth.

(2.) Of special communications. When he communicates himself as a head to its members, as a prince to his favourites, as a husband to his spouse. When he bestows the precious fruits of his unspeakable love, the invaluable purchase of his precious blood, in light, holiness, comforts, the first fruits of glory, and such as none partake of but those that must enter into the harvest, for whom is reserved the inheritance.

(3.) Of special operations. When he walks, and works, and acts in them, as in those only whom he prepares for eternal rest, those only whom he intends to crown, and for whom he reserves an eternal weight of glory. This is the presence Christ here promiseth. Thus will he come to those that

open. And till sinners open, though they have his general presence, yet they shall never enter into the secret of his peculiar presence. He may be with them as governor of the world here, and as judge of quick and dead hereafter, but not as a Saviour. It is another kind of presence which Christ here promises than ever those had experience of who live in sin, and give up themselves to the world. And that ye may apprehend it more distinctly, and take a clearer view of what Christ offers, when he says he will come in, observe these particulars. He will come in,

(1.) To join himself to the soul; to enter into covenant and league with it, to contract the opening sinner to himself in an everlasting covenant; to unite himself to it, that it may be one with him, that it may be a member of him, 2 Corinthians 11:2. 'The head of every man is Christ.' He comes that he may espouse it to himself, to shew it is as near, as dear to him, as the spouse to her husband. Wherein consists the union betwixt man and wife (which the Scripture so frequently uses to illustrate the union betwixt Christ and a believing soul)? It is expressed, Genesis 2:24, 'They shall be no more twain,' &c. Such an intimacy does Christ intend, when he comes in, &c. Only it is spiritual: 1 Corinthians 6:16, 'He that is joined to Christ is one spirit.' He comes to give his own Spirit to it. And this gives some light to that expression, whereby is held forth an intimacy almost incredible betwixt Christ and such souls, John 17:21-22. It is Christ's prayer for all believers; and he prays not only that they may be one amongst themselves, but one with him, as it follows, John 17:23, and so one with him, as the Father is one with him. But this must be cautiously understood. Not that they may be of the same essence as the Father and Son are, nor that they may be assumed into a personal union with himself or the Father, as the human nature of Christ is assumed into a personal union with the Godhead; but that they may be of the same Spirit, that the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Christ may be in them. Hereby they may become one with Christ, as he is one with the Father. For consider him in his human nature, and how is he one with the Father? Why, besides the union of his own nature in the person of the Son, we can conceive no other union betwixt the Father and Christ incarnate but that which consists in the indwelling of the Spirit in the human nature of Christ. Now this is it he prays for, that they may be one with him by the dwelling of the same Spirit in me and them, whereby I am one with the Father. The return of this prayer Christ brings when he comes into an opening soul, he makes it one with him as he is one with the Father, viz., by making them of one spirit. He joins himself thereto; and he that is joined to Christ is one spirit.

(2.) To express his kindness to it. We use to come to our friends for this end. But no such kindness can be expressed by the sons of men as Christ exercises to an opening soul. Before, while shut up against Christ, the soul was under the wrath of God, under the stroke of justice, under the curses, threatenings, and terrors of the law, without comfort, without God, without hope in the world. But when Christ comes it is a time of love; he expresses this love by coming, even that loving-kindness which is better than life. He tells the soul, justice is satisfied, the law fulfilled, the threatening executed, the curse removed, the Lord reconciled; and that he has effected all this out of love to it. He has satisfied justice, he has borne the wrath of God, the curse was executed upon him, he has slain enmity upon the cross, his blood has quenched the flame, his death has procured life, he has blotted out the handwriting; there is now no curse, no wrath, no condemnation. Oh, how beautiful are the feet of Christ bringing these glad tidings of good things! He was anointed for this end, and to this end he comes. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,' Isaiah 61:1.

(3.) To shine in the soul. Then may it be said to the soul as to the church, Isaiah 60:1-2. While Christ is shut out, the heart is a dungeon, a place of darkness, a sad, a dismal place, a shadow of death; but when Christ comes, it becomes like the firmament, when the sun shines in its glory, Malachi 4:2. Some clouds and mists there will be, but when the sun is once risen, this light will shine more and more unto perfect day. Before, the god of this world did blind its eyes; but now 'the light of the glorious gospel,' &c., he comes to 'give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ;' the veil is taken away, and now he may, as in a glass, with open face behold the glory of God, &c.

He was 'sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord.' Oh what an alteration is here! Even as in one that is born blind, on a sudden restored to sight; or as one shut up in a dungeon all his days, brought out to see the sun. Oh how are his apprehensions changed! He sees that in sin that he never saw before, that in himself which he would not believe, that in the world which he would never have been persuaded of, that in holiness which he never imagined. Oh how does he look upon Christ, his sufferings, his love, his intercession, his righteousness! He wonders that he should have heard so many times of these, and yet never see no such thing in them as he now apprehends. The light is come, the day-star is risen, the sun is up, Christ shines in his dark heart, he comes to this end.

(4.) To adorn it. Nothing so loathsome, nothing so deformed, as the soul of a sinner without Christ. Corruptio optimi est pessima. The best thing corrupted becomes worst of all; the most beautiful bodies, when putrefied and rotted, are most loathsome. The soul of man, when created, was the most excellent piece of the creation in this world; but corrupted by sin is the most noisome, the most loathsome. The Lord cannot behold it without loathing and detestation. Hence is this corruption by sin expressed by things most offensive: the poison of asps, the stench of an open sepulchre, the vomit of a dog, the mire wherein the sow wallows, the deformity of a leper, the putrefied matter of an ulcer, the corruption of a festered wound. Put all these together, and the soul of sinners is a more loathsome spectacle in God's eye, than such a compound, a filthy medley, would be in ours. Now, is this a place fit to receive Christ? No; but he will make it so; he comes to this end, to cleanse the soul, to purge out its filthiness, to take away its deformity, to clothe it with beauty and glory, that he may delight in it, Ephesians 5:25-27. He does it effectually, makes the soul a fit object of love, so as he can call it his love, his undefiled; so as he can express love to it in such a wonderful strain, 'My sister, my spouse,' Song of Solomon 4:1, Song of Solomon 4:7, Song of Solomon 4:9-10, Song of Solomon 6:4, Song of Solomon 6:10, Song of Solomon 7:6; so as he can rejoice in it, according to the tenor of that high expression, Zephaniah 3:17.

(5.) To enrich the soul. Christ comes not empty-handed, he brings those treasures with him that will make thee rich for ever. But what is this? thou wilt say; is it gold, or silver, or pearls, or worldly possessions? Alas! these are trash compared with it, not worthy the account, the name, of riches. It is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. Hear Christ himself asserting this, Proverbs 8:17-19, and Proverbs 3:13-14, Proverbs 3:16. But what are these riches? What is the sum, the value of them? Do you ask this? Oh, it is far above me to tell you; nay, the great apostle, who was rapt up into the third heaven, cannot herein satisfy; nay, the angels themselves are not sufficient to express. For why, they are unsearchable riches, they are infinite, there is no end of them. Dig in these mines to eternity, you will never make a full discovery;

they are unsearchable. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, &c. The eye of man has seen much, the ear has heard more than his eye has seen, his heart can conceive more than either his eye has seen or ear heard; but eye, and ear, and heart, let them see, and hear, and conceive as much as is possible, can never reach a full discovery. But though I cannot give you a full account of these riches, yet I may point at them. There are riches of righteousness, of joy, of grace, of glory. I will but add one word more, but there is more in that one word than all the men on earth, or angels in heaven, can fathom. What is that? Why, it is himself. When he comes to thee, he comes to give thee himself, no less than himself. And this is more than all the earth, more than all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them; nay, more than heaven and earth put together. Oh happy soul, if Christ be come into thee! Thou art far from want, thou needest never complain; thou needest never envy the greatest, the richest, under heaven; he is thine, who is more than heaven and earth. Go thy way and break forth into praises; say, I have enough, I have all, he is mine who is more than all; my lines are fallen in a pleasant place, I have a goodly heritage; a goodly heritage indeed, for Christ is my portion. Ahasuerus his hundred seven and twenty provinces are but a small pittance, an inconsiderable nothing, compared with my possessions. Christ is come, and has given me possession of himself. ‘Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee.’ Thus bountifully he deals with every soul that opens to him.

(6.) To reign in it. That heart shall be his throne. It was before one or Satan’s dungeons, a cage for unclean lusts; but Christ comes to make it his throne. There was much riches in the former, here is as much honour in this. ‘Whence is this to me,’ says Elizabeth, Luke 1:43, ‘that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?’ With how much more admiration may that soul say, What honour is this, that the Lord himself should come to me; that he should choose this unworthy soul to be his throne, this polluted heart to be his temple! Yet thus it is; Christ comes for this end, to erect his throne there, to expel those tyrants that have so long oppressed the soul with cruel bondage, worse than that of Egypt; he comes to make thy lusts (his and thine enemies) his footstool; to whip out those buyers and sellers, that the soul may be his temple; to make thy heart his chamber of presence, to walk there, to act there, to abide there. That is the seventh.

(7.) To abide there. He comes to stay, to make his abode; not as a stranger, but as one that would dwell with thee, John 14:23. He will not be as a stranger, or as a wayfaring-man that turns but in for a night, but he will abide with thee for ever: John 14:16, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ If thou be unkind, unfaithful, froward, disrespectful of him, this will cloud the glory of his presence, eclipse the comforts of it, he will hide himself, seem to withdraw, but he will never utterly forsake thee, Psalms 89:30-31, &c., Isaiah 54:7-9. When he comes to the heart, he says, This is my resting-place, and here will I dwell. Here is a covenant of peace.

Use. I. For information. The light of this observation discovers the misery of those that open not to Christ; those that are so much engaged in sin, so much entangled in the world, as Christ hath no admission. If you open not to Christ, he is not yet come in; and if he be not come in, you are without happiness, without hopes of it, extremely miserable. For

1. You are not joined to Christ; and if not joined to him, you are in conjunction with sin and Satan. You are not members of Christ; and he that is not a member of Christ, is a limb of Satan. You are not one spirit with Christ; and he that is not one spirit with Christ, what spirit is he possessed with, but that evil, that unclean spirit, which fills every heart that is not taken up with Christ? You are not

in covenant with Christ; and he that is not so, has made a covennat with death and hell, he is in league with Satan. Indeed, every heart that shuts out Christ says to Satan, as Jehoshaphat to Ahab, 1 Kings 22:4, 'I am as thou art, my people as thy people,' &c. They have the same projects, carry on the same design, act the same things. 'Ye are of your father,' John 8:41, John 8:44. Whatever thou workest, it is the devil's work; and all thou doest is but a promoting of his expeditions. What greater misery than this!

Besides, till thou open to Christ, he shines not into thee. Till then, the blackness of darkness covers thee. Whatever saving light shines without, thou seest it not till Christ come and shine within. What says the apostle? 2 Corinthians 4:3. Now the gospel is hid to thee, if the light thereof lead thee not to open to Christ. While it is hid, thou art lost; and it cannot but be hid if Christ be not come in. He adds the reason, 2 Corinthians 4:14. This is thy condition, the God of this world has blinded thy eyes. Oh, sad estate, to have thy eyes put out by Satan! How woful was Samson's condition when the Philistines put out his eyes, and made him grind in the prison-house, and bound him with fetters of brass, Judges 16:21. This will be thy condition, till Christ come in, and far more miserable. Satan has put out thy eyes, he has bound thee with fetters stronger than brass, and he makes thee grind in the prison-house. Thy own heart is thy prison, thy own lusts are thy fetters, and thy work is worse drudgery than grinding. And it is he that is thy task-master, thou goest when he commands; but thou art blind, alas, thou knowest not whither thou goest, thou seest not he drives thee on in the paths of death. When Israel heard what conditions Nahash offered to Jabesh-Gilead, they all lift up their voice and wept, 1 Samuel 11:4. Why, what were those lamentable conditions? see 1 Samuel 11:2. Oh, but much more reason hast thou to weep, much more reason have all that know thy condition to weep over thee. Satan has not put out thy right eye only, but both thine eyes; not those of thy body, but that which is far more woful, those of thy soul. He has quite blinded thee; he does not offer this, as Nahash, but he has already done it. Oh that every one that hears this to be his condition, would with Israel lift up his voice and weep! Or if thou seest no reason to bewail it, even this shews Satan has blinded thee, that thou canst not see reason to weep, to bewail so sad a condition. Thou thinkest thy estate good enough, with Laodicea; but even this shews, as Christ tells her, that thou art blind.

Further, till Christ come in, thou shalt never have experience of his loving-kindness, never taste that the Lord is gracious. Some things thou mayest receive from common bounty; but these, embittered with the curse, and mixed with the wrath of God; but the loving-kindness which is better than life, thou shalt never taste of. And if that be better than life, is not thy condition without it worse than death? Make as much as thou canst of thy husks, thou canst not taste of the bread of life.

Till then, thy soul is deformed, leprous, loathsome, in the eye of God. Nothing in it but wounds and bruises, and putrefied sores, full of corruption. He cannot look upon thee without loathing and detestation. The temper of thy heart, and all its actings, both its complexion and motions, are all an abomination in his sight, Proverbs 15:8-9, Proverbs 15:26.

Till then thou hast neither part nor lot in Christ's riches, not the least dram of those treasures belong to thee; nothing to do with his righteousness, no interest in his blood, no share in what he has purchased. Thou canst lay no claim to his person, he is not thy portion. And what then? The curse, the wrath of God, everlasting misery, is thy portion, thou canst expect no portion but with

hypocrites. Thou pretendest to Christ, but in thy life deniest him; or if thou seem to open outwardly, thy heart is shut against him. This is the character of hypocrites, and their portion is set out in the place where there is weeping, &c.

Till then thy heart is the place where Satan has his throne; he rules in the children of disobedience. What more dreadful than the condition of Babylon? Revelation 18:2, 'It is become the habitation of devils,' &c. This is the condition of thy soul; it is a habitation of devils, and a hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird; of that which is more unclean and hateful than the hatefullest birds, it is a cage of unclean and hateful lusts. So it is, and so it will be till Christ come; these unclean birds will never be chased away, but prey upon thy dead and putrefied soul; it will never be dispossessed of these foul spirits till Christ have possession; it will be the devil's habitation, till Christ come and make it his temple.

Oh that the Lord would open the eyes of every soul, who will not part with sin to let in Christ, to see his misery without Christ, that thou mayest never give rest to thy soul, till it be a resting-place for Christ!

Use. 2. For examination. By this ye may try, by this ye may know, whether ye have opened unto Christ. If ye have opened, Christ is come in: 'If any man open the door,' &c. But how shall we know whether Christ be come in? If you will be directed by the word, you need not want direction.

1. When Christ comes in, he comes as a friend. This is clear. Now, if you entertain him as a friend, you love him. But how shall this be known? Why, the Lord shews you this by the psalmist, Psalms 97:10. If you love Christ, you hate evil, you hate every evil way, every sin.

Now try by this. Do you hate everything you know to be sin? There is none of you but formerly have loved some sin or other, and lived in the practice of some evil or other. Now, do you hate that which you formerly loved? that which you have been accustomed to? that which you have delighted in? How shall we know we hate it? Why do you not act it? Do you avoid the occasions of it? Do you not nourish it? Do you not think of it but with sorrow and indignation? If you still act it, make provisions for it, run into the occasions of it, count it a matter of nothing, why, then, it is evident you hate it not; and if so, you love not Christ; and if so, you have not admitted him as a friend; and if so, he is not come into you.

I beseech you, deal impartially with your souls herein. It is the greatest madness in the world to deceive yourselves in a business of eternal concernment. Can you, dare you, appeal to God, as David? Search me, try me, if there be any wickedness in my heart, my life, that I act, that I tolerate, that I hate not; I am content this sentence shall be passed on me, I am not one that loves Christ, I am one that shuts him out. Whether you be content or no, the Lord in his word passes this sentence on thee, Christ is not yet come into thee.

2. When Christ comes in, he comes as a husband; if he be admitted as a husband, you give your consent. This makes the match, you consent to take Christ as he is, whole Christ; not only as he comes by blood to pardon you, but as he comes by water to purify you; not only for happiness, but for holiness; not only for justification, but sanctification. You may know if Christ be come in by the temper of your hearts in reference to holiness: where it is derided, slighted, neglected, Christ is far from being admitted; Christ himself suffers therein, for it is his image. When he comes, he plants it; it grows, flourishes, is fruitful more or less; there is a high esteem of it, a dear love to it, strong

desires after it, constant endeavours to obtain, increase, promote it in himself and others; sorrow for the weakness, decays, unactiveness of it. Be not deceived; if you be strangers to holiness, to the being, increase, life, exercise of it, you are strangers to Christ. If enemies to holiness, to deride, scorn it, under the names of purity, preciseness, dissembling, you are enemies to Christ, he is far from coming in.

3. When Christ comes in, he comes as a king; if you admit him, so you will be ruled by him; you will think it treason to run cross to his word, to cast his commands behind your backs. Briefly, are you conscientious to practise every duty that Christ requires of you in his word? I leave this to your consciences. Is it your design and business to bring yourselves wholly under Christ's government, and more and more under it? Your minds, to judge of things as his laws represent them, that good, best, contemptible, &c., which he declares so? Your wills, to get them subdued to his will, so as when they come in competition his may be preferred; your affections, to have them move and fix as he orders; your lives, to have your conversations ordered by him in spiritual and common affairs?

4. When Christ comes in, he enters as a conqueror. Though sin be in you, though lust have abode in your hearts, they reign not. Are your lusts subdued, mortified, weakened? Do they languish, as having received a deadly wound from the hand of Christ? Are you crucified to the world? Is that as a dead thing to you, which others admire, covet? Christ overcomes the world where he comes. If it overcome you, if you be slaves, drudges to your enjoyments, to your employment; if your hearts be not dead, crucified to these things; Christ has not entered.

5. If Christ be come in to you, you have a high esteem of it, such as becomes him who has the King of glory for his guest. Those that profess themselves Christians must needs say they have a high esteem of Christ. But it is one thing to say it, another to feel it. When he in the parable had found the pearl of great price, how does he express his esteem of it? He went and sold all that he had, and bought it, Matthew 13:44-46. Christ is this treasure, this pearl; if you value him, all other things will be vile compared with him. Your own humours, interests, pleasures, profits, you will part with all for Christ; you will say as Mephibosheth, So did he rejoice in David's return, as his estate was nothing to him compared with it: 2 Samuel 19:30, 'Nay, let him take all, for as much as my lord the king has come in peace,' &c. Not only part with his sins, but renounce his own righteousness, that which he formerly made the ground of his confidence so as to neglect Christ: so the apostle, Php 3:7-8. By this you may know the truth of your esteem, when Christ and other things which you have formerly valued come in competition, which of these gets the place? If you had rather displease Christ than cross your humours, rather dishonour him than decline your worldly interest, rather offend him than abate of your pleasures, rather hazard the loss of his favour than lose an outward advantage, oh your esteem of Christ is little or nothing; it is not such as will afford you assurance that Christ is come in. If he be in you, your esteem of other things will decrease, your esteem of him will increase, it will overgrow, overshadow all; that which others reject will be head of the corner, elect and precious to you that believe, 1 Peter 2:6-8. Those that stumble at the word are disobedient, will not part with sin when Christ commands; to them he is a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, their base lusts are preferred before him, he has no place in such hearts.

6. If Christ be come in, he has possession of you. For this end he comes to take possession of the soul, and if you admit him you will not disappoint him. Try by this. Have you given Christ

possession of your minds, of your consciences, of your hearts and affections? But how shall this be known? Why,

If Christ be in your minds, they will be much taken up with Christ, there will not be so much room for other things; the world will not find such free entertainment in your thoughts. The mind is the eye of the soul; when this glorious guest is come in, your eye will be much upon him, you will be frequent and much in thinking of Christ, how full of love, how full of beauty, how sweet in his promises to thee, how wonderful in his undertakings for thee. Such thoughts will come often, and stay long, longer than formerly; they will be welcome, pleasing, delightful; you will think of him as of your treasure, your glory, your sweetest comfort.

If Christ be in the conscience, it is purged, and you will be fearful to defile it. You will say as the spouse in another case, 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on again? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?' Christ has taken away my guilt, those filthy garments, how shall I put them on again? He has washed my soul, how shall I defile it? So you will find a greater reluctancy against that which offends Christ; you will be loath to give him distaste; he that regards his guest will not lay his excrements in the place where he lodges. Such is sin in the eye of Christ; and therefore conscience, when Christ possesses it, will say, How can I be so vile, so disloyal, so uncivil? 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against Christ?'

If Christ possess the will, it will be new moulded. The will of Christ is its mould; into this it is delivered; it runs into it. Before it was hard and stiff; nor threatenings, nor promises, nor commands could move it. If it were fixed on this or that way of sin or the world, whatever was said by Christ in the ministry of the gospel, it would not move from its hold. Ay! but now it offers itself freely to comply with him: 'Behold, I come to do thy will!' 'Thy people shall be willing,' Psalms 110:1-7. It yields to what it knows, and it desires to know the whole will of Christ, that it may yield to all. It was hard before, it was a rock, would fly in the face of his messenger then rather than yield to reproofs, exhortations. Ay! but now the presence of Christ, the love of Christ, has melted it; it runs into every part of the mould, fashions itself, conforms to the whole will of Christ, moves so as Christ did. 'I come not to do my own will,' &c.

If Christ be in the affections, they all attend him. There is love to him in all his appearances. There is delight in present enjoyment; there is desire after fuller fruitions; there is fear of losing, there is grief for offending, there is hatred of what is contrary to him; there is anger that he can be no more officious, serviceable, respectful; there is jealousy lest anything should distaste Christ, cause him to withdraw. When Lot had entertained angels, how jealous was he lest the wretched Sodomites should wrong them! He would expose his own daughters rather than they should be injured. The heart that has entertained Christ, the Lord of angels, will be careful to do nothing to offend him.

Come we to the second thing promised. 'I will sup with him. Hence!

Observe. Christ will sup with those that open to him. He will feast every soul that admits. He will vouchsafe not only his presence, but sweet and intimate fellowship and communion with himself. 'I will sup:' it is a pregnant word. Let me open it that you may see what comforts, refreshments, privileges, are wrapt up in it; that those who have opened to Christ may see their happiness; that those who yet shut him out may be hereby stirred up to open. It implies,

1. Provision. Christ has made provision for every soul that will open, he has made it ready beforehand. Nothing hinders sinners from these blessed enjoyments but their not opening, Luke 14:16-17. It is Christ has made a great supper, and he stands and knocks, and says, Come, open, all things are now ready. It is Christ the Wisdom of the Father, of whom Solomon speaks, Proverbs 9:1-3, Proverbs 9:5. He sets forth this spiritual provision, these soul refreshments, by such things as we are best acquainted with. He has provided such things as will more refresh the soul than these do our bodies. They are all ready, Matthew 22:4. Do these things nourish? Do they refresh? Do they strengthen? Do they delight us? Do they promote growth? Do they preserve life? Do they continue health? Are they serviceable to the outward man in these respects? Such, and much more, will Christ's provisions be to the soul; they will more nourish, strengthen, refresh, delight it; they tend more effectually to promote and continue spiritual life, health, growth. All that tends thereto are ready, Christ has provided them.

2. Plenty. The Jews used to make their greatest entertainments at supper, and this may be the reason Christ says not I will dine, but I will sup, to denote the plenty of soul-refreshments he will afford those that open. He has spared no cost, no pains; he thinks nothing too good, nothing too much for those that open. If we consider the price, what these refreshments cost Christ, we shall not wonder that they are so many, such abundance of them. They were not bought with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of that Lamb without spot. Where shall we expect, where find bounty, if not in the King of glory? It is for the honour of his majesty that those whom he entertains should have no reason to complain of want. No good thing will he withhold. 'He that cometh unto me,' &c., John 6:35. He will fulfil the desires. Let the heart be never so empty, never so capacious, he brings enough to fill it, to fulfil it. Let it be stretched out by intense desires to its utmost capacity, he will satisfy it, he will abundantly satisfy it, Psalms 36:8. The things of the world, get as much of them, as many of them as you can, will never satisfy, the heart is too large for them. But Christ has provided enough to fill, to satisfy, Isaiah 55:1-2. The whole world cannot fill the heart of man. Christ's provisions are more in this respect than the whole world. Here is plenty indeed, Psalms 23:5; fulness of joy, &c.

3. Variety. There may be plenty where there is not variety. There may be enough, yea, too much of one thing. But it is a feast that Christ promises. He has variety of ordinances, variety of promises, and there are variety of comforts, variety of refreshments in every one. Nay, what is it that Christ offers in these but himself? Now, when he offers himself, he offers all. Here is variety indeed. Can ye have more than all, than he who is all in all? When he comes in, he is yours, and you are his; and what does the apostle infer from this? 1 Corinthians 3:21, 1 Corinthians 3:23. Christ only is that object, that can please and satisfy every faculty. To the mind he is the highest truth, to the will he is the chief good, to the conscience he is peace that passes all understanding, to the affections he is the most lovely, the most desirable, the most delightful object. Here is food for the mind, he that is truth itself. Here is a feast for the conscience, he that has slain enmity, he that brings the peace of God. Here is satisfaction to the will, the fountain of goodness. It need not lose itself in searching for drops, and following shallow streams, and digging broken cisterns; here is the spring-head. And here is food for the affections. Love may satisfy itself in embracing the chiefest of ten thousand, fairer than the children of men, the sun of beauty, where all the scattered rays meet and shine in the brightness of their glory. Desire may here satisfy itself in clasping the Desire of all nations. Delight may here bathe itself in rivers of pleasures that are at Christ's right hand. And

when Christ sups with thee, thou sittest by him, thou art not far from his right hand. Here is variety.

4. Delicacies. It is a feast, a feast of Christ's providing. You will expect no ordinary fare when the King of glory entertains you. Here is choice rarities, such as the world affords not. 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of,' John 4:32; 'Not as the world giveth give I unto you,' John 14:24. The world are strangers to such refreshments, as Christ affords an opening soul. A stranger does not enter into his joy. Such fare does Christ provide as will not only satisfy but get a stomach, such as will not only continue life where it is, but raise to life where it is not. Such as taste of it shall never see death: hidden manna, angels' food, bread from heaven, the fruit of the tree of life which grows in the midst of the paradise of God. Adam longed to taste it, but then it was forbidden; now Christ brings it into the soul that opens. Himself is the tree of life, Revelation 22:2. He comes into thee that thy soul may taste him and live for ever, John 6:31-33, John 6:35. The virtue of this provision is everlasting, it far exceeds the manna in the wilderness; that did preserve life for a season, but it could not secure from death. But he that feeds on this can never die, not spiritually, not eternally, John 6:47-48, &c. It is called water, but it is water of life; he that tastes but a drop shall find it become an everlasting spring in his soul. He that tastes it need not thirst after carnal refreshments; he need not go to the world, to the creatures, to draw, this shall satisfy him for ever. So Christ tells the woman, John 4:10, John 4:13-14. He will let thee drink of the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. What think ye of this manna, of the fountain* of the tree of life, of that water that proceeds out of the throne of God? Is not this worth your opening? Would you taste of those grapes that grow in heaven, those fruits which grow in the land of promise? And now, when you are in this dry and barren wilderness, does thy soul long to taste of those dainties which that city affords, whose maker and builder is God? Why, Christ offers this; he that opens to him shall sup with him He will set before thee some clusters of those grapes which grow in Canaan. He will give thee the first fruits of heaven. Thou shalt have some taste of the pleasures of his father's house. Here are rarities indeed; the world knows them not, and will not believe them. But those that have opened to Christ know what I say. They are hidden enjoyments, Revelation 2:17; the earnest of the Spirit, the peace of God, the riches of assurance, the joy that is unspeakable and glorious, the hidden manna, the water of life. These are enjoyments that differ but in degree from those in heaven. And those that open to Christ, that sup with him, do taste of some or all these.

5. Familiarity. Christ will deal familiarly with thee as with an intimate friend. We take it as a great argument of intimate friendship when one will say to another, I will come and sup with thee. When David would aggravate the disloyalty of Ahithophel, he does it in these terms, 'It was thou, my familiar.' And how was he his familiar? Why, it was 'he that ate bread with me,' Psalms 41:9. Thou hast been a stranger to Christ, lived without him in the world, at a great distance from him. Thy hatred of him and rebellions against him have provoked him to shew himself an enemy; but now he is upon terms of kindness and friendship with thee: if thou wilt open, he will come and sup with thee. The mighty God, the Prince of the kings of the earth, will stoop so low as to shew himself kind to thee. When David would express the remembrance of a friend to Jonathan, he thus expresses himself, 2 Samuel 9:3. It was an exceeding great kindness, the kindness of God, that David would shew. And how does he shew this kindness? see 2 Samuel 9:7. 'Thou shalt eat bread at my table.' This is it, and more than this, that Christ offers; if a sinner will open, he will shew the kindness of God to him, a wonderful, an exceeding great kindness. And how? He shall eat bread

with me, I will sup with him. Oh what intimacy, what familiarity does this denote, especially when to one far inferior! Mephibosheth, though a prince's son, was astonished that David should offer him such kindness: 2 Samuel 9:8, 'What is thy servant?' &c. Oh, how should sinners run to entertain such kindness from the King of kings! How should those that enjoy it wonder at it! 'What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am!' What kindness, what friendship, what honour! What is this to me, that the Lord of glory should come and sup with me?

6. Complacency. Christ will shew he much delights in the soul that opens to him. This we learn by their posture at meat, in use amongst the Jews. They, like the Romans, had beds about their tables, on which they lay when they went to eat, so that those which lay on the same bed, the one did rest his head in the other's bosom. So it is said of John, John 13:23. So that when Christ promises, I will sup with him, it is as much as if he should say, he shall lay his head in my bosom. He that opens to Christ, he shall have the place of the beloved disciple. So much delight will Christ take in him, as in one whom he will admit to rest in his bosom. Oh blessed posture! Oh happy soul, whom Christ will take so near to himself, whom he will lodge in his bosom! Well may it be said of Christ, that his delights were in the sons of men, when he will shew he takes so much delight in them, as to lay them so near his heart, to take them into his bosom. Well may he say, 'As the Father loved me, even so love I you,' John 15:9. And yet if he had not said it, what worm amongst us could have presumed, could have believed a love which seemed so incredible? As the Father loves me, &c. There is not an equality, but there is a similitude. And as in other things, so it holds in this. Such is the Father's love to Christ, as he is said to be in the bosom of the Father, John 1:18. And such is Christ's love to thee, such his delight in thee, as if thy heart be opened, thou art in the bosom of Christ. If thy heart be opened, it is Christ's banqueting-house, he will sup there. His banner over thee is love, as Song of Solomon 2:4. With what delight mayest thou lie down under his shadow! How sweet will the fruits of his delight be to thee, while his right hand does embrace thee, and his left hand is under thy head, thy head rests in his bosom! Oh what sensible soul will not be transported to think of this with believing thoughts! What delights can the world afford like unto these! when, as the spouse expresses it, Song of Solomon 1:13, Christ lies betwixt thy breasts like a bundle of myrrh, and thy head rests in his bosom! Thus will it be when Christ sups with thee; and he will sup with thee when thou openest to him. Then will he shew as much delight in thee as if thou wert admitted to rest in his bosom.

Use. Exhortation. 1. To those to whom Christ is come, whom he feasts, to whom he vouchsafes communion with himself. Be careful to continue in this happy condition. Be afraid of whatever may provoke Christ to withdraw, what may interrupt this communion. Be careful to abide in this blessed fellowship. Use all means to continue this communion with Christ, that he may still feast you, and you may continually sup with him.

Quest. But what means shall we use to this end, to continue? &c.

Ans. 1. Make him welcome. Shew by your joy and cheerfulness in his presence that you count it your happiness to enjoy him. Let him see that you delight in him above all things, that you prefer him before your chief joy, that he is the head, the chief of your delights. Set him against all other things that worldlings rejoice in, Psalms 4:1-8. Shew that you count his presence a sufficient supply of all wants. Christ is better unto me than friends, children, riches, honours. These are miserable comforts if I taste not the sweetness of Christ in them; and there is enough in him to

rejoice me when all these vanish. As too much delight in outward things does disparage Christ, so does sadness and uncheerfulness in the want of these things. Say, is not Christ better to me than all these? 1 Samuel 1:8, ‘My soul shall magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Saviour.’ Then do you magnify him when you count other things small in comparison of him. Then does your soul rejoice in him when you delight more in him than in all outward comforts. Thus to magnify him, thus to rejoice in him, is to make him welcome, and that is the way to continue him with you.

Ans. 2. Entertain him. He brings provision enough for you, will you provide nothing for him? It is true, indeed, you can provide nothing worthy of such a guest, but something he expects, and something there is he delights in and will accept. When the three angels came to Abraham, how careful, how active is he to entertain them! Genesis 18:1-33. It is the Lord of angels that comes to sup with thee; oh how careful shouldst thou be to provide that which he loves, wherein he delights! Why, what is that? I will but point at it. It is a humble, a broken, an upright heart. This he loves, this he delights in.

(1.) A humble heart. A heart humbled in sense of Christ’s excellency and its own vileness. He beholds the proud afar off, but the humble he beholds with delight, and will delight to continue with it. See what sweet promises he makes thereto, Isaiah 57:15. None so precious to Christ as those that are vile in their own eyes. He that is poor in spirit, though no man regards him, and though he do not regard himself, the Lord has a special respect to him, Isaiah 66:1. Those that have high thoughts, good conceits of their own righteousness, parts, performances, the Lord will overlook them, he stays not there; it is the humble spirit that he looks at, that he dwells with.

(2.) A broken heart. A heart broken from sin, and broken for sin; a heart that melts and bleeds, when it remembers how it has wounded, how it has dishonoured Christ; a heart that yields to Christ’s motions, and receives his impressions. A stubborn, stony heart, that is insensible of sin, that is hardened against the word, that is not moved by all the melting manifestations of Christ’s love, but continues in sinful ways, notwithstanding all the knocks of the word: this heart is an abomination.

Oh, if the Lord have broken your hearts, made them tender, take heed they be not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. If you would entertain Christ with that which he loves, give him a broken, a contrite heart; this will be more acceptable to him than all sacrifices, than all the rarities thou canst provide, Psalms 51:16-17.

(3.) A sincere heart. A true and upright heart. This Christ delights in. ‘Thou lovest truth in the inward parts,’ Psalms 51:6. He loves a whole, an undivided heart. That is a sincere heart that is wholly Christ’s. ■ν■ρ δ■ψυχος, ‘a double-minded man’ he cannot endure; one that has a heart and a heart; says he has a heart for Christ, when his heart is for the world; pretends Christ has his heart, when he has a heart for his lusts. He that will entertain Christ with a divided heart, divides himself from Christ. He will not endure the arbitrament of the harlot, ‘Let it be divided.’ If he have not all, it is as bad as if he had none at all. Give your heart wholly to Christ; if you entertain him with such a heart, he will like his entertainment, it is the way to have him stay with you.

Ans. 3. Let him have good attendance. If you be careless, disrespectful of him, how can you expect his company! Let every part of your souls wait upon Christ. When you tender him any

service, offer up your souls with it. If you tender your outward man, without your souls, in ordinances where Christ feasts his people, it is as if you should bid your servant wait upon your guest, and withdraw yourself; this is a disrespect. Is not Christ worthy you should attend him in person? Take heed of these neglects.

Ans. 4. Let him have your company, be always in his presence. If you depart from him, wander after others, no wonder if he depart from you. Be always with him. How? Your minds with him, by frequent thoughts of him, Psalms 139:17-18; your wills and hearts, by inclinations to him, the bent and tendency of them upwards, a bias leading you still; your affections on him, as the most lovely, delightful, desirable object, Psalms 73:23, Psalms 73:25; and with him in your daily converse: by ordering your conversation so as it may be a walking with God: Genesis 5:25, 'Enoch walked with God,' and so Noah, Genesis 6:9. Labour to see him, to enjoy him in all, to act as in his sight, to order all for him, to dispose of all in subserviency to him.

2. Branch of the exhortation. To those that have not yet opened to Christ; to those who have not feasted with him. You will never have fellowship with Christ, you will never enjoy this happiness, you will never taste how sweet, how gracious the Lord is, till you admit him. He only sups with them that open to him. Oh then make haste to open.

Quest. But who are those that have not opened, that do not feast with Christ, that yet enjoy not fellowship with him? How shall I know whether this be my condition?

Ans. This we will briefly resolve, that the exhortation may be seasonable and forcible. You may know it,

1. By your appetite after spiritual enjoyments. Those that feast with Christ have a strong appetite to those spiritual dainties that he provides. He fills the hungry with good things. Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness, after holiness, after spiritual knowledge, after a clearer sight, a fuller enjoyment, of Christ? You know when you hunger and thirst after bodily nourishment there is a sense of emptiness; this emptiness of the stomach is a pain and anguish to you; you are restless till you be satisfied. Is it thus with your souls in reference to spiritual enjoyments? Are you sensible of a soul-emptiness? Is this your grief, your soul-affliction? Will nothing satisfy but Christ, more holiness, nearer communion? Do you pant and breathe after this in every ordinance? Can you truly say, 'As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my heart after God'? Do you sigh and mourn in the sense of your soul's poverty and emptiness, Christ's withdrawings and estrangement? Is this the voice of your heart, 'Oh when shall I come and appear before him?' when will he appear, &c.? When carnal men think the Sabbaths and spiritual employments long and tedious, whereas they say, 'When will the Sabbath be done?' is it the voice of your soul, When will the Sabbath come, that I may see him whom my soul loves, that I may see his face, and hear his voice, and be satisfied with the pleasure? &c. Does your soul breathe after Christ in prayer? Do you desire the word as new-born babes, &c.? When you can withdraw from ordinances, think them tedious, have no more than some faint wishes after spiritual enjoyments, this argues Christ does not feast with you: 'He fills the hungry,' &c.; 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come,' &c.

2. By your delight in the presence of Christ, and those spiritual enjoyments wherewith he feasts his people. If he feast with you, you will take such pleasure herein, as will dead your affections to unlawful pleasures, as will moderate your affections to lawful delights. If Christ feast with you, if

you enjoy fellowship with him, the pleasures of sin are rank and unsavoury to your souls. Those stolen waters which were formerly sweet, will now be as the waters of Marah; your stomach will rise against those things that formerly you have swallowed with delight. The word will be sweet to your taste. Secret prayer, and meditation, all those spiritual duties wherein Christ feasts his people, will be your delight. The provisions wherewith Christ entertains you will make you vomit up those forbidden morsels, wherewith sin and the world fed you. You will not henceforth count them sweet; you will have no more mind to return to sinful pleasures than to swallow up a vomit, or to wallow with the sow in the mire. If intemperance, good fellowship, uncleanness, unseasonable sports, or any way of wickedness, secret or open, be sweet to you, you may fear Christ is not yet come to feast with you; you have not tasted of those delights which are enjoyed in communion with him.

3. If Christ feast you, your souls will grow, thrive, and be well liking. This will be the fruit of these spiritual refreshments; they will make you more lively, strong, active, fruitful, in the ways and acts of holiness. You will grow in grace, &c.; go from strength to strength. Your souls will be as watered gardens, the fruits of the Spirit will flourish there. Your hearts, sometimes like a desert, will now be as Sharon; and that which was a wilderness, nothing but weeds, briars, and thorns—worldly, unclean lusts—will now be as the garden of God. The spices thereof will flow out: love, and zeal, and self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness, and contempt of the world. These will be on the growing hand, you will be outgrowing your distempers, prevailing more and more against corruption, and increasing with the increase of God. Oh, but where there is no spiritual life manifested in holy duties, no strength, no opposition, no effectual resolutions against prevailing and endeared sins, there is no sign that Christ is come in. Your souls would be in a better plight if Christ did feast them.

Thus you may know if Christ sup with you. And if the Lord bring these home to your consciences, the exhortation will be more seasonable. If you have not yet opened to Christ, if he do not sup with you, oh make haste to open. To stir you up hereto, consider the misery of those who have not this fellowship with Christ. If you have not fellowship with Christ,

1. You have fellowship with unclean spirits. These, though you perceive it not, feast with you, feed in you. The heart where Christ is not, is a place swept and garnished for Satan, fitted for his entertainment. There is no such refreshment to Satan in the world as the lusts of a carnal heart. These unclean spirits feed rank; your sins are their feast; it is their meat and drink to have you continue sinning. You cannot provide him any choicer delight than unmortified lusts. He sups with you till Christ come in. Your communion is not with the Father, but with him who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience.

2. You have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Your lusts, proud, worldly, unclean, revengful, these feed on you, they are always gnawing upon the inwards of your souls. You feel it not indeed; no wonder, till Christ come you are dead. You have seen vermin crawling in, and feeding on a dead carcase; this is the very emblem of a soul without Christ. Unmortified lusts, like so many vermin, prey upon your souls. The worm that never dies breeds here; if Christ come not in and kill it, it will gnaw upon you to eternity.

3. You can have no fellowship with Christ hereafter. Those that acquaint not themselves with Christ by entertaining him, by communion with him here, he will not know them hereafter. If you

admit him not, if he sup not with you here, he will say to you, ‘Depart from me, I never knew you.’

MAN’S INSUFFICIENCY TO DO ANYTHING OF HIMSELF For without me ye can do nothing.—John 15:5. In the former verses there is a parable. A parable is a similitude; and in this, as in others, we have three parts.

1. Πρ■τασις, a similitude propounded, under three notions, the vine, the branches, the husbandman.

2. ■π■δοσις, the similitude applied, to three parties, the Father, the Son, the elect; Christ the vine, the elect the branches, the Father the husbandman.

3. Εκθεσις, the similitude expounded and prosecuted, declaring the acts and offices of the several parties held forth therein: the acts of the Father, the husbandman, to lop and purge; of Christ, the vine, to support and nourish the branches; of the elect, the branches, to abide in the vine, and be fruitful. It is propounded in part, and applied, John 15:1; prosecuted in the rest. The acts of the Father, John 15:2, two, according to the distinction of branches: in respect of the unfruitful, ■ιρεσις; of the fruitful, καθ■ιρεσις; and the instrument by which he doth these acts, John 15:3; the acts and offices of the vine and branches, John 15:4-5.

I am the true vine. A vine; that to my members, which a vine is to its branches, give them life, strength, fruitfulness.

True. Not vitis sylvestris, a wild vine, either barren, or yielding nothing but wild grapes; but a choice fruitful vine.

Husbandman. How he resembles one, appears in the acts ascribed to him: John 15:2., ‘Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.’

He taketh away, ■ιρει. He detects their hypocrisy, so as they are no longer accounted branches.

He purgeth, καθ■ιρει, lops off that which is luxuriant. His instrument, John 15:3.; the word is his pruning-hook.

Clean, καθαρ■ι, hence catharist. Take away the abuse of the word, it is the same with puritan, they differ but as Greek and Latin. No shame to be called a puritan, since Christ called his disciples so. It is an honour not to think one’s self pure, but to be pure, whatever others think. The acts and offices of Christ, John 15:4-5, in that word abide.

I abide in you. The vine may be said to abide in the branches, by conveying juice, nourishment, whereby they subsist and flourish; which subtracted, they would be barren, wither, rot, and fall off. Christ abides in us by his influence, upon which depends our subsistence, life, strength, fruitfulness. The acts and office of professors follow, John 15:4-5, abide in me.

Bear fruit. He urges one by the other. It is necessary, your duty, that which proves you branches, to bear fruit; but it is impossible you should bear fruit, except you abide in the vine. This he proves by the same simile repeated, John 15:4, and applied, John 15:5. Take the sense of the whole simile, and both verses thus: the branches cannot bear fruit without the vine; but I am the vine, &c., therefore abiding in me you may bring forth fruit; but, on the contrary (which is understood),

not abiding in me, ye cannot be fruitful. He adds a reason in the text, ‘for without me ye can do nothing.’

Obs. Men without Christ can do nothing; or, men out of Christ cannot do anything: 1 Corinthians 3:5, ‘Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?’ and 1 Corinthians 4:7. ‘Who made thee to differ from another?’ &c., Matthew 12:34. I shall

1. Explain (1.) what it is to be without Christ; (2.) what is this impotency, cannot do; (3.) in what sense they can do nothing.

(1.) Without Christ; [1.] without union with Christ; [2.] without influence from Christ. Unless they be united to, assisted by Christ, they can do nothing. The first seems to be principally intended; for it is χ■ρις, not ■νευ, and χ■ρις μο■ is as much as χωρισθ■ντες ■π■ ■μο■, separated from, not united to: yet the other is necessary, and indeed inseparable. Where there is union, there is influence; and where there is acting, there is both.

[1.] Without union. Except ye be in him, as the branch in the vine, partake of his nature, virtue, &c; such a union as is held forth in this cup, a real, intimate, reciprocal, inseparable union: real, not seeming and in appearance only. There are some who are said to be in Christ, not because they are so, but because they seem so: John 15:2, ‘Every branch in me that beareth not fruit.’ If they had been really in Christ, they had not been fruitless, nor taken away. Those who seem but to be united, seem but to act; to seem to do only, is not to do. He that seems to do only, though he do all in appearance, doth nothing; if not really united, he can do nothing.

Intimate. Abide in me; not by, or near, or with, but in me. Appropinquation, conjunction, adhesion, is not sufficient; it must be insition, inhesion, implantation. Many may come near, sit down under Christ’s shadow, join with him, cleave to him, yet be impotent, because without him; if not intimately in him, without him, and without him ye can do nothing.

Reciprocal. ‘Abide in me, as I in you’; he in you, and you in him. Some may be in Christ, and yet not Christ in them. The elect, before regeneration, may be said to be in Christ; he is not in them, therefore they are as impotent as others. They were in him when he suffered, for he suffered as a common person, as their representative; even as we are said to be in Adam, sinning before we had a being, Romans 15:12. If Christ be not in you, as well as you in him, ye can do nothing.

Inseparable. Those are without Christ, who are not sure to be always in him; yet some are said to be in him who may be out of him. The members of the Jewish church were in Christ, else they could not be said to be broken off, Romans 11:20; but not inseparably. Faith only makes this union inseparable. They were tied to him by profession, external covenanting, but broken off for want of faith,—‘they were broken off by unbelief, thou standest by faith,’—except you be inseparably united, your union is separated from acting, you can do nothing. This is in the text too. He says not, he that is in me, but ‘he that abides in me.’ Separable union is no union in the sense of the text; it leaves a man without Christ. To abide in Christ, and to be without Christ, are opposed in the text as immediate contraries; so that whosoever abides not in him is without him, no medium is allowed by Christ; and without him ye can do nothing.

[2.] Without Christ's influence, concurrence, co-operation, ye can do nothing. Not that general influence only, which is necessary both to the existence and operation of all creatures; for without this they would not do nothing only, but be nothing, sink into annihilation; this is it by which all live, and move, and have their being. But that special influence, by which, as head of the church, he enables those that are in him to act spiritually and supernaturally, in order to those supreme ends, his glory, &c., this influence supposes union; he concurs with none this way but those that are united to him; and union without this would not empower any to act; without influence, exciting, determining, fortifying, &c.

Exciting. The best principles and habits are as sparks in embers; they cannot burn until they be blown. They are as Peter asleep in prison, will not rise and walk, though the door be open, till the angel of Christ his influence awake them. No second cause can move till it be moved by the first; not grace itself, though more excellent than the rest. It is a creature, and therefore dependent, as in esse, so in operari. The apostle thought it necessary to stir up pure minds, 2 Peter 3:1. He in so doing was a labourer together with Christ; he concurs, co-operates by this influence; without it ye can do nothing.

Determining. Souls rightly principled, if not indifferent to good or evil, yet indifferent to this or that act and object. This indifferency must be determined, else there can be no acting; no determinations but by this influence. If it could determine itself, it would be independent in acting. Nothing else can determine it, because nothing can have immediate access to the soul but Christ, and it is not determinable but by an immediate influence.

Though much be disputed against this determining influence, by some who advance the power of nature too much, yet I am forced to close with it by this reason: every particular act is decreed, Ephesians 2:10, else there could be no providence; and how should the soul meet with and be carried to the same acts that are in the decree, with all circumstances, except guided and determined to them by this influence? Our souls are like Ezekiel's wheels, indifferent to go or stand, to move below, or be lifted up above; they are determined to this or that motion by the spirit of the living creatures, by this influence that acts them. They are like clay in the hand of the potter, indifferent to be moulded into this or that form, determined by the hand and at the pleasure of the potter. Paul's comparison, Romans 9:21, holds, not only in respect of our state, but our actings: 'We are his workmanship, created unto good works,' Ephesians 2:10. There is a creation which respects acting as well as being; a creation unto good works to walk in them. A pen in itself is indifferent to draw a letter or a figure, or this or that form of either, the hand of the writer determines it; if this be withdrawn, the pen falls and blots. We are such instruments in the hand of Christ, he can draw what he pleases by us; but if he withdraw his hand, his influence, we fall, sin, blot, do nothing, or worse than nothing; as the pen draws nothing without the hand, so ye without Christ can do nothing.

Strengthening influence. 'I am able to do all things through Christ strengthening me,' Php 4:13; therefore able to do nothing without Christ, 2 Corinthians 12:9; his strength is made perfect in weakness, Ephesians 3:16, Colossians 1:11; we can do nothing unless we be strengthened with might.

(2.) What is this impotency? In four degrees take its nature and latitude.

[1.] It is a privation of power, an absence, a total privation; an absence not in part and degrees only. It is not only a suspension of acts, as may be in sleep, but an absence of radical power: Romans 5:6, ‘When we were without strength, Christ died for us;’ Exodus 15:2, ‘The Lord is my strength’; nor an absence of part or degrees of power, as in sickness, but a total privation, an absence of all power: Isaiah 40:29, ‘He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.’ Not such an impotency to act as is in a branch in winter to bear fruit, but such as is in a branch cut off from the vine, have not the least degree of spiritual power to do anything.

[2.] It is not only a total privation in respect of power, but it is universal in respect of the subjects of that power. Every part is impotent, deprived, and wholly deprived of all mind, will, memory, affections: Psalms 138:3, ‘In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.’

[3.] It is not a mere impotency only, but an incapacity; not only want power, but incapable with any near capacity to receive it; not only as a branch cut off, yet green, for that may be engrafted; but cut off and withered, no capacity of fruitfulness, though implanted. The capacity is but either merely obediential, such as is in stones, to become Abraham’s children; or at least very remote, such as is in dry bones, to be jointed and animated and made instruments of vital parts. The capacity is so remote, such a distance betwixt the power and the act, as nothing but infinite power can bring them together; that power which brought heaven and earth out of nothing, calleth things which are not as though they were; hence called a creation, ‘his workmanship, created,’ Ephesians 2:10; ‘He that is in Christ is a new creature,’ 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:24.

[4.] There is not only absence and incapacity, but resistance; he is not able, and he is not willing to be able; without power, and unwilling to receive it. It is not only a physical, a want of power, but a moral privation, a want of will; both unable, and unwilling to be able, and unable to be willing. Unwilling, ‘ye will not come to me,’ John 5:40; hence on God’s part, drawing, John 6:44; striving, Genesis 6:3; on ours, refusing, Proverbs 1:24, Matthew 23:1-39; resisting, Acts 7:51; unable to be willing, Php 2:13, 2 Corinthians 3:5; we cannot think of being willing.

3. The extent of this impotency in this word ο■δ■ν, ‘can do nothing’; (1.) that they would do; (2.) that they should do; (3.) as they ought to do; nothing.

(1.) That they would do nothing, [1.] to avoid the least degree of misery; [2.] to attain the least degree of happiness.

[1.] To prevent misery, cannot satisfy justice, pacify wrath, avoid the curse, escape judgments.

First, They cannot without Christ satisfy justice. Justice requires perfect obedience; in want of it, death. That men cannot perform, that they cannot endure; it is eternal death, for the penalty is answerable to the fault. There is something of infiniteness in disobedience, at least objective; there must be something of infiniteness in the punishment: punishment is infinite in weight or duration; that which is infinite in weight a creature cannot undergo, it would sink him into nothing, therefore it must be infinite i continuance. What man is not capable of in weight must be supplied i duration. None can satisfy the demand of justice in point of perfect obedience, therefore all without other provision must die eternally. The proper act of punitive justice, is to distribute punishment, to inflict the penalty due to disobedience, according to law. This the law according to which God proceeds

with man, ‘Do this, and live;’ perform perfect obedience, and have eternal life; and in the negative, ‘Do not this, and die;’ fail in obedience, and die eternally. Now no man since the fall can perform perfect obedience, therefore justice is engaged to inflict eternal death on all.

Now, lest no flesh should be saved, mercy puts a favourable construction upon the law; dispenseth with personal obedience, and accepts of it performed by another, a surety, a proxy; so that, whereas the sense of the law, primitive and eternal, is this, Do this by thyself or another, and thou shalt live; satisfy the law by thyself or another, and the reward shall be life, otherwise thou shalt die; wisdom concurs with mercy, and finds out Christ as the fittest person to satisfy justice, both by obeying and dying, as most able, most willing to satisfy justice and glorify mercy. So that, by the mediation of these attributes, the rigour of the law is turned into the sweetness of the gospel, and runs thus: he that performs perfect obedience by himself, or by a mediator, Christ the righteous, he shall live; he that doth neither, shall die without mercy.

Now the former is impossible; no man can in his own person perfectly obey the law and thereby satisfy justice: and none but Christ can or will be accepted as a proxy, a surety. Therefore, all who are without Christ, who have not his obedience and righteousness imputed to them, must die without mercy, and the justice of God is engaged to see it executed. Justice is as a flaming sword, turning on every side to keep out those from the way of the tree of life, who approach without Christ his righteousness. Justice is our adversary, we must agree with it, give satisfaction to it in the way, in this life, else it will deliver us to the Judge, &c., Matthew 5:25, and we shall never come out, because it will never be paid. Revenging justice, as the avenger of blood, pursues all sinners; and there is no security, no city of refuge, but Jesus Christ. Vengeance bangs over your heads as a sword by a hair, and justice cries, as he to Elisha, ‘Shall I smite him’? And if Christ interpose not, his blow will fall so heavy as it will sink you into hell.

Secondly, Nothing to pacify the hatred and wrath of God; all without Christ are exposed to these, and all the degrees of them. This severe affection in God is held forth in several degrees, and all of them bent against sinners without Christ.

Displeasure. Both persons and actions, all in them, from them. He vouchsafes no pleasing look, thought, word; he frowns, chides, smites, expresses displeasure every way: Romans 8:8, ‘Those that are in the flesh cannot please God;’ not they do not, but cannot. And this denotes not difficulty only, but impossibility: Hebrews 11:6, ‘Without faith, it is impossible to please God,’ whatever other accomplishments they have, or actions they do. And why? without faith and without Christ; he is well pleased in him, Matthew 3:17, and with none but in him; no beauty in person, no loveliness in actions, nothing that can please him.

Anger. That is more than displeasure. He that is not well pleased is not forthwith angry: Psalms 7:11, ‘God is angry with the wicked every day.’ No wonder; for everything they do, or speak, or think, is a provocation. So, as Christ in another case, Mark 3:5, he looks round about on them with anger. Hosea 13:11, ‘I gave thee a king in mine anger;’ those things that they desire are in anger.

Wrath. Sublimated auger, fury, the accomplishment of anger: Ezekiel 7:8, ‘I will pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee’! It flames, burns, and cannot be quenched, Jeremiah 7:20. It is ‘poured out,’ Jeremiah 7:1-34, upon him and all his. The Lord never says, as Isaiah 27:4, ‘Fury is not in me,’ till you be in Christ. Wrath against their persons and services,

Ephesians 2:3. ‘Children of wrath,’ born in it, to it, it is their portion, a rich portion, a treasury, Romans 2:5. ‘It abides on unbelievers,’ John 3:36; ‘revealed against their actions,’ Romans 1:18.

Hatred. This is more than anger in its height; as Aristotle, it is ■ν■ατον, it is ■υ μετα λυπ■ς. It does βο■λεσθαι τ■ μ■ ■■ιναι. Anger would make him smart that is the object of it, but hatred would destroy him. Anger is more easily allayed or removed than hatred; anger shews itself with some grief, but hatred with delight. God’s love runs in several channels, but all his hatred is carried to sin and sinners. Christ is the Son of his love, and none partake of his love but in Christ.

Enmity. It is a deadly hatred, such as is betwixt mortal enemies: Luke 19:27, ‘Those mine enemies,’ &c. Traitors, rebels to his crown and dignity: Romans 5:10, ‘When we were enemies.’ No reconciliation without Christ.

Abhorrency. Both we and ours abominable; more than hateful persons, Titus 1:16; in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient. Their services, those which God commanded. Proverbs 15:8, ‘The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination.’ Isaiah 1:13, ‘Incense is an abomination to me.’ Isaiah 1:14, ‘Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them.’ Isaiah 66:3, ‘He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man, he that burneth incense as if he blessed an idol;’ and what more abominable?

None can remove wrath but Christ. Ephesians 1:6, He ‘hath made us accepted in the Beloved.’ 1 Peter 2:5, ‘Spiritual sacrifices acceptable through Jesus Christ.’ For his sake God calls them his people, and her beloved which was not beloved, Romans 9:25. It is he that reconciles, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. He is the ■λαστ■ριον, Romans 3:25; stands betwixt us and wrath. The law works wrath, Romans 4:15; he trod the wine-press alone. He only can make persons and services cease to be objects of wrath: 1 Thessalonians 1:10, ‘Jesus which delivered us from wrath to come.’ Romans 5:9, ‘Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.’

Thirdly, Nothing to avoid the curse of the law of God. All that are out of Christ are under the law, and all under the law are under his curse; for the law blesses none but those who obey it perfectly, curses all that fail in the least: Galatians 3:10, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them! Every one that doth not all things is cursed, and continues so. It is a cursed state and condition, all in it are cursed, 2 Peter 2:14, ■ιο■ κατ■ρας. An Hebraism ordinary in the Testament, sons, i. e.

First, Destined to the curse, as Judas, and the man of sin is called ■ι■ς ■πωλε■ας, because ordained to destruction, 2 Thessalonians 2:3. So he is ■■■■ who is condemned.

Secondly, Worthy of the curse, as τ■κνα ■ργ■ς, Ephesians 2:3; and Son of peace, ■ι■ς ■ιρην■ς, Luke 10:6, dignus pace.

Thirdly, Actually under the curse, as ■ιο■ φ■τος, John 12:36, &c.; or filii contumaciæ, Ephesians 2:2, the son of the curse.

Fourthly, Most cursed, as 2 Thessalonians 2:3, ■νθρωπος ■μαρτ■ας, i.e., peccato deditissimus, most sinful, most cursed. In every place, in the city and in the field, Deuteronomy 28:16, abroad and at home, where thou most blessest thyself, it shall enter as the flying roll, Zechariah 5:4, Proverbs 3:33. In every part, in body and soul, in every faculty and member, knees, legs, Proverbs 3:355; blindness, madness, astonishment of heart, Proverbs 3:28. In every action, Deuteronomy

28:19, when thou comest in and goest out, Deuteronomy 28:19. The Lord shall send cursing, vexation, and rebuke in all that thou settest thy hand unto for to do, Deuteronomy 28:20. In all relations, that which is dearest and sweetest, children: Deuteronomy 28:18, ‘Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body.’ In all enjoyments: Deuteronomy 28:17, ‘Cursed thy basket and store, fruits and cattle;’ nay, the choicest blessings are cursed, Malachi 2:2. With every curse, spiritual and temporal, of law and gospel. The law curses all that want obedience, want works; the gospel all that want faith, without Christ, without both. The gospel-curse is more terrible, no avoiding, no repealing mercy; Christ himself cannot bless when it curses, or leaves under the curse.

Nothing but Christ can remove the curse, for there is no removing but by bearing; and no angel nor man can bear it, it would sink all into hell; not bear that which is due to one, much less what is due to all. If the Lord had not laid hold on one that is mighty, the heavy curse had pressed all into hell: Galatians 3:13 ‘Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.’ Revelation 22:3, ‘There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.’

Fourthly, Nothing to escape judgments. This depends on the former. Justice unsatisfied summons wrath. The curse is the sentence which justice passeth in wrath, and judgments are the executions of this sentence.

God’s dispensations are judgments to all out of Christ. Not simply afflictions or chastisements (for these may be sent in love, and made subservient to happy ends), but judgments sent in wrath from a judge, not a father. There is a sting of vengeance in them till disarmed by Christ; they come to avenge the quarrel of the violated law. All dispensations are judgments; for, as all the ways of God are mercy to such as keep his covenant, Psalms 25:10, so are they judgments to these. As all things work for good to them, etiam ipsa peccata; sic odientibus eum omnia cooperantur in malum, mala quæ; fecerunt, quæ facere voluerant, quæ per alios jurarunt. No question of those which are evil, malum culpæ et pœnæ. And it is clear of things indifferent, which receive impression of mercy or judgment from the principle or intention of God in dispensing.

Nay, those things which are good. Immo bona quæ fecerunt, in illis non perseverando; vel quæ non fecerunt, omittendo; quæque acceperunt gratia Dei, abutendo. Mercies in themselves and unto others are judgments, because not in love, nor to do them good. ‘Judgment without mercy,’ James 2:13. No drop of mercy but through Christ, if you take it formally and strictly. Grievous judgments, spiritual, νο■ς ■δ■κιμος, &c. Insensible: when cry peace and dream of mercy, sudden destruction. There is no escaping judgment but by Christ. He only satisfies justice, he pacifies wrath; and, this done, nothing can be a judgment; their nature, their notion, is changed.

Obj. But did not Ahab escape a judgment, yet without Christ?

Ans. It was but deferred, 1 Kings 21:29. And but in part deferred, and but awhile; the deferring of it was a judgment, through his abuse of the forbearance.

Fifthly, Nothing to deliver from hell; the accomplishment of the rest. He that can deliver from wrath temporal must deliver from this, else no deliverance.

All are as brands; must lie in fire to eternity if Christ pluck them not out. All will be drowned in this deluge of wrath that get not into the ark; all must perish by fire and brimstone that get not into this Zoar, or fly not into this mountain. He only can deliver your souls from death, &c.; no name under

heaven by which ye can be saved but his alone, Acts 4:12. It is Jesus only that ‘delivers from the wrath to come,’ 1 Thessalonians 1:10. No hill, no mountain, can cover from his wrath that sits on the throne. No man, no angel can secure, only the Lamb. Nothing but fire and brimstone without Christ; nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth, nothing but everlasting burnings, nothing but shame, confusion, and utter destruction. It is he that trod the wine-press, there was none with him, Isaiah 53:3. It is he that drank of the brook in the way; ‘in the way,’ Psalms 110:6, i.e. betwixt men and heaven. A great gulf, a vast ocean of wrath, curses, judgments, these keep all from heaven, and would carry all as with a violent stream to hell. Christ, to prevent it, he drinks of this brook, dries it up, makes the way plain and easy. But none else can drink it; none that ever drank could lift up their heads but Christ: it sunk them. ‘There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ,’ Romans 8:1; ‘He that believes not,’ is not united to Christ by faith, ‘is condemned already.’

(2.) They can do nothing that they should, good spiritual; nothing [1.] that is formally so, [2.] dispositively so, that has a necessary connection with good of that nature.

[1.] Nothing formally so. In general, if they could do it of themselves, it would not be attributed solely to God, but so it is.

First, Not procure or act any grace. This cannot be done, except it be given from above: James 1:1-27, ‘Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights;’ if from men, it would be from below. Ephesians 1:3, ‘Blesseth us with all spiritual blessings in Christ;’ Php 1:21, conversion, faith, repentance, love, hope.

First, Conversion. None can convert himself: Jeremiah 13:18, ‘Turn thou me and I shall be turned,’ says Ephraim, who else was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; and the church, Lamentations 5:12, ‘Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned,’ else not. There are two acts in conversion: 1. Passive, the work of the Spirit, infusing gracious qualities. It is properly a work, but metaphorically styled a voice or calling, yet an operative calling; also called preventing grace. And by this act of the Spirit we are united to Christ, before grace, both actual and habitual; for the habit is by this act infused, and herein man is become a patient. 2. Active, where, by the help of the grace received (Christ by his Spirit co-operating), we turn to God, unite ourselves to Christ, obey his call. That cannot be done without union to Christ, nor this without influence from him. We speak of the first, herein we are passive, can do nothing, no more than the air can enlighten itself without the sun; for it is called a turning from darkness to light, Acts 26:18, or dead body raise itself; it is called a resurrection, so most expound, Revelation 20:6, plainly, John 5:24-25. It is Christ that is the resurrection, John 11:25. No more than the world in a state of nonenity could create itself, it is a creation, Galatians 6:15, 2 Corinthians 5:17; no more than an infant can beget itself, for it is a generation; begotten again, John 1:13; no more than a stone can turn itself into flesh, Ezekiel 36:26, and Ezekiel 11:19.

Secondly, Faith. Cannot believe. This we have by Christ: Php 1:19, ‘To you it is given in the behalf of Christ, riot only to believe,’ &c. Nothing must be attributed to us: Ephesians 2:1-22, ‘Through faith, not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.’ All must be attributed to Christ: Hebrews 12:2, he is ‘the author and finisher.’ It is the gift of God indeed, may some say, but man may contribute something to obtain it; as riches are his gift, &c. No, says the apostle, it is so his gift as not of ourselves. But though all in faith be not, yet some part. No, it is all from Christ; he is the author and finisher. 1 Corinthians 12:3, ‘No man calls Jesus Lord, but by help of the Holy Ghost.’ But (may be) all men

are not excluded, such only as are sottish, brutish, improve not nature and reason. No; all are excluded, says Christ: John 6:44, ‘No man comes to me except the Father draw.’ Every man must be drawn, or else none will come, will believe; for coming is believing, John 6:35. But (may be) this drawing is but suasion, some such act in God as supposes power in man to believe, if the duty be but declared and urged with moving arguments. No, it is a powerful drawing; God puts forth an infinite power in drawing. So impotent, so averse is every man to faith, as nothing can prevail but the working of the exceeding greatness of his mighty power; as great, as mighty as was requisite to raise Christ from the dead, and set him at his right hand, in despite of all the opposition that principalities and powers could make, Ephesians 1:19-20.

Thirdly, Repentance. Man, without Christ, cannot repent: Acts 5:31, ‘Him has God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance.’ It is Christ’s gift. He gives it as a prince; to none, therefore, but his subjects, those who are in his kingdom, those in whom he rules.

Nothing can draw men to repentance but the regal power of Christ, that power which he exercises at God’s right hand. For the acts of repentance are hatred of sin, sorrow for it, resolution to forsake it, and endeavour its ruin. Now sin is so transcendently dear, lovely, and delightful to a man out of Christ, as nothing but an infinite power can draw him to these acts. He loves it, delights in it more than anything in heaven and earth.

More than liberty. He gives up himself wholly, willingly to be its servant, its slave; when the jubilee is proclaimed, will have his ear bored.

More than time, strength, health, riches; spends all these upon sin. Experience tells us he is prodigal of these in whoredom, drunkenness.

More than his own body, members of it. Lusts are called members, Colossians 3:5; the principal members, eye, hand; most useful, right eye, right hand.

More than his soul. What is the reason the greatest part of the world lose their souls? Because they will not lose their sins to save them. The Lord makes this proposition, Whether will you lose your souls or your sins? The major part by far vote for their sins, and lose their souls merely on that account.

Sin is a man’s self. ‘Let a man deny himself,’ i. e. his sins. It is dearer to him than his whole self, body and soul, and the eternal well being of both; he will suffer both to be cast into hell, and there be eternally tormented, rather than part with one beloved lust.

It is dearer to them than Christ, the Spirit, the Father, &c.

Now since every man naturally does thus doat, is thus mad upon sin, what can turn such transcendent love into hatred, such intense delight into sorrow? None but Christ his power. What can divorce a man from himself? What can make him with indignation cast away that which is dearer to him than eye, hand, soul, but the effectual working of infinite power?

Oh it is a mad, a dangerous mistake, to think you can repent when you list, and so defer it to your deathbed. Oh, repentance is not at your beck, it is the gift of God, and it costs him the expense of an infinite power to work it when you are in health, strength, and best disposed. What will it require when dying? will you put off such a difficult work till you have no strength? think to turn from sin

when you cannot turn in your beds? It is Christ's gift, and he gives it to few; to them, before it is given, it is a peradventure: 2 Timothy 2:25, 'If God peradventure will give them repentance.' We read not that ever he gave it any at that time but one. Will you leave your eternal salvation at an if, at a peradventure? It is ten thousand to one you never repent if you defer it. There is nothing to ground hopes on, much against it.

Fourthly, Love. One out of Christ cannot love Christ, neither amore beneficentiæ nor complacentiæ Not for what he does; for no special favour, no spiritual blessing is vouchsafed but in Christ, Ephesians 1:1-23; nor for what he is, for out of Christ he sees no beauty, tastes no sweetness, though there be nothing else in him; he knows him not, he sees no beauty nor comeliness that he should desire him. Christ is either a stumbling-block or foolishness; he never manifests himself but when he comes to make his abode, John 14:21, John 14:23. Nor does he taste any sweetness in him; none taste the Lord as gracious but those that come to him as a living stone, &c., 1 Peter 2:3-5. He must lie in your bosoms as a bundle of myrrh. No grounds of love, interest, likeness, love.

Fifthly, Hope. Out of Christ, without hope, Ephesians 2:12; Colossians 1:27. 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' If you be not in Christ, he is not in you, and then no hope of glory. All other grounds, civility, morality, external acts of charity, piety, are but sand, and what then will become of the house? Matthew 7:27; Job 11:20, 'Your hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost;' no lively hope. Christ is the life of it: 1 Peter 1:3, 'Begotten again.' There is no more hope of heaven without Christ, than hope of a man's life that is giving up the ghost. Hope in Christ is as an anchor, Hebrews 6:19-20, fastened within the veil, i. e. in heaven, upon Christ gone thither for that purpose, as the high priest into the sanctuary. All other hope is as a spider's web, Job 8:13-15. The hypocrite, those who come nearest Christ, those who seem to be in him, who profess so to others, and sometimes think so themselves, yet because not in him, without hope; seeming union, seeming hope. Those that forget God, the proper character of those who are out of Christ and continue so; for if they did remember God, how dreadful, how terrible he is, a consuming fire, a revenging judge, an enraged enemy, they durst not so continue.

Secondly, Cannot subdue any lust. Jeremiah 13:23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' &c. These may be painted or covered, but not changed. One out of Christ may restrain the outward acts, but not mortify the principle. There can be no formal opposition of sin in such a one, much less victory. Contrary qualities oppose one another in the same subject, as heat and cold. In water, the natural coldness strives with the heat it has from the fire, till it have reduced it to its natural temper; but when the whole subject is possessed by one quality, there is no contention. Sin possesses the whole soul, there is no room for grace until Christ make it; the strong man armed keeps the house, all is quiet, nothing to make opposition.

If there were any, yet no hopes of prevailing without Christ, he only is able to conquer sin; its power transcends all the power in heaven and earth but his. All the power of the creatures, the whole world of natural men, are subdued by it, and made its slaves. Sin reigns over all, the whole world lies in wickedness, fettered, captivated.

There is more strength in a saint to wrestle with sin than in all the natural men in the world; yet sin has been too strong for any saint that ever lived, it has foiled them, they have fallen one time or other.

There was more in Adam, while innocent, to resist sin, than in any saint since; for sin has a party within them, so as they are divided, weakened, and often betrayed by sin within to temptation without. But sin had no such advantage over Adam, yet it overthrew him. The angels were far more able to withstand sin than Adam, had more excellent nature, more capacious of grace, and nearer to God; yet sin prevailed against them, cast them out of heaven into hell, transformed angels into devils, and keeps them in chains of darkness. The devil is as much a slave to sin as a sinful man is to him, led captive at its will; sin says to one, Go, and he goes, &c.

If neither reason, nor holiness, nor innocence, nor perfection, in man or angel, can resist sin, what power, then, is requisite to subdue it? Even the power of him to whom all power is given. It is he that leads captivity captive; it is he only that conquered all, and makes his people conquerors.

3. Cannot improve any ordinance, either to God's glory or their soul's good; not hear, pray, communicate.

Hear. They are deaf, Isaiah 43:8, have ears, and are deaf. Compared to the deaf adder, Psalms 58:4, neither can, nor will hear. But deaf, and stop their ears. So stopped as none can open them but Christ. Isaiah, prophesying of the flourishing kingdom of Christ, Isaiah 35:5, says, 'The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.' Till Christ open the ear, and by it enter into the heart, till he speak a quickening, awakening word, all hearing is no hearing, to no purpose; though an apostle, an angel, Christ himself preach, it is not an engrafted word till it be an engrafting word; till then there is no ground to believe but it is the savour of death, 2 Corinthians 2:16.

Pray. How can they call on him of whom they have not heard? They cannot call Jesus Lord without the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:3; sure then they cannot call on Jesus. 'Behold he prays,' it is said of Paul, Acts 9:11. He thought he prayed before, but he did not so in God's account. God counts that which you call prayer, without heat and life from Christ's Spirit, to be vain babblings, a profanation of his name, taking it in vain, no better than the howling of dogs, Hosea 7:14. No odour sweet, but what Christ offers, Revelation 8:3. It is else an abomination. It is an offering a strange fire, because not kindled from heaven. It is a wonder ye are not struck dead, burned, Leviticus 10:2. Prayers are a sacrifice evangelical. It is essential to a sacrifice to be offered by a priest. Christ is the only priest under the gospel; those that offer without a priest may expect Uzziah's doom.

Obj. If prayer and hearing be so sinful, it is best to omit them.

Ans. Though a man without Christ be in such a dangerous condition, as whatever he doth be sin, yet some sins are more heinous. He sins in praying, but more not to pray; he sins in hearing, but more grievously in refusing to hear. Those services are so acceptable to God, as he is pleased to encourage and reward the resemblance of them, as in Ahab, Nineveh; may defer judgments here, and make future torments more tolerable; while they use the means, they are in the way wherein Christ works.

Communicate. Out of Christ they do it unworthily. The sinfulness and danger of that, see 1 Corinthians 11:29, 'eateth and drinketh damnation,' to judgment temporal, or eternal, or both. It is a sign and seal indeed, but a sign of God's indignation, and a seal of God's curse, and to some a seal of damnation. Those that are in Christ, eat judgment, if unworthily; those that are out of Christ, and continue so, eat damnation. God sometimes inflicts temporal judgments, yea, death itself, on saints: 1 Corinthians 11:30, 'Many sleep.' But he will inflict eternal judgments, eternal death on

others: 1 Corinthians 11:27, ‘Whosoever eat this bread, &c., unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,’ i.e. guilty of some such sin as the Jews, who wounded the body, and spilt the blood of Christ; crucify him, or put him to an open shame. Guilty of high treason against the King of glory, prostituting him in a vile and shameless manner, as Hebrews 10:29, ‘Tread the Son of God under foot, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.’ Such communicating is most horrible profaning of the most precious blood of Christ. Out of Christ ye are no better, in God’s account, than dogs and swine, Matthew 7:6, Php 3:2, Revelation 22:15. When they receive the body of Christ, i.e. that which represents it, it is cast under the feet of swine, and his blood given to be licked by dogs. Outrageous sinners, as much as they can, execute that on Christ which the Lord threatened on Ahab and Jezebel: ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel,’ ‘the dogs shall lick Ahab’s blood,’ 2 Kings 9:10. This is to ‘give children’s bread to dogs,’ Matthew 15:26. He that comes hither without Christ, comes without the wedding-garment, Matthew 22:11. See his doom, Matthew 22:13, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness.’

4. Cannot remove any spiritual distemper. Darkness out of their minds, hardness out of their heart, senselessness or terrors out of the conscience, disorder out of the affections. For the removing of these seem something like to miracles, and require such a power to effect them, as those acts which the Scripture relates as miracles, such a power to enlighten the mind, as at first to bring light out of darkness, or give sight to him that was born blind; as much to pacify a terrified conscience, as to still the tempestuous winds and raging seas; to mollify a hard, stony heart, as to bring water out of the rock; to order the affections, as to joint dry bones; to make a carnal fancy spiritual, as to turn water into wine; to subdue a rebellious appetite, as to cure the possessed with the raging spirit; to cast Satan out of the soul, as out of the body; to purify the heart, as cleanse lepers. A miracle is when something is done, 1, ex nihilo; 2, in subjecto inhabili; 3, sine mediis propriis; out of nothing; in a subject altogether indisposed; without proper means.

Ex nihilo. These are such spiritual qualities as are created, not educed, e potentia materiæ, depend not on matter, as the sounder schoolmen.

Subjecto inhabili. If any disposedness, so remote, as no natural means, nothing but God, can bring into act. There is a total privation, both of act and power, proxima, and from such a privation there is no regress to the habit, but by extraordinary power.

Sine mediis propriis, such as have no native virtue or aptitude to attain the end, as clay to open the eyes. The means used by God, 1, have no proper tendency to these ends and effects; all they have is by institution. They are not appointed because they are effectual means, but are fit means because they are appointed.

2. They have no efficacy but by divine influence. They have not any natural virtue in themselves; what they have is ab extrinseco, from divine assistance and co-operation. God appointed such on purpose to glorify his power, and take us off from dependence on means. What virtue in the foolishness of preaching to make wise to salvation; in the word to quicken, regenerate, sanctify? It was not Christ’s word to the dead man, but his invisible power, that raised him, Luke 7:1-50, so to the sick of the palsy. It is but verbum significativum of itself, it is factivum by co-operation, signifies something of itself, but effects nothing without concurrence. It is but a passive, not a co-operative instrument. It works but per modum objecti, and an object has no active power per se to work upon the organ; it is only an occasion of working, which some force in or about the organ makes use of

(Pemble). Means that have a native power, when fitly and skilfully applied, do always produce their effects, but not when hindered by some extraordinary indisposition. The word, though most seasonably and skilfully applied, many times works nothing; that which makes it efficacious, is absent, not in itself. Those work always, equally, in all alike disposed, not these. Therefore these being so like miracles, require an infinite power, cannot be removed but by Christ. If there be a dark mind, it must continue so for ever, except Christ enlighten it. Christ was sent to this end.

3. Out of Christ men can do nothing as they ought. A clear demonstration. They can do nothing but sin, Ergo, either what they do is sinful, or if lawful in itself, yet they do it sinfully. Take do in its latitude, as comprising thoughts and words, and all sorts of actions, and they are sin or sinful.

(1.) Thoughts. They are thoughts of iniquity, Isaiah 59:7, yea, the most provoking iniquity, abomination, Proverbs 15:26. All, and always, Genesis 6:5.

(2.) Words. No good word can proceed from an evil heart: Matthew 12:34-35, ‘How can ye, being evil, speak good things? The evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things.’ The fruit will be like the tree, Matthew 12:33. Ye cannot expect grapes of thorns, Matthew 7:16. They will be vain, idle, poisonous, worldly, or worse. There must be a new root, a new stock, before there be good fruit; must be engrafted into the true vine before the words can be good grapes.

(3.) Acts, all kinds, natural, civil, religions.

[1.] Natural: eat, drink, sleep, sinful. ‘What is not of faith is sin,’ Romans 14:1-23. Applied by the ancients to prove that even eating, and every act of an unbeliever, is sin; though otherwise expounded now, it is true in this sense. Hebrews 11:6, ‘Without faith it is impossible to please God;’ ‘Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God,’ 1 Corinthians 10:31. There is a command, it is a sin to violate it; but out of Christ men cannot avoid; so far from using natural things spiritually, as they use spiritual things naturally, to low base ends. Their table is a snare, a sin, what they eat ensnares them, Titus 1:15. ‘Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure,’ not the necessities of nature, not sleep or dreams, even their mind and conscience is defiled, much more their fancy.

[2.] Civil acts. Those which their particular calling engages to. ‘The ploughing of the wicked is sin,’ Proverbs 21:4. By a synecdoche all their labours, buying, selling, working, a curse attends all. No curse where no sin; cursed because sinful. Omnis vita infidelium peccatum est, says Anselm, et nihil bonum sine summo bono, i. e. without Christ; all they have and do. Hence they are said to live, walk, dwell in sin, they abide in it; their whole life, all the acts of it; their whole course, all the steps of it are sin, Psalms 1:1. Their walking, their standing, their sitting: when they walk, it is in the counsel of the ungodly; when they stand, it is in the way of sinners; when they sit, it is in the seat of scorners; or if they scorn not holy ways, they despise them.

[3.] Religious acts. Those which may plead exemption, if any; acts of moral virtues are splendida peccata. Etiam quodvirtus videtur esse, peccatum est (Ambrose). Nec placere ullus Deo, sine Deo, potest (Id.). Religious exercises, the sacrifice of the wicked, Proverbs 15:8. Acts of piety or charity, whatever comes under the notion of a sacrifice, is abomination; the sweetest sacrifice, incense, Isaiah 1:13, the greatest abomination; compared to idolatry, Isaiah 66:3, because not in dependence upon, and in reference to, Christ.

Obj. The saints do sin in their best services; their righteousness is as a menstruous rag; in multis offendimus omnes, says James; therefore this seems not peculiar to men out of Christ.

Ans. It is true there are infirmities, defects, imperfections in the best; such as not answering the exactness of the law, requiring perfection, may be called, and are bewailed as, sins. But there is a vast difference betwixt their sinning and others', as will appear by a distinction. Acts may be called, and are, sins, or sinful,—

1. Quoad substantiam, or materialiter; when the act itself, abstracted from circumstances, is forbidden, as murder and adultery. And in this sense religious acts, in or out of Christ, are not sins; for the matter and substance of them is good and commanded.

2. Quoad circumstantiam, or formaliter; so that is a sin which is good in itself, if not well done, out of a good principle, in due manner, for right ends; for these, though accidental to an act, yet are essential to the goodness of it. Hence moral acts plus debent circumstantiæ, quam substantiæ. He that fails in any of these, makes the best act evil: malum est ex quolibet defectu. These are necessary ingredients to every good action; and to fail in any one, divests it of goodness. Now, there may be a double failing: through, 1, want, or total absence, as of light at midnight, no moon or stars; 2, weakness, or imperfection, as of light at twilight. We call things irrational that want reason, as beasts, properly; or that have it, but want the perfect exercise of it, as children, improperly.

This, then, is the answer: unbelievers want those things that are necessary essentially to make an act good, therefore their actions are properly evil. Believers have all the ingredients, but with imperfection, and in weakness; therefore their actions are not properly evil, but rather imperfectly good. Acts are good in themselves in actu signato, from the matter; but in actu exercito, and as acted by us, they cannot be good, without a good principle, a due form, a right end; without Christ, without all these. The want of any one makes an act evil, much more the want of all. Those that have not Christ, have none at all; and so their acts not at all good. Totally evil, not in the parts; want essentials, not degrees only; they do nothing as they ought, because,

1. No good principle; the stream rises no higher than the spring; not out of thankfulness, not out of love, nor out of respect to God's command, nor to the reward rightly apprehended; but out of custom, out of design to gain some temporal advantage; for the loaves, Matthew 23:14, or to get applause; to be seen of men, or out of envy, Php 1:15; to remove some incumbent affliction, then seek him diligently, Hosea 5:15; to escape hell, out of fear.

2. Undue manner; not reverently, diligently, delightfully.

(1.) Irreverently. Not with self-debasing, God-exalting thoughts; without sense of vileness, which is visible in saints in all their approaches; as Abraham, Genesis 18:27, Isaiah 6:5; the publican, who stood afar off; the prodigal, unworthy, and the centurion; 'the four and twenty elders fall down,' Revelation 4:10. High, awful apprehensions of God, his presence and glory. Though these may use the words, yet have nothing that answers them in their spirit, but have rude, common spirits, not as much respect as to an ordinary man, Malachi 1:14.

(2.) Negligently. Careless, with lips only, not with heart and strength; faint wishes, not strong desires, such as that, Psalms 63:1, 'My soul thirsteth for thee,' &c., and 42; not δ■ησις

■νεργουμ■νη, James 5:16, operosa, actuosa, wrought in, possessed with the Spirit. The possessed with evil spirits are called ■νεργο■μενοι. There is a holy possession; they have not such attention as that of the angels, 1 Peter 1:12; the same word, παρακ■πτω, Luke 24:12, John 20:5, John 20:8. Not such praises as David: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; all that is within me, bless his holy name.' Their charity not παρ■ξυσμος, Hebrews 10:24, but παρ■λυσις. There is a palsy in it, a deadness, a benumbedness; either cold or lukewarm, faint and heartless; not upon some particular indisposition, but its ordinary temper.

(3.) Unwillingly. Not willingnesses, free-will offerings, Psalms 110:1-7, but as a tax, grievous; the more spiritual and heavenly the employment, the more tedious; soon weary: Malachi 1:13, 'What a weariness is it! when will the Sabbath be done?' No delight; far from David's temper: Psalms 84:10, 'A day in thy courts is better than a thousand.' They neglect opportunities; little in private or secret duties; draw back, as from that they have an averseness to.

3. No right end. This has a strong influence into the goodness of an act. Non actibus, sed finibus pensantur officia: not the acts, but the ends, give weight to a duty. Not the general ends: 1, not to please God, but rather to please men; 2, not to glorify him, but to advance themselves; 3, not to enjoy him, content with duty without God. Nor particular ends: to satisfy conscience, not to have communion with Christ.

Obj. But if men, out of Christ, cannot but sin in performing religious duties, it is best to omit them.

Ans. 1. By way of concession and caution. It is true; unregenerate men are reduced to a necessity of sinning, but it is through their own default. This is the great misery of that state, the greatest imaginable, that they can do nothing but sin. But it was man's sin that plunged him into this misery. God made man upright, and so he might have stood and walked, but he found out many inventions; and this is one of them, one of the worst, that he ensnared himself into a necessity of sinning. If he worship not God, he sins; because he is obliged to this, both by God's command and his own being. If he worship God, he sins; because he does it not from good principles, in a due manner, for a right end. If he pray not, he sins; because he is commanded to call on God, and thereby acknowledge his dependence on him. If he pray, he sins; because not with faith, fervency, &c. If he hear not, he sins, because God speaks to him; if he hear, he sins, because he mixes not the word with faith. If he serves not God, he sins, because God enjoins and expects service; if he serve him, he sins, because he serves him not in spirit. If he eat not, he sins, that would be self-murder; if he eat, he sins, because he doth it not to God's glory. Sin lies at his door, let him go backward or foward, he falls into it; but it was sin that brought him to it. Now, to neglect duty because he cannot perform it without sin, when his sin brought him to this exigence, is to add sin to sin.

Ans. 2. In such necessities, where evil is unavoidable, the less evil must be chosen. If you cannot but sin, it is better to be guilty of the least than the greatest sins. Now, it is a less sin to serve God amiss than not to serve him at all; better to do what ye can than do nothing; a total omission is a more heinous sin than an undue performance; better to offend in manner only than both in matter and manner; it is bonum, though not bene. There is a goodness in the acts performed, their matter and substance is good, though they want other ingredients of goodness. But omissions are purely evil, without any mixture of good; there is more contempt in total neglects, and so more provocation. You provoke God more by omitting prayer than by lukewarm, superficial

performance; and so in hearing. The saints may allege, ‘The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment,’ &c., Matthew 12:41. We may collect the nature of the sin by the degree of the punishment; the Ninevites’ punishment shall be more tolerable, who performed but outward acts of religion, without inward affections, than those who would be brought to neither outward nor inward conformity; therefore omissions are more provoking sins than outward, though otherwise sinful performances. God, then (whatever he does now), will render to every man according to his works. It is better to pray as well as you can (though you cannot as well as you should) than not to pray at all; the omission is totally sinful, performance but partially; that is more wilful, this is in part necessary.

Ans. 3. If necessity of sinning were sufficient ground to omit religious acts, it is so also for omitting natural acts; if it be a reasonable plea for exemption from those, it is so also for exemption from these. We cannot eat, sleep, &c., but we sin, no more than we can hear and pray without sin; yet these are as necessary for your souls as those for your bodies; these as necessary as you are rational, as those as you are sensible; the necessity of sinning is equal. Now, since the reason is equal, yet men urge it unequally, for omissions in one kind, and not in the other: it is a sign that sinfulness, urged as a reason to omit holy duties, is but a pretence. The true reason is, their averseness to the holiness of the duties, not to the sinfulness that attends them.

Ans. 4. God rewards the outward performance though sinful, but there is nothing but wrath revealed against omissions; Ergo, no reason for it. Holy services are so acceptable to God, as he rewards the very resemblance of them, though but obscure. The lively actings of grace are so lovely in God’s eye, as he seems to be pleased with the picture of them. It is manifest in Ahab, 1 Kings 21:29; and Nineveh, Jonah 3:10; who had presently perished but for their outward humiliation; this procured a reprieve.

Reasons why a man out of Christ can do nothing.

Want of the principle of acting, defect in active faculties and members, no spiritual action without spiritual faculties, absence of active qualities and habits. What can a carcase do without a soul? He wants a soul, spirit. Or what can a soul do in itself (immanent acts) without faculties? or in the body (transient acts) without members? or by these, if altogether indisposed and disabled to act? Or what can faculties and members do without active qualities and habits, since they do nothing immediately but by the help and mediation of these? To use the metaphor in the text, ‘What fruit can a tree bear without a root? or a tree rooted without branches? or by them broken and obstructed? or branches, if withered, without sap, not qualified? He that wants Christ wants that which is answerable in a spiritual sense to all these.

1. Want of the principle of action. The soul is the principle of action in a man, and the Spirit of Christ in a Christian, no act without. What the soul is to a man, that Christ is to a Christian, all imperfection separated. Spiritus Christi forma ecclesiæ. Galatians 2:20: ‘Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’ Even as we say of the body it lives, yet not the body but the soul lives in it. The body separated from the soul is dead, so a man [out] of Christ is dead, Ephesians 2:1, Colossians 2:13. And what can a dead man do? Spiritual life is the result, the issue of the soul’s union with Christ, as natural life of the soul’s union with the body. Action cannot be without life, life cannot be without a soul. Every degree or kind of life springs from a soul suitable; vegetative, sensitive, rational life, from a vegetative, sensitive, rational soul. Now, as there is a degree of life

above these, a spiritual life, so there must be a soul a degree above these, or something equivalent answerable to one, and this is Christ, who therefore is said to dwell in us by faith; this is the copula, and he is said to be our life, John 14:6, Colossians 3:4, and to give life, John 6:33, to quicken, &c., so that he is a soul virtually though not formally; as necessary to the life and activity of a Christian as the soul to the life and actings of a man. No action without life, no life without a soul; neither without Christ.

2. Defect of faculties and members, the instruments of action. A man out of Christ wants spiritual faculties. He is wholly what Paul complains of in part, carnal, Romans 7:14. 'The carnal mind is enmity,' Romans 8:7; not only enmity but impotency, 1 Corinthians 2:14. No more apprehend spirituals than a blind man can see colours, therefore called blind, Revelation 3:17; Isaiah 43:8, 'Bring forth the blind people that have eyes.' Eyes they have indeed, but see not; for, being constantly fixed on lower objects, they can no more see spiritual objects than one eye can see both heaven and earth at once. And as they want the prime spiritual knowing faculty, so the prime spiritual moving faculty. The will is carnal, there is a foreskin of carnalness upon the heart; it cannot move spiritually till it be circumcised, Deuteronomy 30:6, Romans 2:29; Jeremiah 9:26, it is old, gross; Matthew 13:15, fat; Isaiah 6:10, hard; Psalms 95:8, stony; Ezekiel 11:19, deceitful; Jeremiah 17:9, desperately wicked.

Though they have these faculties, yet they are wholly disabled for, and indisposed to, spiritual acts. What can a perforated memory retain? A sieve can hold no water. What can a seared conscience be sensible of to the soul's advantage? It is seared in part as to morals, wholly as to spirituals. If a body be organised, have members, yet if they be bound, obstructed, or maimed, how can they act? Man's faculties are bound, he is Satan's captive, fettered with sins, loaded with fetters, obstructed, no passage from heart or head, for active spirits; there can be no conveyance without union; dissolutio continui, maimed; the great fall we had in Adam broke all, put all out of joint. If a particular fall broke David's bones, Psalms 51:8, when he fell but from sense and degrees, but from one storey, much more this from the height of happiness and enjoyments. A failing may put one out of joint, as Galatians 6:1. The word rendered restore, &c., is to set in joint, καταρτιζετε. How can a man walk with his legs broken, out of joint, or work with arms and hands wounded, maimed? A deadly wound we have by sin; men out of Christ are halt and maimed, Luke 14:1-35, both Jews, Luke 14:21, and Gentiles, Luke 14:23, mancos claudosque. Nay, considered without a soul, they are no apter for action than those dry bones in Ezekiel's vision were fit for motion, Ezekiel 37:1-28, until the Lord caused breath to enter into them.

3. Absence of active qualities. As the soul cannot act without faculties, their instruments, so faculties cannot act without some qualities, which either concur as causes, or are required as necessary conditions, causæ sine quibus non, without which there can be no acts. The mind cannot discourse or argue without knowledge, nor apprehend without species, images, representations of its objects. The will cannot choose without liberty; the eye cannot see without its humours, or any that move without heat. Even so no spiritual act without a spiritual quality, and no such qualities without Christ. How can a man believe without faith, or mourn for sin without repentance, or be fervent in service without zeal, or expect happiness without hope, or affect union to God without love, debase himself without humility, or submit in affliction without patience? These are formal acts, and cannot be expected but by their proper form, no more than the fire can burn without heat, or water wet without moisture, or the sun illuminate without light. It is

impossible. There can be no spiritual act without such qualities, and no gracious qualities without Christ. Spiritual qualities are spiritual blessings, and the Lord blesses none out of Christ with these, Ephesians 1:3. In Christ, tanquam in capite, unde in membra manant, he that is not a member is not capable. So in remote imperate acts. How can he mix the word with faith who hath none? How can he pray in spirit who is not spiritual? How can he sing with grace in his heart [who has no grace in his heart]? How can he serve the Lord with fear who is void of fear? How can he have his conversation in heaven who has no heavenly mind? The soul is not only void of gracious qualities, but possessed with the contrary; no sound part from the highest faculty to the lowest. The mind, quoad apprehensionem, dull, blind; quoad judicium, wavering, erroneous, prejudiced; quoad cogitationem, vain, unfixed, independent, foolish, carnal. The memory receptive, retentive of evil, and that only; the conscience senseless or desperate, accuse when it should excuse, &c.; the will perverse, will when it should not will, rebellious, chooses when it should reject, rejects when it should choose, yields when it should resist, and resists when it should submit; the affections misplaced, disordered, immoderate, violent; fancy vain, carnal, brutish, no spiritual light nor holy order, nor due rectitude in any power of the soul till Christ come into it. Spiritual qualifications are part of his retinue: when he comes they attend him, when he is absent the soul is at a loss. Without these it cannot act spiritually, and cannot have them without Christ.

Use. This informs us of man's misery without Christ. One main design of the ministry of the gospel is to convince sinners of misery. Man will not come to Christ until convinced. 'The whole need no physician,' those who think themselves whole. Survey it as you love your souls, seriously meditate on it, let no thoughts thrust out these. Suffer yourselves to be convinced, be not afraid; it is safe, if not pleasing. To help you, observe my former method. This misery is positive, transcendent, perfect, unavoidable, increasing.

1. Justice will be satisfied. It is as dear to God as any attribute, it is himself. God will glorify it, and no way but by satisfaction; it will pursue the sinner, as Asahel did Abner, 2 Samuel 2:19, 2 Samuel 19:21. Is it nothing to be under the curse, all the curses of the law and gospel, heavier than mountains, more dreadful than all the menaces of men or devils; under wrath, fiery indignation, deadly hatred, as the wrath of a king, as the roaring of a lion? This wrath is heavier than a millstone about your neck. In danger of hell, but a step betwixt you and it! Your life is but a span. How can a man sleep upon a precipice? You are not certain of life for an hour, but sure of hell if you die out of Christ!

2. Transcendent. More miserable than sensitive and inanimate creatures; they act in conformity to God's will, and so declare his glory, and improve all the strength received to this end. Miserable man acts nothing for, but all against, God, is always cross to God and his designs. So the best is worse than the beasts that perish, the happiest more miserable than the worm or toad.

3. Perfect. Without mixture of happiness real; no degrees, no pledges, no hopes, no peace, but through false intelligence, mispersuasion; cry peace, peace, when sudden destruction cometh upon them, as on a woman in travail. Inquire of peace, as 2 Kings 9:18; when destroyers are at hand, Isaiah 48:22. No safety. In the midst of enemies, deadly enemies, above, below, within, without. God incensed, the devil and all creatures ready to smite when God gives commission, and nothing suspends it but a provoked and abused patience. Oh what danger! Those are his greatest enemies whom he most trusts and loves, sin and Satan in his bosom; follows their counsels who

thirst after his ruin; like Delilah to Samson, like Joab to Amasa, 2 Samuel 20:9-10. No riches. Naked, famishing, yet without money, lie like Lazarus, but die like Dives; the state of their souls is like Lazarus's body. No success. All tends to the ruin of their souls: it is worst when best. A successful sinner is like a ship carried with full sails against a rock; all gales of prosperity do but hasten you to hell, quicken your voyage thither; he is but made fat to the slaughter. No pleasures. None that are truly delightful, but poisoned; gilded pills, please the eye and palate, but poison the stomach, and are bitterness in the end, as James 3:8, it is said of the tongue, 'full of deadly poison.' There is death in the pot, nay, they are dead already, 1 Timothy 5:6, Revelation 18:7-8. No pledges. No relation to God that will afford comfort or advantage; not his children, but the children of the devil; they are of him as a father, his offspring, bear his image, receive a portion with him, that which is prepared for him and his angels. Not friends, but enemies. In league with sin and Satan until in covenant; lie under the dint of terrible threatenings, Psalms 37:20, 'The wicked shall perish,' &c. Wound the head, &c., a deadly wound, Psalms 68:21; consume as the fat of lambs, because exposed to his wrath, who is a consuming fire; Psalms 97:3, 'A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.' Not servants until members. Slaves of Satan, led captive by him at his will; servants of sin, Romans 6:16, inferior, worse than that which is worst of all things.

4. Unavoidable misery. They can do nothing for themselves; heaven and earth can do nothing, only Christ; will do nothing until in Christ: it cannot be avoided but by doing or suffering. To do, is impossible; to suffer, is intolerable; for sufferings of man, to satisfy, must be eternal. It is an ease in misery to hope for freedom. Here is no hopes without Christ, no promise, no attribute; faithfulness acts not but in performing promises; mercy will not run but in its proper channel, that is Christ; power cannot help without infringement of justice; justice is an enemy till satisfied; wisdom has found out no way for satisfaction but Christ, and if God cannot or will not, how can the angels, saints, or other creatures? They all say, as he, 2 Kings 6:27, 'If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?'

5. Increasing wrath. Swells bigger and bigger till it overflow. As the measure of iniquity fills, so the measure of misery, like Ezekiel's waters, Ezekiel 47:3-4, to the knees, loins, and then unfordable. Adam left a treasury of misery to his posterity, and every child adds to it, every sin casts something into it; every thought, word, act, is a sin till in Christ. Oh the multitude of thoughts, what a black account! You think thoughts are free, but the Lord has manifested as much indignation against thoughts as actions. These destroyed a whole world at once, Genesis 6:5; cast angels out of heaven; captivity, Jeremiah 6:19; Simon Magus, Acts 8:22; indignation at the last day, 1 Corinthians 4:5. Words, you say, are wind, but such as will carry into the Dead Sea: Matthew 12:36, 'Every idle word;' 'By words ye shall be condemned,' James 3:6; 'The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, sets on fire the whole course of nature, and is set on fire of hell,' as it is kindled there, so it kindles it. And acts of all sorts, Romans 2:5, 'treasure up wrath.' If the better sort of actions treasure up wrath, what do the worst? If, when you call on God, how much more when you swear and blaspheme? If acts of charity, much more acts of intemperance, drunkenness, &c. If, when you hear, much more when you neglect and contemn the gospel and revile the messengers of it. If in acts of justice, what in acts of direct fraud and oppression? If those cast in a mite, these cast in a talent. Oh misery! Justice is already exasperated, ye daily more incense it; God's wrath is already kindled, ye daily every moment add fuel to it; you are already at the pit-brink of hell, and

every hour draw nearer to it, and heat the furnace of indignation seven times hotter. Better never have been born than live without Christ; better you had perished in infancy, than continue out of Christ; the longer ye live, the more miserable.

Quest. If it be such a misery to be out of Christ, how shall I know if I be out of him? Those that are not solicitous are certainly out of Christ.

Use. 2. Of examination. Try this whether you are in Christ; come to this trial as a business of great concernment. It is not a trial for your estates: you would be careful and solicitous there; nor for your lives only: there you would be attentive, serious. If one should tell you that the greatest part of this congregation were to be visited, though insensible of it, with a dangerous disease, those that did not discover it would certainly die, and should offer symptoms to discover it; would not every one be fearful, careful, diligent in attending? So it is here.

Signs from the nature of the union in general.

1. Separation from that which is at great distance from Christ; nothing is further distant from Christ than sin; he that is in Christ is separated from sin, in judgment, affection, practice; judges it dangerous, deformed, bitter, nothing more, not afflictions, &c. He that thinks sin profitable, lovely, pleasing, is out of Christ.

Affection. He sorrows, mourns in secret, weeps with a broken heart, as for an only son, Zechariah 12:10; shame, not in respect of men only, but God, as against mercy. Fear, not as it brings ruin, but as it separates from Christ, suspends his influence, &c. Hatred, not anger only; hate it as sin, all sin; seeks its ruin.

Practice. Avoids it, all occasions; flies from it as from a serpent; if once overtaken, seldom twice, with the same sin. He that lives in sin, commits the same sin often, drunkenness, whoredom, Sabbath breaking, cozening, omission of duties, public or private, is not in Christ. If you are in Christ, you do not absent from ordinances, frequent bad company. 2 Timothy 2:19, the Lord will own none for his, nor should any profess the name of Christ, much less pretend to union with him, who departs not from all iniquity; from all, quite a great way, from the sight and occasions, Acts 3:26. It is a blessed fruit of this union to turn from his iniquities, those wherein you have lived and delighted, 1 John 3:6, ο■ ποιε■ι ■μαρτ■αν, i. e. non dat operam peccato. Non simplex actio, sed cum studio et voluptate conjuncta; if conscience condemn you of wilful and customary omissions or commissions, ye need no further inquiry.

2. Likeness. Where there is oneness, there must be likeness. He that is in Christ is one with him, therefore like him in graces, affections, actions; such virtues, and so exercised.

Virtue. 1 Peter 1:15, and 1 Peter 2:9, as not of equality, but resemblance; contempt of the world, self-denial, humility.

Christ contemned the world. The world loved not him, nor he it; cared not for him, nor he for it; the riches, honours, pleasures of it were contemptible to him. What do ye most desire, that one thing only or principally? What do ye esteem? What do ye value yourselves and others by? What do you pursue in the first place? If it be the world, you are its children, not the members of Christ.

Self-denial. Christ sought not his own will, nor his own glory, John 5:41, John 14:14. What do ye when God's will and yours come in competition? What is your design, your interests, or his glory; pleasing and advancing yourselves, or honouring him?

Humility. Matthew 11:29, those that are come to Christ have learned this. Are you cross, furious, impatient, revengeful, trample on inferiors, despise equals, undervalue superiors? Do you make yourselves a rule to others, and condemn those who are not of your mind and way, or it may be of your humour? Does your humility spring from the lowness of your outward condition, or sense of sinfulness, misery, spiritual wants, free mercy, unworthiness? Do you receive the word with meekness, as new born babes, willing to be guided, to submit to it? Acting with delight, do you count it your meat and drink to do the will of God? Have you such objects for your affections as Christ, delight in saints, in soul prosperity? &c.

3. Propinquity. Union implies this. Those that are far off from Christ are not in him. Are you continually with him by thoughts? These present Christ to us, and make us present with him. Are thoughts of Christ more frequent, delightful, consistent than of others? Is he not in all your thoughts? Do ye crowd out these? Are they strangers, or unwelcome? He is most where Christ is most, i. e. in his ordinances, in his banqueting house, sits down under Christ's shadow with great delight. How are you affected to the ordinances, praying, hearing? Are they dear, sweet, desirable? Is one day in the house of God better than a thousand, as it was to David? Psalms 84:10. Do you thirst for the Sabbath ere it come? And why? Not for other respects, but Christ's presence? Do you omit wilfully, or upon small occasions? Are they tedious? Do you complain of length in others, and curtail yours? Is idleness or worldly employments more pleasing? 'When will the Sabbath be done?' Those that are united are always in him, with him, but this union and presence is not always alike manifested. The sense and comfort of it is to be found in ordinances, hence esteem, desires: 'When shall I come and appear?' Psalms 42:2, Psalms 27:4.

4. Adherence to Christ. This is included in union; for it is not a corporeal, essential, or personal union, but rather moral and spiritual. And this union is better expressed by adherence than inherence; the soul spiritually cleaving to Christ, and clinging about him, and a strong tendency to more intimacy, fear of estrangement and separation. Does your soul cling to Christ, clasp about him, as ivy about the oak? If you have no strong inclinations after him, and resolutions to cleave to him, as in Ruth, Ruth 1:16; if you are not fearful to offend, careful to avoid all unkindnesses that may alienate from him; if you refuse to hear, or answer not his call, accept not his invitations, slight his messages, reject his motions, refuse admission to him, can be content without his company; if anything else will please you in his absence, then you are not in him.

5. Participation of Christ. He that is in Christ partakes of the nature and influence of Christ, as the branch of the nature and sap of the tree, Romans 11:17. A branch of a wild olive, grafted into a true olive, partakes of the root and fatness thereof, changes its nature, &c. If Christ be in you, there is such a change, as the Scripture expresses, sometimes by creation, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15; by renovation, Romans 12:2, Titus 3:5; by generation, Galatians 4:19, John 3:3; born of God, 1 John 3:9; born of the Spirit, John 16:1-33. Is Christ formed in you? Have you experience of the pangs of the new birth? Is there an universal change? Are old things passed away, and all things become new,—mind, apprehension? Can you see spiritual things more clearly? Colossians 3:10. Have you a new judgment of persons, things, state, actions? Is your

conscience tender? Does it smite you sooner and more for small, secret evils, such as others make nothing of? Is your will pliable to good, inflexible to evil? Have you new intentions, resolutions, affections well fixed, moderated to lawfuls? Is your conversation not worldly, sensual, profane, &c.? Is it such as becomes the gospel, adorned with the fruits of holiness and righteousness?

6. Sympathy with Christ. Co-suffering, and sense of his suffering. He that is in Christ will be sensible of what is done against him. Christ's sufferings for men are finished, but his sufferings by men are still continued, blasphemies, reproaches, contempts, opinions and practices dishonourable to Christ. Those, then, who make Christ suffer, are not in him. Those who deny his glory, profane his name, contemn his words, slight his beauty and love, and the expressions of it, desert his ways of truth or holiness. Those who are not sensibly affected with these in others do not mourn in secret, Psalms 69:9, Romans 15:3, prefer it not before their own credit and interests. But such as are as tender of the honour and interest of Christ, as if it were their own, resent it, as though their own reputation and interest suffered thereby, are in him. The ligaments and bonds of this union are uniting graces, faith and love. Faith unites Christ to us and love unites us to Christ. Christ dwelleth in us by faith, Ephesians 3:1-21; and we dwell in him by love, 1 John 4:16.

Love. He that is in Christ loves him; he that is so near Christ, sees and tastes that which constrains him to love. This is a sure character of love which Christ gives, John 14:15, 'Keep my commandments.' This is not only a sign of love, but union: 1 John 3:24, 'He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him.' Is this your resolution, as it was David's? Psalms 119:106. When you read and hear as they, Jeremiah 42:5-6, do you resolve sincerely what they did but feignedly? Do you labour to convince your judgments, make your hearts submit, and your lives conformable? What is your custom, after conviction and clear manifestation of God's will? Do ye forget, or neglect, run cross to it, put it off with excuses, say, The Lord is not so strict as you are made to believe; you see none so obedient, or time enough hereafter, or the Lord be merciful to me in this, I may be saved though I be not so punctual?

Delight. Psalms 112:1, 'Delighteth greatly,' &c.; as much as formerly in pursuing carnal designs. Is it your meat and drink to do his will? or are his commandments grievous, hard sayings, the land cannot bear them? Are all his ways pleasant, those commands that cross your interests, lusts, humours? Do you not overlook the least, nor excuse you from the most weighty, nor waive the strictest?

Faith. He that is not in the faith, is not in Christ. Now faith, to describe it in its lowest degree, is a consent to take Christ as God offers him. He offers him, not only as a Priest, but a King, both as a Prince and a Saviour. Are you as willing that Christ should rule you as save you? Do you desire as truly to be freed from sin as from hell? Is the filthiness of sin grievous, and not only the guilt and damnation of it? Do you desire holiness as truly as heaven; not content with pardon without purity? Is the dominion of sin as terrible as its wages? If you divide what God has joined in offering Christ, you have not received him; if you care not for Christ at all, or desire him only to save you from hell, can be content to live without Christ all your lives, and desire him only at death to free you from misery and wrath to come; if the sceptre, the yoke, the strict ways, the holy paths of Christ, be not desirable in your account, you have no reason to think you are in Christ. Resolve this question, If you might be assured that you should never be damned for your sins, would you leave sin? Or

thus, If you might be saved without holiness, would you desire holiness? Would you follow it?

2. Characters from metaphors. That in the text, Christ is the vine, believers branches. By such means as you may discover a branch to be in the vine, you may know if you be in Christ. There are three signs; growth, pruning, fruitfulness.

(1.) Growth. That branch which grows not is either dead or separated from the vine. If you stand still, or run round in a circle of duties, without making any progress, if you grow not better every day proportionably to the means, mercy, light that you enjoy, you are not in Christ. You hear, that is better, &c., but are you improved by hearing? Do you hear with understanding, increase in knowledge? Does your light beget heat, kindle your affections? and do you manifest it in your conversation, walking answerable to the gospel?

You pray; but do you pray every day better, more fervently with the heart, from a sense of spiritual wants, so sensibly and importunately, as one ready to famish cries for bread, pinched with soul wants, as one fainting for thirst? Do you pray more spiritually; earnest not only for temporals, but spirituals; not only to be freed from hell, but to be made fit for heaven; as much for holiness as happiness? You have good motions sometimes, what becomes of them? Do you nourish them till they grow into resolutions? and do not these end but in endeavours? and are your endeavours visible in your life? Those that are in Christ grow daily in all things, Ephesians 4:15. Those that grow worse, or not better, or not in the best, in grace, in knowledge, from good materially, to good in principle and manner, are not in Christ.

(2.) Pruning, John 15:2. The husbandman will not take pains to cut off luxuriances from branches that are withered or broken off, he prunes only those in the vine. Has the Father pruned you, cut off all inordinate motions from your hearts, and acts from your lives, or cut them so as they cannot grow? Are all actions exorbitant, such as become not a holy profession, cut off, separated from your conversation? 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 4:22. Is all corrupt communication cut off from your lips? Ephesians 4:29. Not profane, unclean, deceitful, but good, edifying, gracious. Are sinful thoughts, projects, reasonings, cut off from your minds? 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. If in Christ, all are subject to him, no speculative wickedness, no providing for the flesh, Romans 13:14, no reasoning against Christ, &c. Are all inordinate affections cut off from the heart? Galatians 5:24. Have you no delight in sin, to act or remember it, no desire to return to Egypt, no lusting after the flesh-pots, no love to the world, no more than it hath to Christ'? John 15:19; Colossians 3:5–9. Are you mortified, crucified, dead to old lusts, take no more pleasure in them than Abraham in Sarah when dead? Genesis 23:4. Would you have them dead and buried, not in hopes of a resurrection, but so as not to rise again? Are your lusts alive? Do you act them openly; or if there be some restraints upon outward acts, fear, or shame, or other carnal, selfish enforcements, do you nourish them in your thoughts. Do they live, and move, and command in your affections? Do covetousness, uncleanness, intemperance, pride, malice, &c., live within you, though they appear not as formerly in your lives?

(3.) Fruitfulness. That branch is in the vine that is fruitful, beareth not only leaves, but fruit, good, ripe, seasonable, and much. He is only in Christ that is fruitful, John 15:2, John 15:4-5; filled with 'the fruits of righteousness,' Php 1:11; 'the fruits of the Spirit,' Galatians 5:22. He that is fruitful has every grace, and the exercise, the acts of every grace; both confidence and humility, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, spiritual poverty and contentment, heavenly-mindedness and diligence in his

particular calling, love and hatred.

Acts. These are actually fruits; grace, but fundamentally. Without the acts of grace you are no more fruitful than a vine in winter. Many acts, much fruit. Are you acquainted with the life of faith; not only faith to make you alive, but faith to live by? To live by faith is to make every act of life an act of faith; to pray in faith, hear, walk, work, eat in faith; act it on all its objects, attributes, offices of Christ, promises, relations, providences, experiences, functions of the Spirit, the person of Christ; in all its acts, recumbency, application, confidence. Do you cast yourselves, and the burthen of your affairs upon God, and there rest? What then means these torturing cares and indirect means? Do you use to apply promises particularly, do all in the strength of the promise? And rises it so high as triumph over dangers, doubts, difficulties? Can you trust him with all, for all temporals as well as spirituals, and upon disadvantage? Do you walk in fear, as seeing him who is invisible, with awful apprehensions, reverence, holy abasement? Do you act it on all its objects; not only justice, but glory, mercy, purity, omnisciency? Do you fear, not only to suffer, but to offend; and that because it is a dishonour, contrary to his pure nature, and a base return for mercy?

Love. Do you know the constraints of love? Is there a vein of love runs in every act, to make it sprightful and lively? Do you hear his voice because you love him, seek his face because you love him, relieve his members because you love him, think and speak of him because you love him? Are you diligent in worldly affairs because you would be serviceable, and desire to be serviceable out of love? Are you diligent in holy duties because you would enjoy him, and desire to enjoy him out of love? Is your design and endeavour an act of love, in acts natural, civil, religious? Are you diligent in doing, and ready and cheerful to suffer, out of love? Is it your grief and affliction that you fall short hereof, and do you count it your happiness to be always under the constraints of love, to have your whole life influenced by it?

2. Metaphor. Believers are in Christ as stones in a building, whereof Christ is sometimes called the corner stone, Matthew 21:42, Acts 4:11, Ephesians 2:20; sometimes the foundation, 1 Corinthians 3:11; they are ‘living stones,’ 1 Peter 2:4, 5. This affords three characters: 1. stedfastness; 2. dependence; 3. uniformity.

(1.) Stedfastness. A stone laid upon a sure foundation in a well compacted structure is not easily moved. One in Christ is stedfast, unmoveable, not tossed with every wind of doctrine, nor overthrown with every temptation. Do you yield to sins that have no visible temptation, as swearing; or to temptations at the first motion and assault, in judgment or practice? Are you overthrown by weak temptations, such as nature can resist, such as have no advantage from within? Do you fall frequently? Is your life a falling-sickness? or do you return to it when temptation returns? Loose stones may be removed at pleasure.

(2.) Dependence. Stones in a building depend one on another, all upon the foundation. Their strength is dependence. Is yours so? Do you live in continual dependence on Christ? Being sensible of weakness to bear Christ’s yoke, do you run to him for support? In sense of difficulties in holy actings, sense of your impotency, convinced that no strength is sufficient, but some without, and that only in Christ; is your constant recourse to him upon all occasions for it? Is your life a leaning upon Christ; as the spouse? Song of Solomon 8:5. Do you make new applications to him in all your undertakings, sighing after him, resting on him? Do you do all in his strength?

(3.) Uniformity. It is a curious structure, a temple. In such buildings the stones are uniform; not one part rough and another polished, but all regular. Do you make conscience of all sins, all duties, to avoid the one, to perform the other? Do you not leave one sin to live in another, gross, secret, beloved, common? Do you not do one duty, and omit another, but do all public and private, and secret meditation, heart-searching examination, self-judging, secret mourning, strict watch over heart and ways, inward motions, and outward acts; not acts of common honesty only, but charity, by relief, and by counsel, admonition, and reproof? And acts of piety, do you not hear only, but attend, believe, remember, meditate, practise? Do you not pray only, but watch, trust, expect, and conform your life to your prayers? Quicquid fit propter Deum, æqualiter fit. What is done out of respect to God, is done equally, uniformly. He that does any part of his will sincerely for him, out of respect to him, will decline no part of his will, have respect to all.

Use of Exhortation. To get into Christ.

Motive. The strongest is necessity, here is the greatest. If you do not, you are most miserable; if you do, you are most happy. The misery of not being in Christ appears from the former discourse; and further, from ver. 6, 'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.'

(1.) Cast forth, ■κβ■λλεται ■ξω. Cast out of God's favour, no good word, kind look, gracious act; out of his household, not his servants; he that commits sin is the servant of sin. Out of Christ's jurisdiction, not his subjects, but rebels, will not have him for their King; not his disciples, but Satan's, will not have him for their Prophet. He will not be their Priest; shall they have benefit by his sufferings, who continue to make him suffer? Nor shall they partake in his intercession; he prays for none but those that are in him, or in the way to him. 'I pray not for the world, but for those that thou hast given me out of the world,' John 17:9.

(2.) Withered, ξηρ■ινεται. No beauty, no more than we see in a withered stick; no life, dead, alienated from the life of God, Ephesians 4:1-32. They live the life of the devil; no leaves, nothing to shroud from wrath, hide from justice; no fruit but fruits to death, pernicious fruit, such as endangers the tree that bears it; such as Deuteronomy 32:32, 'The vine is the vine of Sodom,' &c.; useless, Ezekiel 15:2-3; obnoxious, Isaiah 5:4-6; and good reason, for it dishonours God, Isaiah 5:8.

(3.) Men gather them, συν■γεται. As men gather dried sticks, so the devils gather wicked men. As good angels are employed about saints, so the devils about these. They are excommunicated in the court of heaven from society with angels and saints; delivered over to Satan, to be ruled and rewarded by him. He abides in Christ, in whom Christ's words abide. By the same reason Satan abides in them, because his words, his suggestions abide in them. 'His ye are whom you obey.' There are but two commanders in the world, the God of heaven, and the god of the world. He has soul-possession, if not bodily, dwells in them, and acts them: as the Holy Spirit acts the saints, so the evil spirits these. Satan 'works effectually in the children of disobedience.' They are gathered, and bound over by Satan to the great session.

(4.) Cast into the fire, ε■ς π■ρ β■λλεται. This is the doom, and will be the end of all that continue out of Christ, barrenness entitles them to it: Hebrews 6:8, 'That which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.'

(5.) Burn them, κα■εται. Keep them in the fire till they be burned. Those that continue out of Christ will not only be cast into the fire, but kept there burning; only with this difference from other withered branches, though they shall be always burning, yet they will never be consumed.

2. The happiness of those that are in Christ. Take all the branches in one bundle: that expression, 'If you abide in me,' &c., 'Ask what you will,' Hebrews 6:7, 'and it shall be given you,' a large grant as the heart of a man or angel can desire; not as Ahasuerus to Esther 5:3, 'Ask to the half of my kingdom;' but what you will, heaven, or earth, or both, and all in both: if it be good, that is the only limitation, and this does not straiten the privilege, but enhance the worth of it. That which is not good, is not worth asking or giving. So the sense is this, 'Ask what you will,' if it be worth asking, if it be worth giving. Oh the sweetness, the largeness of this privilege, the happiness of those that partake of it! This grant, as it is large, so secure, the best security in heaven, the bond of Christ, his word, promise, obligation; no other condition of it but this, 'If you abide in me.' If a great prince, rich, powerful, should make such a promise, ask my son, my kingdom, my treasure, all that I have or can do; how happy would we think the condition of such a favourite! Nay, they have not only this happiness by way of promise, in words, de futuro, but actually, in hand, in words, de præsenti. 'All are yours, ye are Christ's, 1 Corinthians 3:23. Interest in him gives interest in all; union with him, possession of all. All is an exposition of what ye will. Man's desires are infinite, nothing will satisfy but all; therefore Christ, who is determined to enhappy all his, will satisfy their desires to the utmost, and gives all, all that heart can desire; himself, and all with him.

All that he is, as God; his attributes, essence, subsistence; as mediator, his offices, your king, priest, prophet, and the acts of it; as man, his mind; he is ever mindful of you, you are never out of his thoughts, Isaiah 49:15. His heart, his affections, more tender and endeared than in any creature. Love, 'As the Father loves me,' John 15:9, John 17:26; love not equally, but as truly, really, effectually, certainly, unchangeably. Delight, 'All his delight is with the sons of men,' Psalms 10:3, Proverbs 8:31. Compassion; for this end he assumed our nature, Hebrews 2:17. Joy, 'as a bridegroom over the bride,' Isaiah 62:5. Oh what happiness! Surely this is the joy of heaven, yet you have it here.

All that he doth. His administrations on earth,' John 17:13, John 17:19; his intercession in heaven, he now lives, &c. It is the end of his life in heaven.

All that he suffered. He was wounded for their transgressions; and that he purchased by sufferings, pardon, peace, grace, glory.

All that he hath, even from his throne to his footstool: Revelation 3:21, 'To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit on my throne.' His footstool: Matthew 5:5, 'Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth;' 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things;' not only peace, and plenty, and glory, but his peace: John 14:24, 'My peace I give unto you.' His fulness, the fulness of God, Ephesians 3:19, John 1:16, 'of his fulness.' His glory, John 17:22; his joy, John 17:11. All that he hath in heaven or earth, your Father, your portion; the Holy Ghost your comforter, teacher, John 14:26; the angels your attendants, your guard, Matthew 4:6, Psalms 91:12; the saints your brethren, your fellow-members, first fruits, Galatians 3:28. Ye are all one in Christ Jesus, part of the same crop with those that are in heaven, only they are first reaped.

All in earth, 1 Corinthians 3:22, 'or the world, or life, or death, or things present,' &c.

All that he is, so far as it is communicable, and you capable; all that he doth, or can do, if good for you; ‘no good thing will he withhold from them’ that love him, Psalms 84:11, and Psalms 34:10. All the difficulty is, whether can better judge what is best, God or ourselves. Oh what tempting happiness is he! Can the world, or sin, or Satan, promise or secure such things? ‘Will the son of Jesse give you fields and vineyards? 1 Samuel 22:7.

Obj. But how shall we get into Christ?

Direct. The best I can prescribe is shewing the way by which the Lord brings men to Christ. No man comes except the Father draw him, and he draws by degrees.

1. Illumination. Opens the eye to see sin, sees it with another light; sets them in order before him, shews him the face of his soul in the glass of the law, the sins of his nature and life; leads him into every part of his soul and life, as he did, Ezekiel 8:1-18, still greater abominations; brings to his mind sins past, and makes him possess them; opens the bag where they are sealed, lets him see what a woful treasure there is; shews him the number and weight, so that he sees cause to complain with David, Psalms 38:4, ‘Mine iniquities are gone over my head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.’ Variously in degrees, not alike in all as to degrees.

2. Humiliation under the sense of sin’s desert. Sees all the curses and threatenings bent against him, levelled at him, justice ready to discharge, wrath hastening justice; applies threatenings to himself, the soul that sins shall die, is cursed, condemned; conscience is awakened, sensible of the burden, groans under it; the sting of guilt pricks his heart, as theirs, Acts 2:27; conscience is wounded, sometimes so deeply, as ready to faint; the burden of wrath lies so heavy, as makes him ready to sink. Hence horror, a degree of hell; fear, a spirit of bondage. Sees himself at the brink of hell, ready each moment to fall in. Herein the Lord proceeds with some variety; all are not humbled alike, some more deeply, some less; but all have some sense of their misery, so as to be apprehensive of an absolute necessity of Christ.

3. Self-renunciation. Renouncing his own righteousness, despairing that any thing he hath, or can do, will remove this misery, pacify wrath, expiate guilt, and counting all loss. Men convinced of wrath and misery are apt to inquire with the jailor, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ and take up resolutions to pray, hear, &c., hereby to pacify God; but when he intends union, he takes away these rotten supports, to make way for Christ; convinces that nothing he can do is available; not the fruit of the body, nor rivers of oil; not good nature, well-meanings, holy duties; all are as menstruous cloths; none but Christ. These must be pared off before there be engrafting.

4. Hope. Though he makes him despair of himself, yet he leaves him not to despair of God, raises some weak hopes from the mercies of God: ‘He wills not the death of a sinner.’ General offers of Christ: ‘He came to save sinners,’ to ‘seek and save that which was lost,’ and why not me? says the humbled soul. From examples in Scripture and experience, the Lord pardoned such grievous sins and sinners, who knows but he may pardon me? It may be he will. He cannot, dare not say at first, he hath pardoned, or will pardon; but it may be he will. From absolute promises, ‘though their sins be as red as scarlet,’ ‘I will blot out their iniquities for my name’s sake.’ There is some hope concerning this.

5. Desires after Christ. These are virtually faith, when strong, spiritual, sincere, constant, insatiable. When I desire him, as one almost famished for bread, as the hart panteth for water, as

one under a pressing burden for ease; as one dangerously wounded, and grievously pained, for cure; as one in danger of death, for life, ‘skin for skin,’ &c. Let me be poor, if I may have interest in Christ’s treasures; let me be hated, persecuted of all, if Christ will pity me, love me; let me be banished from friends and comforts, it Christ dwell with me; let me be nothing, have nothing, if Christ will be mine; let God deny me what he will, if he give me Christ; let him dispose of me as he pleases for temporals, only let me live, let my soul live. Oh that I might have Christ, though I suffer, die, go through hell to him! These bring along with them,

6. Consent to take him upon his own terms. He thinks them propounded easy, embraces them with all his heart. No terms could be so grievous but he would accept them; he closes with Christ, clasps about him, resolves never to part. This is actual faith, and then actual faith makes us one with Christ, brings us actually to him.

Use. If those that are without Christ can do nothing, then they are deceived who ascribe to man’s will unrenewed, such a power, as to that which is spiritual and saving, as is inconsistent with what Christ here tells us. They say man’s will can do much herein, without Christ’s special influence. Christ himself tells us, ‘without him he can do nothing,’ and the apostles after him, Ephesians 2:1-22, Php 2:13, 2 Corinthians 3:5. This is enough to crush that conceit of the power of free will, advanced first by the Pelagians of old, who were therefore branded as the enemies of the grace of Christ, and revived in later times by the Arminians, the Socinians, and the Jesuits, who all are zealots for it. And indeed it is of great moment, and of large influence. Luther called it fundamentum totius papismi, the groundwork of all popery. The words of Christ in the text are a full confutation of it. I need add no more to dissuade those from it who are tender of the honour of Christ, and the glory of his grace, but only to let you understand what it is, and help you to see into the inwards of it; for I cannot much fear that any amongst us will be taken with it, but because they do not well understand it; pride in the learned, and ignorance in others, are the great advantages of it.

I will therefore endeavour to open it to you as briefly and plainly as the matter will admit. The glory of Christ, the interest of souls (who are concerned to give him the honour of his grace) and the vindication of the text I have insisted on, require this of me.

Free will, in the sense of those who maintain it, is a power in the will to incline either way, when that which is supernatural and saving is offered as its object; a power and freedom in the will to choose or refuse, to yield or resist, to embrace or reject, as it list. So that this with them is twofold.

1. To refuse or resist. We say as to this, The will of a natural man may, and does, resist common motions or offers of grace, but not those that are special, viz., when the Lord puts forth the power of his grace with an intent to convert a sinner, then the will does not, cannot resist.

They say when the Lord and the power of his grace has done all that it can do, all that he is ever wont to do, the will ordinarily does, and always can resist it; so that if we will believe them, we must believe that when the Lord has done what he can, the will can do what it list. And so it must be free, so far as not to be subjected to the dominion and power of God; he cannot rule, or move it otherwise than it list; if it should be more than thus subjected to him, it would be destroyed. It is essential to the will to have a power to resist God, do what he can, unless he would take away the nature and being of it. This is the true visage of their opinion (in the first branch of it); if you will see

it plain and naked, there needs no dirt to be cast upon it to render it odious.

2. To choose, or embrace. The will, they say, can incline to that which is spiritually and supernaturally good. They speak not of a capacity, which is not denied, but of an active power. A natural man, by the power of his will, as he can reject Christ, so he can embrace him; as he can resist converting grace, so he can yield to it as he will; the will can incline itself to this as well as the other. This is a true representation of their opinion in the other branch of it. Against which we say,

(1.) This is to deny original corruption (which is the foundation of all the doctrine of grace comprised in the gospel, for it all depends upon a supposal of the corruption of our natures), for if the will can incline itself to that which is spiritually good, it is not habitually inclined to evil only, it is not fixedly averse to supernatural good; and if we be not so inclined to evil, and so averse to good, our natures are not corrupted.

(2.) This is to deny the necessity of regeneration, which is the ground of all the benefits and privileges we have by Christ, the first stone in the structure, without which none of the other have place, for if the will can incline itself to spiritual good, it needs not regenerating grace to incline it; if it can incline itself to holiness, it needs no inward principle of holiness to incline it. To solve this (that I may not conceal from you the best they have to say for themselves) they tell us, the will is not inclined but by the help of grace, that gives it power. But what is that which they call grace? Let that be minded. They say it is a common enlightening of the mind to discern the object, and a moral excitement or inviting of the will by arguments and rational inducements. Such grace, they say, the Lord affords to all indifferently, and it is all that he gives or does to the will of any one in order to conversion. Those that use this grace right, are converted; those that do not, are not. To this we say, that such grace gives no strength to the will, but supposes it able already. He that holds forth a light to a man lying on the ground, and moves him with arguments to rise and walk, does not thereby give him legs, or strength, but supposes he has these already; so that his grace, such as it is, being supposed, still no room is left for original corruption, no need of regeneration; nor will Christ be the cause of conversion, the author of faith or holiness, and the efficacy of his grace shall depend upon the will of man. Grant the best they can allege, all these absurd and dangerous things must be allowed, if we will allow their opinion.

[1.] There will be no original corruption. For if the will be corrupted through original sin, that which helps it must take away the prevalency of this corruption; but such a grace as they tell us of, is of no such use or tendency; nor do they pretend that it heals the corrupted will, for they rather freely confess that there is no corruption in the will of a natural man.

[2.] The necessity of regeneration is for the implanting of gracious qualities in the soul, and especially in the will (that being the principal seat of all grace), that it may be possessed with the principles of faith, repentance, holiness; that by virtue of them it may be inclined to suitable acts; since, in every state, the will inclines according to the quality of it; nor can the fruit (the acts) be good, till the tree be good. But they do not pretend that their moral grace does implant any such gracious qualities or principles in the will; nay, they contend there needs no such quality in the will; the will can, and does, incline itself without it, and so no need of regeneration.

[3.] This, we say, makes Christ not to be the worker or real cause of conversion or regeneration, nor the author or giver of faith, repentance, holiness; which appears several ways; for since what Christ does for us this way is only, as they say, by this suasive or exciting grace,

First, He does not work conversion, but only invite to it; not efficere, but suadere. He is not the worker of it, but a persuader to it, and that for the most part ineffectually; moves the will so as it needs not to be moved, and commonly is not; effects not our conversion or regeneration, but only excites us to do it ourselves.

Secondly, This way (which is all they leave them) he neither gives the power nor the act.

First, Not the power, for suasive grace gives no more the power to yield than resist, but leaves the will, as they say, indifferent. Besides, this exciting grace supposes a sinner has the power already, and needs not giving, but only exciting. He that thinks it enough to shew a man his business, and persuade him to work, doth not thereby give him strength, but supposes he has it beforehand.

Secondly, He gives not the act or the willingness, for that which gives or works the act determines the will, or causes it to determine itself. But this which they call grace brings it only to the will's choice, and leaves it indifferent to act or not to act; and so, no more works the one than the other, and is no more the cause that it acts than that it acts not. They say God will convert us if we will (neither desires nor promises it absolutely), so that the will must be from us; but if we be willing we are actually converted, and so the act of conversion is from us.

(3.) This grace of theirs is given equally to all, and effects no more in one than another. Therefore Christ, in this respect, is no more the cause of conversion in these that turn to God than in these who are never converted; he works regeneration no more in those that are sanctified than in the unregenerate, i. e. he works it not at all, he is no cause of it. He gives faith and repentance no more to those who believe and repent than to those who persevere in impenitency and unbelief; he gave faith no more to Paul than to Judas; he gave repentance no more to Peter than to Simon Magus, i. e. he gave it not at all; for he does no more for any than this moral grace will do, and all have this alike.

(4.) This makes the efficacy of the grace of Christ to depend upon the will of man. That grace which they say is sufficient, if we will, becomes effectual; if we will not, it is of no effect. And so it is 'of him that willeth,' and not 'of God that shews mercy,' in making his grace effectual, Romans 9:16. To help all this, some of them say there is another sort of grace, which they call subsequent and co-operating, by virtue of which they would have it thought that the Lord may be said to be the author of conversion. But this latter grace comes too late to be counted the cause of conversion, for, as they state it, it is not vouchsafed till the will have determined itself, therefore it is called subsequent. It concurs not with us till we are willing; the determination of the will is before it in order of nature. None have this grace (according to this method) but those who make right use of the former preventing grace; and right use is not made of that but when the will yields to the invitation, and gives its consent. Now, when the will yields and gives its consent, the soul is converted already; and so this grace which follows such consent cannot be the cause of conversion, unless that can be called the cause which is after the effect.

All that can be made hereof is this: the Lord by his grace helps to convert us when we are already converted; he gives us faith if we believe beforehand; he quickens us when [we] are already alive;

he helps us to rise out of this state of sin and impenitence, when we are already risen! It is we that do the work first; he helps us in it afterward! If you can digest this, you may swallow their doctrine.

Thus have I truly shewed you what the patrons of free will hold and assert in opposition to the text. It exempts man's will from the dominion of God, it denies original sin, it leaves no need of regeneration, it takes from Christ the honour of being the author of our conversion, the giver of saving blessings; it subjects his grace to the sovereignty of man's will, so that it shall have no efficacy but as we list.

I need not lay any colours on it to make it look ugly. It detracts from Christ to exalt nature; it takes the crown from effectual victorious grace, and sets it upon the head of free will; it makes Christ and his grace in a manner needless, as to the restoring of our souls to life; it is but little that he does, and that to no purpose, unless we will. And if we will, we well nigh do it all ourselves. Thus must we conclude if we believe them. But if we believe Christ, without him we can do nothing.

Obj. If it be impossible to do anything out of Christ, then it is in vain to endeavour. If no possibility, why should we hope? If no hope, no endeavours; despair, or be careless.

Ans. 1. It is our duty to endeavour what is impossible by our endeavours to attain, so sin has made it; to avoid all sin, to perform perfect obedience, to love God with all the heart and strength. It is our duty to endeavour the continuance of those things we cannot possibly lose; Ergo, not absurd to endeavour the attainment of what is impossible. It was not possible that Herod should murder Christ in his infancy; yet Joseph used means to avoid it, fled to Egypt, was so commanded. It is not possible the elect should be seduced, fall away totally and finally; yet they are to use all means to prevent it. Necessity is a sufficient reason to act without further encouragement. A man in a river, ready to drown, will endeavour to save his life, though some should tell him it were impossible. There is a necessity where there is a command from God; now he requires, it behoves man to do his duty, and leave the success to God. Secret things do belong to God, Deuteronomy 29:29; things future are secrets, events are future; present known duties belong to us. If it be not possible to attain happiness by our endeavours only, yet it is possible to attain it some other way. Do what he requires, and he will do what is best; leave him to find the way who made it.

Ans. 2. Though one out of Christ can do nothing spiritually good, yet he may do something preparatory. There are some things attainable by a natural man, which may be called preparations for Christ. Though they be not causes, nor necessary antecedents of conversion or union, yet are disposing occasions, and have a probable, though not a necessary, connection with these. Those that attain them may miss of Christ, but it is probable they will not. This is great encouragement to endeavour; they are very desirable, and withal attainable. It is in his sphere, this should be his palæstra. I shall shew, 1, what these things are; 2, that one out of Christ may do them; 3, there is a probability they will succeed; 4, if they succeed not to the utmost, yet they are not in vain.

1. (1.) Knowledge of man's sinfulness and misery by nature out of Christ; sinfulness of nature and acts; misery, curse, wrath, present and to come. Knowledge of justice and the law: what that requires and forbids; and of justice, what it is ready to execute.

(2.) Conviction that he in particular is so sinful and miserable; wrought by application of what he knows in general to his own state: I am the man who am thus sinful, and therefore who am thus obnoxious to justice and wrath.

(3.) Sense of his misery. Letting his thoughts dwell so long upon it, till his heart be affected with what his understanding apprehends; till the notion beget affection, some sense thereof, fear of wrath, justice, threatenings, curses, lest they should be executed, sadness, consternation of spirit, dejection, humiliation of heart, and all high thoughts of his good and safe condition cast down, and himself laid with them in the dust, manifested by sighing under the burden of wrath, lamenting his sad condition.

(4.) Desire of freedom from this misery, serious wishes to be delivered from the wrath to come; not to come into that place of torment, not to dwell with everlasting burnings.

(5.) Believe that Christ only can free him; no name under heaven but this. Nothing that himself hath, or can do, or any other for him, can deliver him; none but Christ.

(6.) Diligent use of outward means where Christ is to be found: hear, pray, read, meditate, confer.

(7.) Outward reformation.

These are the preparations. Now,

2. That they are attainable by one out of Christ is evident, because such a one has all things that are requisite to attain them, which are three: 1, apt, fit means; 2, common assistance; 3, power to use the means.

(1.) He has fit means. Fit, i. e. such as have an aptitude (if made use of) to work these effects. The word clearly reveals man's misery, and Christ the only remedy. The word preached, and particularly applied, has an aptitude to convince of sin and misery in particular; and this seriously thought of, and imprinted by meditation, begets sense; from this sense springs desire of freedom, and desires beget endeavours.

(2.) He has common and general assistance. And this is enough (for these being but common works, do not require special assistance), he has it; because common assistance, whether by way of motion or co-operation, is never, or very rarely, denied either to rational or natural agents. If things requisite to an action be ready, and actually applied, and nothing hinder it but want of this divine assistance, the suspending of it is a miracle, which we can never expect. If fire do not burn combustible matter applied to it, it is a miracle, as we have an instance in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. If nourishing meat, received and concocted, do not nourish the body, merely for want of this co-operation, it is no less miraculous. If the eye, rightly disposed, do not see a visible object conveniently placed, merely because divine influence is suspended, it is miraculous. And so if an intelligent man do not understand a plain discourse, merely because God concurs not, it is no less miraculous. And so in this case, if the means, apt in themselves to work these effects, do not prove effectual, when made use of, if there be no other reason but want of divine assistance, it is a miracle. There is no more reason to fear the want of common assistance, than to hope for miracles; no more ground to deny that, than to affirm this.

(3.) He has power to use the means; for nothing is required to the use thereof but the diligent exercise of reason. No man that thus objects will deny but he has the use of reason, and he cannot deny but he may be as diligent in the exercise of it about this object as about others. Reading, or hearing, and meditating on the word, will work the mentioned effects, and these acts are all within the reach of reason. To do these spiritually indeed requires a higher principle, but a

common and rational exercise of these will attain these common works. Though without Christ ye cannot act spiritually, ye may act rationally. Ye may hear what is plainly delivered with understanding, and apply what is spoken in common to your own particulars, by the use of ordinary discourse, and remember what concerns your souls as well as what concerns your estate, and work what you remember upon your hearts, by serious thoughts and meditation; these acts are in the power of an ordinary understanding.

What, then, is the reason that when so many enjoy the gospel, so few reach these common works? It is not want of means, assistance, or power to use means; what then? It is woful negligence, and wilful carelessness; men will not hear, not so much as come; or if they do hear, yet not so much as to hear with understanding and remembrance; apply it not, keep it off as that which belongs not to them, or that which they are afraid of; meditate not, let it not stay in their minds, nor let their thoughts work on it. This is the true reason why so many perish without excuse; they will not do what they can, and so provoke the Lord not to do for them what they cannot. This is the true, the only reason; others are idle or wicked pretences. And it is little less than blasphemy to accuse the decrees or providences of God as the causes, when negligence only deserves to be counted so. If a man have the use of his hands at command, and meat before him, would it not seem wicked and ridiculous if he should say he could not take the meat because he is not moved from above? When was such a common assistance ever denied? You have the word preached, and understandings capable; why do you not receive it? Is it not plainly because you will not? If a man eat, but force his meat out of his stomach before it be concocted, would it not be both wicked and absurd to say his meat doth not nourish, because God denies to concur with it, whenas the plain reason is his ejecting it? You here receive the bread of life; but by worldly cares and employments, you crowd it out of your souls before it be concocted by meditation; you stop reason in its working, will not employ it to meditate. It is not want of assistance, but want of will and care. You will not do what you can, therefore your destruction is of yourselves; God’s justice is clear. This will stop your mouths at the day of judgment. Whatever the heathens have to plead, you will have nothing; but stand speechless, and hear that dreadful sentence passed without excuse. Will it be a sufficient plea to say you would not do what you could, because you could not do what you would; do nothing, because you could not do all; not do your duty, because you could not do what he has reserved in his own power; not obey him in things possible and easy, because he would not suffer you to entrench upon his prerogative? Oh woful plea, which will make your condemnation greater, and add to your torments! But, blessed be God, there is yet time to prevent this, and you see the way. Here is matter for your endeavours, you need not be idle and careless; yea, and here is matter of hope too. I say not, that if a man do what he can, God ought to give him grace, or will certainly; but only there is hope he will. You need not despair, as appears in the third answer.

3. Though there be no certainty that these preparations will bring you to Christ, yet there is probability they may; though the success of these endeavours be not certain, it is probable. Men count probabilities sufficient grounds to act upon, and indeed moral endeavours have no other encouragement; events are uncertain. But in affairs of the world, if there be one probable way, and no other visible, men never consult whether they shall take that course, but immediately, without delay, fall upon it with all their strength. So Benhadad, 1 Kings 20:31-32, ‘Peradventure he will save thy life,’ &c.; so the lepers, 2 Kings 7:4, ‘If they save us alive, we shall live,’ &c.; so the

Canaanitish woman, Matthew 15:26-27; all upon very weak probabilities. There is no certainty physic will cure a dangerous disease; yet because it is probable, a sick person will take it, though costly and unpleasing. No certainty that industry in a particular calling will make rich; yet because it is probable, men rise early and sit up late, &c. Here is as much probability for your souls, and it is of more concernment, and there is no other way visible that you can walk in. The probability rises from many grounds.

(1.) It is God's ordinary way whereby he brings men to Christ. It is a great encouragement to a poor pilgrim that he is in the ready way home, though it be possible he may lose it; there is more hopes he may arrive there, than for him who never comes near, is out of it, and goes further and further from it. Those who have these preparations are in the way; those who want and neglect them are out and wander, what hopes of them? A poor prisoner lies in a dungeon many years, and like to do so until he die; a friend comes and shews him a way by which he may probably get out; it is possible the jailor may meet him, and prevent his escape; yet if he try, there is more hopes for him than those who love their dungeon and fetters, and will not stir, nor take a lively* course to escape. It is God's way, therefore hopeful.

(2.) It is a sign God is bringing such to Christ; not an infallible, yet a hopeful, sign, that God will give the end, when he stirs up any to use the means. It is a sign God intends salvation when he sends the gospel; but a more hopeful sign, and that which presages better and more particularly, when the gospel is improved, made use of by any to whom it is sent.

Those who use the means, though such as have but a probable connection with the end, have hopes; those who neglect them are desperate, have no ground to think they should attain the end. Shew us some token for good. There are several tokens: some portend infallibly, some but dubiously and probably. There is certainty from those, hope from these, neither from others.

(3.) These are nearer to Christ and happiness than others, Ergo, there is hope. The greatest part of the world are out of Christ; yet there is a latitude, some further off, some nearer. Christ says of one, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven,' Mark 12:34. Some in the confines of it, some in another world, more hopes for them; some within sight of a city of refuge, others beyond Jordan. We may compare the kingdom of Christ to the temple; the glorified are in the holy of holies, the saints in the holy place, these under preparations in the court, there is more hopes they may get into the sanctuary than those who are in another country or a remote part of the land. There is more hopes, more encouragement for those that are nearer to Christ than for those that are further off.

(4.) These are more fit for Christ, more capable of grace than others: these preparations are a comparative capacity, though not absolute, so as never to miss of it; a material and subjective capacity, though not a formal; such disposing occasions as diminish the resistance though not abolish it, more easily reduced: abate something of it, though not quite expel and prevail against it; though all easy to God, yet to us some more, some less. A stone under the instrument of the workman is more capable of a form than a stone in the rock. The Lord indeed is a free agent, and ties not himself to preparations or dispositions, works where and when he pleases; the Spirit blows where it listeth; yet, a vessel in the sea, with sails spread, is in more hopes to get the advantage of a gale than one sticking in the sands without sails; these preparations are as sails spread. The impotent man that lay at the pool of Bethesda, John 5:1-47, sensible of his infirmity, though he

could not go into the pool when the waters were troubled, was more likely to be cured than those who were insensible of their diseases and did not come near the pool. Those that are thus prepared are sensible, and lie at the pool, there is more hopes, they are more capable, &c. Here is a capacity, though remote, more hopeful than none at all.

(5.) Few miscarry that go thus far, therefore there is hopes; few go thus far but go farther, are carried by God to Christ; few in comparison of those who go not so far, and of those who go so far and miscarry. The miscarriage of some merchants upon the seas doth not hinder others from venturing, because they see many grow rich thereby; but if they had no other way to subsist, though more should perish, they would adventure. We can do nothing, all for hopes of a subsistence; when necessity is the greater, the hopes are more; it is a duty necessary, not an employment out of choice. The most successful armies lose some in their conflicts, yet this discourages not the rest from hazarding all to conquer. We run no hazard here; we hazard none if we venture not;* and few perish in comparison of those who conquer; therefore great encouragement to endeavour; and if you do not, you are certain to perish, for anything you can do.

(6.) Those that miscarry are the causes of it themselves; they either despair, or relapse, or resist. The fault is man's.

Despair is very rare and unusual. The Bible, a history of four thousand years, tells us but of two, Cain and Judas. Yet there is more hopes of those that despair, than that senseless presumption affords any ground for, in which most live and die.

Relapse is the ordinary cause, when those who have gone so far omit, negligently perform, those duties in the use of which they arrived at such attainments. They embrace the present world with Demas, choke these motions, drown the voice of conscience, bestow so much time and strength on it as leave none for their souls; return to their vomit, base lusts, sensual pleasures, bad company, resist the common workings of the Spirit, provoke him thereby to add none special. The fault is clearly man's, none else can be accused. God moves not to evil, James 1:13-14. He is not bound to prevent these miscarriages or their causes. None can oblige God but himself, and he has not engaged himself to anything in nature, or attainable by it. He cures not these distempers, yet he refuses not, but upon man's provocation and desert. He resists, or misimproves, or rejects, common grace and workings: is it not just with God to deny special, saving, irresistible? None miscarry but through their own default, may blame themselves, not God; therefore here is encouragement. If a band of soldiers should be assured that none should perish but those who run away, or revolt to the enemy, would not this be encouragement to fight to the last? So it is here. If a merchant should be assured that no adventurers make unsuccessful voyages but those who use means to sink their own ship, or those who, repenting their undertaking, return before they arrive at the place whither they are bound, would not this encourage him to adventure? That you may perceive that what I speak concerning these preparations is far enough from their principles, who advance the power of nature or free-will, to the prejudice of free grace;—

These preparations are not the cause of conversion or union, nor necessary antecedents, so that union and conversion should certainly and unavoidably follow these; nor parts or degrees of regeneration, &c., though steps to it; not gradus rei, sed gradus ad rem; nor spiritual or supernatural acts, but such as natural men may do with common assistance, such as is common to those who never are converted; nor saving acts, such as pertain to salvation, or are necessarily

linked with it, or with a title to it. Nor do they give power to a soul to believe, to turn to God, &c., if he will, yea, or power to be willing. Nor do they oblige the Lord to give Christ or spiritual blessings to such, either in point of faithfulness, as though he had promised it; there is no promise to such of grace to natural acts. Much less in point of justice, as though there were such worth in these to make it due; no, nor in point of equity, as though it were unreasonable, unequal, or incongruous for the Lord to deny regenerating grace to those who are under these preparatives. He may do what he pleases for all this; and what he pleases to do, either to give or deny, it will be highly equal and congruous.

4. Though these endeavours always succeed not to the utmost of what may be expected and desired, yet they are never in vain; for preparations are required and commanded, and industry to attain them is obedience. No man ever lost by obedience in small things; it has a recompense in itself: behold its reward is with it: there are advantages in it, though none should follow it. It is better to be in hell obeying than in heaven rebelling. There is so much sweetness and excellency in obedience, as makes it desirable, and worthy of our best endeavours, without respect to recompense. What greater excellency than conformity to the divine will? And there is no true pleasure in any acts but those that are conformable to it. When Paul says, ‘If our hopes were only in this life, we were of all most miserable,’ he speaks not his own, but the opinion of the world. For if there were no heaven hereafter, obedience would be a heaven, some part of happiness here. It is true of saints, and in proportion of others.

Yet there are extrinsecal advantages here and hereafter. It is observed that those who have searched after the philosopher’s stone, though they have not found it, yet in the inquiry have discovered such rare and pleasing secrets in nature, as may countervail their pains and cost. So here, those that tend toward Christ in these preparatory works, though they find him not, yet have rewards that exceed their pains. Cyrus had temporal promises, Isaiah 44:28, and Isaiah 45:1, Isaiah 45:13. Jehu, for his obedience in destroying idolatry, was invested in a kingdom, and had it established upon his posterity for four generations. Temporal blessings are the proper reward of temporal obedience. God thinks these below that which is spiritual and sincere, therefore saints often have not an equal share thereof with temporary believers: for the future, it has its reward, if not in perfect happiness, yet in more easy sufferings. ‘It will be far more tolerable in the day of judgment for,’ &c. If they enjoy not more, they shall suffer less.

AGAINST ANXIOUS CAREFULNESS Be careful for nothing.—Php 4:6. The beginning of the chapter consists of many exhortations. This is one now read. It has little dependence upon the former, that is obvious, unless with the two next before it, Php 4:4, ‘Rejoice in the Lord always.’ Those that have interest in Christ ought to rejoice, and do so always in every condition; not only when their outward state is plentiful, and flourishing, and prosperous, but when it is like that of this apostle and the Philippians, low and afflicted, beset on every side with dangers, and exposed to all sorts of outward sufferings. They have cause for this joy always, because it is a rejoicing in God, who is an object that affords constant and continual occasion of rejoicing. If the world, or the most pleasing things in it, had been the object of their joy, it had been unreasonable here to have called for a constant rejoicing, it had been impossible to comply with it; the matter will not bear it, the world cannot, will not afford constant occasion for it. It is a variable and inconstant thing, and so are all the enjoyments of it; if we have them now, they will be gone ere long, or the comfort of them may vanish; if they please and delight us now, they may afflict and trouble us shortly, and bring us

sorrow enough to dash all our worldly joy. But God is the same always, he varies not with the changes of the world, but is as delightful and joyous an object in affliction as in prosperity; we always find occasion of rejoicing in him, and therefore we may, we ought, to rejoice in him always. And that they may thus rejoice in the Lord, he advises them, ver. 5, to carry themselves moderately towards outward things; not to be much taken with them when they seem most pleasing, nor to be much troubled at them when they seem most afflictive; not to be much exalted when the world favours us, nor dejected when it frowns and crosses us; but to keep a temper, and avoid extremes, either of which damp or disturb spiritual joy. Το επιεικες seems to denote an equal carriage towards the world, an even passage through it, an indifferency towards the things thereof, whatever they be; as those who have their eye so much upon God, and so taken up with him, as to be little concerned in outward things, and the little circumstances of this life. The Lord is εγγυς; can you be much taken with sensible things when the Lord is so near you? Can you see any object so lovely, so desirable, so delightful as he? Or if afflictions and sufferings be near, your condition troublesome, or persecutors powerful and violent, yet the Lord is near, a very present comfort, a very present help in such a time; he is at hand, ready to secure, or support, or refresh, or deliver; to make you gainers, rejoicers, more than conquerors; and therefore trouble not yourselves, be not careful or solicitous, only make your case known to him, that is all you have to do. He will take care of you and all your concernments, you need not be anxious about anything, ver. 6.

Obs. The people of Christ should be careful for nothing, μηδεν μεριμνατε, care for nothing, be not solicitously, anxiously careful for anything. As they need not, so they ought not give way to those cares which haunt and take up the minds of others. It is both their duty, and their privilege, and happiness. Indeed, there is little or nothing which the Lord requires of us but tends to our happiness. He shews not only his sovereign authority, but his infinite goodness, in those things which he enjoins us; and leaves us self-condemned and inexcusable if we comply not with his will, since it is his design, not only to have us shew our subjection, but to make us happy. All his commands tend thereto, and most of them (and this amongst the rest) directly and evidently, as will appear in the sequel. For explication, let me inquire a little into the act and the object; what we are not to be careful for, and what it is to be careful.

1. For the former. The expression seems universal, but must be understood with that restraint which the Scripture elsewhere directs us to. Nothing here respects especially the concernments of this present life, the things of the world and of time. These are they about which we are in danger to take too much care; the concernments of our souls, the things of heaven and eternity, we are apt to be too careless and regardless of. The Lord uses a spur here; we need quickening, and are in danger to be too remiss, both as to the end and the means. The Lord calls upon us to take care of both, and we are to hearken to him accordingly, Deuteronomy 15:5, Luke 10:40, Titus 3:8. Both the end and the way should be minded with great care; he excites and stirs us up to this; but where we are in danger to be too careful, there he uses a curb; and this is about the things of this life, for these he would have us not careful. These are the things intended in the text, and other expressions in Scripture point at them. What we are in danger of, what we are restrained from, is the cares sometimes of this world: Matthew 13:22, μεριμνα του αιωνος τουτου, and Mark 4:19, μεριμναι, &c., sometimes of this life; Luke 21:34, μεριμναι βιωτικαι, the things which concern this life while we are in this world, earthly and temporal things, which are of no longer continuance

nor further concernment than our present life. Nothing of this nature should be our care, we are not to be careful about any such thing. Particularly, we should not be careful about, (1.) getting and providing them when we want them, or have them not in such a measure and degree as we desire. Our Lord Jesus, in that excellent sermon which he made in the mount, insists most upon this; he stays not so long upon any other particular, and presses it with much force and variety of argument; Matthew 6:25, Matthew 6:31, Matthew 6:34, where the word rendered, 'take no thought,' is the same all along which the apostle here uses, μ■ μεριμν■τε, be not careful, μ■ μεριμν■σετε, ye shall not be careful, either for plenty and superfluities, or for necessaries, food and raiment; there is no cause, no reason for carefulness to get either, as he argues admirably, and to the conviction of the dullest understanding, and the most distrustful heart.

(2.) About keeping, ordering, or securing them. Martha was too solicitous and careful in ordering the affairs of the family. Christ checks her for it, Luke 10:40. The rich man was careful how to keep his stores; he is branded as a fool for his pains, Luke 12:17, Luke 12:20, διελογ■ζετο ■ν ■αυτ■, he reasoned carefully, &c. We should not be solicitous and careful how to avoid losses and troubles, how to prevent or escape sufferings in our persons or outward concerns. The apostle in the text probably has a particular respect to this. The condition of the Philippians, exposed to dangers and sufferings, might make them subject to carefulness, how they should secure themselves and what they had. And so he thought it seasonable to mind them of their duty, to be careful for no such thing. The way of man, the way of flesh and blood, is to take much care in such a case. The way of God lies elsewhere; make your case known to him, and be at rest.

(3.) About deliverance when losses have surprised us, and troubles and sufferings are upon us. When this befalls us, a burden of cares is ready to fall upon us, we are apt to pull it upon ourselves. The Lord would not have us careful about this, he has better provided for us, Psalms 55:22; and thus did the three faithful Jews ease themselves of that which would have oppressed others, Daniel 3:16. But are we to be altogether careless and regardless of the enjoyments or sufferings of this life, and have no more regard of them than Gallio had of the Jews' concerns? Must we 'care for none of these things'? Must we be neglectful of them, as the disciples thought that Christ might be, when in their danger they say to him, Mark 4:38, 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?'

2. No, do not mistake; there is some care that is allowed, yea, enjoined and required, about these things, and there is a carefulness which is forbidden and condemned; and what the one and the other is, we are now to inquire. It was the second thing propounded for explication of this truth and the understanding of our duty; about the act, what it is to be careful in the apostle's sense, when he forbids it. And herein I shall proceed, (1.) negatively, (2.) positively. He does not prohibit all kind and degree of carefulness about the concerns of this life. There is a care which is lawful and necessary, of which take account in these severals:—

(1.) We may take notice of our outward condition, and the concernments thereof; we may make use of our judgment and reason, and employ and exercise them in discerning what our circumstances are, yea, and what they are like to be, Proverbs 22:3, and Proverbs 27:12. It is part of Ephraim's censure, Hosea 7:9, 'Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not,' &c. We may and ought to mind and observe what we have, and want, what we have lost or are like to lose when trouble is near, and what we are in danger to suffer. These, and the like, we are to

mind and consider, or else we are like to neglect those duties which depend upon the notice and consideration hereof, and which the Lord has suited to the several postures of our outward state. We shall not spiritually improve what is present; and all these things being under changes, we are like to be surprised and found unprepared for what comes next. What care a prudent observation hereof includes, is lawful and necessary, Proverbs 27:23.

(2.) We may have some thoughts about these outward things. Care is the exercise or employment of our thoughts about this or that, including the same motions which they have upon our other faculties; and some thoughts about these things are needful, and so some care. We may be reasoning, and advising, and thinking in ourselves of our enjoyments, how they may be duly preserved and well employed; of our wants, how they may be regularly supplied; of our dangers, troubles, sufferings, how they may be lawfully avoided, or patiently endured, or fruitfully improved, or seasonably removed. The apostle censures those who are careless in one of these cases, by which we may conclude of the rest, 1 Timothy 5:8, if any one, ο■ προνοε■ τ■ν ■δ■ων, have not some provident care of his own concerns, as to outward things, he is far from being faithful.

(3.) We may have some sense of our external condition, such as may reach our hearts, and some way affect them, make some impression on them: in a temperate fear or hope, joy or grief, such as arises from the due and moderate employment of our thoughts about the things of this life. The apostle allows this, only bounds it, as the nature of these things requires, 1 Corinthians 7:30. And he would not have us insensible of afflictions, as those who have little or no regard of the hand of God therein, Hebrews 12:5, neither too great a sense, so as to faint under it; nor too little sense, so as to have little or no regard or care, which ■λιγωρε■ν, the word there used, signifies.

(4.) We may use lawful means (so we do it lawfully, for measure, manner, and end) about these outward things, to preserve or procure the comforts of this life; to prevent danger, to keep off sufferings, or to be delivered out of them, we may have so much care, as will make us delight in such use of means. The Lord encourages it: Proverbs 21:5 ‘The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness.’

It is not all care, you see, that is forbidden; what is it then?

2. Positively. It is an excess of care. It is carefulness, an inordinacy therein. Which, what it is, and how it may be discerned, I shall endeavour to shew. The former in these particulars.

(1.) When they are too many. The mind is full of them, when not only some care, but carefulness; some thoughts, but thoughtfulness; a fulness of solicitous thoughts, and thoughtful cares; when the mind is wholly or near wholly taken up with them, and little or no room left for better, more needful, more profitable, more refreshing thoughts, those of higher and greater concernment; when more than are needful on any account, more than the condition of those things requires, or the quality of them deserves. If we would take our measures by the worth and value of these earthly things, a little care, a few thoughts, should serve their turn; they are of little moment, and of little continuance, and of small advantage or disadvantage, in comparison of that which should be our care indeed, and ought to be the main subject of our thoughts. Our minds are of a better temper, and were made for higher and nobler purposes, than to spend themselves upon such low and little matters, and to spin out their strength and spirits in care and thoughtfulness about them; there is an excess in giving way so much, and to so many of them; it is culpable and forbidden

carefulness.

(2.) When they are tumultuous, and put the soul all into a hurry, and hale it into confusion and disorder. That is the import of the word τυρβ■ζ■, whereby Martha's carefulness is set out, Luke 10:41. μεριμν■ς και τυρβ■ζ■ περ■ πολλ■. When the thoughts about these things are not only too many, but like a confused multitude in a throng or crowd, where each one pushes, and troubles, and hinders one another, one can do nothing else when he is in it, and cannot easily get out. When they disorder, and disturb, and discompose the soul, and render it unfit for its proper work, though of greatest importance. When they put the soul into a commotion, and make it like the restless and troubled sea, or a vessel without anchor in a storm. A word of that import is used by Christ, when he is dissuading from this carefulness, Luke 12:29, μ■ μετεωρ■ζεσθε. Let not your minds be tossed with these careful thoughts, like a ship at drift with the unruly waves. These are thoughts excessively careful, which disquiet and unsettle the mind, and like so many billows keep it in a tossing and restless agitation.

(3.) When they are perplexing and vexatious, when they in any degree reach the mind, and distend it, as is were, upon tenters; when they divide and rend it, as μ■ριμνα denotes, the word by which excessive care is so often expressed in Scripture. When the mind is anxious, and the heart thereupon in some pain and anguish, and sadder impressions made thereon than these outward things, however they go, can be any just ground or occasion of in those who make account their portion is not in this life, nor any part of their true happiness in things below.

2. In the next place, let me shew you how we may discern when our cares are excessive and inordinate, that we may the better know what are forbidden, and what we are concerned to avoid, and also wherein we have been guilty; that we may both bewail what is past, and be more effectually watchful for the future. We may be sure our care about the things of this life is excessive, and that is a condemned carefulness;—

(1.) When it is more for earth than heaven, more for the outward man and its concernments than for the soul; more for things of time, than those that are eternal. Opposites illustrate one another; and it is in opposition to this forbidden carefulness for outward things that our Lord Jesus gives that rule, Matthew 6:33. Let this be your first, and chief, and great care; leave the care of the other to God. When this is not first, the other is before, or near it; and it is excessive indeed when it is either, when not much before or after it; when more careful to make sure of a good temporal estate, than to make our calling and election sure, very solicitous about a good title to earthly possessions, but take less care about a title to heaven, and interest in Christ.

More to thrive in the world, and increase in riches, than to grow in grace, or to get holiness planted and increased, and to get possession of more heavenly treasure. Very thoughtful about that, but more indifferent here. Careful of outward health, but more regardless of soul distempers and inward diseases, such as bring it to the gates of death. Curious in trimming and adorning the body (a little better-coloured clay), spend an hour or more, some days upon that; but take less care, and spend less time in ordering the soul, cleansing that from all filthiness, and putting it into a dress and posture fit to meet with God, even when approaching him in a solemn manner. When more careful to avoid sufferings than sin, and to keep out of outward danger than to keep out of temptation, and to secure our estates from wasting and decays than our souls from declinings and backslidings, and to be delivered from troubles and afflictions, than to be freed from selfish, carnal,

and worldly lusts. This is a carefulness not only condemned, but such as to the greatest part of the world, yea, of those who live under the gospel, is actually damning.

(2.) When it hinders us from enjoying what we have; when so thoughtful to get more, or to keep what we have, or to secure it and ourselves from danger and trouble, will not let us enjoy with quiet and comfort what we have in possession. He is not like to rest quietly, who, when he composeth himself to it, has one that is still jogging, or haling him, or making a noise in his ears. When our thoughts, busy about these outward things, perform this ill office to our minds, and are still jogging them and buzzing in them, they deprive the mind of rest, they are then excessive.

If a man lie down, and his lodging be otherwise never so well accommodated, yet if there be thorns in his bed, he cannot lie easily. The cares of the world are compared to thorns, Matthew 13:22. When our thoughts lay our minds and hearts in an uneasy posture, and are still pricking them when they should be at rest, and make our enjoyments as a bed of thorns to us, there is a lamentable inordinacy in them. When the possession of outward things, which should be quiet and comfortable (else they are not enjoyed), is disturbed and embittered by carking disquieting thoughts, here is excess.

(3.) When it indisposeth us for holy duties; when we cannot break through the crowd of these thoughts to converse with God, or, if we do, yet too seldom, and with difficulty, and then come with souls discomposed, and these thoughts still follow us. When they should be quite shaken off and cashiered, they are still crowding in, when our minds should be wholly taken up with God; and they are still giving us diversion and interruption, and call off some part of our souls from him who expects them all, so that they are distracted and divided when they should be most united and entirely fixed on him, who will be sought with our whole hearts. They often hinder us from offering unto God, and when we can get leave of them to bring a sacrifice, yet these flies seize on it and spoil it. God likes not such offerings, no more than we like fly-blown meat. We come to pray, and when our minds and hearts should ascend up to God, these call them down, and carry them another way. We come to hear, and when the Lord speaks, we should attend him alone, and hearken to nothing else; but then these come, and knock, and buzz, and will be heard; and God, and what he speaks to us, is little minded. We set ourselves to meditate; oh, but our minds are prepossessed and taken up before with the concerns of this life, and they will not give way to thoughts of God and heaven and our eternal concernments, or they will mix with them, and make an untoward confused medley of heaven and earth, God and the world, in one lump, in one exercise. When these keep us from drawing near God, or from approaching him with cheerfulness, heartiness, entireness of mind and affection, or make us come with our loins ungirded, our souls draggling in the dirt of the world, and sweeping the dust after them, and raising a cloud of it, so that we cannot discern well where we are, or what we are doing, whether with God or with the world, whether we are minding him or it; or rather lose the sight of God, where he is to be most seen and enjoyed. When these cares bring us to this pass, then they are intolerably excessive.

(4.) When it is distrustful, arises from our not trusting God, or takes us off from depending on him, Isaiah 7:9, 2 Chronicles 20:20. To trust God with our affairs is the way to be established, to have the mind settled. When it is staggering and wavering betwixt fear and hope, and so unquiet and unsettled, this is from an excess of carefulness. When the soul thinks not itself sufficiently secured by the promise or providence of God, when he doubts whether the Lord is able, or whether he is

willing, to provide for him and his, or to secure his concerns, or to dispose of all his affairs for the best, and so does not commit his way to him, but will look after it himself, and employs his thoughts anxiously about it, as though otherwise it could not go well, this is distrustful, and so sinful and excessive carefulness.

You will say we may, we must use the means, that is our duty. True, but do ye no more herein than is your duty? Over-doing is from over-much carefulness and too little faith. And when you have done what is requisite herein, why are you so solicitous about the event, so thoughtful what will be the issue of your endeavours? That is wholly in God's hands, and belongs not to you, but to him. If you believe he will do anything at all, you must not doubt but he will take care of that which is properly his own work; and if he will take care of it, why do you so much trouble yourselves about it? Why do you not leave that to him which is properly his? Here your care crowds in where it has nothing to do, here it exceeds its bounds, from a distrust of God, where he is most to be trusted, and your minds and thoughts are very busy where you have nothing to do but to believe; where they should stand still and wait his pleasure,

(5.) When it hurries you to the use of unlawful or suspected means, such as are unwarrantable in themselves, or such as you may suspect to be so, or such as you are doubtful of; for though these be lawful in themselves, yet they are unlawful to you. It is excessive carefulness that pushes men on in such a course as is either evil, though they think it good, or good, if they think it evil; when so careful to keep what they have, as they will stretch their consciences rather than lose or hazard it; or to get more, that they will take some course to do it which they cannot justify, which the word or their own conscience allows not. So careful to avoid dangers and sufferings, as to dissemble, or equivocate, or decline some way of God, or take some unwarranted path to do it. So careful to get out of troubles, or to be eased from their present burden, as to venture out by some way that the Lord never opened. So careful for deliverance, that how it come (so they may but see it) they much care not. Rebekah and Jacob so careful to have the blessing, that they would get it by deceit rather than miss it. Jeroboam so careful to secure the kingdom to him, that he would set up false worship rather than run any hazard. Saul so careful not to fall into the hands of the Philistines, that he would sacrifice in a forbidden way, yea, and after go to the witch at Endor.

Such is excessive carefulness, which either draws into sin, or is a temptation to it. By this you may understand how we are not to be careful, what carefulness it is that is forbidden, and how it may be discerned. I have stayed the longer in the explication, because it is of a practical tendency. In the next place, let me confirm this practical truth, and enforce it as your duty, by some considerations, which may serve both as reasons and motives for this purpose. The people of Christ should not be careful with such carefulness as I have described, for,

1. It is useless, it will not serve the turn; you will be nothing the nearer to what you aim at, for so much carefulness; it will not help you, it will rather hinder you from what you desire; and who that has the exercise of reason will make use of that which is no way useful for his purpose? This is one argument which the Wisdom of God (Christ himself) urges against it, Matthew 6:27. You would count him a madman who would expect to grow taller by being thoughtful, or to lengthen his life by greatening his cares. Why, says Christ, you can no more reasonably expect to make provision for your life by such cares. This is no more the way to increase or secure your outward concerns, than it is to add a cubit to your stature: Psalms 127:2, 'It is vain to rise up early, to sit up

late, to eat the bread of sorrows.' To cark and care is not the way to wealth, or the cause of it; those that take that course find they do it in vain, and are generally disappointed, ■ταν Θεος, since it is the Lord (so the words are to be read) who gives his people plenty, rest and comfort therein, though they never lose any sleep in seeking it. This carefulness is not to keep what you have, or to get more; nor to secure you from dangers and sufferings, nor to bring you out of trouble; in vain will you seek these things this way: it is the blessing of God from whence these must be expected. Oh but, you will say, he blesses diligence. True, he blesses lawful diligence, but he never blesses this carefulness; and if any thrive or succeed, or get anything by it, without a curse, they have it some other way. This carefulness is the way to blast what you have, and what you get; to make it, or the comfort of it, wither, to curse it to you or your posterity; to endanger, instead of securing you; to strengthen your hands, instead of unloosing them; and to keep off deliverance, or make it prove no mercy, if you this way come by it. It is useless for these purposes, unless you count that useful which cannot expect a blessing.

2. It is needless; as it is of no use, so no need of it. It is not at all needful that you should trouble yourselves with such cares. Why so? Our Lord Jesus tells us (and it is another argument which he urges against this carefulness), Matthew 6:32, 'For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' True, he knows all things, but what relief is that to me? Why, he is a father, the heavenly Father, and yours. An earthly parent, who has but ordinary natural affection, if he know what is needful and good for his child, he will take care to provide it for him, if he be able; how much more will your heavenly Father do it, who as far exceeds the best parents on earth, not only in power, and wisdom, and riches, but also in love, and goodness, and bounty, as heaven is above earth; and far more, Isaiah 55:9, Matthew 7:7-12; but I need not lead you to this by consequences; see what he says directly, to prove your care needless: 1 Peter 5:7, 'Casting all your care on him; for he careth for you.' All that you may be tempted to be careful about is cared for already, by one who can infinitely better look after it than you yourselves, or any, or all creatures for you. What need is there, then, of your carefulness? If all the creatures in heaven and earth, angels and men, high and low, should faithfully engage themselves to take care of all your concerns; would you not think this a sufficient discharge of all your cares as needless? Oh but you have unspeakably more; that God, who is unspeakably more considerable than all the creatures in the world, has engaged himself to take care of you, that you shall want nothing that is good, that nothing shall befall you but what is really best for you; and to take such care of this, as to take care off from you; and is not your carefulness then needless? Since the Lord takes care of you, why is it not needless to trouble yourselves with these cares? Cannot he better dispose of all your affairs and concerns, than you yourselves can with all your care? Now if one that is better able to manage your business than yourselves should take it upon him, would not your hearts be at rest, and eased of the care of it? Would you not think it needless to trouble yourselves about it further? And does not the Lord take all your affairs upon him, when he bids you cast all on him? Cast, π■σαν την μ■ριμναν, all and every care upon him. And can any possibly take better order about all that you want, or desire, or fear, than the all-wise, and the all-mighty, and the all-sufficient, and the infinitely merciful God?

More distinctly, that carefulness is needless, appears, (1.) By what he will do for you; of which before.

(2.) By what he has done for you. If he have done the greater things for you without your care, you need not be careful about the less, as though he would not do that without your carefulness. So our Lord Jesus argues: Matthew 6:25, ‘Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on: is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment?’ You owe your life to him, he gave you that without your care; he formed your body, when you were not capable of taking any care about it; and will he not preserve the life that he has given, and uphold the body which he formed? Your care was not needful about the former, and there is less need of it about the latter, because that is less. You need not be solicitous about the lesser concerns of your life, how you shall be provided for in wants, or secured in dangers, or delivered out of troubles. He that took care you should have a life, and a body, and gave you the greater, he will not grudge you the less.

You took no care in the womb when you were there, how you should have life, or how you should be formed; you need take no more care now, than when you were in the womb. It was needless then, because the Lord took care of all, and he is as ready to take care of all your concerns now. You need not be so solicitous, lest he should think the less too much for his care, when the greater was not so.

(3.) By what he does for others. Other creatures, whom the Lord less regards than his children, need take no care for the concerns of their life or being; therefore those whom he more regards have less need to be careful. This is another consideration which infinite Wisdom suggests for this purpose, in one instance after another. Matthew 6:26, the very fowls upbraid us for our carefulness, as needless trouble; they do not cark or moil, they have no need to do it, because the Lord takes care for the feeding of them; much less have we need to do it, whom the Lord has more regard of, and so takes more care for. This the Spirit of God sets forth to us more fully. There are but three things which such creatures are concerned in: how they shall be fed, and where they may rest, and by what means they may be safe; and the Lord takes care of all these. They are not, they need not be, solicitous about them; for their food: Psalms 104:21, ‘The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God.’ They teach us what we should do, they seek it of God, and we should make our case known to him, and not trouble ourselves with solicitous carefulness. The Lord fails not them, Psalms 104:27-28; he gives it them, and gives it in season, and gives it plentifully, and plenty of that which is good and desirable for them; and will he do less for those who are more to him, whom he has declared himself more concerned for? Need we fear that, or be solicitous about it? And as he takes care for their food, so for their rest and habitation. If we should be tempted to be careful about that, look up to these creatures, and by that which the Lord does for them, we may see it to be needless: Psalms 104:16-17, ‘The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house.’ And so for their safety, he has taken care they should be secured from danger: ver. 18, ‘The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the coneys.’ You may say, those that can help themselves need not take care; but what shall become of those who are destitute and helpless? If that be thy case, yet mayest thou learn, even by these creatures, that thy carefulness is not needful. As the Lord provides for all here below, so especially for those that are most helpless: Psalms 147:8-9, ‘Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth: who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.’ The meadows and lower grounds, they are refreshed

and watered with the brooks and streams that run through them; but what shall become of the mountains? they are destitute of such advantage. The Lord provides for them also; he gathers the clouds and sends rain, and so they are refreshed and made to flourish. He causeth grass to grow there, where it could least be looked for, and whereby he provides for the wild beasts that feed there, whom men take no care of. The tame beasts, indeed, they take care of, as being useful to them; but if the Lord did not thus provide for the wilder beasts, they might starve, no other creature would take care of them. And so the young ravens, who being deserted by the old ones before they are able to help themselves, as soon as they are hatched, they would certainly perish, if the Lord did not take care of them, when they cannot do it themselves, and those who are most concerned would not do it for them. He gives them food when they cry out, as left utterly destitute. When you are tempted to carefulness, consider the ravens; our Lord Jesus sends us to them to learn this lesson: Luke 12:24, 'Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have store-house nor barn, and God feedeth them.' Those whose condition is most helpless, and so seem to have most need to be careful, the Lord so provides for them, as they need not to take care; and need they take care, whom he is more engaged to look after? 'Doth the Lord take care of oxen?' says the apostle, 1 Corinthians 9:9. Doth the Lord take care of lions and ravens, of wild goats and coneys, &c., of beasts and birds? Does he take care for their food, their rest and habitation, their refuge and safety, for all their concernments; so that those who are most destitute and helpless amongst them need not be careful? And is there any need that they should trouble themselves with cares about their necessities or their dangers, for whom he has a more particular care, a more especial providence? Our Lord Jesus shews how needless our solicitous cares are by another instance, in the plants and vegetables: Matthew 6:28-30, 'And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' The lilies, they toil not to make that grow of which clothing is made, nor do they spin it when it is grown up. They take no care, nor need they, the Lord clothes them. He not only makes them grow, but makes them flourish to such a degree, as 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them.' Now, says he (and it is the arguing of him in whom dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge), if he made so splendid and rich provision for the withering grass, the soon fading flowers, of so little account with him, yea, with us, what then will he not be ready to do for those whom he much more regards and values? The lilies, the flowers, the grass, they need not care, and why? Because the Lord takes care for them; and if this be good reason, then sure those whom he takes more care of have less need to be careful. It is great vanity, if it were no worse, to trouble yourselves with that which is altogether needless; and carefulness about the concerns of this life is manifestly needless, upon many accounts, which we have from the mouth of Wisdom itself.

3. It is heathenish. Such carefulness about these outward things is no better than gross heathenism. This argument our Lord Jesus urges against it: Matthew 6:32, 'About these things are the Gentiles solicitous.' It is the character of a heathen to be so careful about the things of this life, it smells rank of that blindness and infidelity in which the heathens are shut up. It should be as far from the disciples of Christ as heathenism is from Christianity; they more resemble the Gentiles than the people of Christ, who give way to such cares. It is heathenism in the professors of Christ's gospel, which is the worst and most intolerable. It signifies both heathenish thoughts of God, and

heathenish apprehensions of things here below; both seem to be intimated in those words, Matthew 6:32, ‘For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.’ Let us touch both.

(1.) It imports heathenish conceits of God, as if he were no God, or had no providence, or did not concern himself in the government of the world, or had no special regard of human affairs; as if he knew not what we wanted, or what we feared, or did not regard our necessities or dangers, though he knew them, but left us to shift for ourselves as well as we could, without any other aids and assistances than those of second causes. For if there be a God, a providence which reaches all things, and is sufficient for everything, but is more particularly concerned for those that are more nearly related to him; if this be apprehended and believed, hereby all this carefulness of ours is superseded. But where these cares prevail, it is not duly believed or apprehended, as it was not by the Gentiles. And therefore after these things they sought, and were so careful and solicitous about, as if they had had no God to take care of them. And it is for none but such heathens, who know not God, and believe not his providence, and mind not his faithfulness, and have no experience of his fatherly love, and particular care and compassions, to trouble themselves with these cares. It is for none but those, whose lamentable condition the apostle describes, Ephesians 2:11-12, who are Gentiles, such as the Jews called uncircumcised, who were without the knowledge of Christ, far remote from the citizenship of Israel, strangers to the covenant of grace and promises of the gospel, and so without hope and without God in the world. If you would not shew yourselves to be too like to these, you must disband your earthly cares. They will signify you have heathenish conceits of God, like those whose minds the god of this world has blinded, and that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (who is the image of God, and in whom we have the clearest discoveries of God, what he is in himself, and what to his people) has not shined into you. Much heathenish darkness and infidelity still covers your minds, if these cares trouble your hearts.

(2.) It imports heathenish thoughts and inclinations to things here below. Such a value of them, such an eagerness after the things of this world, as the Gentiles had. These were the most valuable things to them, and therefore these were their greatest care. ‘After these things do the Gentiles seek.’ Alas! they knew no better things, and so having the highest value for them, they would not commit the care of them to any but themselves, nor trust any with them, no, not God himself. But have you such an esteem of earthly things? Are these your chief concerns, and so your chief care? Why, then, you are not only like the heathen, but worse than they; for you have seen, or might have seen (if your eyes had not been shut), better things: the glorious things of heaven, of Christ, of the gospel; things so far transcending all here below, so much more rich and precious, so much more pleasant and delightful, so much more necessary, durable, and advantageous, so much more excellent and glorious, as that the sight of them is abundantly sufficient to take down the value of all earthly things, and to lay them very low in your esteem, and so to make you little careful about them, little solicitous what becomes of them, at least well contented to leave the care of them to God.

Christ coming into the world brought life and immortality to light by the gospel, and discovered all the precious and inestimable things included therein, which were before folded up, and much hid from the world. And those who saw them effectually in that light, saw that in them which quite disparaged these earthly things to them, and made them no more to mind them, and to be no more careful about them, than toys and trifles, not worthy of their care and solicitous thoughts. You may see an instance of it in the primitive believers. When Christ, and pardon, and life, and glory

was discovered to them by the apostles, how little did they mind the world, how little careful were they about their earthly enjoyments! Presently upon the view of those more excellent things, they ‘sold their possessions, and brought the price, and laid it at the apostles’ feet,’ Acts 4:34. Oh how far were they from troubling themselves with cares of getting more, who were so little thoughtful for the future, and so free and ready to part with that they had, Hebrews 10:34. Here they shewed themselves Christians indeed, not sinners of the Gentiles, not heathenish worldlings, at a great distance from the heathenish temper of those who mind earthly things.

Christ has been long teaching you this. If you have not in some degree learned of him, you are so far in this heathenish darkness, and hearken rather to him who is the teacher, the god of this world, and blinds instead of enlightening those that follow him; but if you have learned Christ, and been taught of him, as the truth is in Jesus, he has shewed you that by the light of the gospel, which will make the things of the world to appear as loss and dung in your eyes, and not so worthy of that regard and care which the heathen, who knew no better, had of them.

If you would not shew yourselves of a heathenish spirit and temper in the midst of your profession of Christ and the gospel, after these earthly things you must not seek, and for them you must not be thus careful.

4. It is hurtful. It is not only needless and useless, that which will do you no good at all for the ends for which you use it, but it will do you much hurt, and more than all you are careful for, if it should succeed, will come to.

(1.) It will disoblige God, and take him off from caring for you in that particular manner, as he does for those who cast their care on him. It is so amongst men. They will not take the care of his affairs, who will not leave the care thereof to them. If the care of a business be left upon them, they are obliged; but if it be not, but the man takes the care of it upon himself, they are not engaged, they may leave it to him who will not trust them with it. So here, if you will cast your care upon God, he will take care of you and your concerns, but if you will not trust him with it, you may look to it yourselves, and take what comes, the Lord is disobliged. Jeremiah 17:5-6, ‘Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.’ This is all you are like to get by letting your hearts depart from God in over-caring, and flying to this and the other instrument and means, viz., a curse, that will make your enjoyments like a wilderness, and yourself like the heath in it, which does not receive, or cannot expect any good from God. If you will cast your burden upon the Lord, he will sustain you, as he promises, Psalms 55:22, but if you will not, you are like to fall under it; you have no assurance that your feet shall not fall and sink under the pressure. You disoblige the Lord, and that is a greater damage than your, and all the care of the world, can recompense.

(2.) You lose in effect what you have, by this carefulness about it; you are like to lose the comfort and advantage of what you possess; carefulness, carefulness, like the lean kine, will devour it and eat it up all. What marrow and sweetness is therein, this is ready to suck it out all, and leave you nothing but a bare bone to gnaw on. Those outward things, which should be as refreshment and bread to you, it will turn it into ‘the bread of sorrow,’ Psalms 127:2; ‘the bread of carefulness,’ Ezekiel 12:18-19. This will not suffer you to enjoy what you possess, and then you had as good or

better be without it; you have nothing of it but the vexatious care and trouble. While Ahab was so careful for another vineyard, his whole kingdom was no joy to him, 1 Kings 21:4.

(3.) It will keep you from being the servants of Christ, so far as you give way to it. This is another argument of Christ against it, where he is levying so great force to subdue it in us: Matthew 6:24, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' The more careful you are about outward things, the less careful you will be to serve the Lord. The soul has not stream enough to run with any fulness towards both God and the world, and if the main current be not for God, he makes account he has none; he will count you servants of that about which you are most careful. Carefulness about these earthly things is not reconcileable with your faithfulness to God, and being true servants to him.

(4.) It corrupts the whole soul, the whole life. This is another reason which our Lord Jesus levels against worldliness and this carefulness for worldly things: Matthew 6:22-23, 'If thine eye be single,' i. e. if thy soul be freed from the mixtures of worldly cares and desires, the whole life will be lightsome; a spiritual and heavenly lustre will shine through it all; 'but if thine eye be evil,' if worldly carefulness and lustings are gotten in there, there will be nothing but darkness, a soul and life estranged from Christ, and remote from a strain and temper which is truly Christian; and instead of shining as lights in the world, there will be a walking on in the gross darkness of it.

(5.) It hinders the efficacy of the ordinances, and quite spoils them; it makes the word unfruitful, Matthew 13:1-58. When the word falls upon the heart, and is about to put forth its force in the soul and in the life, these cares do as it were take it by the throat and strangle it, συμπν■γει, and so it becomes a dead letter, not καρποφερ■μενον, not bringing forth fruit; it makes the prayers to be no prayers, a painted, not a real sacrifice; a mere piece of formality and hypocrisy; for when the lips draw near this draws away the heart, Ezekiel 33:31, and when the heart is gone, the soul and life of the prayer is gone with it, and nothing left for God but a dead carcase: that which he counts no more a prayer, than we count a carcase to be a man. And it spoils our thoughts of God and heaven, and either keeps them out or mixes with them, and so makes us to have earthly thoughts of heaven itself, and worldly thoughts of the most high God.

(6.) It keeps us from joy in God, and disturbs our peace, that blessed peace we might have with God, that sweet tranquillity we might have in our own souls. Both these appear by the context. That we may 'rejoice in the Lord, and that always,' Php 4:4, we must be moderate as to these outward things, Php 4:5, and careful for nothing, Php 4:6. Carefulness embitters the comfort which is to be had in outward enjoyments, and turns that into sorrow and vexation; it is more inconsistent with spiritual joy, 1 Timothy 6:9-10. They that will be rich, who make this their care, they give themselves many wounds, pierce themselves through with many sorrows. It is such a mischievous thing as cuts off or stops the pipes which should convey comfort to us both from the upper and lower springs, and will not let it pass to us either from heaven or from earth. If the apostle had been troubled with cares, either to avoid sufferings, or to get out of troubles, they would not have been matter of rejoicing and glorying to him.

It not only keeps us from joy, but will not let us have peace. This appears from the verse following the text. We must be careful for nothing, and trouble ourselves no further, but to 'make our requests known, that the peace of God,' &c. This is the way to have that sweet quiet and serenity of mind which is so transcendent a happiness. But the hurry of these cares will ruffle the mind and disquiet the heart, yea, and leave some guilt in the conscience too, which will not let it be at peace,

and so hereby every part of the soul is robbed of its peace.

(7.) It involves those who give way to it in public calamities. When Christ is foretelling the dreadful ruin of Jerusalem, he warns those who would escape it to beware of these cares, as that which would bring them in danger of that terrible wrath, as well as other sins which are counted more provoking: Luke 21:34, 'And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.' Where observe there is some intoxication in the cares of this life, as there is in excess of drinking. As an intemperate person is overcharged with too much drink, so is an intemperate soul overcharged with too much care, μ■ποτε βαρυνθ■σι. There is another sort of drunkenness besides that with strong drink: the heart may be overcharged and distempered with the cares of this life as well as with wine, and the effects are alike. He that is distempered with drink is not fit for business nor apprehensive of danger; mischief may come upon him, and often does, without any sense of it: so he that is distempered with the cares of this life, he is indisposed for the work which the Lord calls him to, and he is liable to judgment, and in danger to be surprised by it, and to have it fall upon him unawares. Take heed, says he, as of other stupifying wickedness, so of these cares, lest that day come upon you unawares, otherwise you are in danger to have the miseries of that day come upon you suddenly, unexpectedly, and so unavoidably. When God arises to execute judgment in a terrible manner, and to make the power of his wrath known in the execution, do not think that it will fall only upon notorious, flagitious persons, and that it will punish only luxury, drunkenness, and such excess of riot; even the cares of this life, however they are minced and counted no great provocations, may expose you to this wrath, and bring it upon you unawares, even when you look for no such thing. You know the calamities here threatened, and afterwards executed upon Jerusalem, were so grievous, as the like had not befallen any people under the whole heaven; and they are his disciples that he warns here: even they were in danger to be involved in these calamities if they were found entangled in these cares; and if they would endanger them, who can expect to escape that are under the guilt of them? You see how hurtful, how pernicious, how destructive this carefulness is.

5. It is very sinful, and shews there is much evil, very much corruption in the heart that gives way to it. It is a noisome, poisonous weed, and shews the soil is naught where it grows. To instance more particularly, it argues,

(1.) Unsubmissiveness to God, a heart not subdued to the divine will, not willing to have his concerns ordered and disposed of as the Lord thinks fit; and therein intolerable pride, self-confidence, and exalting its wisdom and will above that of God. Carefulness looks like a modest thing, but if you dissect and open it, it will be found big with such monsters as these are in the sight of God. Carefulness must have its own will, and its own way, and its own end, and is loath to submit to God in any of them. A submissive heart is content to have its concerns ordered, as to much or little, as to dangers or safety, as to sufferings or deliverance, as the Lord sees best and thinks fittest; he refers all to God, and rests quietly in his disposal; but when the heart is careful and troubled, it is because it cannot submit. The Lord says, it shall go well with the righteous, in whatever condition they be; he will take care it shall be well, Isaiah 3:10. Oh but, says the careful heart, can it be well with me in such a want, loss, trouble, suffering? If the Lord should thus order it, I cannot think it would be well, and therefore I will take care it shall be otherwise; and so submits not unto the wisdom, and will, and way of God, but must have its own as better. The

Lord sees it good that such a one should be kept low, abridged of what he desires for himself and posterity, exercised with troubles and afflictions; but the man thinks it better to have the world at will, and to live prosperously, and thereupon will be careful about this, and submits not to those providences that cross him in it. Such stiffness and haughtiness, such crossing of God, and advancing of his will and judgment before the wisdom and pleasure of God, is this carefulness resolved into. One would think it were not such a devilish thing, but it is no better.

(2.) Unbelief and distrustfulness, and that by Christ's own arguing: Matthew 6:30, 'If God so clothe the grass, &c., shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' There is great unbelief, there is very little faith, where there is much care about our outward concerns. To trust in the Lord is expressed by casting our burden on him, committing our way to him, Psalms 37:5, and these are all one with casting our care on him, Luke 12:28. He that will take the care upon himself will not, does not, cast it upon God, and so does not trust him; he will trust himself rather than trust God with his concerns. There is some doubting in such a heart, either whether the Lord be able or whether he be willing, to order his condition and affairs as they should be; and so he will not leave them to him, but look after them with all carefulness himself. Here is evidently a distrust of God. When you meet with a man whom you fully trust with a business, you will not be further solicitous about it; but if you be still careful and anxious, it signifies you are not confident in him. And so it is here. This carefulness is from some doubtfulness lest your concerns in the hand of God should not be ordered as they should be, and this doubtfulness is inconsistent with that trust and confidence you should repose in God. Luke 12:29, 'Seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.' Where there is such solicitous seeking after these things, such thoughtfulness about them, there is a doubtfulness of mind concerning God; and where the mind is so doubtful, it is distrustful, there is little faith in it; Matthew 14:31, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' As faith increases, cares will vanish; and as cares and doubts prevail, faith declines into distrust of God.

(3.) It argues much unmortifiedness; that we are carnal and sensual, and carnal and sensual lusts are unsubdued. From whence is such carefulness about earthly things? Is it not from our lusts, that are fed by these things, and live upon them, and would not be starved? There would be less carefulness about these outward things were it not to make provision for these. The flesh must be pleased, fancy and sense must be gratified; if our condition be not such as will serve for this, it is grievous to us. Therefore are we so careful and solicitous about our outward condition, lest it should be so ordered as to pinch the flesh. As our lusts die, our cares will die; but while these are so rife, they are too far from being mortified.

(4.) It argues a great inordinacy towards the world, an excess of affection to the things of it. Our hearts are much set upon that which we are so very careful about. If we did not too much love it, desire it, delight in it, we would not be so solicitous for it. If we did not too much fear losses and sufferings in our outward concerns, we would not perplex ourselves with care to avoid or escape them. Our care of any thing is answerable to our esteem of it and our affection to it. We are little solicitous about that which we have little or no affection for; we have little care of that which we contemn and despise; we would not be so careful about the world if the things thereof were contemptible to us. It is from our high esteem of, our great affection to, earthly things, that we are so careful about them. If we were crucified to the world, and the world were crucified to us, this carefulness for it would not be so strong. Where there is this crucifiedness to the world, there is an

indifferency towards it and our outward condition. The heart is indifferent whether we have little or much, so we have but enough to be serviceable; whether we be high or low in the world, so we be but nearer unto God; whether we be afflicted or prosper, so that our souls do but prosper. And where we are indifferent in any case, we are not very careful which way it go, which way the Lord will dispose it, so that we are far from being thus crucified while we are so careful. This signifies not an indifferency but an inordinacy; and how sinful, how dangerous that is, we may judge by that of the apostle, 1 John 2:15, ‘Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;’ James 4:4, ‘Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.’

(5.) It argues a neglect of heaven; that we are too careless, too regardless of the kingdom of God, and of the way, the only way that leads to it. This is intimated by our Lord Jesus in that place where we have such a rich treasury of arguments against this carefulness: Matthew 6:33, ‘But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’ Those that mind heaven, and seek the kingdom of God as they ought to do, first and most, before all and above all, they will find something else to do than to trouble themselves so much about their earthly concerns. Those that mind these so much seek not that most, mind that too little. Where so much of the mind and heart is engaged and employed for outward things (as it is in careful persons), there will be little left for the kingdom of God and their heavenly interest. He that is over-careful for that cannot but have too little care of this; even as he that is too much taken up with his recreations and pleasures will neglect his business. The soul has not strength and vigour enough to lay out in any great measure upon several things, and so different as heaven and earth, Matthew 6:24. If he be too much addicted to one of them, too careful to observe it, the other will be neglected, Matthew 6:19-20. If you be too careful to lay up treasure on earth, you will not, you cannot be careful enough to lay up treasure in heaven, and those Christ adviseth to shut out the one that the other may be admitted. And why, but because both cannot be entertained at once? The soul has not room enough for a due care about the heavenly treasure, if it be prepossessed with carefulness about earthly riches. If you mind earthly things your conversation cannot be in heaven, as is clear from the coherence of the apostle’s discourse, Php 3:19-20, ‘Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things, for our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ;’ πολ■τευμα, our dealing and commerce, &c. You will drive no trade for heaven to purpose if you so mind and be so careful about earthly things. Merchants can drive a trade both in the East and West Indies, and mind their business at home too; and why? Because they do it by factors abroad. If they were to do all in their own persons, their trade at home would be as much as they could follow. You cannot manage your trade for heaven by factors; you must do that business in person if you will have anything done. If carefulness about your earthly concerns take you off from that, your trade for heaven is like to be lost. What would you have thought if Kish the father of Saul, when both his son and his asses were wanting, he should have been more solicitous about the asses than his son? 1 Samuel 9:3, 1 Samuel 9:5. It argues a viler temper in those who are so very careful about earthly things; they regard the asses so much, as that which should be dearest to them, dearer than relations or life, is little regarded. It argued a profane heart in Esau, when he would part with his birthright for a little pottage, Hebrews 12:16. He minded it not (though not only a civil but a sacred privilege) in comparison of that which would serve this present life, Genesis

25:32, Genesis 25:34, and so therein flocci fecit partem futuri sæculi, he set at nought his part in the world to come, says the Targum. Those that are so solicitous for what may sustain this present life, they too little regard the life to come and the concerns of it. It argues they are far from a heavenly temper, they are of a sordid, profane spirit, as Esau was.

6. It is foolish. It is great folly to be careful about the concerns of this life. This we may learn also from him who is wisdom itself: Matthew 6:34, ‘Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ Be not thoughtful for the future, how you shall be secured or provided for.

(1.) The morrow has burden, and trouble, and turmoil enough of its own, which you are like to find when it comes. You need not anticipate it, and bring it upon you before the time. It is a great folly to do so. Yet so you do, by taking the care of the morrow upon you to-day. You make a future trouble to be present. Is it so desirable as that you will not stay its time, but must needs have it beforehand? Is not this strange folly? Let the care and trouble of the morrow stay till the morrow come; will not that be soon enough? Those that have any wisdom will think so, and not so hasten the troubles of their life as to make those of one day to run into another, and to make those which would not come till the day after to leap into the day before, into the present day, by their troubling themselves with cares of the future.

(2.) But this is not all the folly of this carefulness. It will appear more fully by what he adds, ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ Every day has its evil, i. e. its care, its burden, and trouble; and so much of this as is sufficient for it, as much as you can well bear. And would you have more than enough of this upon you, more than you are sufficient for, more of this evil than you can bear? Is this wisdom, or anything like it? Now, by carefulness for the morrow, for the future, you take the course to have more of this evil upon you than you are sufficient for; for when that of any one day is sufficient, by caring for to-morrow you add the evil of another day to that which is upon you already. By caring for the future, you bring the evil, the trouble of many days into one, when the burden of this day is heavy enough. You pull hereby many more burdens upon you than that of one day, even as many as the days come to, that you are anxiously careful for. It is great folly to charge yourselves with more than needs must, but so you do when you are solicitous about the future; for thereby you make the present (which is charged enough already) bear the charge and burden and trouble of the future also.

(3.) It is folly also, because there is a far better way to dispose of your temporal concerns than by taking such care and perplexing yourselves about them, a way that is easier and shorter, and pleasanter and surer, for the well ordering of them, than such carefulness will prove. And that way is opened in the text. ‘But in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God.’ When anything is apt to perplex you and entangle you in these solicitous cares, instead of giving way to them, make your case, your request, known unto God, and leave it with him, commit it to him, cast it upon him.

[1.] This is an easier way. Would you compass your end more easily than by making a request for it? This is God’s way. Is your way like it, which lies all along through troublesome perplexing cares? You would think him a man of much folly, and little under the conduct of any wisdom, who, when he might come to his end in a plain and easy path, would rather choose one that lies through briers and thorns and troublesome entanglements. Such is the way of carefulness; it is beset with

that which is like briers and thorns to the mind; it is entangled and perplexed, full of trouble and vexation. But in the way of God you may have your affairs ordered for you with ease. It will give you no trouble nor disquietment. The Lord opens it for you, and calls you into it, because he would have you eased of what is troublesome. Use moderately the means he allows, and seek him in the use of them, and you need not trouble yourselves further, no occasion to be disquieted: Isaiah 26:3, 12, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.’ Thou wilt ordain peace for us.

[2.] This is a shorter way. The way of carefulness it is tedious, it is about, there is no end of it: cares for getting, for keeping and securing, for disposing the things of this life. It is folly to choose such a way when there is a shorter and more compendious way before you, and that which leads more directly to what you would come to, and is most desirable. What shorter way would you desire than to look up to God and make your requests known? The way of cares is tedious in itself; but being an indirect course, and such as the Lord approves not, allows not, he is provoked to make it and let you find it more tedious, as the passenger, that will not take directions from his guide, is like to wander and lose himself. You hear ‘a voice behind you saying, This is the way;’ but if you will not hearken to him, and follow his conduct, and be directed by him, but will be your own guides, he may leave you, as he did the Israelites, to wander in a wilderness, and be many years about that, which in few days, a little time, might be accomplished. ‘They consumed their days in vanities,’ Psalms 78:33. They spent their days and years, and themselves too, in the troubles of a wearisome wandering, and so may you do so too, and be harassed and worn out in bewildering cares, and that to little purpose; for,

[3.] This is a sure way; the other is far from being so. Now, no man who is not a fool will choose a way which is not like to bring him where he would be, when he has another before him which will assuredly do it. The way of God is not only plain and short, but sure. If you will walk in it, you may be sure either to arrive at what you desire, or at that which is better than you desire. You have the best assurance of it that can be given, the promise of God: Psalms 37:5, ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass.’ God undertakes he will bring it to pass, if you will commit it to him; and what greater certainty can you wish? Can there be any failing in that which God undertakes?

Oh but in your own way, the way of carefulness, there is nothing but uncertainties. What more frequent than for men to miscarry in that which they are most careful about, careful even to excess? You think the more care is taken, the more like to succeed; whereas many times it proves quite contrary. The more carefulness, the less success; God interposing, and crossing a way that is not his own, and blasting that which he likes not, and not suffering that to prosper which casts dishonour upon him. How solicitous were Joseph’s brethren, lest their youngest brother should be advanced above them, according to the import of his dream! Yet the care they took to prevent it, proved the way to promote it; so far was it from answering their desires, that it directly crossed them. How careful was Saul to secure the kingdom to his posterity! He made it the business and design of a great part of his life, while he was king; but the issue was quite cross to his great and careful endeavours. How careful was Ananias to secure part of his estate! Yet, by the means his care put him upon, he lost both it and his life too. The Lord is engaged to disappoint such cares; and how can any be sure they shall succeed, when God is concerned to disappoint them? Matthew 16:25, ‘Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my

sake, shall find it.' It holds true, as to our lives, so the concernments of our lives. He that is careful, in his own way, to secure his liberty, is like to lose it; or to save what he has, takes the course to be deprived of it; or to improve his estate, is more like thereby to impair it; or to preserve his reputation, takes the way to blast it.

Obj. But we see this carefulness often succeeds.

Ans. It does not succeed, when it seems to do. He that gets anything by it, if a curse go along with it, the seeming success is worse than a disappointment; and he that gets it not in God's way (as the way of cares is not) cannot look for a blessing. You can be sure of nothing that is truly desirable this way; you can make no account of anything, but the quite contrary.

[4.] Lastly. This is safer, a pleasanter, and in every respect a more happy way; and therefore it must be great folly to decline it, for a path in which no such thing can be expected. These, and the other particulars likewise, are evident by this one thing, that in this way the Lord is with you; in the other, you are left to and shift for yourselves. In this way you go leaning upon God; in the other, you lean upon your own understandings, and thoughtfulness, and puzzling endeavours. You are with God while you are in his way: Psalms 73:23, 'I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand.' And while you are in his hand, you are safe, and cannot miscarry. Your course is comfortable and pleasant, being with God; it is blessed, and cannot be otherwise. Though it seems sometimes to lie through the valley of the shadow of death, yet, the Lord being with you in it, there is with you safety, and comfort, and happiness; for where is this to be had but in the presence of God? But being left to yourselves in your own way, what can be expected but danger, disaster, and misery? Judge you whether it be not great folly to choose such a way before that which is, in every respect, better, infinitely better.

7. It is incongruous to be so careful about these outward things: they do not deserve so much of your care; they are little worth, and it is very incongruous to take much care about that which is little worth. Particularly,

(1.) They are of little moment, they will not quit the care that they cost you; and that which will not quit the cost, you count not worthy of your care. Of how little moment they are, you may discern in these severals; that which will cost much, put you to great charge, and produce little when all is done, you count more worthy of your disregard, than much care; you think it lost on such things.

[1.] You are very little concerned in them; they are not the things which are your concernments indeed; whatever they are accounted by vain minds, your interest lies not in them, nor do they much concern it. And you think it not reasonable in other cases, to take much care, where you are little concerned. Your souls, and your eternal state, are very little concerned in these things; and here lies your interest, these are your concernments indeed. Much of these outward things threatens, and apparently endangers your eternal life: Matthew 19:23-24, 'A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And again, 'I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' If the Lord had said this of poverty or a straitened condition, we should have thought it reasonable to have feared it like death; yet who is afraid of riches, though the Lord have represented them so extremely dangerous? A small share of these outward things does not, of itself, endanger our souls, or everlasting condition. Lazarus was never the farther from heaven, for all his want, and afflictions,

and poverty; Luke 16:22, ‘The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.’ Oh, but though our souls and future life be not concerned in these things, yet this present life is very much; nay, but even this present life is very little concerned in much of them: Luke 12:15, ‘A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.’ The interest of your life consists not in having much of the world; for what is the interest of it, but that you may live healthfully, comfortably? And so we may live with as little of the world as the apostle Paul did; and what prince on earth lives so happily, so comfortably, as he did? That which you are careful for, is to have much for you and yours; to have more than is simply necessary, to have superfluities; but Christ tells you, that your life consists not in this, ο■κ ■ν τ■ περισσευειν. Your life is little concerned in superfluities, and therefore you should not be careful for them, unless you will be so absurd as to take much care where you are little concerned. Those things are of very small moment, which are little considerable as to this present life, and less as to the life to come.*

[2.] There is little of reality in these things which you are so careful for; they are more in show, or fancy and opinion, than in reality. The good which we are careful to have in them, the evil that we are careful to avoid in them, is not so much really as in our conceits. He that has much, and uses but little, what more has he in effect, than he that has but little; what more real advantage, what more than in conceit?

What do delicacies and varieties contribute more to health and strength, than mean and plain fare? How then are they better, except in fancy? You may say, they are more pleasing; but if one can fancy the other to be as pleasing, it will be so, and there will be some reason to help the imagination, because that which is plain is really more healthful, and so in reason more pleasing.

What do great places, and power, contribute more to an happy life, than a low condition? What is the pomp and splendour of it, but π■λλη φαντασ■α an empty fancy, what show soever it make, how great soever it seem?

What real good is there in rich and gaudy habit, more than in that which is mean and common, since this will serve all the ends of clothing as well as the other? You will say one is more for ornament. But the judge of ornament is fancy; and therefore, that which is most comely to one seems ugly to another. The lily, the tulip, the peacock, outdoes all the gallantry of artificial habit, if you will but think so. ‘Surely,’ as Psalms 39:6, ‘every man walketh in a vain show. Surely they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them;’ and embraces a vain show, as if it were a real good, and shews himself a very vain person, in taking so much care about that which hath so little of reality.’ The evil that we are so solicitous and careful to escape in these things is little, but what fancy and opinion puts upon them.

Imprisonment seems a grievous evil, and what cares do some perplex themselves with about it! And yet a man can confine himself to his house, or to his chamber, for a long time; and if he do but fancy it, and have a good opinion of it, it will not be grievous. So banishment seems grievous, and how careful are we to avoid it! Yet many can live for many years, often during life, in a strange country, for trade’s sake; and why not on a better account? This would not be grievous, no more than the other, if there were but as good an opinion of it.

There is much of fancy in these things; they are evil or not, and more or less so, according to the opinion we have of them. And why should we trouble ourselves with so much care about such

things, which have so little reality in them, wherein there is so little that is really good or evil? It depends upon imagination; you may think them out of what they seem to be, whether good or evil.

[3.] They will not answer the ends for which anything is worthy of your care; and what is that worth which will not answer the end of him who takes care of it? Men will not regard that which will not serve their turn, and think it absurd to trouble themselves about it. What do ye design in being so careful about these things? What would ye have of them? Is it pleasure, is it profit, that you aim at? Oh, but they rarely afford either of these, true pleasure or profit.

First, Will they help you to contentment? If they do not, they cannot truly please you; for what delight is there, or can there be, without contentment? Now, they are not apt, they art not wont, to satisfy those who have most of them: Isaiah 55:2, 'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' If they would give satisfaction, those who have the greatest confluence of them would be contented. But we find it is otherwise: Ecclesiastes 4:8, 'There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good?' and Ecclesiastes 5:10, 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver: nor he that loveth abundance with increase.' Will that please you that cannot content yon, which will prove a troublesome, restless desire of more, instead of satisfying? And what is that worth that will not please you when you have it?

Secondly, Will they make you better? you have no real profit by them, unless they make you better. But when did you see any made better by having more? They debauch multitudes, and ensnare them in many foolish and hurtful lusts, and feed, and nourish, and minister to them; they are apt to clog the best, so that they move slowly in a spiritual course. They steal away their minds and thoughts from Christ and heaven, and divert or damp their affections to things above. All sorts are usually worse for them, but who is better? If they make you no better, you will be nothing the better for them; and who would trouble himself about that which he shall be nothing the better for? You are careful to escape afflictions and sufferings, but if you were freed from them, would it be better for you? Freedom from afflictions is often a grievous judgment; the souls of many suffer often for want of sufferings, and sometimes are utterly undone. David tells you it was good for him that he had been afflicted; but where does he, or any of his temper, tell you that it was good for him he was not afflicted? How unreasonable is it to be careful about that that you are like to be no better for! Or,

Thirdly, Will they make you happier? Are they any part of your happiness? How can that be, when those who have most of them are most miserable, and they that have had least of them have been most happy? If they would make you happy, there would be reason to make them your care; but since your happiness is not concerned in them, why are you so solicitous, &c.? Freedom from afflictions is counted a happiness, and yet this has drowned multitudes in perdition. And how often does the Spirit of God (who sure best understands what these things are) declare an afflicted state blessed! James 5:10-11, 'Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy;' Psalms 94:12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.' You see how little they tend to pleasure, profit, or

happiness; and how little should they be in our care, which are of so little moment in these respects!

Fourthly, If the ends for which persons are commonly so careful for these things were gained, it will be worse than if they should miss them; success herein will be far worse than a disappointment. And is that worthy of our care, wherein a failure is better than success?

What are the ends which do commonly excite these cares, and which men are wont to propose to themselves in the careful pursuit of these things? Why take they so much care to escape afflictions and sufferings, and to get so large a share of riches, power, or greatness? Is it not ordinarily that they may live at ease, and fare deliciously, or go sumptuously, and gratify the flesh, or be in reputation and honour, and have more than others, and get above them, and look upon many as under them? And what is this (if we will judge truly of it) but pride, slothfulness, sensuality, and selfishness? And the more they have for the securing and maintaining of these, the more is their guilt, and the greater their condemnation. And should any be so careful to make themselves more sinful, and more miserable? Is this worth your care? Oh the lamentable delusion of the world, in being so careful to make themselves more miserable; in troubling themselves with cares for that which is not only (in the issue and tendency of it) nothing worth, but much worse than nothing! You see of how little or no moment these things are, and so how unworthy of great care. But this is not all.

(2.) They are of little continuance. If they were of more moment, yet if they were of small continuance, in reason you should not much care for them. But when they are of little worth, and of little continuance too, why should you be so very careful about them? But so they are; the time of them is both short, and, which is worse, uncertain. The things of this life are of no more continuance to us than our life is; the most of them commonly stay not so long. We see them vanish and die before us; we see an end of them ordinarily before our few days are ended. But if we had them for life, what is our life? is it not a bubble, a vapour, a shadow? You would think it childishness to see one very careful and solicitous about a bubble, a thing soon raised, and presently fallen and sunk. Who but a child would concern his cares in such a thing? Why, such a bubble is our life, and the enjoyments of life are more such; now raised, and presently gone: James 4:14, ‘What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.’ What if there be some splendour in this vapour, what if it please us? it will not do long. It is but a very short show, it is vanishing as soon as we begin to seek it; look on it again, and it is quite vanished. Such is our life; and the enjoyments of it appear for a little time, and then vanish, ‘and the eye that saw them shall see them no more,’ Job 14:2. What if this shadow keep you from some inconveniences? It is but like the shadow of Jonah’s gourd, a worm is prepared that will shortly (it may be the next day) smite it, and the gourd will wither, and the shadow (with the refreshment of it) will vanish. Are we sober when we trouble ourselves with cares about such vapours and shadows, such withering, vanishing things? They are but the enjoyments of a little time; if we have them now, they will shortly be gone; if they please us now, they will not please us long; and those that most please us, usually wither soonest: Isaiah 40:6-8, ‘The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.’ The apostle applies these expressions to riches: James 1:10-11, ‘But the rich, in that he is

made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.' The grass, or the stalk of the flower, is soon gone, that will be cut down or wither shortly. Oh but the flower, that which more pleases us, stays not so long; that is cropped, or sheds its leaves sooner. All is withering, all is gone; but usually that which we are most taken with is soonest gone. Oh, why should that which is of so little continuance be so much our care? The apostle, upon this account, thought them scarce worth the looking on: 2 Corinthians 4:18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

(3.) They are not only of short, but uncertain continuance. When we speak of continuance, we have but a short time in them; but if we speak of certainty, we have no time at all. We have no time certain, no, not a moment, in any of the concerns of this life; and this is reason enough why we should not trouble ourselves with cares about them. After all your care and trouble, when you look to enjoy them, the things may be gone. A tenant, if he have a lease of his farm, he may take some care of it; but if he have no time at all in it, but may be turned out the next day, the next hour, he can see no reason, he will have no heart, to take much care of it. It is thus with us as to all the concerns of this life; we have no lease of it, no time in them at all. The Lord of all may turn us out of this, and the other, and all the next hour, the next moment. And he has left us at such uncertainties, on purpose that we might see reason not so much to mind, not to be so careful about them: Proverbs 23:5, 'Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they flee away as an eagle towards heaven.' You would think him an absurd man who, when he sees an eagle in his field, would take great care how to fence it in there, whenas no fence can secure it, make it as high as he can. The eagle, when she list, will make use of her wings and fly away; she will do it certainly. Such winged things are the enjoyments of this life, they certainly make themselves wings. There is nothing so certain as our utter uncertainty of having them or keeping them. And is not our care lost upon that which we can never make sure to us for another moment?

Such reason we have, and so many motives, not to give way to this carefulness. Let me, in the next place, shew you what means are useful, and may be effectual, with the Lord's concurrence, to expel these cares, and secure us against this forbidden carefulness.

1. Get interest in God, and trust him. Study his all-sufficiency, and believe that he, above all, more than all, can satisfy all your desires, and entertain all your delights, and secure you against all fears; that there is in him all the good that is to be cared for in these outward things, and infinitely more; that he can communicate this good to you easily, plentifully, seasonably; that he can prevent, or divert, or remove all the evil you are solicitous to avoid, or be rid of, or else can turn it into good; that he is willing to do all this.

(1.) In general, believe the all-sufficiency of God, and get your interest therein cleared. View this well, and you may see enough therein to ease your minds of these cares, and to clear yourselves from the trouble of them. Is not he sufficient for you who is sufficient for all things, for all purposes? If he be, if you have enough in him, if you have more than those who have most in the world without him, if you have far more in him than the whole world comes to, what occasion have you to

be careful about any more? Should he that has enough, abundantly enough, trouble himself with cares about more? Is not God all-sufficient enough for you? Dare you give way to a thought so dishonourable to him? Is he enough for thousands and millions of angels and glorified saints, enough for all the creatures of heaven and earth, and not enough for thee alone? And when thou hast so much more than is enough for thee, and all the world besides, shouldst thou be solicitous about more still? Should he, who has more than those who have most in the world without God, be still careful about earthly things? Should he who has a kingdom trouble himself about an acre or a foot of land? Why, all the fields, all the lands in the greatest kingdom on earth, are not so much, compared with what you have in God, as a foot, an acre of land is to such a kingdom. Should one who has treasure to the value of many millions, be careful and solicitous about a penny or a farthing? Why, all the treasure on earth is of no more value than a farthing, compared with the treasure and riches you have in the all-sufficient God. Should Ahasuerus, who had an hundred, twenty, and seven provinces, should Alexander or Augustus, who had got the empire of the world, trouble their heads about a molehill, or perplex themselves with cares about a trifle? Would not you think this notoriously absurd, and them little better than madmen? Why, all those provinces, all the kingdoms of the earth, the empire of the whole world, it is but a trifle compared with his estate who has God for his portion. If he be your possession and heritage, and yet you are perplexing yourselves with cares about these lesser trifles, when your eyes are opened, you will see cause to pass that censure upon yourselves (which the psalmist does in a like case): Psalms 73:22, ‘So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee;’ 1 Corinthians 2:9, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.’ Has God prepared and laid up for you, as your portion, more than eye has seen, though it has seen all that the world can shew; have you more than ear has heard, though it has heard much more than the eye has discovered; have you more than has entered into the heart of man, more than you can think of, though you can think of more worlds than are in being? Is all this yours? And are you still carking, still caring, and are still perplexing yourselves about more, when you have so much already as the whole earth is nothing, and less than nothing and vanity compared with it? Sure you do not believe God and his all-sufficiency. If you had faith herein, and did but exercise it, your cares about earthly things would vanish. They would not stay, they would not appear, but where there is no faith, or very little: Luke 12:28, ‘If, then, God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith!’ More particularly believe,

[1.] That there is all that is good in God; that there is in him all that is to be cared for or regarded; that you may have in him all the good that is to be cared for in these outward things; that there is in him infinitely more than these things contain or can pretend to; that all the good which you need take thought for, or are tempted to be thoughtful about, you may have it in him, whether you have these things or no. For all the good that is worthy of any care in earthly things, it came from him, he conveyed it into them; and therefore it is eminently in him. And there you may find it still, whatever become of these outward enjoyments; even as all the light and heat that is in the air at noon-day, it comes from the sun, and therefore is in the sun virtually and eminently, and there may be found, if there were none in the air; or as all the water that is in the cistern or pipes came from the fountain, and there you may have it, and more than these can contain, whether there be any in them or not. Now why should you be solicitous lest you should want these things, since all that is good in them, and any way desirable, all that you need care for, is to be had in God, and more and

better than in them.

What are these things good for but to serve your necessities, or to serve you with conveniences and delights? Food, and raiment, and habitation are necessaries; we cannot live without them, and so think it excusable to be careful for them. But these you may have in God, when you are not, or cannot be, otherwise accommodated: Psalms 90:1, ‘Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.’ So he was when they were in the wilderness, and had neither house nor home. Here David rested better than in his palace: Psalms 71:3, ‘Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.’ To make use of the Lord for this purpose obliges him: Psalms 91:9-10, ‘Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.’ And who can dwell more safely, more pleasantly, than he who dwelleth in the secret places of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty? ver. 1. And for food, he tells us, Matthew 4:4, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’ When we cannot have it, he can make up the want of it with a word. He can sustain life without bread, which in Scripture phrase includes all the necessaries of this life. He can make these things not to be needful, and order it so, that we shall need no more than we have. He can take away the necessity, and he that takes it away serves our needs better than that which does but from day to day supply them. If you take away my meat, God will take away my stomach, said that faithful woman. If I cannot have what I need, the Lord will not let me need it. And not to need these things is better than to have them, if the state of angels be better than that of frail indigent men: for that is the difference betwixt them and us; we have these things as needful, they need them not. And as for delights, he knows not God, is utterly a stranger to him, who believes not there are more and sweeter to be had in him than in the pleasantest things on earth: Psalms 4:6-7, ‘There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased;’ Habakkuk 3:17-18, ‘Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.’ When the very course of nature for ordinary preservation does fail, faith can see enough in the all-sufficient God not only to free him from perplexing cares, but to fill him with joy and glorying.

If you have God, you have all that these things are good for; all that you need care for, whether for necessity or delight, and so are no way concerned to be careful whether they come or go. So long as he goes not, whatever else go, you lose nothing, but what is still left you in him, and may be found there with wonderful more advantage. If a man have a great stock, a rich bank, he will not be careful though he have but little in his purse; he knows where to have more, and enough of it, whenever there is occasion for it. God is your bank, your treasury, all that riches is your own. What if you have not much money about you, not much of these outward things to lug along you, you know where you have enough, it is not out of your reach, it may be had when you have occasion; why then are you so careful? If a man be stored with bars of gold, or jewels of great value, he is not careful though he have but little in small money. The things of this life are but like small money for present use. What if you have not much in pence, and such little pieces, so long as you have it in that vast and incomprehensible sum, the all-sufficient God, the total of which is beyond account,

above all valuation, what need you be careful? Will not this yield you unspeakably more when there is occasion, than many bags full of single pence or copper money? In other cases you judge not of things by their bulk, but their value. Here is one thing you have (if God be yours) which is more worth than all other things together, and you may make more of it when there is need. It is virtually all, and comprises the good and advantage of whatever you care for. What, then, need you care for more? Oh if you did but see it, and know it, and believe it, you would dwell far from carefulness.

[2.] Believe that there is no good to be had from them without God. All the cares of the world can make nothing of them, can squeeze no drop of good out of them, unless he let it out. For as all the good that is in them is in him eminently, and so you need not care for them if you have him, so all the good that can be expected of them is from him dependently, and so they are not to be regarded without him. They can do you no good at all, they are not sufficient for it of themselves, their sufficiency for it is from him who is only all sufficient. Be as careful as you will to get as much as you can, and to keep it; yet you will get just nothing, but the trouble of your care and turmoil; nothing at all to be cared for unless he give it you. Now, if you did believe this effectually, you would not, by over-caring, provoke God to suspend that influence upon which all that is anything worth in them depends. The Lord can be as good to you as heart can desire, even without these; but these will be good for nothing without him. Meat and clothes, and rest, though you have more than enough, will not serve your necessities, will not keep you in health and strength, will not ease or cure you when you are ill. Pleasant things will not be delightful, will not so much as content you. Riches will not serve the end of riches, and when they do not serve their true end, they are far worse than well improved poverty: James 5:1-3, ‘Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.’ God has such a stroke in these things, that the creatures, though given in abundance, will not serve their proper uses when he says they shall not: Micah 6:14-15, ‘Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but thou shalt not drink wine.’ Haggai 1:6, Haggai 1:9, ‘Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes,’ &c. This was the issue of all their carefulness, when they neglected better things. They had enough to feed, and clothe, and make them rich, and yet they were in effect neither fed, nor clothed, nor enriched. God did but blow upon it, and all the good of these things, all that was to be cared for in them, vanished. If you did believe and consider this, you would see yourselves, your care so much concerned for the pleasing of God, that you would be little careful about other things.

[3.] Believe that he can communicate the good of all these things to us, though they of themselves cannot do it. And this he is all-sufficient to do, either by these things or without them. There is no restraint with him to do it either way. And though ordinarily he conveys it by these things, yet it is not at all difficult to him to do it without them. He can do this easily, plentifully, seasonably.

Easily. He can with the greatest ease give these outward things, or afford the comfort and advantage of them; he can do it with a word, with the turning of a hand. Let him but give the word,

and it will be done: Psalms 147:15, ‘He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth, his word runneth very swiftly;’ Psalms 107:20, ‘He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions, with the turning of a hand;’ Psalms 104:28, ‘That thou givest them they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good;’ and Psalms 145:16, ‘Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.’ That which the things themselves cannot do, with all their abundance; that which we cannot do, with all our carefulness (satisfy us with the good of them), he can do more easily than we can open our hand. If we be careful to have these things, the good of them, without much trouble, faith will direct us where it may be had with ease; it will lead us to mind God, and not to mind nor be thoughtful about the things themselves.

Plentifully. He can fill, he can satisfy us with the goodness of them; not with the husks, which is all we can have without him, perplex ourselves with what cares we will, but with that which is desirable in them: Psalms 104:28, ‘Thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good;’ Psalms 68:10, ‘Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.’ 1 Timothy 6:17, ‘Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.’ He can give abundance of the good where there is but a little of the things; much contentment with it, much spiritual advantage by it; and upon that account, Psalms 37:16, ‘A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.’ And it is true in this sense, though it may look farther, when it is said, Luke 1:53, ‘He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.’ He sends them away empty of the good of riches while they have them, and fills those with it who have them not. He can convey the marrow to others, and leave them nothing but the bare bone to gnaw on, which, how big soever it be (how bulky soever their estates are), is nothing the better, being but a bare and empty bone. If we be tempted to be careful for much of these things, which is so common as the best are in danger, this believed will help us to cease from this carefulness, and to apply ourselves to him, in whose hands alone plenty, and all the good of it, all that is to be cared for, is plentifully found.

Seasonably. When they will do us no hurt, when they would do us most good, when they are most needful, most useful. We know not the season, we mind it not. We would have these things, and are careful to have much of them at a venture; whether they will do us good or hurt we care not, but to take much care to have them, and our fill of them, whatever be the issue; as one in a fever, that will have wine, and his fill of it, though he die for it; he will have his appetite, indeed his distemper, gratified; come what will of it, whether it be safe or seasonable, he cares not. We consider not, we know not when it is safe, when it is seasonable; but the Lord knows perfectly, and can give it when the season is: Psalms 104:27, ‘These wait all upon thee, that thou may give them their meat in his due season;’ and Psalms 145:15, ‘The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.’ Hosea 6:3, ‘He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain on the earth.’ He can give these, as he gives the first and latter rain, when it is most needful, and will be of greatest advantage. This believed, would help us to eye God, and fix our minds on him, instead of fixing our minds on, and employing our thoughtfulness about, our outward concerns. This would teach us not to strain our souls with cares, in leaping greedily at the fruit which is above our reach; and observe the hand of God, which only can convey it to us seasonably, when it will be good for us, and worth the having. This believed, that the Lord can give us the good of these things without them, will help us not to be so careful for the things

themselves, for the good that is to [be] had by them, is all that is to be cared for in them; and this the Lord can help us to, whether we have them or no. When you have drawn all the spirit out of any herb or plant, you regard not the gross, dry, useless matter that is left, nor are solicitous what becomes of it. If you have the advantage and comfort which is expected from outward enjoyments, you have all the spirits of them, and this the Lord is sufficient to give you without them, yea, and to help you to as much of this in a little as in more of them. And this believed will help you to be indifferent as to the measure of these things, not to be careful or solicitous whether you have less or more.

[4.] Believe that he can secure you from whatever you are solicitous to avoid, or ease you of whatever you are careful to be rid of.

First, Losses, troubles, sufferings are wholly and uncontrollably at his disposing; he can prevent them when they are afar off and keep them so; he can divert them when they are near and turn them another way; he can remove them when they are upon you, for all of this nature that you are apt to be thoughtful about is in his hand, and all the instruments and circumstances thereof, and he can take whatever order therein he pleases. You are not careful about your concerns, when they are in such hands as you can be confident of. Have faith in God, believe but that all is in the best hands that they can possibly fall into when they are in his, and you will see no occasion to be careful. If you will but give God the pre-eminence above some creatures, and believe your affairs are better in his hands than in those persons that you can be confident of, your hearts may be at rest, all is as well as can be, unless it can be better than when all is at God's disposing. When a stone cannot move without the hand that you can trust, you will not be careful about what you may suffer by it. Why, all that may trouble you lies as still as a stone in the highway, and cannot move without the hand which you have so much cause to trust, which you have more reason to trust than your own: if you believe this, how can you be careful? If the rod be in the hand that the child can trust and be secure of, he will not be perplexed about it. All that can afflict you is in the hand of God; if that be to be trusted, your minds may be at ease, there is not the least occasion to be anxious or perplexed; believe but that God can secure you; that may hush your cares. The three faithful Jews found it enough for this purpose: Daniel 3:16-17, 'Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.' This they believed, therefore they were not careful.

Secondly, He can secure you from the evil of afflictions, troubles, losses; if they should come upon you, he can keep the evil of them far from you: Job 5:19, 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.' When you are surrounded with troubles, he can take order that the evil of them shall not so much as touch you, Psalms 23:1-6. He can take a course that there shall be no evil to be feared; and where there is no cause of fear, there can be no occasion to be perplexed. There is nothing that in reason you can be careful to avoid but that which is evil; believe but that God is sufficient to secure you from all the evil of troubles, and all occasion of carefulness will vanish. The evil of them, which we are so careful to avoid, is the smart, the sting, the damage, the grievance, we are apprehensive of; but the Lord can pull out the sting, and what need you then care for the serpent? He can keep you from any damage by them, and what need you care what seems lost, if there be no damage by it? He can ease you of the grievance, and why so careful to avoid that which will not be grievous? He can take order that you shall not so much as smart by them. He can not only mitigate the evil you are wont to be perplexed about, and make it

tolerable,—as 1 Corinthians 10:13, ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it;—but quite take it away. He can so order it that troubles shall not be troublesome to you; that pressures shall not be heavy upon you, but go as lightly under them as if they weighed nothing; that you shall not suffer by what others count great sufferings; that you shall not lose anything which you need care for by your losses. If the evil be gone, there is nothing left that you need be careful about: and the evil the Lord can easily remove.

Thirdly, He can do you good by afflictions; not only free you from the evil of them, but make them good for you. He can render them as good or better for you, than freedom from them of itself is or can be. Believe this, and you will count it very absurd to be careful; it is little better than madness to be careful to avoid that which is good, solicitous to escape that which will prove best for you. God is sufficient to do this. If you lose much of what you have, he can make the little that is left as good or better than the whole, as comfortable, as satisfying, as advantageous, yea, and yourselves more serviceable thereby than, it may be, you would have been with much more. It is not the quantity but the virtue of things that is to be cared for; and the Lord can convey more virtue into a little than ordinarily there is to be found in very much, as you find more in a little spirits than in a great quantity of drugs. If the Lord can give you all the virtue of much in a little, what need you be so careful for much, unless the mere bulk and cumber of it be to be cared for?

And, as in losses and wants, so in other afflictions and sufferings, he can do you more good by them than you were like to have met with without them. He has done this ordinarily. Jacob’s afflictions, which he met with in the loss of Joseph, proved a greater advantage to him and the whole family than if he had never parted with him: Genesis 45:5-7, ‘Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life: to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.’ If Jacob’s care lo keep Joseph with him had succeeded according to his desire, he and his family might have starved: Genesis 50:20, ‘Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is at this day, to save much people alive.’ He kept the Israelites so long in the wilderness, a place of much trouble and afflictions to them, that he might do them good thereby, Deuteronomy 8:15-16; he led them so long in the valley of death, as it is called, Jeremiah 2:6, to do them good. It was better for David, when he was persecuted and hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, than when he was upon his throne: Psalms 119:75, ‘I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.’ He did his people good by their captivity, the most grievous suffering that ever they met with, and the more, because it was not only the loss of their country, but the loss of the temple and the solemn worship of God: Jeremiah 24:5, ‘Thus saith the Lord, Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.’ He did them that good hereby, which mercies, and deliverances, and his own ordinances were not effectual before to do; hereby he brought them to return unto him and acknowledge him: Jeremiah 24:7, ‘I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.’

I need not stay on particular instances; the apostle comprises all, Romans 8:28, ‘We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;’ all afflictions and sufferings whatsoever, for of those he is speaking. He tells us, how that

which we count so evil works for good: Hebrews 12:10, ‘He chasteneth us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.’ More of his holiness is so great a good as far outweighs all the evil, seeming or real, that is in any outward losses or sufferings whatsoever. Believe this, that he is sufficient to turn them into good, and it will take you off from such carefulness to avoid them. What pretence can there be for perplexing yourselves with cares for the escaping of that which is good for you? You may say, It is true, if the Lord will do this for me; oh, but you have no reason to question this, for,

[5.] He is willing, and you have all reason to believe that he is willing to do all this for you; believe that he is willing to communicate the good of these outward things to you, or the things themselves if they be good; this is all that is to be cared for. And this you may be sure of, if you count the word of the faithful God sufficient assurance: Psalms 34:10, ‘The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing;’ and Psalms 84:11, ‘For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;’ and Psalms 85:12, ‘The Lord shall give that which is good; and our land yield her increase.’ You will not, if you be sober, be careful, lest you should be without that which is not good; you will not count that a want; and if your wants be no other, you are assured of a supply: Php 4:1-23, ‘He shall supply,’ he is willing to do it richly. You are no more concerned to be careful about this, than a child is, who has, and knows he has, an affectionate father, able and willing to provide for him. The Lord is more willing to provide herein for you than the best of fathers on earth. Would you desire more to free you from cares? Sure it needs not. Why, but you have more. The Lord is as much more willing to do it than any earthly parents, as the love of God exceeds the affections of men; as much more willing as the Father of mercies, and the God of all comforts, exceeds that bit of affection, that drop of love, which the narrow heart of an earthly parent can contain: Matthew 7:11, ‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good gifts to them that ask him?’ As much more willingly does he give as heaven is above earth. Do but believe this effectually, and you shall be ashamed, if not astonished, at the absurdness and unreasonableness of your cares. And then as for afflictions, &c., he is not only able but willing to free you from them, or to secure you from the evil of them, which is all you need to care, or have any occasion to perplex yourselves about; and not only so, but to make them really good for you. All which he assures us of by many great and precious promises (which I must not mention now), he is willing to make them good; to make them prove best for you, in all respects, both in point of pleasure, and profit, and honour; all which are comprised in that of the apostle: 1 Peter 1:6-7, ‘Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in weariness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.’ Here is delight wherewith you may greatly rejoice, even in the midst of afflictions; here is profit, richer than that of gold, something much more precious and valuable; here is approbation with God, the greatest honour and glory, both at his appearing here and hereafter; and all this the issue of manifold afflictions, of fiery trials. But that the Lord is willing you should partake of so sweet, and rich, and noble advantage, he would not be willing you should suffer, no, not for a season. He is ready to make these not only good, but better for you than outward prosperity is wont to be, or of itself can be; and need you be so careful to avoid that which he will make better for you, than the condition you naturally most desire, better than a prosperous and flourishing state? Do ye think the apostle Paul,

for all his sufferings, would have changed conditions with Nero, in the greatest flourish of his empire? Or, that Moses did not believe the Lord would make afflictions better for him than all the honours, or riches, or pleasures, of Egypt, when, Hebrews 11:24-26, ‘he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt’? The Lord is willing hereby to free you from that which is your greatest evil, your sin and corruption; which is the weakness, the disease, the poverty, the deformity, the misery of your souls. He has declared his will by his promise: Isaiah 27:9, ‘By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin;’ and Isaiah 1:25, ‘I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy sin;’ and willing to make you hereby partakers of that which is the greatest good you are capable of on earth: that holiness, which is the health, strength, beauty, riches, life and glory of the soul, and fruitful therein, Hebrews 12:1-29, 2 Corinthians 4:1-18. Do you question his willingness here? Why, he is more willing you should have so much good by afflictions than yourselves are. You are afraid of this sovereign receipt, because it tastes a little bitter; like a foolish child, who will not take that to save his life which bites his tongue. The Lord is glad to force it on us; so much more ready is he to do us good thereby, than we are willing to have it. Believe but this, that he is so willing to make afflictions so good, so exceeding good, and you will condemn yourselves of childishness in perplexing yourselves much, and being so very thoughtful how to avoid them. These cares would find no place if faith were duly exercised: Psalms 42:11, ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God;’ John 14:1, ‘Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.’

(2.) Get more submission unto God, if you would be freed from this carefulness.

[1.] Get judgment and will more subjected to the mind and will of God, so as to rest satisfied in that which he counts best for you. The Lord has assured his people that it shall go well with them, that he will dispose of their concerns for the best. If we did acquiesce in this, and were fully satisfied with it, and will and mind rested in it, we should be at rest from our cares; we should not be further perplexed about that which we were satisfied would be ordered for the best. The Lord has given sufficient ground in his word for our satisfaction herein; and we seem to be satisfied in general, and can say he will make all work for the best; and in particular cases, which are remote, and concern others, we make no doubt of it; but when we are tried in cases that more particularly respect to ourselves, and which touch us nearly, the unsubmissiveness of our souls unto God, in these dealings which he judges fittest for us, does presently bewray itself. Oh if I should meet with such a loss, lose such a relation, such a comfort, such a considerable part of a livelihood, how could it be well with me if such and such an affliction should befall me, so grievous, so wounding, which strikes deep into the interest of ease, or profit, or credit, or comfort? Then we fly off, and gainsay in particulars what we seemed satisfied with in general; and make that a question, which, before we came to be specially and deeply concerned, seemed unquestionable. Then we are ready to say (or to think at least) How can it be well with me if this should befall me? How can this be for the best, which threatens to ruin, to undo me; which comes upon me with open mouth, to swallow up my dearest comforts and concernments? Now we cannot submit to God, and yield up our judgments to that which he has so often declared; we cannot think it best, nay, we cannot think

it good for us, though it be the dispensation of that God who has given us his word that all his dispensations shall be for the best. Here our judgments rise up against the mind and judgment of God, and what he thinks best and fittest for us we think worst of all; and accordingly we are anxious, and perplexed, and thoughtful, and full of cares how to prevent it, when such a providence approaches, or how we may remove it when it has overtaken us. Whereas, if our minds and hearts were but subdued to the mind and will of God, we would be satisfied with that as best which he thinks to be so; and so our cares would cease, and mind and heart would be at rest from the troublesome hurry of them.

Oh labour for this quiet, humble submission unto God; abhor that horrible pride whereby we prefer our own judgments before that of infinite wisdom, and advance our own wills before that of infinite goodness. See that mind and heart lower to God in all his dispensations, as most wise, and most good, and best of all for you, whatever they may seem to a proud selfish heart, or to a partial short-sighted mind. This you must do, if you would be freed from the sin and trouble of this condemned carefulness. If we will presume to make ourselves wiser than God, and to know better what is best for us than he, no wonder if our hearts be like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, if we be left to set ourselves on several occasions upon the rack of this carefulness.

[2.] Get your wills subdued to the will of God. If this were done, and our wills brought to a due subjection to the divine will, we should not be at all troubled or perplexed with cares; for, though we observe it not, our excess of carefulness is to have our own wills in this, and the other, and every thing that we are solicitous about. If our own will were not in it, and something therein lay not cross to that, we would not be troubled with cares or thoughtfulness about it.

Why are we so careful to get much for ourselves and ours; so thoughtful lest it should be lost or impaired, but because we would have a fair estate? That is our will, it is fixed and stiff for it. We cannot yield to be put off with a little, though it were the will of God so to order it.

Why are we so thoughtful and solicitous for the avoiding of afflictions and sufferings, or so very careful to get out of them when they are upon us, but because we would live easily, and pleasantly, and prosperously? This is our will, and is so much set upon it, that it cannot yield to a low and afflicted condition, though it were the will of God to dispose us in it. If we did but submit to his will, the care and trouble would be over; that which he wills for us would be welcome to us; we should not trouble ourselves with cares, either to prevent it before it come, or to escape it when it is upon us. You may see this in Saul: it was the will of God that David should succeed him in the kingdom; it was Saul's will that his own son should succeed him, and the crown not be removed from his family. Hence was Saul so afflicted with cares, after he suspected David should have the kingdom: hence was he so thoughtful how to make an end of him. His cares might bring or increase that melancholy, which is called (as some think) an evil spirit, or which an evil spirit made use of, to afflict him and trouble his spirit, 1 Samuel 18:8-10. If Saul could have submitted his will to God's, he had been freed from those cares, and the troubles of heart and life, which they brought Upon him; but Saul would have his own will, rather than God's will should be done: this was the rise of his cares, and that which continued them during his life. And thus it is commonly with us in other cases; when our carefulness is truly stated, the contest is betwixt God's will and ours. We may tremble that it should be thus, but so it is. We are careful to have our wills, with a neglect of God's will, nay, many times in opposition to it. Instead of being careful to have his will

done on earth as it is in heaven, we are thoughtful how our wills may be done on earth, that we may have all that we will, and all as we will, whatever the will of God be. We would have his will yield to ours in this and the other, and that not to be his will which is so. We would have him will nothing but what we will as to our outward condition; or if he will anything that we like not, which suits not our inclinations, we will hinder it and have it otherwise, if all our care will do it. Oh what horrid pride is here, what rebellion against the sovereign will of the Most High! How do we attempt to cross God in our cares, and trouble ourselves with thoughtfulness to have our wills, though God's will be against it! Oh humble yourselves for this! Importune the Lord to give you hearts of flesh, such as will be tractable and easily wrought to a compliance with the divine will, to take away that stone rather than heart, which is in us naturally, that will break rather than yield. So far as the will of God is acceptable to you, so as yours can stoop to it though it cross you, so far you will not be anxious or careful. If you could submit to his will in all things, you would be careful for nothing.

(3.) Live in the view of eternity. Labour to walk still in the sight of your everlasting condition; let your eye be often on it; let your minds and thoughts be frequently taken up with that endless state which you must shortly enter on. Be still comparing your time here with that eternal condition that remains for you; consider how little or nothing it is in comparison, and that will help you to discover how small and inconsiderable the concerns of this present life are compared with those of everlastingness, and consequently how little to be cared for. You have that to look after, which is of so much more importance than the things of this life, as far exceeds them, as that vast incomprehensible eternity exceeds a little moment. Oh believe this effectually, consider it seriously, and you will find something else to do than to trouble yourselves so much with cares about concerns of so inconsiderable a moment! Why was the apostle no more careful about the things of this life, why no more troubled about them? why no more thoughtful to avoid afflictions and sufferings, or to get rid of them? He gives you this account of it: 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' His view of those eternal things made things of time' seem nothing to him, not fit to be the concern of his care, soarce worthy to be looked on. A due prospect of eternity would help us more to overlook the things of this life, and to look upon ourselves,* our cares, as very little concerned in them. He that has his eye much fixed upon that, when he looks downward, will be ready to think he sees nothing. What are the atoms, the motes, that we see stirring about us in the light, to one that, with the help of an artificial glass, has been viewing the sun and the heavenly bodies? The things of time are no more to those of eternity than these motes are to the sun or the whole heavens. Let these motes dance on; what are we concerned in them, unless to keep them out of our eyes, out of our hearts and minds? A traveller that has but a night to stay in a place, he will not be very solicitous about his accommodation; he will take it as he finds it, considering it is for so short time; he must be gone the next morning. You would think him little better than a madman who would take as much care about his inn as he does about his own dwelling house. Why, such is our case in this world, and so we should think of it. We are strangers and pilgrims, we are in a journey, we are seeking a country; our habitations are but as an inn, and our enjoyments as the accommodations of it; and our abode herein is not so much, compared with eternity, as a night's lodging. Whether they please us or please us not, we need not much care, since it is for so short a time; we must be gone, as it were, the next morning. Psalms 49:12: 'Man being in honour, abideth

not,' ■■ ■■■■ he shall not stay, he shall not lodge a night. Alas! what need he care whether he be in honour or not, whether he have little or much, since it is for so little a while, since he is not to abide in that condition so much as a night comes to? It is not so much in respect of everlastingness. Be not careful about it; take it as it comes, since you must be gone out of it so very soon. Would you think that traveller in his wits, who, when he is but to stay in his inn so few hours, would busy himself to stuff his bed and pillow with thorns, so that, when he can but rest a while at best, he may not be able to rest at all? Thus you do when you trouble yourselves with the cares of this life. Our Lord Jesus expresses them by thorns. When you must rest no longer, will you take the course not to rest a short night? Your stay here is not so much to eternity as a night. Psalms 90:2, Psalms 90:4, 'A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.' If a thousand years be but to eternity as a watch in the night, the space of three or four hours, and that passed over insensibly in sleep, what is our life, which is but so small a parcel of a thousand years? The fourth part of a night is but a very little thing. Oh but it is not so much, it is but as yesterday, and yesterday when it is past is nothing. This life is no more expressly: Psalms 39:5, 'Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is nothing before thee; verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity.' If our life be as nothing to everlastingness, what are the concerns of it? If this were believed and considered, would that be so much our care, which is no more than nothing in the account of God?

Let those infidels trouble themselves with the cares of this life who think their souls shall last no longer than their life; but you that believe you must live hereafter more millions of years than there are minutes in your whole life, yea, more millions of ages than there are minutes in a million of years, what do you think your life here is to that, of such an astonishing continuance, of an endless, an everlasting duration? Can you conceive it to be like anything more than a moment? And why are you so careful, why so much concerned about the accommodations of a moment, of a minute? What if they please you or please you not; is it any great matter, since it is for so short a time? What if they be not such as you could wish; will they not serve well enough for a moment? May you not be indifferent how it fares with you for such a very little while? Oh, but the concerns of eternity, of a condition that will never, never have an end, that will be never nearer to an end after it has lasted millions and millions of ages; oh sure this should be your care, and so much your care, that the things of this life should have little of it in comparison, little or nothing in comparison of them, because they are little or nothing compared with them, of little or no continuance comparatively, and so of little or no consequence. That emperor made himself ridiculous to the world, who, giving out that he had a design to conquer a kingdom, and taking care to raise a vast army, and marching them many hundred miles, in the end employed his soldiers only to gather cockles. You declare your design to be for a kingdom, an everlasting kingdom; you must strive, and wrestle, and combat to compass it. Here lies your business, here should your care be employed. If, instead of this, you turn your cares upon the things of this life, you fall a-gathering cockles or picking straws, instead of seeking that kingdom; the things of time are of no more value than straws in comparison of it.

PRAY FOR EVERYTHING But in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests he made known unto God—Philip. 4:6. The apostle having forbidden the Philippians to be careful, he shews them what they should do instead thereof. He shews them a better way to obtain what they or others are apt to be careful about, than all such forbidden carefulness would

prove. Instead of troubling yourselves with cares for anything, apply yourselves to God by prayer in everything.

Obs. The people of God should have recourse to him by prayer in everything. For explication, let us inquire into the act, the extent, the manner of praying. What we must do, and wherein it must be done, and how we must do it.

1. For the act. It is prayer, expressed here by four words, προσευχ■, asking of God, or, as it is rendered, prayer; δ■ησις, supplication; ■υχαριστ■α, praise or thanksgiving; ■ιτ■ματα, petitions or requests. For the opening of which, you know there are two principal parts of prayer, petition and thanksgiving, the asking of what we would have, and the due acknowledgment of what we have received. When we take notice of what the Lord bestows, and are affected with the riches and the freeness of his mercy therein, and out of an hearty sense thereof gratefully acknowledged; this is, ■υχαριστειν, to give him thanks, which is one chief part of prayer, that which should not be omitted. When we would pray, as he requires, our requests should be joined, μετ■ ■υχαριστι■ς, with thanksgiving. The sense of our wants, pressures, sufferings, should not drown the sense of his mercy and bounty expressed towards us. Eagerness after more should not make us overlook what he has done for us already; but while we beg, we should also be thankful, having as much occasion for this as the other.

Then for petition, the other part of prayer, that is here, α■τ■ματα, the several requests we make, or petitions we put up, and προσευχ■, and δ■ησις, denote the same. He uses more words to express the same thing, as the Hebrews were wont to do (whose manner of speech he much uses) to signify frequency or vehemency; to mind us that we should be very much and often in this duty, or that our hearts should be very much in it when we are about it.

We need not inquire how these two words may be distinguished; it is like the apostle intended no more than I have expressed. But if we will be so curious, one of them may denote the object of our prayers, προσευχ■ is πρ■ς τ■ν Θε■ν ■υχ■, a request directed to God. To whom shall we address ourselves if we would be relieved, or supplied, or delivered? Let your requests be made known to God, πρ■ς Θεον. Others may be unable or unwilling to help; it may be a wickedness, or it may be to no purpose to seek to them; but God is able and willing to relieve, he has made it your duty to apply yourselves to him, and to none else without him. The other may denote the subject of our prayers; δεησις, rendered supplication, is from δε■μαι, to want. That which we are to request of God is what we want, be it something which we have not, or more of that which we have, if it be needful for us, that which we want indeed. We may seek it of God; it is both our duty and privilege to do it; he both encourages and commands it. It is a principal part of prayer, to which there are so many promises, for which there are so many precepts, to spread our wants before God, to make them known to him. Not that he knows not what we want before we declare it, Matthew 6:1-34; but this is the way, most for his honour and our advantage, to have supplies. ‘He will be sought unto,’ Ezekiel 36:37. We must seek him, and not formally, and as of course; but as those who are sensible what they want, and who it is that only can relieve us, make all known to him.

2. For the extent of it. ‘In everything;’ so we must both pray and praise him, both make our requests, and give thanks, in everything; but here seems some difficulty, as to both, which I will endeavour to remove.

(1.) How can it be our duty to give thanks in everything? There are many cases, wherein it may be a question, whether they require thankfulness; several, which seem to call for humiliation rather than thanksgiving. But this in general may be determined, whatever our estate or the circumstances of it be, so far as there is any mercy to be discerned therein, so far we ought to be thankful, yea, though there be much of anger and divine displeasure there. And thereby we may resolve the particular cases wherein it is questionable, whether it is our duty to be thankful, and how it can be so.

[1.] When we are under afflictions, are we to give thanks for personal grievances? Yes; there is something in them for which we may, we ought to be thankful. But how? Not for the afflictions considered in themselves, for so they are not joyous, but grievous. But if they be for righteousness' sake, then are they blessed dispensations, then they are occasions of joy, and so of praise, Matthew 5:1-48. Then they are gifts, special favours, and so oblige us to thankfulness: Php 1:29, 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.' Yea, when they are chastisements, and occasioned by our miscarriages, yet then we may and ought to be thankful, because they are no more, not so much as we had deserved, and had reason to fear; not so many, not so grievous, not so continued. When we lose something, had it not been for that mercy (which we should be thankful for) we had lost all. When we suffer in one particular, we might have suffered in all, in soul, body, estate, relations, altogether. When it is but a rod, it might have been a scorpion; when it lies but on us a while, it might have oppressed us all our days, and made our whole life a life of sorrow and affliction. But they are not so much as others suffer. What are our sufferings, when greatest, to those of Christ, though he was innocent, not, as we are, covered with guilt? What are our afflictions to the sufferings of others, who are as dear to him, and have less provoked him? What to theirs, who, by the Lord's testimony, were such, of whom the world was not worthy? Hebrews 11:1-40. And because they proceed from love, and shall have a merciful issue, if not for the grievance of them yet for the rise, and for the effects of them, so far as they are sanctified, to make you partakers of his holiness, to bring forth the fruits of it; so far as you have his presence, and are supported under them, and enabled to demean yourselves under them as children, to bear them with patience, submission, the exercise of faith, hope, and other graces requisite in such a state; and because, where we have one affliction, we have a thousand mercies. And should the sense of one, though sharp, drown all these, especially a few of them? Some one of them is more just matter of praise and rejoicing, than all the afflictions in the world of sorrow and dejection. You are in troubles, but you are not in hell; and why not there, but because his mercy towards you is infinite? The Lord has taken this or that from you. Oh, but hath he taken his loving-kindness from you? Has he divorced you from Christ? Has he cut you off from hopes of glory? Has he extinguished his grace in you, or taken his Holy Spirit from you, or shut you out from the covenant of grace, or separated you from his love? Romans 8:1-39.

[2.] When public judgments are inflicted, that calls for mourning and lamentations, what place then for praise and thanksgiving? Why, so far even then we are to be thankful, as the Lord remembers mercy in the midst of judgment. We then have occasion of thanksgiving, because he inflicts no more judgments, pours but out some one vial, when he might pour out all together; because he makes not those inflicted more grievous and intolerable, more spreading and universal, more destructive and ruining; because we are secured and preserved, we escape when others fall; because it does but scorch us, when it might consume us, Lamentations 3:1-66. They could see

occasion of thankfulness in the midst of those calamities, which had burnt their temple, destroyed Jerusalem, laid their country desolate, and carried the inhabitants into captivity; they could discern mercy and compassions through all this, and so far as this can be discerned, there is cause of thanksgiving.

[3.] When we are under temptations. An hour of temptation is a time of fear and trembling, yet even then we have cause of thanksgiving. So far as the temptation prevails not; so far as we are strengthened to resist it; so far as it is not too violent to be borne or withstood; so far as we escape the danger; if we do not quite escape, so far as we take warning by it, and are made more watchful, and stand more upon our guard, and are more humbled in the sense of our own weakness, and led to more dependence on the Lord our strength, and fear and hate that more to which we were tempted, and are more resolute against it. 1 Corinthians 10:13, ‘There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.’ So far as the Lord’s faithfulness, his mindfulness of his covenant, appears in any temptations, whether for good or to evil, so much cause is there of thanksgiving.

[4.] When we fall into sin. That is the hardest case; yet here we ought to be thankful, not because we are left to sin, for that is cause of sorrow and deep humiliation, but because he leaves us not to sin more, as we would do were it not for his gracious restraints; because the Lord does not leave us, does not cast us off when we sin; because he proceeds not more severely against us for sin; because we do not die in it; because he does not cast us off, and cause us to perish in the very act; because he gives any time for repentance, or any heart for it. Here is matter of thankfulness, since he is so highly provoked by sin; since he might so easily satisfy his just displeasure in destroying us; since he might do it with advantage to his glory, the glory of his justice, and might prevent further provocations, and more dishonour; or because he over-rules this desperate evil, to occasion any good; or works any cure of this deadly poison, as he can do. And thus you see how we may give thanks in everything, even in those wherein it is hard to see any occasion for thanksgiving.

(2.) As there is some difficulty in respect of thanksgiving, so in respect of prayer, whether we may apply ourselves to God in everything particularly; and that which the text leads me to, whether we may make our requests known to him for temporal things, the concerns of this world. With some, this seems questionable; μ■ προσελθ■ς θε■ ■π■ρ ■υτελων πραγμ■των, says Chrysostom, make not thy address to God for small things; injuriam magno Deo facit, qui parva petit, parva autem sunt omnia temporalia, says Savonarola. But such sayings must be understood as intending a restraint only, not an absolute prohibition, since by warrant from Scripture we may pray for what is there promised, and ‘godliness has the promise of this life,’ 1 Timothy 4:8. And these are some of the things that the text directs us to pray for. We are not to be careful for the things of this life, but instead thereof, make our requests known in everything; as in other things, so in these. We have both rule and example for this in Scripture. Our Lord Jesus directs us to pray for our daily bread; so Jacob: Genesis 28:20, ‘And, Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,’ &c. And Agur, Proverbs 30:8, ‘Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me.’ They may be sought, but with limitation.

[1.] Not principally; for they are not the things that we are principally concerned in, Matthew 6:33. The kingdom of God, and the righteousness of it, things eternal and spiritual, are to be sought principally, first and most, above all, more than all, as being of far greater value and consequence, of greater necessity and importance. We may far better fall short of the things of this life, that may trouble us for a time; but to miss the other, will be our misery for ever, and of greater value. The other are but loss and dung in comparison, of no considerable value; and so we should be far from seeking them principally.

[2.] Not for themselves, but in order to better things; not to serve ourselves of them, but to be more serviceable by them, to do more good with them; not to please our senses, but to help us the better to please the Lord; not because they suit our inclinations, but to enable us to do the will of God, and that work which he has set us to do. As the apostle desired a prosperous journey, Romans 10:10, not for the journey's sake, as though he loved or delighted in that, but that he might have thereby an opportunity to do more good. To seek these things for themselves, profit for profit's sake, or pleasure's sake, is to seek them as God only should be sought, and so to idolize them.

[3.] With submission. These things are not good for all, in every degree. We know not whether they will be good for us, nor what measure of them may be best. We must not seek them peremptorily, as those that have a mind to have them at a venture, but with a reserve if they may be good for us; and these must be submitted to the will and wisdom of God, who only knows it. Illi committite, ut si prosint, det; si scit obesse, non det. Refer it to him, either to bestow them if he see it good, or deny them, if he know they will not be good. The all-wise physician knows better what is good or hurtful than the distempered patient.

We are not to seek outward things as we may seek faith, repentance, pardon, holiness, growth in grace, power against sin. These are absolutely necessary to our happiness; it is his will his people shall have them; he has declared it in his word, and promised them without reserve; and therefore so we may beg them. But outward things are not absolutely necessary to salvation; we may be happy without them, or such a measure of them; we know not but it may hinder instead of promoting our happiness. They are not promised absolutely, and therefore should not be so sought.

Those things which tend but to our well-being in spirituals, as comfort, assurance, and highest degrees of holiness, are not to be sought but with submission, much less these which tend but to our well-being in temporals. 'Not my will but thine be done,' said our great pattern. And David herein shewed himself to be a man after his own heart: 2 Samuel 15:25, 'And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation.' He referred it wholly to the will of God, whether his outward condition should be prosperous or no. So much for the act and the extent of it. The mode or manner of praying is, the 3. Third particular propounded, how we must pray. Take an account of this in these severals.

(1.) Pray much and often. That we are enjoined, when he bids us pray in everything. We must pray whenever we have occasion; and everything gives us occasion for some request. We have occasion to pray, from what concerns our eternal state, our spiritual state, and our outward conditions, occasions to pray from everything. We have either wants or fears, which respect every

state; and therefore frequent, constant occasions to pray, and so we should be much and often in this duty. It is called for in the like expressions: Ephesians 6:18, ‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints.’ What is here implied, is there expressed, προσευχ■μενοι ■ν παντ■ καιρ■, praying always whenever opportunity or occasion is offered; this is offered frequently, continually. And so we are enjoined to continue in prayer: Colossians 4:2, ‘Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;’ to ‘pray continually without ceasing,’ 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Luke 18:1. The meaning of these expressions is not that we should do nothing else but pray, that this should take up all our time, and we should be every moment in this employment, but that we should be much and often in it. We should still keep a praying temper; we should always be disposed to it, always ready for it when occasion is offered. No employment should wear off this temper, or indispose us to this duty. As when the apostle says, Romans 9:2, ‘I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart;’ not that the acts and expressions of his sorrow were never discontinued. We know he was often rejoicing upon other occasions, but their sad condition had made a lasting impression of grief upon his heart, which he was ready and disposed to express when occasion was offered. Though the act of prayer be intermitted, and discontinued through other employments, yet the disposedness to it should last; the heart should be ready for it whenever there is occasion and opportunity. Such a continual disposition and readiness to pray, is, as we call it, an habitual praying; and in this respect we may be said to rejoice always, evermore, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Php 4:4. So to pray always. But that is not all. As we must be always ready to pray, so we must frequently shew this readiness, this habitual frame, by praying actually; we must do it every day; it must be our daily employment, our daily sacrifice. As the priests might be said always to sacrifice, because they constantly offered sacrifice, evening and morning; or, as Mephibosheth is said to eat meat with David continually, 2 Samuel 9:7, because he did eat with him at his set meals; so we, that we may answer these commands which require us to pray continually, must have our times for prayer every day; as they had for their sacrifice, and we and they had for their daily meals. But this is not all neither: we have many times repasts and refreshments besides our set meals; and they had many other sacrifices besides those offered evening and morning, some extraordinary, and some upon particular occasions. So should we, besides our ordinary and daily addresses to God, make our requests known in an extraordinary manner when we have extraordinary occasion, public or personal. We should apply ourselves to him at any time (besides those seasons which we daily observe) when we have more particular and special occasion. We must take all occasions to offer our requests which the providence of God offers us, both those that are continued and in course, and those that are emergent, and bring special reason for it. In everything, both of this and that nature, our requests must be made known, and so much and often, such a frequency as may be called a continuance in prayer.

(2.) Pray carefully. Instead of being careful about other things, be careful in this. Pray carefully; take care how you perform this duty: shew this care about prayer in everything you pray for. Not that you should pray with anxiousness, solicitousness, perplexity, but that you should not pray carelessly. This care in praying is expressed by watching, frequently joined to this duty in Scripture: Colossians 4:2, ‘Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;’ Ephesians 6:18, ‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance;’ 1 Peter 4:7, ‘Be ye sober, and watch unto prayer.’ There must be diligence and care in praying. We must be watchful about it, as that which requires our care. We

are careful about that which keeps us waking and watchful. Watchfulness denotes the importance of that which we watch, and some danger in it, and the sense of both. It is of some consequence that we think ourselves concerned to be watchful about. We should go about this duty as a matter of great importance. We should be sensible who it is with whom we have to do, of what importance it is to make an address to the great God, and of what importance our necessities are which we spread before him. If we pray with sleepy, drowsy, listless hearts, we slight the great God, and slight our own necessities, our own interest, and slight a duty wherein both the Lord and ourselves are so much concerned. If we go about this duty with a sleepy soul, we offer to God a dream instead of a real supplication; we affront him, and shew a wretched disregard of our own concernments, and therefore we should awake ourselves when we come before God; as Deborah, Judges 5:12, 'Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song;' David, Psalms 108:2, 'Awake, psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early;' and Psalms 57:8, 'Awake up, my glory,' &c. We should stir up ourselves to lay hold on him; we should rouse mind and heart, graces and affections, that all may be stirring and active, and not shut up in a careless, drowsy listlessness. This is to watch unto prayer, this is to be vigilant and careful about it.

Further, it denotes danger. When we are watchful, we apprehend some danger, and this is signified when watchfulness in prayer is called for: Matthew 26:41, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;' Mark 13:33, 'Take heed, watch and pray;' Luke 21:36, 'Watch ye, therefore, and pray always.' There is danger, for there is temptation attends our prayers. There is danger lest our minds and hearts should wander from God, when they should be fixed on him. There is danger lest such distempers seize on, and cleave to our souls in praying, as may turn our prayers into sin; so there is danger lest our prayers should miscarry. We should be apprehensive of the danger, and so watchful to prevent it, to avoid it. Careful and vigilant that we enter not into the temptation to which we are subject when we pray; watchful to espy it, that we be not surprised; to resist it, that we be not overcome; that though it attack us, it may not carry us along with it, we may not enter into it. Vigilant to prevent wanderings and distractions, those loose vagaries of our vain minds and hearts into which they are apt to run when they should be most fixed, and have that before them which should wholly take them up, as Abraham watched his sacrifice; vigilant and careful to discern and shake off inward distempers, which are wont to mix themselves with our prayers, and spoil them.

(3.) Pray earnestly. It is the property of the Hebrew tongue to express vehemency, by joining divers words of the same signification together. The apostle being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, usually follows that style; and that may be one thing intended here, by adding divers words of the like signification to express prayer. He would have us to pray with some vehemence and earnestness, as Elias did; his vehemence in praying is so expressed, James 5:17, προσευχ■ προση■ξατο, he prayed vehemently, as Luke 22:1-71, 'With desire have I desired,' i.e. greatly, earnestly, vehemently desired. Our hearts and affections in prayer should not only be roused, but extended; drawn out in some earnestness: not only awakened, but warmed; there should be a spiritual heat and fervour in them. We should be 'fervent in spirit' when we are thus 'serving the Lord.' Pray as the church for Peter, Acts 12:5, προσευχ■ ■κτεν■ς, fervent prayer was made; the same word 1 Peter 4:8, ■γ■πην ■κτεν■; and so it is said 'the tribes served God,' Acts 26:7, ■ν ■κτενε■α, 'in fervency,' or, which is all one in effect, with souls stretched to him. Prayer is ■ν■βασις το■ νο■ πρ■ς Θε■ν, the ascent of the soul to God; and therein the soul should stretch

forth itself to the utmost to get near unto God. To pray lazily, slothfully, is to pray as though we prayed not; and that will have answerable returns from him, will provoke him to hear as though he heard not, to regard our requests as though he regarded them not. He that begs coldly bespeaks a denial; may be used like an idle beggar; too lazy not only to work, but to seek relief. The Lord, if he love you, will whip you out of such intolerable sloth.

It is earnestness the Lord expects in prayer, such as is expressed in Scripture by crying out of the depths, Psalms 130:1, by mighty cries, Jonah 3:8, strong cries, Hebrews 5:7, such as those of a woman in travail, Isaiah 26:1-21. The soul should cry, as pained with its spiritual wants, inward distempers and corruption, as one in anguish till delivered. By striving: Romans 15:30, 'Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;' such as wrestlers use when they put forth all their strength, use all their might to prevail. By wrestling. So Jacob wrestled with God, Genesis 32:26. And herein his wrestling consisted, Hosea 12:4, he 'wept and made supplications;' he prayed earnestly, affectionately; his heart melted and run out in his supplications.

If we would take care to pray thus, the other carefulness wherewith we trouble ourselves would be needless; this would do our work both for the things of time and eternity: James 5:16, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'

(4.) Pray spiritually; with spiritual intentions, and by the Spirit's influence.

[1.] With spiritual intentions. Look that your aim and end be right in all you seek. It cannot be right unless it be spiritual. Even in our worldly business our end and design should be higher than the world. A Christian should not have such ends and designs as a natural and worldly man hath in his earthly affairs. How far should we be from such ends in holy and spiritual employments. Our prayers will be such as our ends are, carnal, and selfish, and earthly, if our intentions be such; for the form gives the denomination, and quid forma in naturalibus, id finis in moralibus; what the form is in natural things, that the end is in moral acts. If the end in praying be carnal or worldly, it is a carnal and worldly prayer, no more fit to be offered unto God than an unclean beast was to be offered in sacrifice. 'It is as the cutting off a dog's neck, or the pouring out of swine's blood, an abomination in the sight of God,' Isaiah 66:3-4. When you pretend to be best employed, it is to be doing evil before his' eyes, and to choose that in which he delights not: James 4:3, 'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.' They asked amiss, because they missed the right end. The ends we should aim at are the honouring of God, pleasing him, enjoying communion with him. These we should principally aim at in seeking either spiritual or temporal things. If we seek spiritual gifts, that we may be more eminent than others, and accordingly respected, applauded, admired, this is to be little better than Simon Magus, Acts 8:9. Such prayers may be the issue of the gall of bitterness. Those that are in the bond of iniquity may be enlarged in making such requests. If we seek more grace, higher degrees of holiness, out of respect to our reputation, or merely for our own ease and comfort, instead of seeking and worshipping God in such prayers, we do but seek ourselves. When we desire health, that we may live pleasantly; or long life, that we may long enjoy the comforts of this world; or plenty, that we may have enough to gratify the flesh, and lay out upon our pleasures; or riches, for those low and common ends for which worldly men desire them; or outward prosperity, that we may not be troubled with sufferings, grievous to flesh and blood; or public deliverance, for our own safety and welfare or success, that we may have our wills upon these we have suffered by: this is not to pray

spiritually. The Lord counts not such requests to be prayers, though for the object they be directed to him, and for the manner be fervent and affectionate. The Lord accounts things to be such as their end is. That which is an act of obedience in itself may be no better than murder in his account, when the end is not right; as Jehu's killing of Ahab's children; God enjoined it, 2 Kings 10:30; yet he obeying only for his own ends, God will avenge it of him as if he had been a murderer, Hosea 1:4. So sacrifice, though he required it, is resented by him, as if no better than the killing of a man, Isaiah 66:3. And prayer likewise, if not for spiritual ends, instead of proving an acceptable sacrifice, will be counted an abomination, Proverbs 21:27.

[2.] Pray by the Spirit's assistance; seek it, wait for it; do nothing that may check or restrain it, and give any impediment to it. Rely not upon inward abilities, or outward helps, real or pretended, so as to disengage that blessed Spirit, ready to help his people in praying when they are sensible of their want of his assistance, and look up to him for it. Be not like those who do shut their eyes because they have spectacles, or do tie up their legs, if not cut them off, because they have got crutches. When you have a better help, do not disoblige it by preferring or confining yourselves to a worse. Depend upon him alone who can help you to make requests in everything; do nothing which may provoke him to withdraw or suspend his assistance. Look upon this alone as your sufficiency for this duty, which are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought, much less to offer up a good prayer, a spiritual sacrifice. The Lord will not have it offered with common fire, of your own or others' kindling. You must fetch fire from heaven if you would sanctify the Lord in your approaches. Look to the promise, Zechariah 12:10, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced,' &c. Prayer should not be the issue of models and exemplars only, no, nor of habits and qualifications within; but should flow from the spirit of grace and supplication. So in the primitive times, they are required to pray accordingly, προσ■υχεσθαι ■ν πνευματι, Ephesians 6:18; ■ν πνε■ματι ■γ■■, Jude 1:20; by the Spirit, by its help and assistance; so that the prayer may be said to proceed from him. Those who like not to hear [of] praying by the Spirit, confess from hence, that so they prayed in the apostle's time; but they would have us believe it was a miraculous and extraordinary gift, such as was not to continue, and it is not now to be expected or pretended to; but I think they mistake. By praying in the Spirit in these two texts cannot be meant an extraordinary gift, such as those of healing, prophesying, tongues, &c.; for not to take notice that such a gift of prayer is not mentioned amongst those that were miraculous and extraordinary, where we have a particular account of them, Mark 16:1-20, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 1 Corinthians 12:14; but this we may insist on as granted by them. Yet as all extraordinary gifts were not confined* upon any one person except the apostles, so no one extraordinary gift was bestowed upon all and every believer: and so that which all partaked of was no extraordinary χ■ρισμα, grace or gift. But this for praying was bestowed upon all believers, as appears by the texts alleged; for all the believing Hebrews, all that were sanctified, to whom Jude wrote, ver. 1, are required thus to pray, ■ν πνε■ματι ■γ■■; and all the converted Gentiles at Ephesus, to whom Paul wrote, are exhorted to exercise this gift, Ephesians 6:18; and all other believers in them are called to do it, if the epistles be of general concernment. Now, it could not be their duty to exercise it if they had it not, or might not have had it; and if they all had it, it was an ordinary gift, and continued to the church in all ages. These precepts oblige us as much as them, and it is as much our duty to pray in or by the Spirit as it was theirs. We are still to pray by the assistance of the Spirit; but how does the Spirit help us therein? What assistance are we to look for? We may learn

that by the apostle: Romans 8:26, ‘The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.’ This assistance is expressed by two words, especially συναντιλαμβ■νεται, he helps our infirmities or weaknesses. ■σθεν■ιαις, ■σθενο■ντες ■ντι του εν ■νδε■α ■ντες, says Favorinus: weakness is from some want. We are in some want as to several things requisite to praying: want of judgment to discern what we should pray for; what is best for us we know not, he helps that. And so want of memory: he minds us of what is most needful, most seasonable, when otherwise we might pass it over; it is promised. So want of affection, holy and lively motions, the languor and sickness of the soul, the dulness, listlessness, deadness of it, that is, many infirmities in one. So want of expression too, which will more appear by the other word ■περεντυγχ■νει, which signifies to act for one, as an advocate for his client. The Spirit of God advises his people, intercedes for them, as it were petitioning, or, as they say in our courts, moving for him, or drawing up his petitions or motions, dictating what he shall move for, and how, and in what form and words. And this is it which the apostle declares here; this is the way whereby the Holy Ghost helps our infirmities in prayer. Thus it is that he makes intercession for them, by dictating what, τ■, and how, καθ■ δε■, in what manner, for what things, with what expressions; helping them both to matter, affections, and words. Thus Grotius explains the word, a man of great esteem with those who differ from us herein, est advocatorum, &c. It belongs to advocates, who dictate petitions to their clients; and is ascribed to the Spirit of God, quia preces ad Deum nobis dictat, because he dictates to us the requests we offer to God. And so to pray in the Holy Ghost, Jude 1:20, is with him to pray dictante Spiritu Sancto, the Spirit of God dictating, suggesting to us what and how. But of the Spirit’s assistance in prayer, more hereafter. Let us in the mean time be sensible, when we are going to pray, of our great need of it, our insufficiency without it; let us labour to engage it for us by all means, especially by depending on him for it. Let us hearken to his motions, and follow his dictates, and yield to what he suggests, and not grieve, nor quench the Spirit of grace, nor put restraints upon him, nor any way provoke him to withdraw and leave us to ourselves, or to our own seeming abilities, but real weaknesses, our own lazy inventions and devices. When we come to the throne of grace, if the Spirit be not there our advocate, our plea will avail nothing. Our prayers cannot be spiritual without the assistance of the Spirit; and unless they be spiritual, they will not be fit to be offered unto that God who is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and truth.

(5.) Pray in faith. This is frequently called for, and made the condition of effectual and prevailing prayers: Mark 11:24, ‘What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them;’ James 1:16, ‘Ask in faith, nothing wavering;’ Matthew 21:22, ‘All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.’ Our whole life should be a life of faith, Galatians 2:20; by virtue of this, we should walk with God and man too: ‘We walk by faith,’ 2 Corinthians 5:7; and should hear with faith, if we will hear to purpose, Hebrews 4:2; and so pray in faith, if we would prevail. But what is it to pray in faith? It requires particular application, a fiducial recumbence, or a general persuasion.

Use. Since this is our duty, let us take notice of it, let us observe it, and make our requests known, and that in everything. Pray, and pray much and often, and pray carefully, and pray earnestly, pray spiritually, and in faith; and thus pray in everything. I might enforce this duty with many motives, but I intend not to stay on it. Mind these two.

1. It is most honourable to God, is as much for his glory as anything we can do. We can speak nothing more high and excellent, more noble and glorious of anything than this, that it honours God. This excels all, because it is the end of all. Everything is more valuable as it promotes this sovereign end; and therefore prayer is most valuable, because it most advances, and tends most to honour God. We can add nothing to the essential and absolute glory of God; this is δ■ξα ■κινητος και ■ναλλοι■τος, a glory which is infinite, to which nothing can be added. We have no way to glorify him but by declaring or acknowledging him to be glorious, giving a testimony to his glorious perfections and excellencies. Now, there is nothing we can do does more declare the glory of God than prayer; nothing that acknowledges more of his excellencies, and gives a clearer testimony to his glorious perfections. This gives him the glory of his immensity and omnipresence, acknowledges he is everywhere, applying ourselves to him wherever we are. His omniscience: acknowledges he knows the desires of our hearts, and understands best of all what is best for us; his power: acknowledges he can do whatever we would have him, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think; his goodness: that he is willing to hear such vile creatures, to supply, relieve, support, deliver, save to the utmost; his dominion: that he has right to dispose of all things as his own; his providence: that he rules and orders all, good and evil, small and great; his justice: that he is ready to revenge his elect that cry; his truth and faithfulness: that he is mindful of his word and promise, the ground of all our requests; his all-sufficiency: that there is enough in him for us, to satisfy, enhappy whatever our condition at present happen to be; more in him than in all things, since we seek to him more: Psalms 50:23, ‘Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.’ That which is said of one part of prayer is true of the whole, he that offereth praise glorifieth him. If we would honour him much, glorify him in everything, let us in everything make our requests known.

2. It is most advantageous to us.

(1.) It is an universal expedient, that will avail us in everything; the Lord would not direct us to use it in everything, but that there is nothing in which it will not stand us in stead. The advantage of other things is particular: one is good for this, another for that purpose, but prayer is good for all. The efficacy and advantage of it reaches as far as the Lord lets forth his omnipotency. Prayer can prevail for anything that the Lord will employ his power about. This can prevail for the supply of all wants, redress of all grievances, security from all fears, deliverance from all troubles, the satisfying of all our desires. It can prevail with that great God who can do whatever he will in heaven and earth, who has all creatures, all things, at his beck: Hosea 12:3-4, ‘By his strength he had power with God, yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed.’ That which can prevail with him who can do all, can do all at the second hand. This can prevail, not for small things only, but the greatest, not only for earth but heaven: Deuteronomy 4:29, ‘If thou seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him; if thou seek him with all thine heart and all thy soul.’ For Christ, Proverbs 8:6; for the Spirit, Luke 11:13: ‘How much more shall the Father give the Spirit to them that ask him?’ Romans 8:32. It can prevail not only for easy things, but the hardest, that which is most difficult, and bring relief in cases that seem most desperate, can do more than the whole power of nature. Prayer has wrought miracles, and if it do not so still, that is not because it is less powerful, but because the Lord thinks not fit they should be done: Joshua 10:12-13, ‘Then spake Joshua to the Lord, in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still and the moon stayed,’ &c. Peter was in prison, the king resolved to have his life; he is

secured by armed men, by iron gates, by chains and bolts; his case seems desperate, his escape hopeless, to sense or reason impossible; but prayer is made for him, and this brings him out in despite of all, and conveys him out of danger through a train of miracles, Acts 12:4-5. It is the readiest expedient, always at hand; the easiest and shortest way, and the surest; never fails, is never in vain.

(2.) It is a ready way, always at hand; you need never be to seek for this, as you may be for other means of supply and relief. All others may be out of your power, above your reach, but you need not be at a loss for this, which is instar omnium, and will stand you instead of all else. In such a destitute condition you may pray; when you are without riches, without liberty, without strength, without health, without friends; when you can neither help yourselves nor others can help you; yet then you may pray, and so engage the Lord to help you. When you are in the depths, sunk below the reach of other relief, then you may pray: Psalms 130:1, 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord!' When you are environed with calamities, so straitly besieged by them as no supply, no relief, can get in to you, then you may relieve yourselves by prayer, as David did in such a case: Psalms 116:3-4, 'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!' Or if you were in as forlorn a condition, as Jonah in the whale's belly, where neither he nor any creature else could afford any help, yet then you might pray, as he did, Jonah 2:1-2, Jonah 2:7, Jonah 2:10. He that can pray needs never be at a loss, however the world goes. He has the key in his hand which can open all the treasures of heaven, and let him in to all the riches of the goodness of an all-sufficient God. The violence of men may take estates from you, but they cannot take away the spirit of grace and supplication; they may shut out friends from you, but they cannot shut you out from access to God by prayer; they may bereave you of liberty, but not of liberty to pray; they may cast you into prison, but there you may be as much enlarged as anywhere; they may take from you public opportunities, but you may pray in private, in secret; they may watch your mouths, but your hearts may pray; you may be too weak to work, to follow your callings, but scarce too weak to pray; not able to go abroad for help, but then you may go to God with your requests. You may be too weak to speak, to move your lips, but then your hearts may move, and therein lies the heart and soul of prayer, 2 Kings 20:1-2, Isaiah 38:1-22. Prayer is an expedient ready at all times, on all occasions, to bring you in what supply and relief you need.

(3.) It is a short and easy way: no more but ask and have, seek and find, Matthew 7:7. There may be difficulty and trouble in other ways of relief, but what show of either in this? Could your hearts desire an easier way to compass what you desire, than by making your requests known? Jehoshaphat's enemies were like to prove too hard for him; he could not levy an army sufficient to deal with them, but he could lift up his eyes to God and pray, and that did his work; a few words prevailed against a huge army: 2 Chronicles 20:12, 'O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee.' When you know not what to do, when you can do nothing, do but pray, which you may easily do, and the rest shall be done to your hand. So it was to him, 2 Chronicles 20:17, 2 Chronicles 20:23. The poor woman in the Gospel, that had taken a costly and tedious way for relief, Mark 5:25-26, she applies but herself to Christ, and without further trouble or expense, her grievance is removed, Mark 5:29; so, Matthew 17:15-16, Matthew 17:18, Matthew 17:21, that which nothing else can effect may be thus done with ease. When Naaman liked not the

prophet's way for his relief, what say his servants to him? 2 Kings 5:13, 'If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?' If the Lord had bid us do something difficult and troublesome to get our wants supplied, our fears scattered, our grievances redressed, would we not have done it? How much more when he bids us but make our requests known? You have not money at command, you can make no friends, you can get no interest in great persons, you can raise no armies; these are too hard for you. Oh, but can you pray? Is that too hard for you? Why, this that you may so easily do will do more for you than all the other can do. This can do all for you that you need desire, and may not this be done with ease? The Lord does not require you should consume your bodies or waste your strength in praying; put but up your petitions, let but your hearts go along with it, you need not trouble yourselves to write it, no, nor to express it in words, when your weakness will not afford expressions. The Lord hears the language of the heart, and knows our meaning when we cannot utter it; Romans 8:27, 'He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit.' Oh what an easy way has the Lord opened unto us for an universal supply and relief to us in all cases! How inexcusable shall we be if we walk not in it!

(4.) It is a sure way, an expedient that never fails, of such efficacy that it was never used in vain: Isaiah 45:19, 'I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain;' Psalms 22:4-5, 'Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered;' Psalms 9:10, 'Thou hast not forsaken them that seek thee,' He has never been wanting to them that seek him; he will never disappoint them, never suffer them to seek him in vain. Your labour and pains may be in vain; your designs and projects, your care and thoughtfulness, your endeavours for yourselves, and others' for you, may be in vain. But your prayers, if prayers indeed, will never be in vain. Oh, where will you meet with an expedient that will never fail? Such an admirable engine is prayer, never used in vain. The disciples fished all night and caught nothing, John 21:3; but they never prayed a night, or an hour, and catched nothing. This net is never spread in vain, we may be confident of it, 1 John 5:14-15. We have all the assurance of it that can be desired, the very best security that heaven and earth can afford, the word of the true and faithful God, his truth and faithfulness engaged for it, who is truth and faithfulness itself, and that in many great and precious promises. Martha says to Jesus, John 11:22, 'Whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, he will give it thee.' He has vouchsafed to give us the like confidence as to whatever we shall ask, John 15:7, 'If ye abide in me, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' John 16:23, and Matthew 7:7, &c. Prayer will either be answered or rewarded; it will either procure the thing we desire, or something as good, or something better. If it be not returned on those you pray for, it will be returned with a blessing upon yourselves, Psalms 35:13.

GOD'S END IN SENDING CALAMITIES AND AFFLICTIONS ON HIS PEOPLE By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.—Isaiah 27:9. In the former part of this chapter, the Lord by the prophet expresseth his wrath and severity against his people, enemies* and oppressors, and his mercy and favour to his people: that in terrible threatenings; this in gracious promises, both repeated in variety of expressions again and again.

He begins with the former, Isaiah 27:1, where he threatens to do severe and terrible execution upon the oppressors of his people, under the notion of leviathan and the dragon, or the whale in the sea, i. e. upon the greatest and most potent of them; those whose power seems irresistible, who devour all before them, as the whales do the smaller fish; upon them altogether, uniting their

forces and complicating their interests. Leviathan a ■■■ addere, copulare; signifying an addition of many creatures united in one.

Isaiah 27:2. Here is his favour to his people, he would make them like a vineyard of red wine; bring them into a flourishing, a fruitful condition. They should bring forth the best and most acceptable fruit, red wine being the best and strongest wine in that country. Their state should be matter of praise and joy; sing.

Isaiah 27:3. Under the notion of water, he promises whatever was requisite to make it flourish and fructify. There should be no drought to hinder its thriving; 'water it every moment.' Nor should anything violently break, or privily creep in to hurt it: 'I the Lord will keep it;' he doth and will do it 'night and day;' 'every moment' of both.

Isaiah 27:4. 'Fury is not in me' towards my vineyard; my people having humbled themselves, and reformed what was a provocation to me, I am at peace with them. But if there be briers and thorns in my vineyard, where there should be nothing but the choicest vines, such as bring forth pricks instead of grapes; tear, and rend, and wound, instead of bringing forth fruit acceptable to God and man; such as are both barren themselves and pester the vineyard, and hinder it from being fruitful: these I will consume and burn up together.

Isaiah 27:5. So will I proceed against those that are as briers and thorns in my vineyard, those that are as hurtful plants, or fruitful* weeds, unless they take the course to make peace with me; unless they lay hold of my arm, ready to destroy them, and apply themselves to me in ways and means that may pacify me.

Isaiah 27:6. He adds another promise of establishing and multiplying his people, and making them fruitful of a multitude of converts and plenty of fruit.

Isaiah 27:7. Whereas it might be objected, that the Lord seems to have no such peculiar favour for his people, since he doth so severely judge and chastise them; it is here shewed that there is a vast difference betwixt his proceedings against them and others; he does not smite and destroy them as he does his and their enemies. And the difference is more punctually declared in the two next verses.

Isaiah 27:8. He corrects them in measure, his love moderates his displeasure. When it shooteth forth, or when he casts them forth as disobedient children, he doth not cast them off or utterly reject them. When he debates with them by judgments, he remembers mercy, which considers their relations and their weakness, and favourably proportions their sufferings accordingly. When the most boisterous wind, as is the east wind, is raised, which might scatter and utterly dissipate them, he allays it so as it does but fan and winnow them.

Another difference is in the text. The Lord has quite another end in chastening his people and judging their enemies; he proceeds against these with an intent to destroy them; against his people with a design to purge and refine them. 'By this,' &c. So that here we have the end and use of the chastenings and afflictions wherewith the Lord exercises his people, viz., the purging of their iniquity and taking away their sin. And the instance here is, in that which was the capital crime of Israel and Judah, the sin to which they were before the captivity most addicted, viz., idolatry, worshipping false gods, or the true God otherwise than he had appointed. 'When he maketh,' &c.;

when the altars erected for sacrifices in the high places shall be utterly demolished, the stones of them beaten as small as chalk, or limestones to make lime or parget of; the groves also and images cut down and demolished. The end and fruit of the Lord's judging and chastening them, was the destroying of idolatry, the instruments and monuments of it: under the chief sin, comprising the rest.

Obs. The end of those calamities and afflictions which befall the people of God, is to purge out their iniquity and to take away their sins; their troubles and sufferings are to purify their hearts and to reform their lives. That which is aimed at in the sad dispensations they are exercised with, is mortification and reformation; the removing of sin, of all sorts thereof, both sin and iniquity, from all parts, both heart and life.

Nothing is more evident in Scripture than this truth, and it is most frequently declared. We shall instance in some few places for many: Isaiah 1:25, I will turn my afflicting and reforming hand upon them, and by the calamities inflicted will destroy those that are incurable, and refine the rest both from more gross and more specious evils, both dross and tin. 1 Corinthians 11:32, Ye are chastened of the Lord, that those sins which are the cause for which the Lord condemns the world, may be removed, and so your condemnation prevented.

Hence it is that outward calamities and afflictions are expressed by a fire and a furnace, such as are used for the refining of metals, and the consuming or separating of that dross which doth debase them. Isaiah 48:10, His people being not yet sufficiently refined, he had made choice of a furnace of affliction further to purge them more thoroughly; Isaiah 4:4, the filth, i. e. sin, which made them filthy and loathsome in the sight of God; and blood, i. e. all manner of defilement and pollution. Ezekiel 16:6, Hosea 6:8, 'By the spirit of judgment,' i. e. by judgments inflicted on them; 'By the spirit of burning,' i. e. by the fire of affliction, which, as the fire of a finer, burns up and wastes the baser parts of the purer metal; and sometimes they are expressed by a wind or a fan, whose end and use is to cleanse the floor, and separate the wheat from the chaff, Hosea 6:8 and Matthew 3:12. This is it which is more or less aimed at in all sorts of sufferings, not only in those which are for correction, but also in those that are for trial or for righteousness' sake.

1. Those that are for correction called παιδ■ιαι; the proper end of these afflictions is the amendment of the afflicted. The Lord makes his children smart for sin, that they may be afraid of it, and no more venture on it. He lets them fall into trouble, or lets calamities fall on them, that they may fall no more into sin; this is evident by the texts fore-quoted. The Lord aims at this, not only in the execution, but in the threatening of chastisements: Revelation 3:19, 'Be zealous,' be no more lukewarm. That was the sin for which he threatens to chastise Laodicea: 'And repent,' i. e. reform, and abandon those evils which provoke me to severe proceedings. He intends this in shewing and shaking the rod.

2. Those that are for trial, called δοκιμασ■αι. Their principal end may be for to try the truth or strength of grace; to discover or prove our faith, love, patience, sincerity, constancy; but that it is the only end, appears not. The mortifying of sin and taking away iniquity may be intended in this also. We find both these expressed together in Scripture, as jointly intended in afflictions and sufferings. Those that are to try and prove the people of God, are also to purge and refine them, Daniel 11:35; shall fall into calamities, brought on that people by Antiochus, specified Daniel 11:33; and this not only to try them, but to purge them and cleanse them; so Daniel 12:10, and

Zechariah 13:8-9. Not only to try them, as gold is tried by the fire, whether it be the precious metal it is taken for, but to refine them as silver is refined, which is put into the fire, and continued there till the dross be wasted or wrought out of it.

3. Those that are for righteousness' sake, called διωγμο■, persecutions. That which moves wicked men to persecute them may be their righteousness, while that which the Lord aims at in leaving them to persecution, may be the taking away their sin. Those sufferings which befell the believing Hebrews were trials, and are called chastenings; yet were inflicted by their persecutors for their profession of Christ, and faithfulness to him; but that which God intended therein was what a father aims at, or should do, in correcting his child, Hebrews 12:5-7. Ad hoc corripit, ut emendet, says Cyprian, lib. iv. epist. 4, when he is giving account for what sins persecution befell them in his times, and what design the Lord had therein, vapulamus itaque ut meremur, &c. The Lord corrects his children by the hand of persecutors, that he may reform and amend them, that by this their iniquity may be purged. For the further confirmation of this truth,

1. In general it is evident in Scripture, that the Lord aims at the good of his people in afflicting them; and intends to do them good by whatever calamities befall them: Romans 8:28, 'All things,' afflictions and sufferings especially; for it is spoken with a particular respect to them. This was the Lord's design in all trials, calamities, and sad dispensations, wherewith the children of Israel were exercised in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 8:15-16, Jeremiah 24:5. That complication of calamities which befell the Jews in the captivity, was designed and ordered for the good of the faithful. They lost their estates, all being a prey to the soldiers; their relations, many of them falling by the sword; their liberty, being prisoners and captives; their country, being carried into a strange land; yea, the ordinances of worship, the temple being destroyed; yet all these dreadful losses were for their good.

Now, which way such evils may prove good to the people of God, we may learn by that of David, Psalms 119:67, Psalms 119:71. Before he was afflicted, he was a transgressor, he took liberty to leave God's way; but by his afflictions he was taught to keep it; he had learned thereby not to transgress.

Indeed, we cannot well imagine how afflictions should possibly do us good, if they did not help, us against sin; for this is it which withholds good things from us, both spiritual and temporal, or hinders them from being good. Holiness (upon which spiritual and eternal mercies depend) cannot thrive, but as sin declines; and temporal blessings can scarce be blessings, unless we be helped against sin; the more outward enjoyments we have, the more snares, if sin be not mortified and avoided.

2. The Lord, in afflicting his people, proceeds not as a judge, but as a Father. A judge punishes offenders, because justice must be done, the law must be satisfied; others must be deterred from breaking the laws, and many times, by the death of the delinquent, so as to leave no place for his reformation. But a father corrects his child that he may make him better, that he may offend no more; not because he would shew himself just, but because he is affectionate, and would have that avoided, which might impair his affection, or hinder the course of his love and delight. And under this notion doth the Lord represent himself, when he chastises his people: Proverbs 3:11-12, 'He corrects whom he loves;' and because he will love, he chastens; that sin which is displeasing and hateful to him, may be avoided; and so his people may continue the children of his

love and delight. By affliction, therefore, would he have their iniquity purged; he would have this to be the fruit of it.

3. This appears by the nature and properties of an end in three particulars, which we may apply to the Lord, according to our imperfect way, conceiving of him, as he gives us leave, after the manner of men.

(1.) That is an end which sets the agent a-work, and excites him to act. Finis movet efficientem ad agendum. The purging and refining of his people is assigned in Scripture as the motive or reason why the Lord takes this course, Jeremiah 9:7, and Ezekiel 18:30-32. Therefore will he judge them, that they may turn from their transgressions, and cast them away.

(2.) The end gives measure to the means; media mensuram et modum accipiunt ex fine, Arist. Pol. i. cap. vi. Means are used in such measure and degree as will be sufficient to effect the end, and no more, nor otherwise. The Lord afflicts his people in such measure and manner as may be effectual to purge their iniquity, &c., ver. 8. As a physician proportions what he administers according to the nature of his patient's distemper, and the quality of the humour that is to be purged; such ingredients, so much of them, and no more than he judges sufficient for the cure; so doth the Lord, as it were, exactly weigh and measure what afflictions, and what proportion and degree thereof, may serve to mortify sin, and reclaim his people from it.

If less will serve, he 'stirs not up all his wrath,' Psalms 78:38, and lays a restraint upon the wrath of men too, Psalms 76:10, Psalms 138:7.

If less will not serve the turn, he lets out more; if a gentle fire will not refine them, he heats the furnace, Jeremiah 9:7, makes it hotter, and melts them.

(3.) When the end is attained, there is no more need, no more use of the means. The Lord, when the iniquity of his people is purged, will no more chasten and afflict them for that end and purpose, Isaiah 10:12. When he has sufficiently chastised his people, so as the end for which he chastened them is accomplished, he will make no more use of oppressors to afflict them. When his children submit, and give ground to hope they will offend no more, the rod shall be burned. The Assyrian, called his rod, Isaiah 10:5, shall be so dealt with, Isaiah 10:16-17. When his people are sufficiently humbled and reformed, there shall be no more yokes nor burdens, Isaiah 10:27.

Use. For exhortation; to advise in the fear of God, to comply with his end in judging and afflicting us. The Lord hath been judging his people many years; he hath made his power known, even the power of his wrath in judging us. He hath followed us year after year with terrible judgments. He hath revealed his wrath from heaven against our apostasies and rebellions, by sword, by plague, by fire, yea, and by famine too; and such a famine as expresses more wrath than any of the rest: those ruining us only in our outward concernments, but this threatening ruin to our souls; and is the more grievous judgment, because the generality are less sensible of the danger and grievousness of it. He has given the sword a commission to eat flesh and drink blood; and, as if the wrath of man had been too little, he has armed the powers of heaven against us, and sent destroying angels to make havoc amongst us, and to cut down thousands and ten thousands in city and country. And after all these instruments of wrath, as if they had not done enough, he himself has appeared against us in a posture yet more dreadful; we have seen him march against us, and pass through us as a consuming fire, devouring our strength, our riches, our glory; laying

all our pleasant things desolate, and making such terrible devastations, as may strike every one that sees, or hears, or that thinks of it, with horror and trembling.

Now, what is the Lord's end in all this? Why, if he have mercy for the nation, and design not our utter ruin, by this should our iniquity be purged; and this should be the fruit of all, to take away our sin.

Nay, he has been judging professors amongst us; he has been visiting his own people, not in such a way as he visits those with whom he is well pleased; they have seen the day of a severe visitation; they have had their share in the public calamities, and a great share thereof has been the portion of many; they have not escaped the displeasure of God, and the wrath of man has been more bent against them than others. Those that observe the Lord in the way of his judgments, cannot but take notice that many of them have seemed more particularly pointed at those who profess him. And besides our share (whatever it has been) in national sufferings, he has been visiting us with more particular and personal chastisements. He has been breaking us with great breaches; his hand has made breaches, not only in our congregations, but breaches in our families; sad breaches in our dear relatives; great breaches in some of our estates; large breaches in our liberties, our soul liberties. He has broken us with breach upon breach, Job 16:14; and some of us may say, our breach is great like the sea, who can heal us? And after all that is come upon us, shall we wipe our months, and say, We are innocent, we have not so much offended him as others, we have not so highly provoked him? Shall we justify ourselves, and condemn the Lord's proceedings against us? Shall we think he has no controversy with us, when he is pleading it so severely? Shall we say he is at peace with us, when he has been contending with us, and is so to this day? When we see for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, shall we imagine he is well pleased with us, when his displeasure is so evidently revealed from heaven against us?

O no, far be this from us. Surely this nation has highly provoked God; surely his people have provoked him. The provocations of his sons and daughters are not small, if they be not greater than those of others. The hand, the rod of God speaks this; the many, the sharp rods wherewith he has corrected us, speak this aloud, if our consciences be silent or asleep. This being our case, the truth before us shews us what is our great duty at this day, the duty of the nation, the duty of the people of God especially. Though others will not see when God's hand is stretched out, what it points at, yet they should see. Though others will not regard, yet they should lay it to heart, and apply their minds, and consciences, and souls to it. The end of all that is befallen us is the purging of our iniquity; and what does the Lord expect from us, but to comply with this end, in mortifying sin, and cleansing our heart and life from it? Those sins especially, for and by which we have suffered, this is it which the word, which the providence of God now calls us to, and hath made it so much our duty, as I know not whether anything else can be more, or be so much the duty of all sorts at this day.

If, after all that has come upon us for our unfruitfulness under the means of grace, when the axe has been laid to the root, again and again, and we have been so often in apparent danger of being cut down, or of being left desolate of the means by which our souls should live, we still continue barren;

If, after all, &c., for our worldliness, we will still so highly esteem earthly things, and affect them, and pursue them as worldlings do, and seek them for such ends, and convert them to such uses, as the custom is; For our neglect of holiness in the power of life, and exercise and growth of it, we will still content ourselves with a slothful, easy, cheap, fruitless profession of it, and be more indifferent whether we have more or less of it than we are to outward things, and much better content with a little holiness, than with a little of the world, and less concerned whether our souls thrive or no, than whether we thrive in our earthly affairs;

If, after all, &c., for our pride, folly and vanity, we will still be more vile this way;

If, after all, &c. for our contentions, divisions, decay, and loss of brotherly love, we will not seek union with, nor express love to one another, in lesser differences, but live in open contradiction to so many express precepts of the gospel, and let envy, strife, bitterness, wrath, malice or ill-will, and evil-speaking continue, and continue in these, and such like, the apparent works of the flesh;

If, when the Lord has laid any of us aside for unserviceableness, &c., we labour not for a more serviceable temper;

If, after we have lost such mercies, opportunities, advantages, by our unthankfulness, murmuring, repining; the dread of having our carcases fall in the wilderness, bring us not to an effectual sense of our sin;

If we still remain proud, selfish, carnal, unprofitable, unmortified, unrefined: if we continue under the guilt of these, and other sins, for which the Lord has been contending with us;— Our guilt will be exceeding great, and our danger such as I cannot easily express. Let me endeavour it in some particulars, which may serve as motives to enforce this duty of complying with the Lord's end, in afflicting and bringing calamities upon us.

1. Otherwise our calamities are like to continue; the Lord may wear out this generation in his displeasure; he may cause our carcases to fall in the wilderness, and swear in his wrath that we shall never enter into his rest. So he did with the Israelites, when what befell them in the wilderness did not purge their iniquity. We shall shew ourselves hereby to be such as they were, 'a people that err in our hearts, and have not known his ways,' Psalms 95:10-11—the ways that he leads us to by afflictions, nor the way that would lead us out of them speedily and comfortably. This will move the Lord to come to that severe resolution, 'I will deliver you no more;' for this was it which brought him to that resolution against the Israelites, when neither former deliverances, nor present oppressions, took away their sin, Judges 10:11-13, Isaiah 9:12-13. If our transgressions and iniquities be upon us, we may pine away in them, Ezekiel 33:10, and languish under fears, restraints, distractions, calamities, all our days. Thus we may make our condition desperate, and deliverance hopeless; and propagate our miseries to our posterity, and leave them the sad heirs of what our sin has brought upon us.

There is no way of mercy out of trouble, but by leaving the sin which brought us into it; no ordinary way, &c., Isaiah 9:12-13.

2. This may increase the affliction upon you, add more weight, and put more sting into it; this may strengthen your bonds, and make your yokes heavier, and less tolerable. Whenas your fears and troubles are but by fits, and with some intermission, this may raise them to, and fix them in, a

continued paroxysm.

If less will not serve to purge your iniquity, you may expect a larger dose, that which will prove more bitter, and in the working, may make you sick at heart. Those that have but lost one or two dear relatives may be bereaved of all, and left to weep for their children, so as not to be comforted, because they are not.

Those that have but seen the flame at a distance, or been but frightened, or a little scorched with it, may have it kindle, and break forth round about them.

Those that have but lost part of their estates, if this take not away their sin, may be stripped of all, stripped naked, as some have been, and set as in the day that they were born, and made as a wilderness; as the Lord in like case threatens, Hosea 2:3.

Those that have but been threatened by the sons of violence, or a little disturbed, may be given up into their hands, or delivered up to their will; and not only see, but feel, the paws of those lions which before they did but fear.

Those that have but been straitened as to spiritual provision, and only not fed with the hand they desired, may have no hand at all left to feed them.

It is the Lord's ordinary method, when a gentler fire will not purge and refine, to make the furnace hotter.

3. This may multiply your afflictions, and make them come in upon you as waves and billows in a storm, so as you may have cause to complain with the prophet, Psalms 42:7, the depths above and the depths below, the displeasure of God and the wrath of men, may correspond to pour out themselves upon you as it were waterspouts; as though they called one upon another, and did conspire as it were to overwhelm you. If one will not be effectual to purge your iniquity, God may try another and another; yea, seven times more, and it may be all at once. You see what the Lord threatens, Leviticus 26:18, Leviticus 26:21, Leviticus 26:23-24, Leviticus 26:27-28. The stubborn child, that will not yield to his father's will when he is correcting him, must expect to be scourged again and again; he cannot escape many lashes. You know your heavenly Father's will in chastising you is to purge your iniquity and take away your sin, to quicken you to a more vigorous proceeding in a course of mortification. Now, since you know his will, if you do it not, you leave nothing for yourselves but a fearful expectation of many stripes, of multiplied afflictions and calamities.

4. This may bring more grievous evils upon you than any you have yet met with, outward calamities. The little finger of what this incorrigibleness will bring upon you, may be heavier and more intolerable than the loins of all you have yet suffered. You have been chastised with whips; but if this do not take away your sin, beware lest the Lord do not make use of scorpions. You are warned of this by the advice that Christ gives to one who had been under a great affliction, John 5:14. Those that will sin more must suffer more, whatever they have suffered already. How grievous soever that seems to be which is past, if it purge not thine iniquity, there is something worse yet to come.

Why, you may say, Is there any worse judgment than the sword? Is there anything more dreadful than such a plague as has been destroying us? Is there anything more terrible than such a fire as

was consuming us? Our hearts tremble within us, and horror surprises us, when we do but think of the woes that are past; can there be anything worse yet to come? Indeed, there would be no fear of it, if by these our iniquity had been purged; but if these have no such effect upon us, we are in danger to know by experience that the Lord's treasures of wrath are not yet exhausted, there is but a little thereof in comparison yet spent upon us; the vials of his indignation are not yet emptied; we have but yet had a taste thereof; the worst of all, the dregs, are at the bottom, and these we expect will be poured out upon us if our sin continue. Oh that we could with fear and trembling labour to prevent it, by complying with the Lord's end in what is come upon us already, so that by this our iniquity may be purged!

5. The Lord may give you over, and refuse to correct any more. You are in danger of this if the Lord find that former corrections are in vain, and in vain they are if they attain not their end; and their end they cannot obtain if they do not take away your sin.

It seems a condition acceptable to flesh and blood to be without afflictions and sufferings; but to those who judge of things as they are indeed, and as the Scripture represents them, for the Lord to refuse to afflict when afflictions are needful, signifies one of the highest degrees of divine wrath, and is a more dreadful judgment than any of those outward calamities which the Lord calls his sore judgments; sword, famine, pestilence, fire, speak not more indignation in God than this. When a man gives over a stubborn child, after all correction has done no good upon him, and says, I will whip him no more, I see it is in vain, all that I have done is to no purpose, there is no hopes of reclaiming him, let him go on and take his course; the condition of that child is more sad and lamentable than of such a one as his father corrects most severely: 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,' Revelation 3:1-22. What affection has he for those whom he will not rebuke? &c.: 'Blessed is the man,' &c., Psalms 94:12-13. Their condition seems cursed whom he will not chastise, Hebrews 12:7-8. If they be his children whom he thus forbears, yet he deals not with them as his own children, he has not at this time, in these circumstances, so much favour for them, but as the children of strangers whom a man will not trouble himself to correct. When the Lord is expressing the highest indignation, he doth it in threatening to judge and punish those no more against whom his wrath is kindled, Isaiah 1:5, Hosea 4:14-17.

6. He may leave you to spiritual judgments. This usually is the issue of not improving outward calamities, and is the dreadful consequence of the Lord's forbearing to inflict. Outward afflictions are his rods, but these are his swords; and when upon incorrigibleness under those, he takes up these, his wrath is raised to the height. Formerly he fell upon their outward concernments, which are less considerable, now he falls upon their souls; the iron enters into their souls, and the more dangerously and mortally because insensibly. That wrath begins here which will burn to the bottom of hell. When he gives stubborn souls up to blindness of mind, hardness of heart, searedness of conscience, vile affections and lusts, and a reprobate sense, oh these are the first-born of the second death. No greater severity, short of hell, than in the inflicting of these.

Yea, but does he inflict these upon any that belong to him?

Ans. The not improving of other afflictions may provoke the Lord to leave his children to spiritual judgments, and to some measure and degrees of these now mentioned, and to others also more woful than any outward calamities. This may provoke the Lord to bring upon his people a famine of the word, as he threatens, after other judgments had been ineffectual, Amos 8:11-13. Not a

scarcity, but a famine, and that more dreadful than a famine of bread and a thirst for water, so that they shall run to and fro, &c., and the virgins and young men shall faint and swoon for thirst.

2. Or if the word and ordinances be continued, this may provoke him to deny his presence and concurrence, to withdraw his Spirit, and withhold his influences, upon which the power and efficacy of them depends; so that the staff of bread shall be broken while it is in their hands, and the ordinances become dry breasts, so that they can suck nothing but wind out of them which are appointed for spiritual nourishment, Isaiah 65:3-4. Oh what a curse would you think it, if all you eat or drink should neither strengthen, nourish, nor refresh you! But this is worse, it is a curse upon spiritual blessings.

3. Or this may provoke him to leave you to backslidings, and inward decays and declinings, and to smite your souls with a spiritual consumption; so that inward strength shall waste away, grace shall wither, and holiness hang the head like a blasted flower. You think a consumption of the body worse, though less sensible, than the stone or gout. What, then, is a soul-consumption? You think poverty, or the loss of an estate, a great affliction; oh, but to grow poor unto God, to have your spiritual substance wasted, and your heavenly treasure consumed, that is a more terrible stroke to those who are taught of Christ to pass a true judgment of things.

4. This may provoke him to give you up in some degrees to your hearts' lusts; to fall into some gross sin, and wallow in it, as Solomon into false worship and sensuality; or, which I fear is too ordinary, and the sad case of too many amongst us, to indulge themselves in such sins as are less reproachful amongst professors: habitual lukewarmness in serving the Lord; indifferency as to their spiritual and heavenly interests; loose, careless, unwatchful walking tolerated; selfishness, unserviceableness in their places, sensualness, and flesh-pleasing, and worldliness, sinking deep and sticking fast in the mire and clay of it. To be left to these evils is a more grievous judgment than to be given up to the hands of our enemies, or to be left to fly before them, which yet seemed less tolerable to David than a destroying pestilence.

5. Or this may provoke him to give them up to some hardness of heart, and searedness of conscience, in some degree; so that though their sin be often reproved, and the danger thereof discovered, yet reproofs make no impression, conviction will not fasten. If it be a way they are fastened to by affection or interest, they will not believe it is a sin, or such a sin as they need be severe against; especially if they can get some fig-leaves to hide its shame, some pretences to excuse its sinfulness. If they can but believe it will not damn them, say what you can against it, it will not prevail. Such stiffness against convictions of sin, and the like untractableness as to duty, is the symptom of an insensible conscience and an hardened heart; and to be given up to it is a spiritual judgment of a dreadful importance.

6. Or this may provoke him to send a spirit of delusion, which may lead you out of the way of truth, and seduce to relinquish part of that faith which should be earnestly contended for by the saints; or to give you up to a spirit of wantonness and unsobriety, so as to disrelish those wholesome practical truths, and that teaching which tends most to the promoting of the power of godliness in heart and life, and would lead you up to higher degrees of holiness, self-denial, mortification, crucifiedness to the world, and all spiritual fruitfulness; and to dote upon trifling questions, frivolous opinions, vain imaginations, the niceties of this or that way and persuasion, empty notions, strains of fancy, which make neither mind, nor heart, nor life better. This is a kind of spiritual frenzy, a

delirium, a soul-dotage; and you count not only a furious, but a trifling, frenzy to be a lamentable distemper in nature, much more lamentable in a spiritual deliration.

7. Or he may be provoked hereby to send a spirit of terror. When other scourges will not serve the turn, he may wound the conscience, Job 6:4, and give you those wounds that are intolerable, Proverbs 18:14. He may kindle a hell in your souls, and set that worm a-gnawing there which is some of the torture of hell itself. He may make you Magor-missabibs, terror round about, a terror to yourselves, a terror to others, while himself is a terror to you. Wherever you look for comfort, ease, relief, you may be disappointed: Psalms 77:3, 'I remembered God, and was troubled.' The thoughts and remembrance of God, of Christ, of heaven, of the promises, instead of relieving you, may add to your trouble and torture. All the springs of comfort may run nothing but waters of Marah; the bitterness of death may be in them. The Lord's loving-kindness is better than life, Psalms 63:3; to be bereaved of the sense of it is therefore worse than death. Oh what is it then to be under the terrors of the Lord!

Oh, if the terrors of the Lord be dreadful to you, take heed you be not found under the guilt of not improving more tolerable afflictions. Take heed you continue not under this guilt. You are in the highway to spiritual judgments, if outward calamities do not take away your sin. It is the Lord's method to proceed higher and higher in the demonstrations of his anger, and to let out more wrath (as he doth in these judgments), when lesser significations of his displeasure are not effectual.

7. This is the way to be rejected of the Lord; for those that are not his to be rejected wholly, for those that are his to be in part rejected, Jeremiah 7:28-29. Those that receive not correction, i.e. who yield not to what is required and intended in correction, their case is to be bitterly lamented; such being rejected of the Lord as the generation of his wrath. So Jeremiah 6:29-30. All the means the Lord has used for the refining of this people are in vain, all his labour is lost. Though he has blown up the fire in the furnace to such an heat as the bellows themselves are burnt by it, though the lead (used then, as now quicksilver is used, in the fining of silver, to melt it more easily, and with less waste) be quite consumed, yet the founder melteth in vain; all is to no purpose. The wicked things, or, as in the Hebrew, wickednesses, are not removed from them. Refuse silver shall they be called, such as will not pass, but will be rejected in payment. The Lord hath rejected them as dross, not silver, or that which has too much dross in it to be current.

Though he will not utterly reject those that belong to him, yet if they be not refined by their afflictions, he may deal with them as if he utterly rejected them. He may proceed against them as against those whom he utterly rejects, so as no eye may be able to see any difference; as in the captivity, to which this rejecting refers, no difference was to be seen between those that were better and those that were worst.

Though they lose not the relation of children, yet he may treat them as though they were not his children, as though he were not their Father; nay, as though he were an enemy, Isaiah 63:10, Jeremiah 30:14-15. Because their iniquities were increased, when by their afflictions they should have been taken away, though he do not disinherit them, yet may he leave them without hopes of inheriting; so that it may be all one as to their apprehensions, as if they were disinherited; nothing may be left them, in their own sense, but a fearful expectation of judgment.

8. This provokes the Lord to bring destruction. This endangers your ruin, the ruin of your country, the ruin of yourselves. This exposes to national desolation, or personal destruction, Isaiah 1:5; and the issue of revolts after smiting, Isaiah 1:7. As temporal judgments, when not improved, end in spiritual, so spiritual judgments end in ruin, Isaiah 6:9-11, Zephaniah 3:7-8. He that learns not righteousness by public judgments, so as to be thereby more refined and mortified, he doth his part to bring utter ruin upon the place and country where he lives. This desolation of it, when it comes, may be charged upon him. Those that should stand in the gap, and make up the hedge, do hereby make the breach wider, and pull away that which might put a stop to the current of ruining wrath. If this land perish, those that might have saved it, by complying with God's end in judging us, have destroyed it, by not improving judgments for this end. And it is no wonder that those whose hand makes way for destroying judgments, whoever they be, do perish by them. Even those that have interest in God may be ruined and cut off by this sin, and may perish for it. Those that reform not themselves and their families, when they have real admonitions from heaven to do it, may have Eli's doom, though they have special relation to God, as Eli had. Those that are of the Lord's planting, and by the hand of affliction have been lopped and pruned, and yet continue barren, or have wild grapes found in their branches, the Lord, when he lays the axe to the root of the tree, may cut them down as well as others; they may fall by this sin. And it is not more comfortable to die for righteousness' sake than it is dreadful to die in and for sin. And though the Lord may rescue their souls from everlasting miseries, when they fall by the stroke of temporal wrath (as some of the Corinthians fell, 1 Corinthians 11:1-34), yet will they be saved so as by fire, and escape the wrath to come very narrowly, even as firebrands plucked out of the fire.

Oh then, if you would not plunge yourselves into this misery, look that by this your iniquity be purged, otherwise there is great danger of the Lord's high displeasure, and the severest acts and expressions of it. But this is not all, though this be terrible. There is danger also of great and heinous guilt. It is a crime of an high provocation, not to be mortified and refined by calamities and afflictions, whether common or personal; there is much to aggravate it, and render it exceeding sinful.

(1.) It is a double disobedience. The Lord calls upon you by his word to purge out and put away sin. When this is not effectual, he summons you to do it by judgments and afflictions. He calls for it both by his word and by his rod. He requires it by a word, that you may see, Jeremiah 2:31; and by a rod, that you may hear, Micah 6:9. To yield neither to one nor the other is to add disobedience to disobedience. Not to comply with his word, clearly discovering this to be your duty, and frequently urging it on you, is heinous disobedience. But to stand out against it, when it is enforced with the rod, is plain rebellion. If a prince enjoin a subject to do this or that, and he refuse, that is a disobedience that will not easily escape without some mark of his displeasure. But if hereupon he raise a force, and begirt the house or castle of such a subject, and threaten to batter or storm it unless he yield, to stand out in that case will be rebellion. So it is in this. Here is one provocation added to another, and the latter worse than the former, Zephaniah 3:2. Not obeyed, and which is more, and doubles the guilt by an addition of something worse, 'she received not correction.'

(2.) It is a strange boldness and impudence not to put away sin, not to cease from it, when the Lord is smiting for it, and declaring his displeasure against it by real rebukes; such are branded in Scripture as those that know no shame, Zephaniah 3:5. How does that appear? Why, the Lord warned them by judgments, Zephaniah 3:6, yet they received not instruction, but still corrupted

their doings, Zechariah 3:7. And as those that have a whore's forehead, Jeremiah 3:3, because she was not brought by the chastisement mentioned to put away her sin, therefore, says he, 'thou hast a whore's forehead,' &c.

What impudence would you judge it for a servant, who has been beaten for his faults, to tell his master, while the rod is in his hand, he will not leave it, he will do it again. While you do not purge your hearts, and reform your ways, after chastenings for this purpose, you tell the Lord, while the rod is upon or over you, you will not be mortified or refined. This is the language of your hearts and ways.

(3.) It is madness, spiritual folly with a witness. As if one who has drunk poison, should spill the antidote that should secure him from the mortal danger thereof, instead of vomiting up that which so endangers him, yea, and should be ready to swallow down more, when that already taken is still working in his bowels. Sin is worse to the soul than poison to the body. Not to receive correction is to refuse the antidote, and so to let the poison work on, yea, to heighten the mortal danger of it by new additions. It argues stupendous foolishness, and such as is inveterate, and almost past cure, if the rod will not cure it, Proverbs 22:15. If the rod will not fetch it out, it is fast bound up indeed. The bond of this folly and iniquity is exceeding strong, little hopes anything will break it if the hand of God upon his children do it not. It is desperate and incorrigible folly, that will not be removed by severe handling, Proverbs 27:22.

(4.) It argues great hardness and obduration, and signifies he is very much hardened in those evils for which the Lord corrects him, when his chastising hand does not conquer and prevail against them, Jeremiah 5:3. It is for those who have made their faces harder than a rock, not to receive correction, but to refuse to return when the Lord has been striking and consuming them; it is a sign not only of natural, but contracted hardness. Such was that stigmatised in Ahaz, 2 Chronicles 28:22, 'This is that king Ahaz.' Here is a hardened wretch indeed, here is a signal instance of obduration to sin more in or after distress. It is some stiffness not to yield to the word, Zechariah 7:11-12, even this makes way for great wrath. Oh but to stand out against the hand of God too, not to be pliable nor tractable, when we have been under the mighty hand of God, this speaks obduration with a witness. If that be as the adamant, this is harder than a rock or flint, the issue more dreadful.

(5.) It argues much affection, a heart greatly in love with it, when he will not leave it, whatever it cost him; when the smart of one scourge after another will not make him leave his hold of it; when the rod, though in the hand of God, will not drive him from it; when he cleaves to its breasts, though there be wormwood upon them, and the Lord has embittered it by afflictions; when he will not quit its embraces though plague sores be upon it, and the marks of divine displeasure are plainly visible. That love to sin is so far from being mortified, that it is predominant and greater than the fear of any other evil, when he will endanger the loss of relations, liberty, estate, life, yea, the favour of God and the pledges of it, gospel, and ordinances, and his presence in them; when he will run all hazards rather than quit it; expose himself to temporal calamities or spiritual judgments, yea, run upon destruction itself rather than leave it.

(6.) It is brutishness, worse than that of the horse and mule; for these you may restrain from mischief by bit and bridle; you may hedge up their way with thorns, and keep them within compass. But those that are not mortified, reformed, by afflictions, they break through the hedge,

though of thorns, as afflictions are called, Hosea 2:6. When Balaam's ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand, she turned aside out of the way, and would not be forced into it, Numbers 22:23. What brutishness is it to venture on in a way when the Lord stands to stop it, as it were, with a sword in his hand; yea, after ye have been wounded by it, and felt the weight and sharpness of it!

Hence, those who are not reduced and reformed by afflictions, are expressed in Scripture by dromedaries, wild asses, Jeremiah 2:23-24; untamed heifers, Hosea 4:16; bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, Jeremiah 31:18.

(7.) It argues great pride; a heart lifting up itself against God; not only pride in carriage towards men, but in deportment towards the Most High. When the soul is truly humbled, it yields, submits, to whatsoever the Lord would have him leave, or whatsoever the Lord will have him do, Acts 9:6; and in this pliableness to the will of God, doth the nature of true evangelical humiliation most consist. But pride is in its exaltation yet unbroken, when it will not leave that temper, those ways, and designs, and actions that the Lord would have him leave; when he does not yield, submit, and stoop to the divine will herein, though the Lord himself has been laying weight upon him. All the Lord's dispensations have not yet humbled him; he is yet stout against the Almighty; nor is pride hid from his eyes, till he be withdrawn from his purpose, Job 33:17.

(8.) It is contempt of God, and argues that there is no fear, or little fear, of God in the heart; for when should the fear of God shew itself, but when the Lord is angry, and appears terrible? And how should it appear, if not in leaving that which has provoked God to anger, and at which he has been actually expressing himself displeased? Not to leave sin, when the Lord has been judging you for it, is in effect to say, I will take my own course, let the Lord do what he will, let him do what he can with me for it. The Lord reads and hears such language in your hearts and ways, when they are not refined and reformed by judgments and chastenings. This is to despise the chastenings of the Lord, and to make nothing of his severity; to slight the Lord himself, when he will least endure it; when he is executing judgment, and expects you should submit and stoop to his will with fear and trembling.

(9.) This is to affront God, and run cross to his design, and defeat his end, in these proceedings. If a person observe not exactly the letter of a law, yet if he satisfy the end and design of it, he will be in equity excused; but a punctual observance of the words, if the end of the law be crossed, will leave him a transgressor. But if you be not more mortified and refined by afflictions, you run cross, both to the plain words of God, and to his design in these dispensations, and affront him every way, walk as contrary to the great God as may be.

(10.) It argues the person is incurable, and the case hopeless, for this is one of the last remedies; and when the last fails, nothing more is to be hoped for. Food and sleep are the first means for the support of health and life, but when these will not serve, we use physic; but if physic also be ineffectual, the case is desperate. The word and ordinances should purge and mortify us, and take away our sin; but if these do it not, the Lord makes use of his afflictions and sharp dispensations, these are his physic; but if these fail too, which is the last remedy, what hope is there then left?

You see by these particulars our danger; how dreadful it is for those that have been exercised with public judgments, or personal chastenings, not to be purged or refined thereby. If sin, so great a

sin; if the wrath of God in such expressions of it be not feared, it is to those who are past fear. Make it appear that you are far from such a desperate distemper, by complying with the Lord's end in what has befallen us. Make that your great business, which the Lord has made so, by improving what has come upon us, so as this may be the effect, to take away sin.

There is another consideration by which I would enforce this great duty, and that is the advantage we shall reap by complying with the Lord's end in bringing afflictions and calamities upon us; and,

1. The putting away our sin, and the purging our iniquity, is in itself so great an advantage, that this alone, duly considered, may be sufficient to lead us to a full and cheerful compliance to the will of God herein. For what is sin? It is our poverty; it is the sickness and languor of our souls; it is a noisome and a pestilent disease; it is lameness, and blindness, and impotency; it is a monstrous and loathsome deformity; it is a dungeon, with fetters and vermin; in a word, it is misery. It is really as great an evil to our souls as these are to our bodies. It is so represented in the word of truth. It is all these, it is more, it is worse than all these; and what an advantage would it be to be rid of such a horrid, a hideous evil as this.

It is the worst poverty, that which makes you poor towards God, poor and naked in his sight, in his account, who sure can best judge what is riches and what is poverty. He counts them miserably deluded who think they are rich, while their iniquity continues, and judges them poor and naked, however their goods be increased, if their sin be not done away; so Christ, of Laodicea, because of her lukewarmness, that one sin, Revelation 3:1-22. Now what an advantage would a poor man count it, to be freed from this poverty and nakedness! This you may gain by putting away your sins; you are freed from the most wretched poverty.

Sin is the soul's sickness, a mortal disease which has been the death of millions and millions; a noisome and destructive disease; a leprosy, a plague, a cancer, a gangrene. In Scripture language it is no better, it is worse. The purging of your iniquity is the purging out of such a pestilent humour, the freeing of you from such a loathsome and dangerous disease; and would you not count it a happiness to be raised from such a sickness, to be rid of such a leprosy: a great advantage to be cured of the plague, the plague of the heart, a soul gangrene?

If your child, or a dear relative, were blind, or lame, or dumb, or otherwise impotent; if he were frantic, or lunatic, or a natural fool, what would you give to have them freed from such a misery? The case is your own; sin is worse than these to your souls, if you will believe the report of the Holy Ghost concerning it in Scripture. It makes you lame, blind, impotent; it is the most stupid foolishness, the highest frenzy and madness, only you may be cured at an easier rate: do but put away your sin, and the cure is wrought, the work is done, your soul is made whole. Thus you may be freed from the most ugly and monstrous deformity, that which makes you loathsome and ugly in the sight of God, which he (in whose love and delight your souls are infinitely concerned) doth not only hate but abhor.

Thus may you be freed from the most miserable restraint, the most dismal and nasty dungeon; thus may you shake off your fetters, and be rid of the vilest vermin; only by quitting your iniquity, and putting away your sin. Do but this, and so far as it is done you are discharged of all misery and wretchedness.

Oh, if our souls and consciences, if our families or congregations, if our religious or civil assemblies, if our country, if the world were but purged of iniquity, which pesters, troubles, disorders, confounds all, what a happy change would there be! Men would be like angels, who are now, for want of this, like brutes or devils; earth would be like heaven, which is now, through sin, the unhappiest region in the world next to hell; our commerce in the world would be a communion with God, while now we converse together as fools or sharks, as foxes or tigers, either over-reaching, or vexing, or preying one upon another. Oh, if ungodliness, and unrighteousness, and unsobriety were put away, there would be a new heaven and a new earth; there would be a new, a happy face of things everywhere; there would be a face of heaven, of the peace and order and happiness of heaven, upon our souls and consciences, upon our families, upon our assemblies, upon our country, upon the world. Alas, that the world will not be persuaded to be so happy upon so easy terms! But shall those who profess themselves children of light, shall the people of God be guilty of such madness and cruelty to themselves and others? Shall nothing, no, not the hand, no, not the rod of God, lead them, so far as they can, to rid the world of these miseries, and to possess all, so far as they can reach, of these blessed advantages? Oh be persuaded to purge iniquity out of your hearts, lives, families; to endeavour the rooting of it out from the place where you live, and from every place that your influence can reach. Be exemplary herein as to your own persons, and the great advantages you will gain and enjoy thereby may induce the world to follow you herein; or however you shall not lose your reward. To be rid of sin yourselves (so great a misery, all miseries in one), is a most rich blessed advantage.

2. This is the way to deliverance; a sure, a speedy way to be delivered, and that in mercy too. To be delivered from the grievances and afflictions that are upon you, and from those that are approaching; from what you feel, and from what you fear. Afflictions are but the means to purge your iniquity; the taking away your sin, that is the end of all this. When the end is once attained, no wise agent will further make use of the means; there is no need of them. When your iniquity is purged, the Lord will see no need of continuing what afflicts you for that purpose; and he who afflicts not willingly, nor delights to grieve his children, will not afflict and grieve them needlessly. When the child submits, and gives hopes he will offend no more, the rod is laid aside, the father’s severity gives way to the expressions of his love and compassion. And so the Lord represents himself, Jeremiah 31:18-20. When the metal is sufficiently purified, and the dross wasted or wrought out, the furnace is no further useful, the finer sees no need to keep it in the fire. Oh, if our iniquity were once purged, the Lord would quickly take us out of the furnace; nor would there be any danger either of continuing longer in it or of having it made hotter. Not only the wisdom and mercy of God, but his truth and faithfulness, makes this sure to us; for he has promised it frequently, 2 Chronicles 7:14; which is an answer to Solomon’s prayer, 2 Chronicles 6:26-7, and 2 Chronicles 3:6, 2 Chronicles 3:8-9. If we turn from our evil ways, then will the Lord heal, though the wound seem incurable. Though our breaches seem great, like the sea, and such as none can repair, yet will the Lord heal them, certainly, speedily, mercifully.

Oh if we were in a capacity for such a mercy, if our iniquity were but purged, how soon would he give over this sharp course of physic we have been under! If this work were but accomplished upon mount Zion, how soon would he lay aside the sharp tools we are apt to complain of! If our iniquity were but taken away, how soon would he put an end to the days of blackness and thick darkness! How soon would this day of judgment and calamity clear up into a day of mercy and

salvation! How certainly would the day of a gracious visitation dawn upon us once again!

Yea, if the generality of the nation should not be purged, yet if those who have interest in God should comply with this his end in judging and chastening, if their sin be hereby taken away, possibly the Lord might be prevailed with by them, and for a few in comparison might spare the whole. The holy seed may be the substance of support of it, as Isaiah 6:13. We see the Lord would have spared Sodom for ten righteous persons, Genesis 18:32. And though that may be thought a special favour (granted at the importunity of Abraham, an extraordinary person) to spare so many for so few, and so may not pass for a common rule; so that ordinarily from thence we might draw a like conclusion; yet that in Job seems more general, Job 22:30, for (as it may be read) 'The innocent shall deliver the island.' There is such pureness in those who are refined by the furnace of affliction, and they may pass for innocent whose sin is thereby taken away. So Jeremiah 5:1, if there be any considerable number purged from the common iniquity. So Isaiah 65:8, that people is expressed by a vine, so withered or barren that the vine-dresser may be ready to cut it down as dead, yet if one spy in it some cluster that may afford wine, there may be hopes, since it is not quite dead, it may be recovered, and so the whole vine and branches may be spared for a good cluster; hereby signifying that the generality may escape for those few that are upright. So that this is the way, not only to procure deliverance for yourselves, but others; not only for your persons and families, but for cities and countries. It is the way to become saviours, i. e. to prevail with the Lord to appear as a God of salvation to the community against whom he otherwise would proceed as a destroyer. But if the end of God be not herein complied with, especially by those from whom it is most expected, a deliverance in mercy is hopeless. We make it desperate, and leave ourselves or others no expectation of it in an ordinary way, and according to those rules by which the Scriptures shew us the Lord commonly proceeds.

It is true indeed the Lord is not confined to rules, nor ties himself to walk in the common path. He may save and deliver a people, as it were, by prerogative. And so he did Israel, while their iniquity was not purged, 2 Kings 14:25-27, by Jeroboam, who did evil, and departed not from it, 2 Kings 14:24.

(1.) But this was not in mercy, nor was it lasting. It was rather a reprieve than a deliverance. The advantages thereof (such as they were) were but of short continuance. In the next chapter, you may see them all in blood and confusion.

(2.) And to be delivered from outward afflictions, if sin be not taken away, either before or upon deliverance, is but to be reserved for greater calamities. Sin still remaining will curse and blast temporal deliverance, and the fruits of it, and will make it appear in the issue that there is little or no mercy therein, how specious soever they may seem. So that what we call deliverance by prerogative is not a deliverance in mercy, if the sin of a people be not taken away, either before it or by it; for this brings a curse upon such deliverance, as it does upon other temporal blessings. The Lord threatens it for this sin amongst others, Malachi 2:2. Not laying to heart God's judgments and chastenings; not giving glory to him, by answering his end therein, and turning from sin, will make freedom from such calamities, if it be a blessing in such a case, to be a cursed blessing, such as will bring more misery than advantage.

(3.) And if such a deliverance as is neither durable nor merciful were desirable, yet have we no ground to expect it; for faith must be grounded upon common rules and ordinary promises, not

upon extraordinary proceedings, and looks (when it would have firm support) not at what the Lord may do, by prerogative or absolute sovereignty, but at what he hath declared he will do. Faith can have no encouragement at all from what is merely possible; it looks for some certainty, and acts not but upon a sure word. Now it is only possible the Lord may deliver a people, when their sin is not taken away, but it is highly probable he will not, he has declared so much against it. It is only certain he will deliver those in mercy whose iniquity is purged, for the promise of it is to them, and to them alone. If, then, by the calamities you would be freed from, your iniquity be purged, if this be the fruit, &c., you may be certain of deliverance, if it be good for you, and of that as soon as ever it will be so.

3. Hereby you will gain that which is better than deliverance, even this very thing. The purging of your iniquity is better than any outward deliverance; for sin is worse than afflictions and calamities. That is clear in Scripture, in reason, and even in the judgment of those whose practice contradicts it. There is that in sin which is more hateful, more dreadful, more grievous and afflictive in itself, and to those who have either spiritual sense or true judgment, than there is in afflictions. It is far and incomparably the greater evil, and therefore freedom from sin, though but in part, is far better than total freedom and full deliverance from outward calamities.

If the Lord should defer deliverance, yet if thereby he purge you more and more from sin, he shews you more mercy, and does that which is better for you than if he should presently deliver you, he is more kind and gracious to you than if he should fully repair all the losses and breaches that afflictions has made upon you. It be unquestionably better to be freed from a greater evil than from a less.

Moreover, the more iniquity is purged the more does holiness increase; these being such contraries, as the exclusion of one lets in the other, and the declining of one is the advance of the other. And the one gains as many degrees as the other loses. As darkness vanishes, light increases; and as sickness is removed, health and strength is recovered. So as sin is expelled, holiness grows. Hence in some places of Scripture the purging of iniquity is the fruit and end of afflictions and chastenings. In other places, the increase of holiness is the fruit thereof, Hebrews 12:10. So that by improving afflictions for the taking away sin, you will partake more of holiness. That is the advantage you will reap thereby, and it is so rich and considerable as all the advantages of outward deliverance are not to be compared with it. For holiness, it is the health, the strength, the beauty, liberty, safety, the riches, the dignity, the comfort, the life, the happiness of the soul, either formally or efficiently; it either is these, or brings these to the soul. And those who will judge of things as Christians, and not as worldlings or sensualists; those who will not be carried away with the common error and delusion of them whose minds the god of this world has blinded, will judge the health and strength of the soul to be the best health, &c., and that which makes the soul rich, more valuable than all earthly riches, and so an increase of holiness far more desirable than the advancement of their outward estate; and that which adorns, honours, and advances their souls in the sight of God, incomparably better than all worldly honours, dignity, or preservation; and that which makes the soul free, more than that which frees the body from restraint, &c. They will count these soul-advantages so much better as the soul is to be preferred before the body, or outward concernments.

Now, outward deliverance brings you but these lower and less considerable advantages, restores health or strength to the body, repairs your estates, or makes you rich on earthly accounts, or brings you to a freer, safer, or higher condition in the world. But afflictions, though they be continued, if they be improved for the purging iniquity, and consequently for the increase of holiness, they make your souls strong and healthful, they make your minds truly free, and great, and noble; they render you lovely and honourable in the sight of God; they enrich your souls with heavenly treasure, with the riches of God, in comparison of which worldly wealth is but thorns or thick clay, loss and dung, riches falsely so called; they bring you peace, and comfort, and happiness, of which otherwise there is nothing but a dream or a shadow in the world, and over and above they work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Corinthians 4:1-18. And therefore it is unquestionably true, and past all doubt to those who pass a true judgment of things, that to improve afflictions for the purging of iniquity is incomparably better than deliverance from afflictions. And therefore if the day of deliverance be so much desired, much more should you desire and endeavour to comply with the Lord's end in judging and afflicting, so as hereby your iniquity may be purged, since this is far better, and incomparably more to be desired than what you so much desire.

Let me in the next place lay down some rules and directions, the observance of which may be helpful to promote the Lord's end in judging and afflicting, so as by this iniquity may be purged.

1. Set yourselves against all sin, not against this or that particular evil, which conscience, or the word, or providence may more directly point at, but against every sin. For though afflictions may help you more against one than another, yet they are not less improved* unless they help you more or less against all sin. The words in the text are general, and so laid down as they may reach all sin and iniquity. The fruit of affliction should be the purging iniquity, the taking away of sin without exception. Et ubi lex non distinguit, non est distinguendum: where the law makes no exception, we must make none. We must overlook no sin if we would comply with the rule before us. And that we may not be partial, let me instance in some that we are too apt to overlook.

(1.) Set yourselves not only against sin of life and practice, but against the corruption of your natures, that which is all sin in one, the nursery, the spawn of all; that in which all particulars do as it were live, and move, and have their being, Matthew 15:18-19. Out of the corruption of the heart, as from a fountain, flows all the impurity of words and actions. You may stop up one current of sin, and another, but to little purpose, while the fountain still runs freely. It will overflow or bear down the dams you make to stop it, or find another passage when you have done all you can. If you do nothing to dry up the spring in the heart, to divert or dam up this or that passage in your practice will be to little purpose: Matthew 12:33-35, while the tree, while the heart is evil, the fruit will be so. The evil treasure in the heart must be exhausted, else the product thereof will be evil things; that which is in the life will be dross while the heart is not refined. The avoiding of some particular evils is but to pare the nails, which will grow again; but the mortifying of thy natural corruption is to go about to cut off the arm. This is to make sure work, that once cut off, can grow no more.

(2.) Set yourselves against a sinful temper of heart, not only against sinful acts. For such a temper is worse, more provoking, more dangerous, though it be less sensible than many evil acts; as a constant sickly temper is worse than a fit of the toothache, yea, than fits of the stone or gout, though the pain there be more acute and afflictive. A worldly, carnal, selfish, slothful, or lukewarm

temper of heart, is far worse than some particular acts of worldliness, selfishness, sensuality, or lukewarmness. For the temper is fixed, and is a continued sin; the acts are transient. The temper is fruitful, being a pregnant disposedness to more and more acts suitable to it. The acts have no such pernicious pregnancy, and the Lord judges of us more by the bent of the heart than by some particular acts. He, the bent of whose heart is towards the world, the riches, pleasures, dignities of it, will be a worldling in the account of God, rather than he who sometimes by the force of temptation is hurried into a sordid act. And so of the rest, he whose heart is bent to please the flesh, &c., and the temper being less sensible, and not so much taken notice of, is the more dangerous, because the less watched and opposed, and the cure of it less minded and endeavoured.

Accordingly, the Lord proceeds severely against churches and persons, not only for wicked acts, but for a sinful temper, which is very apparent in what he threatens Laodicea, Revelation 3:15-16. It is a lukewarm temper that he so thunders against, it being so loathsome to him that for it he threatens to ease himself of her, as that which he nauseates and abhors, as we do that which we are sick of. This might be ruin to some in whom it was predominant; and in those whom he loves, and where it was not so prevalent, it could not escape without rebukes and chastenings, Revelation 3:19. And the end thereof was not a desisting from this or that act only, but the change of their temper. ‘Be zealous therefore and repent,’ i. e. bewail, abhor that odious temper, and get it turned into one quite contrary. And thus must you do if you would comply with God’s end in rebukes and chastenings, not only quit your old practices, but your former sinful temper. Instead of a worldly temper, get one that is heavenly, so that the bent of your hearts may be for the things above, that heavenly treasure; instead of a selfish temper, get one that is self-denying, that which will incline you to seek and mind the things of Christ, not your own things, and to resign up yourselves entirely to the serving of Christ’s interest; instead of a carnal, sensual temper, that which is spiritual; instead of a slothful temper, that which will make you active and industrious, and laborious for Christ, for your souls and heavenly interest; instead of a lukewarm temper, that which will be zealous for God, and against sin, though you suffer for it; ardent in love and desires to Christ, fervent in spirit in serving him.

(3.) Against those sins, not only which you know at present, but against those which you shall know, and ought to take notice of as sins, though they have escaped your notice hitherto. Not only against those which you are convinced of to be sins, and your sins, but these also, for which you have sufficient means of conviction, though they have not been, or are not effectual. The rod has a voice. One thing that the Lord principally calls a people to, by judgments and afflictions, is to search and try their ways, to find out what evil is in them; and when afflictions and sufferings are continued, and drawn to a great length, notwithstanding prayer, and some other means used for the removal of them, their continuance is sometimes because the evils for which God is angry are not reformed, sometimes because they are not discovered and discerned. Those who suffer by them, do not take notice of them, are not or will not be convinced of them; and therefore those who think their fears, pressures, or sufferings of any kind, tedious and continued beyond their expectation, and are apt to cry out, ‘How long, Lord,’ &c., have a clear call, and are highly concerned, in answer to it, to search diligently, to search and try, to search again and again, whether there be any evil, any provocation in their hearts or ways which they have not observed, or not sufficiently taken notice of. They are not to content themselves with a superficial view, that

which first offers itself; nor with former inquiries, though there have been some diligence in them; nor with common apprehensions of themselves or others concerning the ground of God's controversy. They may suspect they have not been inquisitive enough, or have been partial, or suffered false love, or the reputation or multitude of those who have concurred with them, or something or other, to hinder them from discerning some evil for which God is angry, and so ought to make a more impartial and stricter inquiry after it, and to give all diligence in the use of all appointed means to make a further discovery.

If this be our case, this is the course we ought to take. If, after all the means which have been used for freedom from what afflicts us publicly or personally, we find the Lord's anger is not yet turned away, but his hand is stretched out still; if our hopes have deceived us, and our expectations have been frustrate; if after some little reviving in our troubles, fears are renewed, and the clouds still return after the rain: we have hereupon some ground to suspect, that the cursed thing which troubles is not yet discovered, and that we do not yet discern the cause why the Lord is contending with us; and therefore are highly concerned to make a more strict and diligent search after it, and to resist and avoid whatever may have hindered us from conviction. And great reason we have to engage ourselves thoroughly in such a course, if we consider but this only, that the Lord has proceeded against a people, yea, and destroyed them, for sins which they have not discovered, which they have not been convinced of (only sufficient means being offered for their conviction). Many have been ruined for their sins, which they have not known, being not willing, or not careful enough to know them.

We may see this in the ten tribes, and the account given of their ruin, 2 Kings 17:9. Secretly; Hebr., They hid, or covered, or cloaked what they did. There were some specious and plausible pretences, wherewith what they did was covered; so that the sin and the sinfulness of it did not appear. Hereby it came to pass, that their sin was a secret to themselves. The act was open, public, visible (their high places, their images, their worship, which are the particulars immediately mentioned); but the sinfulness thereof was a secret. The excuses and pleas wherewith it was cloaked kept them from discerning it; they seem to have been ignorant or unconvinced of that sin, and yet they were ruined for it, 2 Kings 17:23.

Wrath came also upon the other two tribes, upon the like account, for sins which they were not convinced of, the sinfulness of which they did not know or believe. That which principally hastened their ruin, was false worship, Jeremiah 44:21-22; and yet even after the desolation of temple, city, and country, hereby we find them so far from being convinced, that this was their sin, that they ascribe what good they met with to the practice of it, and what mischiefs befell them to the forbearance of it, Jeremiah 44:15, Jeremiah 44:17-19, where it is expressed by what they confirmed themselves against conviction: the approbation of their betters, the authority of the ancients, the example and concurrence of their rulers in all their cities, and the measures they took of the providence of God, in dispensing to them good or evil.

Yea, that which was the utter ruin of God's ancient people the Jews, their crucifying of Christ, was not known to be a sin by many of those who concurred to it. Therefore the apostle says, They did it ignorantly, Acts 3:14-15, Acts 3:17; they were not thoroughly convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, though there was evidence enough to convince them, because they did not duly search into and observe it, so they sinned ignorantly, not knowing it was a sin, or such a sin. That was the

condition of most of them, and yet for this that people was utterly rejected, and wrath came upon them to the utmost. So that the Lord may proceed against a people, and often does it, for sins that they know not to be sins, and of the sinfulness of which they are not convinced. The ground of his controversy with them (when he is ready to destroy them), may be that which they little think of. They may be extremely endangered by that wherein they do not imagine their danger lies; that sin may be the great provocation, which they discern not to be their sin. And therefore if you would comply with God's end in judging and afflicting, it may not be enough to put away the sin that you know, but you must search after those you yet do not know, and attend to the means which he offers for your conviction, and be careful to avoid whatsoever might hide a yet not observed sin from your eye, or might turn your eye from it, or might make you stiff against conviction. Use all means which may help you to a further discovery; you are called to it in a special manner. If you have reformed what is discovered, and yet the Lord's anger is not turned away, search your hearts and ways, even those that you have not suspected. Make use of the words as your light; hearken to conscience; observe your afflictions, what they seem to point at. Commune with your friends, with those that are disinterested; neglect not the charges of those that differ from you, no, not the reproaches of enemies, especially be importunate with God.

I have the longer insisted on this, because all things considered, it is to be feared, that the ground of the Lord's controversy with his people at this day, is either not fully discerned, or at least not removed.

(4.) Set yourselves not only against the outward acts of sin, but against the inward motions; not only against complete sin, but the embryos of sin; against it in its inward formation, when it is but breeding, or you find it first stirring, before it be brought forth, and be exposed to open view. Oppose it as soon as God sees it to be sin, before it appear in the sight of the world. A man may live so as the world can charge him with no sin; and yet there may be a world of sin in his heart, &c. An inward act or motion may be sinful, though it never appear outwardly; but there are many outward acts, which, without some inward sinful motion, would be neither good nor bad, but indifferent. Hezekiah's shewing his state and riches to the ambassadors of Babylon, might have been, as to the outward act, inoffensive, if some inward motion of pride or the like evil had not tainted it; but thereby it was rendered so sinful, as the Lord dreadfully threatens it, Isaiah 39:5-7; and so David's numbering the people, 2 Samuel 24:1-25. Nay, the best outward acts, those that are most holy, most eminent and exemplary, most extraordinary and heroical, by some inward irregular act and motion, may be quite spoiled and turned into sin. So was Jehu his reformation perverted; and so may the giving of all our goods to the poor, or the giving of our bodies to be burned, if the inward motions of the heart be not right in such outwardly glorious actings or sufferings, be quite depraved and sullied in the sight of God. The sinfulness of outward acts is derived from inward and unlawful motions, Matthew 12:35. Cleanse the heart, or else even the avoiding of outward sinful acts will be unclean; hence Matthew 12:33-34, Luke 6:43.

(5.) Set yourselves not only against sins that you are tempted to at present, but against those that you may be tempted to, though now you do not find them stirring, nor in motion, 2 Kings 8:13. You should oppose yourselves where there is danger; now, we are many times in more danger of sin when we find it not stirring, and observe it not tempting us, than when we are aware of a temptation. It is found by experience, sin often gives the most dangerous and deadly assaults, after some cessation, after it has lain still and quiet, as though it would stir and tempt no more, as

though it were subdued, and the heart and power of it broken.

(6.) Set yourselves not only against your own, but against your other-men's, sins. If you could avoid sin in your own persons, yet you may sin by others. If it were so, that you should never act sin personally, yet you may be guilty of others' sins, guilty either as principals or as accessories; and when you are but accessories, you sin, though not equally as when you act it.

You may be guilty of the sin when others are the actors of it, by commanding and ordering: so Saul of Doeg's, 1 Samuel 22:19; David of Joab's, 2 Samuel 12:19. When you incense or provoke, as Jezebel did Ahab, 1 Kings 21:7; when you allure or entice, as the harlot, Proverbs 7:21, and those, Proverbs 1:10-11; when you counsel or advise, plot or contrive, as Jonadab of Amnon's, 2 Samuel 13:6; when you consent or approve, as Ahab to Jezebel, 1 Kings 21:19, Romans 1:31; when praise or commend, Isaiah 5:20, excuse or defend, Proverbs 24:24; when empower or capacitate, as 1 Timothy 5:22; though without any intention or suspicion that they will so employ their power. So negatively, by not hindering it; so Pilate, Mark 15:15. By not informing, declaring that it is sin, as false prophets, false worship. By not dissuading, reproving, correcting; so Eli, 1 Samuel 3:13. By not removing the occasions; this was the blot in the character of the good kings of Judah, they take not away high places, 2 Kings 12:3. By not mourning for others' sins; so Ezekiel 9:4, Ezekiel 9:6, only the mourners were to be delivered; those that mourned not, though they were not actors of those abominations, were to fall by the destroyer. By this it is evident, that not only your own, but your other-men's sins, may expose you to afflictions, yea, to destructive calamities. And Eli is a pregnant and dreadful instance of it; upon him and his family such judgments were poured down, as made the ears of those who heard thereof to tingle. And this not for the sins which himself acted; but for those which he restrained not, when he might and ought to have hindered the actors. So that we comply not with the Lord's end in afflicting and judging us, though our own sin be taken away, if we do anything to promote sin in others, nay, if we do not what we ought, and all that in us lies, to hinder others from sinning; if we do not reform, not only ourselves, but our families, our relations, and all over whom we have any power or any influence; and if we do not mourn and humble ourselves, and afflict our souls for what we have not power to reform.

(7.) Set yourselves against sin, not when it appears in its own colours, but when it puts on a disguise. If we would answer the Lord's end in chastening, we must not only put away sin when it shews its native face, which is so ugly and odious as it will affright an awakened conscience, but when it puts on a mask, and hides its ugliness with fair colours. When there is danger that sin may have no more entertainment, it will borrow a better habit, that it may procure a new admission. Sin is like the devil its father; he would not appear to our first parents in his own likeness, but in a serpent, which was then a harmless and sociable creature. So after, he would not offer himself to Saul in his own shape, but in the habit of Samuel. So sin uses not to appear in its own colours; for then, where there is anything of an enlightened conscience, men would not dare to meddle with it. Satan clothes it in another habit; and when one is worn out, or the Lord enables us to see through it, it takes another, and turns itself into any shape rather than it will be quite excluded. If you would have this to be the fruit of afflictions, the taking away of your sin, you must reject it in every appearance and habit; not only when it is apparently a work of darkness, but when it is transformed into an appearance of light.

It may be you are afraid of worldliness, as it is declared in Scripture to be no better than whoredom, drunkenness, or idolatry. Oh but take heed of it, when it puts on the fair colours of diligence in a lawful calling, or necessary providing for family and posterity!

It may be you abhor false worship when it appears, as it is, to be an invading of God's prerogative and an advancing of man's will and wisdom before that of Christ. Oh but take heed of it, when masked with the pretences of order, decency, reverence, and submission to our betters!

It may be want of love to the brethren is dreadful, when branded as a damning sin, and a sign of an unregenerate state. Oh but take heed of it, when coloured with zeal for the truth, or for a way we count best; and they, as dissenters or opposers, fancied to be unworthy of our love, and the acts and expressions of it! To find our own pleasure on the Lord's day, and to neglect duties of religion in private or families, you may count, as it is, a great profaneness; but take heed of this profaneness in another garb, beware of being less conscientious under a pretence of gospel liberty.

You know to despise Christ's messengers is to despise Christ; you will be afraid of this. But take heed of despising them under other disguises, as legal teachers, or ministers of the letter, or men of low ordinary gifts, or under any other mask which Satan may help you to.

Jeroboam would not bring in idolatry in an Egyptian dress, to imitate them, as in the wilderness, that was too gross, too coarse; but masked with reason of state, necessity, and conveniency, 1 Kings 12:26-28.

2. Set yourselves against some sins more especially. As afflictions and judgments should help us against all more or less, so, if we duly improve them, we must make use of them to help us against some sins especially, viz. those that are most dangerous; those that we are in most danger of, and those that we are judged or corrected for. To instance in some particulars; if you would comply with God's end in afflictions and calamities, so as by these your iniquity may be purged,

(1.) Set yourselves especially against mother sins, those which are most pregnant, which give life, strength, and motion to many others. If you would have all sin taken away, if you would have this to be the fruit, &c., be careful to take away those that maintain all. Besides natural corruption, the root and body of all (of which before), there are some main branches, some cardinal evils observable, upon which the rest of our sins are but as it were dependents, are but sprigs shooting out of the main arms of this tree of sin and death. Now, the principals being suppressed, the other, if they fall not of themselves, will with more ease be quelled.

These are as it were the vital parts of the body of sin, which, wounded and mortified, the rest would quickly expire. These are Satan's strongest holds, which command all about them; demolish these forts, and the rest will easily be brought under. The other are but ministering sins, the servants of these. Now, as when the dragon was cast down his angels were cast out with him, so cast down the master sins, and the rest, the retainers, will fall with him.

Unbelief. That is the root in a manner of all sins; that which supports, conveys sap and life to them; that which cumbers the ground, hinders anything from thriving near it, that might hinder the growth of sin. Labour to pluck up this root of bitterness, and the branches will wither; but lesser sins will never die, though they may be restrained, till unbelief be plucked up.

Besides this, the principal mother sins are those mentioned by the apostle: 1 John 2:16, ‘The lust of the flesh,’ sensuality, the affecting to gratify the flesh, our bodies with ease and pleasure. ‘The lust of the eye,’ i. e. covetousness, the affecting of riches, worldly profits and advantages. ‘The pride of life,’ the affection of a carnal and selfish excellency. Set yourselves principally against these three, and the overthrow of them will be the ruin of that army of lusts which war against your souls; for the rest are maintained, have their strength, support, and activeness from them.

Intemperance, incontinence, slothfulness, an immoderate affecting of ease, sleep, pastime, and the numerous evils that have their rise and dependence hereupon, are removed, when sensuality, the lust of the flesh, is taken away.

Then for covetousness or worldliness, called the lust of the eye, what a multitude of sins doth this breed, and nourish, and set a-work! Injustice, oppression, unfaithfulness in words or oaths, fraud, deceit, simulation, dissimulation, neglect of soul and heavenly interest, omission, or slight performance of holy duties, perplexing cares, mercenariness: all these, and many more, issue out of this one cursed womb. Now by killing the dam you starve the young, this loathsome brood will languish; kill this master-sin, and its numerous retinue and dependents will be undone. So for pride; this is a radical sin, the branches of it are self-dependence, self-conceit, carnal confidence, presumptuous curiosity, self-seeking, ambition, hypocrisy, contempt of others, self-magnifying, ostentation in words, actions, fashions, entertainments; discontent, contention, disdain, detraction. Pluck but up this one root of pride, and all these, and many more, will die and wither. Reformation of some particular evils is but like Samson’s shaving his locks, which in time did grow again. If Delilah would have made sure work, and prevented the recovery of his strength, she should have plucked it out by the roots. Indeed, the mortifying of these capital evils, unbelief, sensuality, worldliness, and pride, is as the cutting off the head. There is little danger of the growing of these lesser evils, which are but as the hair, when that is done. You untile the house in other attempts; but by bending your main force against these supporters of the rest, you pull down the pillars of it.

(2.) Set yourselves especially against those sins which you are most subject to. You may judge of it by these severals, which I will but name.

Observe what evil your constitution or complexion most inclines to, what your calling or course of life, your employment, or want of employment, most exposes you to; what has formerly most commanded your affections, your love, delight, desire, zeal, &c.; or what custom has most riveted you in; or what you are fastened to by your interest, credit, or profit, or ease, or safety. This sin you may look upon as the champion of the rest, that which gives them heart and strength, which encourages and sets them on. If this fall, the victory over the rest will be easier; even as when Goliath was slain, the Philistines fled. The king of Syria knew of what consequence Ahab’s death would be to the obtaining of the victory; Jehoshaphat and the men of Judah were but his dependents, and would follow, and be involved in his success, good or bad; and therefore he adviseth, 2 Chronicles 18:30. Many other sins are dependents on these; it leads, acts, employs, enforceth them; let these be taken away, and the rest will scarce stand out against you.

(3.) Set yourselves especially against the sins of the times. There is no complying with God’s end, if you do not utterly abandon these. They are so visible, I need not mention them. Atheism, apostasy, perjury, unfaithfulness to God and men, advancing mens’ advices before divine appointments, profaning his day, name, worship, all that is truly holy; uncleanness, intemperance,

violence, contempt of the gospel, rebellion against, putting away the word of life; abuse of his messengers; and others, which may be discerned without any troublesome search. For this people declare their sin as Sodom, and it is heightened with impudence, universality, incorrigibleness. Oh keep at the greatest distance from these, touch not with them in any degree. Avoid not only these abominations, but the appearance of them; be neither actors nor partakers herein, if you have any regard of complying with the Lord's end in judging us.

(4.) Set yourselves against those sins especially, which are less disgraceful amongst professors; such as custom and opinion has made less reproachful, whatever they be in themselves, and in the sight of God, than the gross pollutions of the world. Let me instance in some: eagerness after the world; indifferency towards holiness, the growth, power, and life of it; superficialness in holy duties; unfruitfulness under the means of grace; unteachableness under the rod; unserviceableness in their places; an unbridled tongue; loose, careless, unwatchful walking: passionateness, pride, selfishness, unpeaceableness, envy, strife, debate, malice, revenge, evil-speaking, detraction, and many others, too rife amongst professors.

Some of these are as heinous in themselves, as great sins in God's account, and as much branded in Scripture, as those which are counted the spots of the wicked, swearing, uncleanness, drunkenness; and the special aggravations which burden all the sins of sons and daughters, make them all grievous provocations. But because they are too common amongst professors, we are too apt to make light of them; we give them more allowance, and count them less reproachful; and so are in danger to overlook them, when God is calling us to purge them out, and dealing with us by his providence to take them away.

If you would comply with God's end, take special care that these be abandoned; judge of them, not according to common opinion, but as the Lord judges of them, and think yourselves as much concerned to free heart and life from these, as you think others concerned to abandon idolatry, whoredom, or drunkenness.

(5.) Set yourselves especially against those evils for which the Lord judges and afflicts; these, above all, should be regarded by those who would answer the Lord's end, &c. If all others should be put away, and these only retained, the Lord's end would not be answered; though he would have all iniquity purged, yet his hand is more particularly against these, and so should ours.

Now that we may comply with the Lord's design against these sins, it is necessary that we should discern them, and endeavour to make a discovery of them. In order hereto, observe in general, that there may be, and ordinarily is, a concurrence of many sins to the bringing of common judgments, or sharp and long afflictions, though some sins may contribute more than others hereto. We may be long a-ripening for his judgments and severe dispensations. A continued evil course, made up of divers sins, is ordinarily precedent to this; though, when we are ripe for it, some particular act or acts may occasion the Lord to put in the sickle, and forbear no longer. And those particular provocations, upon which judgment breaks out, and affliction seizes on us, as they are sometimes more, so they may be sometimes less, heinous than those, or some of those, that prepared and disposed us at some distance for such severity. As a child may somewhile, by several faults, provoke his father to correct him, before he will take the rod, though upon some particular offence he may resolve to bear no longer, but scourge him presently, though that offence be not always the greatest; he may mind him, while he is correcting him, of others which

made way for that severity, and designs the reforming of others, as well as of that particular, upon which immediately he made use of the rod.

And, therefore, when we would discover evils, for which the Lord is judging or correcting us, we should not look only at this or that particular, which might have the next hand in bringing an evil day upon us, but at those also that have been preparing and ripening us for it at some distance; for the influence of these may be as great, though more remote, in procuring the evils that afflict us; and the Lord's designs in dealing severely will not be answered, unless both these and the other be taken away. And, accordingly, I would have you make use of the directions I shall give, to help you in the discovery of those sins and iniquities, for which the Lord has been judging and afflicting us; and therein I design principally a discovery of those evils amongst professors, which have had these woful effects upon us.

If you would discern what the sins are, for which the Lord hath been, and is, contending with us, the observance of these particulars may be helpful.

1. Search for them. If you would make a discovery, you must make a search, and pursue it personally, diligently, thoroughly. The church, in her lamentable condition, thought herself much concerned to take this course, Lamentations 3:40.

Personally, our ways. There is something of the accursed thing hid in every of our tents. Each of us is, more or less have been, an Achan to ourselves, and the place where we live. We may say, I, and I have troubled. Each of us should search our own tent, our own hearts and ways, and not put off this duty to others, as more guilty than ourselves. We should not be smiting others with the charge of this and that guilt; but every one smite upon his own thigh, and say not, Oh what evil has such and such a person or party done? But what evil have I done? The Lord's judiciary or correcting hand has reached us all one way or other, and found us all guilty, and so we should find ourselves, if we would have a stop of severe proceedings.

Diligently. Throughly, every corner of our souls, the most secret recesses of our hearts; all the parts of our lives, all our designs, all our actings, all our ways, even those that we have not suspected, those that have passed for innocent, or better than innocent. That which seems to be best in the vessel may raise the storm; even in a Jonah may more cause of it be found than in the heathen mariners. That which threatens the wreck of all, may be there where we little imagine it to be, and may be that which we have no suspicious thought of, and which, it may be, we have thought it a crime to suspect. Who, before the discovery, would not have thought it a sin to have suspected Jonah as the malefactor rather than the profane mariners? Search, therefore, everywhere, everything; that which we count best may have a provocation in it.

2. Beware of those things which may hinder you from discerning those sins, and being convinced of them; which may shut your eye or divert it; which may make you unwilling to see, willing to overlook, resolve not to be convinced, or loath to yield to conviction. There are many things of this nature and tendency, which you are to avoid and resist, which you are to observe, and be watchful that they do you not this disservice.

(1.) Self-love. That blinds the eye, keeps it close shut, will not let it see that which is odious and loathsome in himself, that which disparages and is a just occasion of ill reflections upon himself; makes him loath to see what should make him vile in his own sight; unwilling to see that which

would trouble, disquiet, affright him; or to take notice of what might be a just cause to judge, condemn, pass sentence against himself as a common incendiary, a troubler of the community where he lives; makes him readier to see a mote in another's eye than a beam in his own, and to censure and condemn any rather than himself. Self-love will see all ruined rather than see itself the cause of it; and fancy the ground of it anywhere rather than where it is, when it is at home. Self-love will be blind where you are concerned to be most quick-sighted: this must be suppressed, mortified, and what remains of it not at all consulted with or hearkened to, if you would discover the evil.

(2.) Subtlety. To find out pretences and arguments for the hiding and covering of sin, and to manage them so as to stave off conviction, and to answer or evade whatever tends to fasten it. Naturally there is such a subtlety in us, and we are prone to make use of it; and many times art is added to nature, and joins fig-leaves together so artificially, as the nakedness of sin is covered, and the shame of it hid from our eyes. Thus the Israelites, those of the ten tribes, so cloaked and covered their sin that it was a secret to them, they discerned it not to be a sin, 2 Kings 17:9; Hebr., they covered or cloaked what they did. They had such pleas and arguments for their false worship, it was so cloaked and disguised thereby, that it did not appear to them to be a sin: the sinfulness of it was a secret.

Saul was a notable artist this way. The prophet had much to do to convince him that a plain act of disobedience was a sin, 1 Samuel 15:3. There is the command. Saul and the people destroy all the persons, but only Agag, and all the cattle that were vile and refuse, 1 Samuel 15:9. Hereupon he is confident he had not sinned, 1 Samuel 15:13. And when Samuel tells him, that the bleating and lowing of the cattle was sufficient to confute him; for God had commanded to destroy all, and he had spared some, 1 Samuel 15:14; he shifts off this very speciously and plausibly, 1 Samuel 15:15. The best only are spared; and these not for our own use, but for the honour and service of God, to sacrifice to him, and express our thankfulness for so great a victory. And if this were a fault, the people did it, not I. Upon this he confidently justifies himself, and persists in it, after Samuel had said much for his conviction, 1 Samuel 15:20; and when he could no longer hold out in justifying the act wholly, yet he has something to allege, which might excuse and extenuate it, 1 Samuel 15:24.

We need not wonder, when men are still as subtle to deceive themselves, and have the advantage of much more art than the world had of old, that arguments are mustered up, to make good and justify so many sins; and that it is so exceeding hard, in many cases and circumstances, to convince persons of their sin.

If you would discover the sins for which God judges and afflicts us, you must get a willingness to be convinced, and not seek evasions, nor catch at fair pretences, nor study arguments tending to prove your sin is no sin; nor accept of them from the invention of others.

(3.) Pride. A good conceit of themselves, an over-weaning opinion of their own holiness, uprightness, or innocency. This makes men very backward to believe that they are guilty of such evils as provoke the Lord to severe proceedings, and apt to think, conclude, the cause of such severity is in others rather than themselves. This blinded the pharisees. Of all the sects among the Jews in Christ's time, they had the reputation of greatest holiness. They thought themselves, and were thought by others, to be the most eminent for piety and righteousness; and this made them

stiff against whatever was urged, by Christ himself, for their conviction. And this hindered Laodicea from the sight of that for which Christ had a controversy with her, Revelation 3:17. She made account she was rich, &c., and this hindered her from the knowledge, from the sight of that which was her sin and misery. ‘And knowest not,’ &c. And this hindered the Jews of old from discerning their sin and sinfulness, when the prophet set it before their eyes; they thought themselves better than any people in the world, the only people of God, honoured and privileged by him above all others; and they had ocular demonstrations of it, the temple of God amongst them; and with this they answer (though it was but a lying, a deceiving allegation) all that the prophet made use of for their conviction, Jeremiah 7:4. And hence it came to pass, that all which the prophet alleged for the discovery of their sin was to no purpose, Jeremiah 7:13.

(4.) Interest. There is nothing more conceals sin; nothing so much hinders men from discerning and being convinced of their sin, than interest. When such a way helps him to riches and dignity, and supports him in such a state; or when it ministers pleasure to him, and is the solace of his life; or when it secures him, keeps him safe; and if he should leave it, himself and outward concernments would be evidently exposed and endangered. Oh, he will see anything rather than see this to be his sin. He will use all shifts, find out a hundred evasions, rather than yield to conviction here. And any plea for it will seem of more force than the most cogent argument against it. The world has one instance of the power of interest for this purpose, which is so pregnant, as I need add no more.

It is as evident, as can be expected in anything of that nature, that there is a horrible degeneracy in church-government, worship, and discipline, amongst the Romanists, and those who follow them. It is palpably quite another thing than that which was primitive and apostolical; there are other ordinances, other officers, other administrations of worship and discipline, than what were appointed in Scripture. The apostasy of latter times herein is so great and so plain, as it may seem matter of astonishment that any should in the least doubt of it. And yet there are multitudes who plead, and argue, and dispute, and fill whole volumes with defences of such a degeneracy, and revile and persecute all that will not yield to them, i. e. those that will not be persuaded that midnight is noon-day. Now, what is it that does thus blind and infatuate them, but interest? They, by their new officers and administrations, gain riches, and honours, and power hereby. This furnishes them with arguments, this helps them to answers and evasions, as to whatever is brought from Scripture for their conviction. And this makes them resolute to believe (say what you will to the contrary) that darkness is light; and so continues the Christian world in such a dreadful apostasy, from generation to generation. Oh the fatal, the stupendous, the pernicious power of interest! That one argument of Demetrius, Acts 19:25, ‘Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth,’ was of more force with those of his temper than all the reasonings of the apostle Paul himself to the contrary. Oh how hard was it to let them see idolatry in a practice so much for their interest!

Those that would discover the sin, for which the Lord judges and afflicts, must be disengaged from the power of worldly and carnal interest. This makes conviction always difficult, sometimes impossible.

(5.) The judgment or example of those whom we reverence, and have an high esteem of. It will not be easy to believe that to be a sin in us, which is countenanced by the judgment or example of

those who are got high in our opinion; by their antiquity, or by their authority, or by the greatness of their parts and accomplishments, or by their exemplary holiness, or by their known conscientiousness in other things. And yet it is possible that the Lord may proceed against us for some evil, that has most of these, or all of these, to countenance it, and to secure it from being thought what indeed it is, a provocation in the sight of God. It may be you may have the judgment and practice of many of the ancients, of the best of your ancestors, for it. You may have the approbation of your rulers, of your betters, of your greatest, or of your dearest relatives, of your teachers for it. It may be the judgment of some of greatest parts, learning, and other accomplishments; such as you may think best able to discern betwixt things that differ, and to judge what is good and what evil. It may be the practice of some that are really holy, and truly conscientious in other particulars; and yet for all this, it may be a sin, and a ground of God's controversy with you. But how hard will it be to believe it, and to be convinced that it is so, against such a stream, so powerful to bear down all before it which tends to conviction! The Jews' provocation was great, and brought dreadful evils upon them; and yet they would see no evil in it, notwithstanding all that the Lord, by the prophet, said to discover it; because they had the judgment and practice of those whom they did most reverence to defend it, Jeremiah 44:17, Jeremiah 44:19, their ancestors, and rulers, and husbands. How many sinful mistakes, in opinion and practice, are defended to this day by the authority of the ancients, those who were learned and holy, besides the plea of their antiquity. The Pharisees, by such means, shut their own eyes and the eyes of others, so as they could not see sin in the grossest unbelief, John 7:48; as if they had said, Can that be a sin which neither those of greatest authority, nor those of greatest reputation amongst us for wisdom, learning, and holiness (such were the pharisees in those days) judge to be a sin, nay, which they judge to be a duty? Or can that be a duty which persons of such eminency every way do judge to be a sin? The difficulty will be greater, and it will be more hard to believe that to be our sin, when multitudes of those whom we count most conscientious concur with us therein. And yet so it may be; possibly the Lord may contend with us for something, wherein we have the concurrence of many who are truly conscientious. And therefore if we would discover the evils for which the Lord afflicts, we must follow no other rule in judging thereof but what he has prescribed. To the law and to the testimony; examine hearts and ways by that, not by the judgment or example either of the greatest or of the best; for these may deceive, yea, it may be, blind and delude us, and instead of being a light, may shut us up in darkness, and hinder us from discovering what we are so much concerned to discover.

(6.) Dissension. When a people are divided, and split into parties, and the differences pursued with heat and animosity, they are apt to transfer the guilt, each party from itself, to those from whom they are rent, and to have their eyes so intent and fixed upon the guilt of those whom they affect not, as to overlook their own. In this case Ephraim is against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and both against Judah. Each party will charge the other, and both will be ready to charge a third, but no one to take the guilt to itself. And so the end of afflictions and calamities is in danger to be lost amongst them; whiles, though all suffer, yet none will cry Guilty as to himself; but though they smite one another, and God is smiting them all, yet none smites upon his thigh, and says, 'What evil have I done, to bring this evil day upon us?' Whereas the Lord's judging and process against them all argues all to be guilty, and the guilt to lie amongst them all, in each party some of it. And the way to know the total of God's charge against us is to observe the particulars wherein each party is guilty, and to put them all together, inquiring after them, and yielding to

conviction in the severals, without partiality.

If you would pursue this concernment successfully, passionately,* take heed of addicting yourselves to a party. Besides other mischievous consequents of it, it tends much to hinder you from discerning your sin, and the sin of those you give up yourselves to, when the Lord for it is proceeding against you jointly. Those that give up themselves to a party are under a strong temptation to be, as in other cases, partial, so also in finding out their guilt. For what self-love does to a person, that such a love, a little further extended, doth to a party: blinds the eye, and will not suffer it to see its guilt, nor take an impartial view of it, nor pass a true judgment upon it, or a just sentence against it.

Oh take heed you be not so keen against others as to have no edge left against the evils that are your own, or those of your own way and persuasion.

(7.) Prejudice against those who are ready to tell us of our sin. The truest information, the most faithful discovery will be lost on us if we be prejudiced against those that offer it. This will hinder us from believing it, make us misinterpret it, tempt us to reject it. Ahab's soul was closed against all conviction from Micaiah, when he declares that he hated him, 1 Kings 22:8. And the Jews were hardened against all Jeremiah's endeavours to make known their sin, and convince them of it, when they had received this prejudice against him, that he sided with the Chaldeans.

If you would know your sin, look upon him as a friend, whatever he be otherwise, that will make it known to you, Psalms 141:5.

(8.) The exceeding vileness of others may hinder us from taking notice of our own sinful distempers or miscarriages. When gross and horrid wickedness exceedingly abounds in the place and times where we live, we may be apt to think that there is no other cause of the judgments there executed, and so professors may be tempted to overlook the more refined evils that are amongst themselves, and consequently may take little notice of that which is in great part the ground of God's controversy. The sins of sons and daughters, though not in their own nature so horrid and grievous as the wickedness of the debauched world, may, by reason of special aggravations, whereof the sins of others are not capable, be great provocations in the sight of God. Though they pass not for crying sins, yet may they cry aloud in God's ear. He may resent them as abominations, though we make light of them, and may proceed severely against professors for them, as those whom he abhors, Deuteronomy 32:19, Amos 3:2. He had chosen them, above all on earth, to be his peculiar people, and admitted them into a covenant with himself singularly gracious, and therefore the sins which he passed by in others, he would punish most severely in them. And therefore we have little reason to be so severe against the sins of others, as to let our own escape a severe inquisition and censure.

These are some of the impediments which may hinder us from finding out the sins for which the Lord hath been judging and afflicting us. If we would discover them, these must be removed, avoided, rested.* We must take notice of them, as evils like to obstruct us in our course of complying with the Lord's end, and must be watchful against them.

3. Listen unto conscience. It has light and power to make you know your sin. It is God's officer, his deputy; he has placed it in your breasts for this purpose, to discover sin.

Conscience hath the light of a rule. The κοινα■ ■ννοιαι, common notions of good and evil are planted in it. Hence that of the apostle, Romans 2:14-15. The Gentiles, which had not the law of Moses, yet in that they had a conscience, they had a law discovering what is good and what evil. And where this implanted law is obscure or defective (the tables of it being much broken by the fall), it may be repaired, and the defects of it supplied by the written word. So that there is a light in it to discover what is sin, what is evil.

Also it hath the office of a witness, and brings in evidence for or against a person, according as he hath demeaned himself towards the rule, Romans 2:15. And it is called συνειδ■σις, which is a man's knowing that he hath done, or not done, what the rule requires; and so is a witness for or against him, either pleading for him as not guilty, or accusing him as a transgressor. Now the way to know your crime is to inquire of your accuser; if you would have a discovery, and want evidence, hearken to the witness, that which God has appointed to perform this office within you.

It hath also the authority of a judge, and passeth sentence according to evidence, 1 John 3:20-21, ο■κειον δικαστ■ριον, Naz. The whole process of conscience, in the execution of its several offices, for the discovery of sin, you may discern in such a syllogism. Whosoever doth thus and thus, sins against God (this it manifests as a law or rule); but thou hast done thus and thus (this evidence it brings in as a witness), therefore thou have sinned against God. (There is its sentence as a judge.)

You see conscience is every way furnished to help you to the discovery of sin; make use of it accordingly. Get it more and more enlightened, that it may give true and full direction. Beware it be not corrupted with false principles, that the rule be not made crooked, and bended to favour you in any evil. And order it so as it may prove a true and faithful witness; let it not be bribed, nor overawed, nor cut short; hear it out, give it liberty and encouragement to speak the whole truth. Let it not be baffled, as modest witnesses are sometimes by wrangling advocates. Observe its first reports, take them in their genuine sense, before they be perverted, darkened, eluded by the arts and sophistry, the shifts, cavils, evasions of corrupt and deceitful hearts, which would deal with the plain witness of conscience, as cunning lawyers are wont to do with the evidence that makes against them. This is the way to have conscience help you to a true judgment concerning the sins for which you are afflicted.

4. Hearken to others. Neglect not the help of any who may be serviceable for this discovery; and there are many who may contribute to it, friends, strangers, different parties, yea, your enemies; but especially those who are called to the guidance of your souls. Plus vident oculi, quam oculus. The more eyes, the better and the fuller discovery. That which escapes your sight may be obvious to another; he may have a more discerning faculty, and better advantages, and may be freer from those impediments which hinder your prospect.

There is a special obligement upon friends to be helpful to one another herein. The laws of friendship require a discovery of that which endangers one another. You would count him unworthy the name of a friend, who knowing a thief or an incendiary to lurk in your family, with a design to kill, or rob, or burn your house, would conceal it from you, and not acquaint you with it on his own accord. There is no such thief, murderer, incendiary, as sin: it more endangers us, and those concernments that are more precious than goods, or house, or life; and that most endangers us, by which the Lord's anger is already kindled against us. Silence or concealment in this case is

treachery. He is the most faithful friend, and worthy of most esteem and affection, that deals most plainly with us, in reference to the discovery of our sin. He that is reserved in this case is but a false friend, a mere pretender to love, whereas, indeed, he hates his brother in his heart, Leviticus 19:17. And because this act of love, though most to be valued, is too unacceptable to our perverse natures, we should provoke and encourage one another to this office; when we are together, this we should commune of, especially in a day of affliction. This should be one of our principal questions and inquiries, Oh wherefore is the Lord's anger gone out against us? What is the cause that it is not yet turned away? We should get every one to declare, and mark every one's opinion concerning it.

Hearken to strangers. Their judgments are more to be regarded, because they are not concerned in our interests, or in our differences, or in our sufferings. And those that are disinterested may pass the truest judgment; they have less bias to mislead them; and therefore, if we have opportunity to know it, their opinion should not be neglected concerning the cause of our calamities or afflictions.

Hearken to those who differ from us. They may be less partial to us than we to ourselves, and are under less temptation to spare us than we to spare ourselves. If the evils were observed, with which the differing parties amongst us do charge each other, and the sum of each charge put together, out of the whole might be made a better collection of the ground of God's controversy with us all, than each party will make for itself. Those that differ from us may, and will see that in us that we cannot or will not see in ourselves. Therefore, the way to understand fully why the Lord contends with us, is to take notice, not only of what we see ourselves, but what, others may see for us, and charge us with, examining impartially how far their charge is just. The accusations of enemies are not to be neglected. You may have heard of one who, intending to wound his enemy, lanced an imposthume, which otherwise might have been mortal to him. We are prejudiced against what comes from an enemy, as being the issue of hatred and malice; but even malice sometimes speaks a truth when it will serve a turn; when it tends to the disgrace and disparagement of the accused, and may render them odious; and that which discovers our sin, though it tend to our shame, serves our turn as well as theirs. We are not so much to regard whether they charge us maliciously, as whether they charge us truly; and so far as their suggestion is true, from what mind soever it proceeds, and whatever design they have in it, let us make use of it for our conviction, and so turn the poison into a medicine. When Judah and Israel were in the field, ready to join in battle one against the other, Abijah, the king of Judah, declares to Jeroboam and his followers, the sin which they took no notice of, 2 Chronicles 13:8-9. If Jeroboam had made right use of this discovery, though it was the accusation of an enemy, it would have done him far better service than his army of eight hundred thousand mighty men.

5. Reform what evils you know already, if you would have a discovery of those You know not. Proceed against them effectually, till they be mortified in the heart, and cut off from the life. A good improvement of what light we have is the way to have more. That promise is of large extent, and may reach this case: Matthew 25:29, Mark 4:25, 'Him that hath,' i. e. who duly uses and improves what he hath, 'more shall be given.' And as in truths, the practice of what we know, is the way to know more, according to that of Christ, John 7:17, so in reference to sin, he that purges out that which he discovers, shall not want discovery of what the Lord would have purged out by afflictions; but if you tolerate any sins which you know, this may provoke the Lord to deny you the knowledge

of what you suffer for. Such abuse and non-improvement of light may justly be punished with darkness. Those who make themselves like idols in one respect, so as to have hands and act not against the sin which they see, may be left to be like idols in another respect, so as to have eyes, yet not to see the sin which they smart for.

6. Observe carefully the judgments and afflictions which are upon you, or upon the place where you live. There is sometimes such a similitude betwixt the judgment and the sin, that he that knows the one may know the other. A strict observance of the calamity may help us to discern the sin which brought it. There is often a proportion between the sin and the punishment, either in the substance thereof, or some remarkable circumstance; particularly, this is observable, 1. Sometimes in the things wherein we suffer. Babylon made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, and she must have blood to drink, Revelation 17:6, and Revelation 16:6. King Asa puts the seer into prison, and the stocks (see the same word, Jeremiah 20:2, and Jeremiah 29:2), and he is struck with a disease in his feet, 2 Chronicles 16:10, 2 Chronicles 16:12; Adonibezek cut off the thumbs and great toes of others, and be himself had his thumbs and toes cut off, and by the likeness of his sufferings is led to the sight of his sin, Judges 1:6-7.

Sometimes in the parties or instruments by which we suffer. David sins in his indulgence and inordinate affection to Absalom, and Absalom is made the instrument to afflict him.

Sometimes in the time. When Belshazzar is drinking in the vessels of the temple, and praising his gods of gold, &c., and at the same hour appears the sentence for his ruin, Daniel 5:4-5.

Sometimes in the measure. The rich sensualist affords not Lazarus the crumbs of his table, and he himself is denied drops of water, Luke 16:1-31.

Sometimes in the manner. Jacob comes, as the elder, to Isaac, and deludes him; and Leah comes, as the younger, to Jacob, and so he himself is deluded.

7. Make use of the word. Nothing comparable to that, for its virtue and power to discover sin, and convince you of it. It is a clear, a searching, a convincing, an undeceiving light. Your own hearts and consciences may delude you; others may abuse you, and be too favourable or too severe, may represent you better or worse than you are; but the word will not deceive you; nor, if you make due use of it, will it suffer you to be deceived. It will help you to discern that which yourselves or others will not, or cannot, otherwise see: Hebrews 4:12-13, ‘mind and spirit.’ It will discover a difference betwixt those things which are most hard to be distinguished, the mind and spirit. It will help you to discern those things that are best, ■ρμ■ν, the nerves, the least parts, and those things that are most secret, and have most to fence them from our sight: the marrow, that which is within, not only the skin and the flesh, but the bones. It will not only discover your actions, but your thoughts and imaginations; the most secret plots and contrivances, the most retired motions and workings of mind and spirit, κριτικ■ς ■νθυμ■σεων κ■ι ■ννοι■ν. It is a critic in discerning these. It will help you to an exact and accurate judgment of the most obscure and subtle devices of your hearts; and, Hebrews 4:13, there is nothing so small, so secret, so disguised, so concealed, but this will bring it to light, and make it manifest. ‘All are naked and open to the eyes of that’ πρ■ς ■ν ■μ■ν ■ λογ■ς, ‘of which we are speaking.’ As all the secrets, the entrails, the inwards of a sacrifice were exposed to the eye of the priest, when he had flayed it, and cut it down the back, and laid it all open, τετραχηλισμ■να, &c. It will flay off all coverings and pretences, which hinder

you from discerning your sin, or being convinced of it, 1 Corinthians 14:24-25. These are his sins, even the secrets of his heart, made manifest to himself by the convincing power of the word.

There are three parts of the word especially useful for this purpose.

(1.) The commands or injunctions. Observe what it requires, what it forbids. In this respect it is a rule; and that is index sui et obliqui, discovers both your duty and your sin. If you would discern the crookedness of a thing, you bring it to the rule. Bring your hearts, the motions, the designs, the temper of them, to this rule, if you would see what crookedness the Lord is correcting in you. What was the temper of your hearts before affliction seized on you? What was the bent, the designs, the contrivances, the language, the posture, the motions of it? Whither did the stream of it run? Upon what was the face of it set? Compare these with the rule; you may thereby see what was wrong there, and what called for the rod, and what occasion the Lord had to make use of it.

Bring your lives, your actions, your ways to the rule; call to mind how they were ordered before trouble came. The word may, and will, if duly observed, point at that which is your troubler, Romans 7:12. It is ‘holy, just, good.’ And that which is so helps you to discern what is not so in the sight of God, and consequently what he is angry at, and why he expresses his anger in afflictions and chastenings. The word is compared to a glass, James 1:23-25. If you would see what spots the Lord would have washed off, what defilement and pollution he would have purged, look into the glass, view your hearts and lives there, and do it, according to the import of the word there. Content not yourselves with a glance, a transient view, but παρακ■ψας, bend down to it, as one that would take pains to see, and has a mind to take all the advantages this glass will afford for a full self-discovery.

(2.) The threatenings. These may contribute very much to the discovery of the sins by which we suffer. In order hereto, observe what is threatened in the word of God, and for what; what calamities or judgments are denounced, and for what sins. If the judgments or afflictions be upon us that we find threatened, and the sins be amongst us for which they are threatened, this will be a good ground to conclude that those are the sins for which we are judged and afflicted. To instance in two or three, which may lead us to the sight of some sins, for which in all probability the Lord hath proceeded against us.

2 Thessalonians 2:10-11. Here some are threatened to be given up to strong delusions; and the sin for which this terrible judgment is threatened, is not receiving of the truth in the love of it, and taking pleasure in unrighteousness; i. e. in false and unrighteous conceits and opinions, such as are not according to truth and godliness.

Now what a spirit of delusion has seized upon many, even multitudes of professors, is too evident. That it has intoxicated them, and made them reel from one thing to another, as drunken men; and that many are fallen by it, fallen foully from the ways of truth and holiness, and from sober and wholesome principles. And the delusion is strong, and continues on them to this day; all means and dispensations have not been effectual to break the bonds of it, and to bring them to themselves. That this judgment is inflicted, and abides so, is visible; and it is one of those we should most tremble at, as being both a dreadful judgment and a high provocation. And hence we may come to the discovery and conviction of the sin for which it is inflicted. The truth has not been received in the love of it. The truths of the gospel, leading to holiness and mortification, have not

been cordially and affectionately received, have not been admitted in the power and efficacy, have not been practically entertained nor rooted in the heart. That seems to be one sin for which the Lord has a controversy with us, and which he has been pleading severely in the way forementioned, by sending strong delusions.

Another threatening, Matthew 13:12, Mark 4:25, Luke 19:26, where those that have not (i. e. who improve not what they have, as appears by the following verses) are threatened to have it taken away. We had opportunities for the beating down of sin, promoting of holiness, advancing of Christ's interest; large opportunities for the winning of souls, defeating of Satan, enlarging the kingdom of our Lord Jesus. We had advantages for reforming what was amiss in worship, discipline, practice, for the rooting out every plant, &c., for the conforming of all according to the pattern in the mount. Have we lost these opportunities for our own or others' souls, wholly or in part, or are in danger of it? Are we bereaved of those blessed advantages we had for reformation? What sin is it that has bereaved us? What is the cause the Lord has taken, or is taking from us that which we have? Why, what can we pitch on with more probability than the sin for which this is threatened? We did not faithfully improve what the Lord entrusted us with while we had it. Here is another chief ground of the Lord's controversy; it seems to be.

Further, the Lord threatens that who are not faithful shall be deprived of the means of fruitfulness, Isaiah 5:1-7; and that the gospel of the kingdom shall be taken from those who bring not forth the fruits of it, Matthew 21:43; and elsewhere the unfruitful are threatened to be cut down, Matthew 3:7-8, Matthew 3:10, Matthew 7:19; and more fully in a parable, Luke 13:6, Luke 13:10.

Now, have we been in danger to be cut down by one destroying judgment after another? Have many been cut down round about us? Has the rain been withheld in its season? a restraint upon that which should make our souls fruitful? Does the Lord by his providence threaten to take away the hedge, and break down the wall that has secured us, and so leave us to be eaten up and trodden down? Are we in danger to be laid waste, left as a wilderness not pruned nor digged? Has the Lord seemed to lay hold on the gospel of the kingdom, and been moving and removing it, as though he would take it away? What is the cause of all this? We need not be to seek if we will observe these threatenings. We see that which brings such a calamity is unfruitfulness, and it is observable.

(3.) Scripture relations; the account we have there of the course of providence, and the Lord's proceedings with others. If, in several dispensations, he has dealt with us as he dealt with others in like circumstances, probably it is upon like grounds; if we suffer in some proportion as others have suffered, probably we have sinned as they sinned. To give but one instance, which possibly may lead us to the sight of a great provocation, and that which had a great hand in procuring and prolonging our troubles and afflictions. Has the Lord proceeded with us as he did with Israel in the wilderness? When we were almost in the sight of Canaan, are we brought back again to so great a distance from it, as we may seem nearer Egypt than the land of promise?

Let us inquire, then, if our sins have not been somewhat like theirs. Have we not been unthankful for great deliverances, great mercies? have we not undervalued them, and made no answerable returns for them? have we not given way to discontents in the midst of all occasions of thankfulness? have we not murmured and repined when we had manna enough, and all provisions and advantages for our souls without restraint? have we not quarrelled with our

condition, if not with the providences of God, because they have not suited with some particular humour or interest? Oh the horrid unthankfulness of this generation! Because we wanted something we desired, or some interest was not gratified, or some instruments liked us not, we fell into distempers much like theirs in the wilderness, and suffered ourselves to be transported with ungrateful and unreasonable discontents, so far as all we enjoyed were sacrificed thereto. Oh how justly may the Lord swear in his wrath that we shall never enter into his rest; that our carcases shall fall in the wilderness; that our eyes shall never more see what we would take no thankful notice of!

Oh how did we undervalue mercies, and such as obliged us to higher degrees of love and thankfulness than any people in the world were obliged to! The greater the mercies, the more intolerable the contempt of them. So it was in Israel, and so expressed, Psalms 106:13–16, 21–27. Oh what was it that we despised not?

8. Apply yourselves by prayer to God for the discovery of those sins, for which he judges and corrects. Beg of him light, direction, and conviction; all other means will signify nothing without his concurrence and assistance. He makes the discovery by means; they will discover nothing to purpose without him. The sufficiency and efficacy of means is from him; your due use of them, and success in using them, depends on him. You can do nothing by them, they will do nothing for you without him. Acknowledge his all-sufficiency in this, as in other things; and the insufficiency of whatever else you may be apt to depend on. Make it appear that you use the means in obedience to him; yet your dependence is only on him; your expectation of success alone from him.

Seek him accordingly. ‘Cause me to understand, O Lord, wherein I have erred’; ‘make me to know my transgression and my sin,’ as Job 13:23. Search me, and try me; enable me to search and try myself, impartially, diligently, narrowly. Help me against whatsoever might blind my eye, or divert it, or contract it. Enlighten conscience, and awaken it; as it is thy officer, let it be thy voice, and represent faithfully thy charge against me. Direct others; bless the word, that it may be a searching, convincing light. Order all and concur with them, that I may understand wherefore thou contendest with me, and with thy people, and with these nations. Be importunate, as apprehensive of the great importance thereof. How much you are concerned to have the Achan, the accursed thing discovered; and how dangerous it is to have that escape your notice which is the ground of this controversy. Give him no rest till he make known to you, both what ripened and disposed you at some distance for this severity; as also what had a nearer hand in bringing those evils upon you; both what prepared the rod, and what provoked him more immediately to make use of it; both what raised the clouds, and dissolved them into showers of displeasure, and still continues the storm; both what moved the Lord to anger, and to express his anger so many ways, and to draw out the expressions of it to such a length; wherefore it is that his anger is not yet turned away.

Pray fervently for this, and pray in faith. You have great encouragement to come to the throne of grace for this with confidence, 1 John 5:14. Now that is according to his will, which he has made your duty—to seek the knowledge of your sin, these sins especially. And he has promised, those that seek shall find. Seek this with a sincere and fixed resolution to put away every sin you shall discover; and there is no doubt but he will help you to the discovery. That is according to his will which he is willing you should do; but he is willing you should know the sins for which he judges and corrects. Whether he proceeds as a father or as a judge, you may he confident of it, he is

willing you should understand wherefore he proceeds against you. What judge will conceal from a delinquent the crime for which he is arraigned, sentenced, and penalty inflicted? What father is unwilling to make known to his child the faults for which he chastises him? So he may lose his end in correcting him. That which he aims at is the reforming of what has offended him; but the child is not like to reform it if he do not know it. And so it is here, the end why the Lord afflicts is to take away your iniquity; but how shall you put it away if you do not know it? As sure as the Lord is willing to have his end in chastening you, so sure is he willing to let you know why he chastises. And therefore you may beg the knowledge of it in faith, and with confidence that he will not deny it, since there is so much ground to believe that he is willing to grant this request.

And, 2, You may apply yourselves to Christ with as much confidence also; for it is his office, as he is the great prophet, to instruct his people in their great concernments. And are they not greatly concerned to know wherefore the Lord is angry with them? Is it not of great importance to them to answer the Lord's end in smiting them; and so understand that without the knowledge of which they cannot answer it? It is Christ's office, as he is prophet, to make known his Father's will, whether signified by his word, or by his rod; and you may be confident he is willing to perform his office.

And, 3, You may address yourselves to the Spirit of God, with the like exercise of faith; for he is sent for this purpose, to convince of sin, John 16:8, ■λ■γξει. He will convince the world of the great sin for which he has a controversy with it; and make it evident that unbelief is the sin for which he judges them; and he will not be wanting to his people in that which he performs to the world. It is his office to convince them of the sin for which God contends, to make their sin evident; so as πασαν ■πολογιαν ■κκ■πτει, to leave no defence, no covering to hide it from them.

Encourage your faith hereby, and exercise it in prayer. So may you prevail with God to bless the use of the other means specified; so as thereby you may discern, and be convinced of those sins personal or national, for which the Lord hath been judging and afflicting. And so much for this great inquiry, so necessary to be insisted on; that we may comply with the Lord's end in proceeding against us. Let me proceed to some other directions which may be helpful to this purpose.

9. Make use of judgments and afflictions, to engage your souls thoroughly against sin; whatever in them is troublesome, afflictive, grievous; whatever is hateful, dreadful, terrible, make account it is from sin; charge it all upon sin's account. Whatever is of this nature in the world, it is from sin; if it be so in itself, sin made it so, and it had never been so to you, were it not for sin. And quod efficit tale, est magis tale. Are you bereaved of dear relatives? Weep you for children, and the loss of other endeared friends, because they are not? Why it is sin that killed them; this was the death of them all. This is the grand murderer, and has been so from the beginning. Distempers, diseases, to which we ascribe their death, are innocent in comparison; there had been no such thing in our bodies, in any of our families, or in any part of the world, but for sin. This bred them, brought them, employed them; they had never done any execution but for sin. This alone made diseases, and made them mortal. If their death be grievous and bitter to you, let the bitterness of their death be upon sin. Are you impoverished? Sin has bereaved you. Are you laid low? Sin has tumbled you down. You charge the fire, you cry out against incendiaries; but this is the fire that has consumed so much of our riches and glory; this is the great incendiary. Had it not been for sin, no instruments would have attempted it; no matter have been receptive of it. This kindled it; this blew it up into

those dreadful flames; this carried them on with rage, fury, so as they despised all opposition. To this we owe our ruins, our desolation; the sight, the report of which, has struck those that saw, yea, those that heard thereof, with horror and astonishment.

Oh! if poverty, if the loss of estate, the ruin of families, be grievous to us; what is sin? whose hand is in all this, whose hand has done all this, and without which it could never have been done. Is a plague dreadful, such a one that sweeps away thousands in a week? Oh! but there had been no plague in the world but for the infection of sin; and sin is more pestilent, more contagious, more destructive. No plague like that of the heart. Where the other has destroyed its thousands, this has destroyed its ten thousands; this has infected the whole world; and all that perish die of this plague. Is persecution grievous? Why, this is it that makes men persecutors; yea, this is it which made him a devil, who acts and inspires them. Of an angel of light, this made him a fiend of darkness; and it is by the mediation of sin that he engages his instruments in hellish designs, to extinguish the light. Had it not been for sin there had been no plagues, no judgments, no calamities, no afflictions, no distempers in our souls, no diseases in our bodies, no complainings in our streets, no lamentings in our families. There had been nothing afflictive, nothing troublesome; no, nor fear of any such. This, this is the Achan, the troubler, &c. This is the burden and grievance, this is the sting and poison of all. Take an account of all that afflicts you or others, cast it up exactly; and then discharging all other things as innocent, charge all upon sin. Make such use of troubles and afflictions to engage your souls against sin, so you will be disposed effectually to purge out your iniquity, and put away your sin, and so comply with the Lord's end in judging.

10. Content not yourselves with any opposition of sin, unless it be universal. If you would comply with God's end in what has befallen you, or is approaching you, so as to have iniquity effectually purged and taken away, the opposition you make against it for this purpose must be universal, not only in respect of the object; you must not only set yourselves against all sin, of which before; but in respect of the subject, oppose it with all your faculties. All that is within you must be set against it. The opposition must be in and from every part; not only in the conscience, but in the will and affections; not only in some part of the mind, but in the whole heart, the whole soul, and in every power thereof. Rest not till you find a party against sin in every part, till you feel each faculty of your souls like Tamar's womb, twins struggling.

11. Think it not enough to avoid or oppose sin, unless you get it mortified. The purging of iniquity, and the taking away of sin, imports no less than the death and burial of sin; the putting it to death, and the burying it out of your sight. Unless you endeavour this, you answer not his call by afflictions, you come not up to what he designs therein. When he puts his people into the furnace, he would have their dross not only loosened, or a little parted from them, but thoroughly wrought out and purged, and so wasted and consumed. If it be not wrought out and wasted, it may mix with the better metal again in the cooling, and so the fire and furnace will be to little purpose. The Lord would have your iniquity purged, so as you should return no more to your vomit; and sin taken away, so as it should no more be found, as formerly, in heart or life; but this will not be; you are not secure from it, unless sin is mortified, and iniquity subdued. The Philistines did not continually invade the Israelites, they were not always making inroads upon them; yet because they are not quite subdued, Israel was always in danger; often miserably foiled, and their land wasted. Content not yourselves to force this enemy to yield to a cessation, but make it your design to break its power; be still labouring for a fuller conquest, that it may not only be still and quiet, but may have

no power left to be otherwise. The heathen could oppose some gross sins, and abstain from the acts of them: the Spartans from drunkenness; Socrates from passion; Alexander from incontinency; the Romans, many of them, from perfidiousness. But notwithstanding, their iniquity was not purged, their sin not taken away, because they were not mortified; but 'those that are Christ's have crucified,' &c., Galatians 5:24, Colossians 3:5. This is it that he calls for, by his word and by his rod. This is it he principally aims at in calamities and afflictions; not only some avoiding of sin, but the purging of it out, the taking it away, i.e. the mortifying of it. Whatever you do against sin less than this, you comply not with God's design; by this alone, and by nothing without this, will you answer his end. And therefore on this we shall insist a little, and shew how it may be effected.

If you would subdue your iniquity, and mortify your sin,

(1.) Get mortifying apprehensions of it. Labour to possess your minds and judgments with full and effectual persuasions that sin is such a thing as is not fit, as is not worthy, to live; that you are highly concerned not to suffer it to have a being in heart or life; that you should not in any reason, that you cannot with any safety, tolerate it or endure it should have life or being; that it is most worthy, of all things in the whole creation, to be utterly ruined and exterminated. That this may be the vote of your judgment, Away with such a thing from the earth! Away with it out of my heart, life, out of the world, for it is not fit that it should live! As they, Acts 21:22. The Spirit of God in Scripture leads you to such apprehensions of sin, and lays down clear grounds to raise them, and to fix them, and to carry them on to full and powerful persuasions, such as should thoroughly engage us to mortify them. It represents sin to be such a thing as should be in all reason put to death, and denied a subsistence, and proceeded against with that severity, Deuteronomy 13:8-10, which was to be used against the seducer.

It is declared to be an enemy, a mortal enemy, to your souls, and all your dear concernments; an enemy in arms, in actual, in continual war against you, 1 Peter 2:11, James 4:1. It is not only so to you, but an enemy to God, to mankind, to the whole creation; a public, a desperate, an irreconcilable, a cruel, deadly enemy. And should not such an enemy be persecuted to death?

It is a monster eminently, ■μ■ρτημα τ■ς φ■σεως, the most ugly peccancy, horrid exorbitancy of nature. Nay, that which transforms every soul and spirit that gives it entertainment, into monsters; so it has dealt with the fallen angels, it has turned them into monstrous fiends; so it has dealt with the souls of men, they come into the world without eyes, or feet, or hands, or hearts for God, monstrously defective. It has perverted and misplaced all the parts and faculties, as if head were lowest and feet highest; a monstrous dislocation! If the effects of it be so prodigious, how monstrous is sin itself! And should such a monster be suffered to live? Oh if it were but seen in its own shape and colours, how would the children of men run upon it, to root it out of the earth!

It is a robber. It robbed our first parents, and in them all mankind, of the image of God, of all the heavenly treasure they were possessed of, of the inheritance they were born to. It left nothing but sorrow and misery; fathers and children, all mankind, were hereby quite beggared and utterly undone. And when the Lord had taken a course to repair all this, yet still it is attempting to rob us of all that is precious to us; of grace, of the means of grace; to rob us of our peace, our comforts, our hopes of glory. It would leave us nothing but beggary and misery here, and hell hereafter. Should such a robber live?

It is a traitor to Christ, to his crown and dignity. It would overturn his throne, throw down his sceptre, trample on the ensigns of his sovereignty. It will not have him to rule over us; and should not such a traitor die the death, which suggests and acts treasonable things against Christ?

It is a ravisher of souls; draws away conjugal affections from Christ; gets into the marriage-bed; forces them to commit folly in the sight and presence of Christ, without any regard of the eyes of his jealousy; prostitutes them commonly, openly to the world; yea, to Satan himself, 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, James 4:4.

It is a witch. Indeed, the mistress of witchcrafts; a sorceress, as the expression is, Nahum 3:4. It practised sorcery upon the Galatians, Galatians 3:1. It was by means, through the mediation of sin, that they were bewitched so as to take error for truth, and truth for error. And others are practically bewitched thereby, so as to call evil good and light darkness, to count that their glory which is their shame, that their refreshment which is poison, that gain which undoes them, that their happiness which ruins them. So they conceive of things, so they act, as those that are bewitched; as such who are under the power of sorcery, which is illusio sensuum, an abusing of the discerning faculty, so as things appear to be contrary, or quite otherwise, to what they are. Now, Exodus 22:18, a witch was not to be suffered to live.

It is a murderer; it sheds the blood of souls. Satan, who is called ‘a murderer from the beginning, John 8:44, has murdered none, from the beginning to this day, but by this instrument. This kills every way, temporally, spiritually, eternally. This has been the death of all that have died any of these ways from the foundation of the world to this moment, and will continue this more bloody practice while it continues. And should not such a murderer be executed? Should it not die without mercy? In the text, when the Lord would have iniquity purged, it refers either to purging by fire or physic. If the former, it implies that sin is dross, that which debased the soul, once of the finest and purest metal, and makes the Lord look upon it as vile and refuse, to reject it as reprobate silver; such as will never pass with him unless it be refined, such as he will never accept on any account until it be purged. And should you endure such an embasement of your souls, and of such dangerous consequence?

If to physic, it insinuates that sin is a malignant humour, a disease, that which breeds and continues all the soul’s maladies; which, unless it be purged, the soul can never have health. It will still keep it under pains, weaknesses, languishments; and will, in fine, make it sick unto death. And should this have a being, a quiet abode, within you? It is desperate folly to forbear it. And when the Lord would have sin taken away, that denotes it as a filthiness, not to be endured in our sight; like those garments, to be taken away, Zechariah 3:3-4. Those filthy garments were his iniquity; and in the original it is excrementitious garments. Iniquity is to God, and should be to us, as the filthiest excrements, as the mire wherein a sow wallows, as the vomit of a dog, as the stench of an open sepulchre, as the putrefied matter of an ulcer. And is not such a thing to be removed far from your sight, far from all your senses? You have no patience, you will be restless, until it be done. The Scripture thus sets forth sin to us, that hereby such apprehensions of it might be formed in us as of that which is not to be endured, not to be suffered to have life or being. We should make such use of them; and when our minds are effectually possessed with such apprehensions of sin, then is it mortified in our minds. This is the way whereby the judgment purges iniquity, and puts away sin. And this will contribute much to the mortifying of it in all other parts; for the judgment is the primum

mobile in the soul, the wheel that first moves, and sets the rest on motion. According as your apprehensions and persuasions concerning sin are, such will the motions in your hearts and lives be against it.

(2.) Get mortifying resolutions. Get your hearts resolved against sin; to prosecute it to the death; to engage all the strength you have, and can procure, in such a prosecution of it; resolve not to spare it; not to forbear it in the least; not to tolerate it, nor suffer it to have any quiet abode in any part of heart or life; not to enter into a parley or treaty with it; not to yield to any cessation, much less to make any peace with it, no more than the Israelites with those whom the Lord had devoted to destruction, Deuteronomy 23:6. Resolve to ruin it, to expel it out of your hearts, and cut it off from your lives. Make use of the mortifying apprehensions forementioned to raise you to such resolutions; let them be full and effectual, fixed and unwavering resolutions.

Full. That the main strength of the will may be in them. Not such as leave the heart in suspense, or in an indifferent posture, or a little inclinable, but carrying it down, as it were, with full weight, into such determinations against sin. Rest not until you find this the bent of your hearts, and that which is prevalent and predominant in them.

Effectual. Not some faint, powerless tendencies of the will, which excite not the other faculties, put them not upon actions and endeavours; but such as will engage them in the use of all means for the effecting of what is resolved on. Get your hearts wound up to such resolutions, that may be as a spring, setting and keeping all in motion, Psalms 119:106, Psalms 119:48. That which he has resolved on, he vigorously pursued.

Fixed. Not wavering; not off and on; not by fits only, when some sermon, or some affliction, or special occurrence has made some impression; not like Ephraim, of whom the Lord complains, Hosea 6:4. But this should be the settled temper of the heart: the face of it should be constantly against sin; and when you find them varying or declining, all care and diligence should be used to renew and reinforce them, to raise them again, and keep them up in their full force and vigour.

Make use of judgments and afflictions (according to a former direction), of the grievousness or bitterness of them, to draw your hearts to such resolves for the ruin of sin; make use of what you have found most effectual heretofore for this purpose; or, if those you have used prove less powerful, try others; leave nothing unattempted that the Lord affords for this end. Look upon it as your interest to have sin ruined; as that wherein your safety, your comfort, your happiness, yea, the life of your souls, is wholly concerned. If you destroy not sin, it will ruin you; if you kill it not, it will certainly be your death. And when will a man be resolute, if not in such a case, when he must either kill or be killed? It is according to what was said to Ahab, 1 Kings 20:42: ‘Thus saith the Lord, If thou let go out of thy hand the sin which he has appointed to utter destruction, thy life shall go for its life.’ Oh then, if thou intendest thy soul shall live, resolve to prosecute sin to the death, and be peremptory in the resolution. When the will is thus resolved against sin for the death of it, sin is already mortified in the will, the sentence of death is passed against it; it is ■■ ■■■ condemned to die; and the will having the command of the other faculties and the whole man, it will be brought to execution. The work of mortification is in a fair way to be carried on universally; and though it be not fully executed at present, yet the Lord, who judges of us by the bent of our hearts, and the prevailing tendency of our wills, will judge one so resolved against sin to be so far a mortified person. This is the way whereby the will purges iniquity, and puts away sin; and that

which contributes most to the purging and putting it away everywhere from the soul and from the life.

(3.) Get mortifying affections; such are the affections of aversation, which carry the heart from sin, or set it sgainst sin: e. g. anger, indignation, revenge, fear, shame, sorrow, hatred; whereby the soul moves from or against sin, as the most offensive, the most provoking, the most dangerous, the most shameful, the most hateful evil. These affections should be bred, and nourished, and strengthened; you must kindle them, blow them up into a flame, and keep them flaming. You should not bear with yourselves in the want, or in the weakness, or in the declining or decay of them. These affections, thus upheld, will be the death of sin; it cannot live in a heart where these are kept up in life, and strength, and action: these will distress it, wound it, starve it; these will be crucifying it; these will drag it towards the cross, and be as so many nails, to fasten the body and members of it to the cross. Particularly,

[1.] Anger. Let sin be the object, the chief object of your anger, Ephesians 4:26. Then, to be sure, you are angry and sin not, when you are angry at sin, when that is the cause and the object of your anger. Our Lord Jesus, the spotless pattern of meekness, was angry at sin, Mark 3:5. Those kinds or degrees of anger which are vicious or culpable towards other objects, or upon other occasions, are your duties and excellencies in reference to sin. You may be, you must be, soon angry, ■ργιλοι and much angry, πικρο■; and long angry, χαλεπο■.

First, Anger should kindle at the first appearance of sin. We should not think of it without something of this passion. The best men are ■ξυχολοι, soon angry, and easily provoked against sin. That which is a weakness in other cases, is a perfection or a degree of it here. We should be slow to anger at that which offends us only, but not slow to anger at that which offends God. Our souls should be as tinder, and take fire at every spark of sin. He that is soon angry in his own cause, for his own petty concernments, dealeth foolishly, Proverbs 14:17; such anger resteth in the bosom of fools, Ecclesiastes 7:9; but he that is not hasty in his spirit to anger against sin exalteth folly. The more quick your anger is against sin, the more speedy will be the execution, the mortifying of it. Get a spirit apt to be angry at sin, and use means to provoke it.

Secondly, Be much angry at sin, and not content yourselves with a low degree of anger; get it raised into wrath and indignation. There is no such danger of transgressing the bounds of moderation here as in other cases; that is immoderate anger which is more than the cause requires or deserves; but the fiercest wrath and the highest indignation of God is not more than sin deserves; and does it not then require and deserve all ours? Let it be against sin purely, against our own sins principally, or against the sins of others, not their persons. And then, if it be great wrath, it is not too much Moses, a person meek above all men on earth, was kindled into wrath by the sight of sin, Exodus 32:19, his anger waxed hot at first sight of sin. A little anger will not do much against sin; the heart that purges it out must be wroth with it, it should be taken away with indignation.

Thirdly. Be long angry. Even for ever; angry so as never to be appeased. It is no sin to be implacable here, nay, it is your duty. The sun must go down, and rise, and go down all thy days upon thy wrath against sin. Such an anger will not serve the turn as is ■ατον χρ■ν■; when it is a mortifying affection, it is ■ν■ατον, an unappeasable anger. Anger at other things must be allayed, suppressed, extinguished; but against sin it must be nourished, heightened, settled, digested into

malice. For though it be a wickedness in other cases, yet malice against sin is a virtue, a duty; you cannot be too malicious against sin, you cannot bear it too much ill will.

There is an holy anger, a sanctified malice, which is singularly useful for the expelling of iniquity and mortifying of sin. Turn all your anger, wrath, malice, into this stream against this object. Whatever is apt to provoke you elsewhere, you may see it all in sin; nothing so offensive, nothing so injurious, nothing more affronts you, nothing so much wrongs you in your dearest concernments. When you are apt to be angry at other things or persons,—Such a one has thus and thus abused, wronged, affronted, vexed, troubled me; so causelessly, so disingenuously, so continually,—turn your eyes, your thoughts, from that, and look upon sin, and say, Oh, how much more has sin done against me, yea, against God? How much more cause have I to be angry at sin? Oh, I do well to be angry at it, even to death. So you may make it a mortifying affection.

[2.] Fear. We are willing to be rid of that which we fear, and ready to use all means, take all occasions to put that far from us which we are afraid of. And the more dreadful and terrible it is, the more dangerous it appears, the more forward we are to get it removed, and the more eager to have it at the greatest distance from us. If you would have sin purged out and put away, get your souls possessed with a fear of it, and so represent it to your souls as you may see cause to fear it more and more. You will not suffer that to have a quiet abode in your hearts which you are greatly afraid of. Look then upon sin as the most dreadful, the most formidable evil in the whole creation. So it is in itself, so it is declared to be. You have the word of God for it; believe the report of God concerning it; believe all the experience of the world, which has found it so; believe that which you have all reason to believe. That is most dreadful, most the object of our fear, which is most dangerous. Now sin is transcendently so; so dangerous, as nothing else in the world deserves to be thought or called so in comparison. This is the root from which all dangers grow. One thing may be dangerous to our health, another to our estates, relations, liberty, life. Oh, but sin endangers all. Nothing is safe where sin has place. This hazards our temporal, our spiritual, our eternal concernments; this strikes at all. Nothing could hurt us; nor men, nor devils; nothing could endanger us, if sin did not open their way. If sin did not expose us, our enjoyments, our liberties, our comforts, our hopes, were all safe, we need not fear what man could do unto us. The foot of pride could not come near us, the hand of the violent could not remove us, nay, could not shake us. But what is the wrath of men, poor inconsiderable worms like ourselves? This, and this alone, exposes us to the wrath of the great God; this, and this only, can cast both body and soul into hell. We fear where no fear is in comparison; we fear a prison, but what is that to hell! We fear the loss of estate, of relations, of liberty, of life, but what is the loss of God’s favour, of heaven, of soul and body for ever? It is sin only that brings us in danger of such a loss. In fine, whatsoever is dangerous, whatever is dreadful to us, sin made it so. It had not been so in itself, or not so to us, but for sin; and therefore sin is more to be feared than all we fear. There had been, there would be, no cause of fear if sin had not been, or if it were once put away. Is it fearful to have your souls dwell amongst lions? Why, but it is sin that transforms men into such creatures, it is sin that gives them the fierceness of lions. Take away this, and they are tame and harmless creatures; a lamb may play with them without danger; you may put your hand into the mouth of a tame lion without fear, you might lie down by them securely were it not for sin. Are afflictions, losses, sufferings, calamities dreadful? It is sin that first let these into the world; it is sin that still exposes you to them; it is sin that embitters them and makes them grievous; it is sin that withholds those comforts which

would quite drown the afflictive sense of any outward suffering. And what would there be in it to be feared, if the afflictiveness of it were gone? When sin is taken away, the bitterness of these is past. Is death terrible to you? Why, but ‘the sting of death is sin,’ 1 Corinthians 15:56. You would not fear to have a bee fly into your bosom if the sting were gone; it would hurt no more than an innocent fly. Is hell dreadful to you? Oh, but it was sin that made hell; this digged the bottomless pit, this bred the worm that never dies, this kindled that fire that never goes out; this feeds those flames, those burnings, and makes them intolerable, and makes them everlasting; but put away sin, and there is no fear of hell to you. Is the wrath of God terrible to you? Oh, but no part of the creation had ever known any such thing as wrath in God had it not been for sin, Ephesians 5:6, Romans 1:18, Colossians 3:6.

You see nothing is to be feared but for sin; so this is to be feared above all, nothing else in comparison. This, this is the one thing to be feared, without which nothing else is dreadful. Believe but this effectually, and according to the evidence you have of it, and you will be as active to purge iniquity, to put away sin, as you would be to rid yourselves of all your fears, and of all that is fearful.

[3.] Shame. This is another affection which will contribute much to the mortifying of sin; that which we are truly, greatly ashamed of, we are not only content to be rid of it, but active to get it removed, and put away far from us.

Look upon your sin as your shame, your greatest, your only shame in comparison, as that which is the shame of the whole creation, the most shameful thing in the world. Are you ashamed of a filthy garment, of a loathsome defilement, of a monstrous deformity? Why, sin is more so in the sight of God than any of these, than all these together are in our eyes. It is a greater shame to you than if you were all besmeared with excrements, than if you were overspread with scabs and leprosy, than if you had no sound, no straight, no comely part in your whole body, but all crooked, or ulcerated, or monstrously misplaced and dislocated. Thy soul, as sin has used it, is a more shameful sight in the eye of God. Are you ashamed of such weakness or folly as would render you ridiculous or despised by all you converse with? Oh, but sin is the most shameful weakness, the most, absurd folly, in the account of God, of angels, and of men too, that are truly judicious, and so it is branded by the Spirit of God in Scripture. Are you ashamed of that which all the world would cry shame of: of betraying those that trust you, dealing unfaithfully with those that rely on you, of being ungrateful to those who shew you greatest kindness, of abusing and wronging those who deserve best of you, of dealing disingenuously with those who most oblige you, of being sordidly penurious where you should be most bountiful, of cheating and defrauding those who refer themselves to you? Do your hearts rise against such unworthy practices? Would you blush to be charged with any of them, even though you were innocent? Oh, but there is no man deals so unworthily, so shamefully with another, as you deal with God in sinning against him. All the treachery and unfaithfulness, all the fraud and injustice, all the ingratitude, all the disingenuousness, all the baseness and sordidness which you cry shame of in the world, is to be found in sin; you are guilty of it all towards God when you sin against him. Any one of these is shameful alone; but all these meet together in sin, and whatever else calls for shame. Believe this, and work it upon your hearts, till you find them rising against sin as the most shameful evil. This will make you willing to have it crucified, forward to do execution on it yourselves, when you are sensible that the purging your iniquity is the purging of your shame, and the taking away of sin the taking away your reproach.

[4.] Grief and sorrow for sin. This is another mortifying affection which will hasten the death of sin. We seek redress of that which is a grievance to us, and will take pains to be eased of it. Oh, if sin were the grief, the sorrow, the affliction of your souls, you would count the purging of it out, the taking of it away, a great, a merciful deliverance. No less than it would have been to the Israelites to have had those nations driven out before them, which were as pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, and a continual vexation to them in the land where they dwelt, Joshua 23:13, Numbers 33:55. The Lord thought the foresight of this might be enough to quicken them to drive them out in all haste; but when they felt what was foretold, they ran all the hazards of war to drive them out and be delivered from them.

Oh, if sin were such a grief and sorrow to your souls, such a vexation to your hearts, as it should be, and as it gives you occasion enough to find it, you would count no outward deliverance comparable to a deliverance from sin. You would freely engage your whole strength in a war against it for to drive it out; you would be restless till these pricks were pulled out of your eye, and these thorns plucked out of your sides, till that were taken away which is your grief and vexation. And should not sin be such a grievance to you? It is so to God. It grieves him at the heart, Genesis 6:6, Psalms 95:10, Amos 2:13; it was so to Christ, Mark 3:5, Isaiah 53:3-4; it is so to the Spirit of God, Ephesians 3:4; it is so to men who have a sense of what is grievous, 2 Peter 2:7-8; it is so to the whole creation, Romans 8:21-22. Is it so to all? And shall those who should be most sensible of it be only void of sense? Whatsoever is a grievance to us is either pain or loss, pæna damni or sensus; either the loss and want of some comfort, or some sharp suffering. For sufferings, this brings them all, this sharpens them all; for losses and wants, this bereaves us of what we lose, and this intercepts the supplies of what we want; and this makes holes in the cisterns, and lets our comforts run out, and then stops the pipes, that no more can run in; this lays an obstruction at the spring head, Isaiah 59:1, 2.

If sin were not grievous, because it is a grief to God, a Father of such love and indulgence; because it is so grievous to him who bore our griefs; because it is such a grief to the Spirit our Comforter; yet since it is the cause of all the grievances that befall us, we have cause enough on this account to resent it as the most grievous evil, that which should above all things raise our grief and command our sorrow. Believe it to be so, and so work up your heart as you may find it to be the grief and affliction of your souls indeed; and then you will be forward and active to be eased of it, you will think it your happiness to have it purged out and taken away; you will see cause to make it the business of your lives to get it mortified.

[5.] Hatred. This of all other affections has the most powerful and effectual tendency to the mortifying of sin. This will not suffer you to be satisfied with anything less than the death of it. That is the nature of hatred, as the philosopher shews, when he is declaring the difference betwixt anger and hatred, Rhet. lib. ii. cap. ix., ■ μ■ν γ■ρ ■ντιπ■θειν βο■λεται ■ ■ργ■ζεται, ■ δε μ■ ε■ναι, he that is angry would have him utterly ruined, would leave him neither life nor being. And again, ■ μ■ν πολλ■ν ■ν γινομ■νων ■λεησεν, ■ θ ο■δενος, he that is angry may relent after the inflicting of some severities, but he that hates has no mercy. This hatred will have sin die without mercy. Get but your hearts possessed with hatred of sin, and then it is dead already in the heart, and this will pursue it to the death everywhere. To excite this affection, look upon it as that which is truly hateful, as that which has all in it that is hateful, as that which has nothing in it but what is hateful.

It is truly hateful, as being wholly and perfectly evil; a direct contrariety to the chief good; opposite to his nature, to his will, and so hated of God, Psalms 45:7. He hates sin infinitely, cannot endure to see it; and he hates it only, nothing but sin, or nothing but for sin. He hates it irreconcilably; he may be reconciled to the sinner, but never to the sin, nor to the sinner neither, unless he leave sin. That must be extremely hateful, which God, who is love, cannot but hate.

Sin has all in it that is hateful. We hate that which is ugly, though it be not hurtful; we hate that which is mischievous, though it be not ugly; but sin is both ugly and mischievous; nothing more, nothing so much in the whole creation.

It has nothing in it but what is hateful. It is a mere compound of ugliness and mischievousness, without the least alloy or mixture of anything comely or commodious. A toad, though the hatefullest of creeping things, has something in it, which separated from the poison, is of physical use, but sin is nothing at all but poison. The devil himself, how hateful soever, yet as he is the workmanship of God, is so far good, but sin has nothing in it of God's workmanship, nothing in it in any sense good; it is the spawn of the devil, and of him, not as he is a creature, but as he is a devil, and so has nothing in it but what is purely evil, and absolutely hateful. It has not the least touch of comeliness, not anything that may pass with excuse, not anything that is tolerably evil, nothing but what is to be utterly abhorred, Romans 12:9.

Get your hearts so affected towards sin, as that which is so hateful, and to be abhorred; get a true, an active hatred of sin. And that will be the death of sin, will lead you readily to purge it out, and so to comply with the Lord's end, &c. Nourish in your hearts this hatred of sin by a frequent view of the hatefulness of it; keep up this affection lively and active, and sin will have much ado to live by it.

[6.] Revenge. This, though severely forbidden and condemned in other cases, is called out by the Spirit of God against sin, and commended where it appears against it, 2 Corinthians 7:11. There was in the Corinthians, in reference to the sin amongst them, not only sorrow, fear, indignation, but also revenge. And such an affection there should be in us, inclining our hearts, and making us eager to come even with sin, to render it evil for evil; to deal with it according as it has dealt, or would deal, with us; to be avenged of it for the mischief it is continually plotting and acting against us; to starve it, as it would starve our souls; to weaken it, as it wasted us; to wound it, as it has wounded us; to ruin it, as it would destroy us; to be the death of that which would bereave our souls of life; to leave it no provisions, no supports, no hopes, as it would have made our condition helpless, and comfortless, and hopeless; to spare it no more than it has spared our souls; to persecute it as restlessly, as unweariedly, as it pursues us. Such an affectation,* you see, is the highway to have sin mortified, to purge it out as it would have had the Lord to have rejected us, and to turn it away as it would have provoked God to have put us away.

(4.) Get mortifying graces, three especially, love to God, and faith in him, and fear of him. These exercised will have a powerful influence upon heart and life for the mortifying of sin, will carry you on effectually to compliance with the Lord's end in afflicting, will help you mightily to purge it out, and take it away.

[1.] Love to God: Psalms 97:10, 'Those that love the Lord will hate evil.' And the more they love him, the more they will hate it; and the more degrees of hatred, the more degrees of mortification.

The more it is abhorred, the more, and the sooner it will be mortified. This will turn the wheel upon sin with a quick motion. When love prevails, it will not let you drive on heavily in a course of mortification; it will make you diligent, active, and unwearied in the use of means for this purpose. It will not suffer you to think the labour and pains requisite hereto grievous. You see the power of love in Jacob: says he to Laban, Genesis 31:40-41; all this hardship he endured, and for many years together, yet love to Rachel made him think the hard measures easy, and the tedious years as a few days, Genesis 29:20.

[2.] Faith. If these devils be not cast out, it is because of our unbelief, Matthew 17:19-20. Other means cannot, the principal cause will not, without faith, Matthew 9:22, Acts 3:10.

[3.] Fear of God. There is an inconsistency betwixt the fear of God and sin, they cannot dwell together. Where sin reigns, it leaves no place for the fear of God; and where the fear of God prevails, it will leave no place for sin: Proverbs 3:7, 'Fear the Lord, and depart from evil.' 'The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom;' and wherein that wisdom consists, the wise man tells us: Proverbs 14:16, 'A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil;' depart from it as far, and as fast as they can, as from that which is hateful to them, Proverbs 8:13. It is visible in Job's character, that this is the proper effect of the fear of God, Job 1:1.

Labour for this fear of God, to get it implanted, strengthened, and exercised, so as you may go out against sin continually under the influence of it. Not a fear of aversation which makes one shun what he fears, such as was in our first parents, Genesis 3:8, Genesis 3:10, and in the Israelites, Deuteronomy 5:24-25. They were afraid, and durst not come near to God, but wanted the due fear of his majesty, Daniel 5:29, the virtue of which is to keep us from departing from God, Jeremiah 32:40. That is the fear of God which tends to the mortifying of sin; an obsequious fear, a fear to dishonour what we reverence, to offend what we love, to lose what we highly value, and to suffer by what we would enjoy.

If you fear this dishonouring of God, this will lead you to mortify sin, as that which alone is a dishonour to him, and robs him of his glory, and lays him low in the minds, hearts, and ways of the children of men.

If you fear offending God, this will lead you to purge sin, which alone displeases and provokes him; this alone he dislikes and is distasteful; this alone he hates and abbors. Sin it is that affronts him, slights his authority, thwarts his designs, crosses his will, breaks his law, makes nothing of his commands or threatenings.

If you fear the withdrawing of his presence or the sense of his favour, this will lead you to mortify sin. For it is sin that makes him depart and leave you; it is sin makes him hide his face, and frown on you, Isaiah 59:2.

If you fear, lest he should not only be, but shew himself displeased, by threatenings or executions, this will lead you to mortify sin; for this is it alone which he threatens. This is it for which he afflicts you, in inward or outward concernments; this withholds those influences upon which the life, strength, growth, fruitfulness, and activeness of your souls depends; this draws out his hand to inflict public calamities and personal chastisements. Your sufferings past, and fears of what is approaching, you owe to sin. Judgments and afflictions should make you fear him: he is a strange child who will not fear his father more, when he has smarted by his displeasure. And if you fear his

displeasure, this will quicken your proceedings against sin as the cause of it.

If you fear further severity (and such a fear may be filial; for if a servant may fear wrath in a master, much more should a child fear the wrath of his father), this should lead you to mortify sin. ‘Sin no more, lest a worse thing come,’ John 5:14. Sin, that has brought already that which is so dreadful to us, will bring something yet worse if it be not mortified That which is past is but a spark in comparison of the flame that it will kindle hereafter, Hebrews 12:29. If we let sin pass unpurged, unmortified, as others do, he will be ‘a consuming fire’ to us, as well as to others. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, let us be persuaded to purge out iniquity, and put away sin.

Now to raise this fear. There is scarce anything in God, but a serious view and consideration of it tends to possess the soul with such a fear of him, as may engage it to mortify sin, and to get it purged out. Let me touch some particulars briefly. The glory and excellency of God. When Isaiah had a vision of the Lord in his glory, Isaiah 6:1-3, this made him look upon his sin as intolerable; he cries out of it, as one undone by it, Isaiah 6:5. He is restless till it was removed, and taken away, and purged, Isaiah 6:6-7. The Lord is an infinite glory, and sin is the thing that provokes the eyes of his glory, Isaiah 3:8, Deuteronomy 28:58. Get due apprehensions of the glory of his majesty, and you will judge it intolerable to have that continue in your hearts or lives, which is such a provocation in his most glorious eye. It will quicken you to get such provoking uncleanness purged out, and quite taken away; you will be afraid to have it found about you. That glory will strike you with a fear of affronting it, by that which is so insufferable, so utterly opposite, so provokingly contrary to it. The almighty power of God. That should strike our souls with a great fear of him, κ■ι φ■βος τ■ν δυναμ■νων τ■ ποι■σαι, Arist. Rhet. lib. ii. cap. x. We fear those that are potent, powerful to do us good or hurt, though they be but men like ourselves; how much more should we dread the mighty God, before whom the united powers of all creatures are but as the might of ants or worms to us? The power of God is laid down in Scripture as a ground of fear, Jeremiah 5:22. Those that will not fear such a power are hardened rebels, Jeremiah 5:23, or senseless wretches, Jeremiah 5:21; Psalms 74:4-7. Will you provoke such a power to anger, before whom, provoked, no creature, how mighty soever, can stand? Why, if sin be not mortified, if it be not purged and taken away, you retain that which incenses him; you offer that to the sight of the great and mighty God continually, which is such a provocation to him. The holiness and purity of God. He is ‘glorious in holiness,’ Exodus 15:11. This was one of those glories, Isaiah 6:1-13, which struck the prophet with such a fear, and gave him such a sense of the impurity of sin, and his uncleanness by reason of it, that he thought it unsufferable for him to stand before God, and himself incapable of being employed by him, till his iniquity was purged and taken away. Habakkuk 1:13, his holiness is such he cannot endure the sight of sin, Revelation 3:15. You keep that in his sight which is intolerable for him to see; while you do not purge it out, and get it taken away. If you do not mortify it, you keep that alive in his eye which he loathes and abhors to see. The fear of God, where it is, will not suffer this; and due apprehensions of his glorious holiness will excite in you such a fear. The omniscience of God, Psalms 139:1-3, &c. This duly considered, will strike you with an holy dread of the divine majesty, such as will hasten the death of sin. If there be something very offensive, to one whom you otherwise stand in awe of, yet so long as you can hide it out of his sight, you fear not. Oh but there is nothing hid from God, nor can be. The secrets of your hearts are no secrets to him; they are as plain and open to him as the highway is to you. That which no other sees, or can see, is as visible and conspicuous to him as if it were writ with a sunbeam;

every secret evil is an open wickedness to his eye. That which you act or think in most secret retirement, is no more concealed from him than that which is openly proclaimed. All is manifest in his sight, all are naked and open to his eyes, Revelation 2:23, 1 Chronicles 28:9. You can take no course with sin, but you will be an offence and provocation to God unless you mortify it. There is no hiding of it, no hopes of concealment, no way to avoid this, but by purging it out, &c. This you will do if you fear God; and due apprehensions of his all-seeing eye will make you fear him. God is ■λος ■φθαλμος, all eye; and such an eye as sees all things. The immensity of God. His is everywhere, Psalms 139:7-13. He that stands in some awe of one when he is present, may less regard him when he is absent; and sometimes absent he will be, and so the fear abated and remitted. But God is never absent, nor can be; he is always as present with thee as thou art with thyself. He is as much with thee in secret as when thou art in public; as much with thee in thy closet as in the street; as much present in thy heart as he is in heaven (though in another manner). He possesseth the reins; he is always as near thee as thy heart; as intrinsic to thee, as much within thee, as thy very soul is. So that if sin be not mortified, if it be not purged out and taken away, take what course thou wilt with it, act it where thou wilt, imagine it but never so secretly, it will always be in God's presence. Thou wilt always provoke him; as that servant would provoke thee who would still lay some dunghill or some carrion in thy bedchamber, or in thy closet, or some loathsome thing or other always in thy way. If thou fearest God, thou wilt not use him thus; this will put thee upon purging out sin, and if thou believest his immensity, thou canst not but fear him. His dominion over us. He has full and absolute propriety in us, and power over us. We are his, not our own, as much as any work of our hands is ours. He may dispose of us as, he pleases. Shall I not do with my own as I will? We are in his hands, as clay in the hands of the potter; he may form us for his use, or he may break us; and none can say unto him, What dost thou? Now this is a just ground of fear, φοβερ■ν ■ς τ■ ■π■ ■λλ■ ■■ιναι. He that is in the power of another is fearful of him. We are nothing so much in the power of any other, and therefore should fear nothing like him, Matthew 10:28. It is perfect madness, such as speaks the absence of fear and wit, to retain that which will be a continual offence and provocation to him, who may do with us what he list; but this you will do, this you will retain, if sin be not mortified, &c. The fear of God, where it is, will not suffer this; and there will be fear, where there is a sense of his absolute dominion over us. His righteousness. That is another ground of fear, Job 37:23-24. He will not afflict without just cause, but he will afflict where there is such cause. He renders to every one according to his works. The rule by which he proceeds is his law, and his proceeding according to that law is his righteousness. He is able, as we shewed before, and he is willing. His righteousness makes him willing to express his displeasure, when he has just occasion; and occasion he will ever have till sin be mortified. So that the neglect of this will lay you continually under imminent danger, δ■λον γ■ρ ■τι βο■λονται τ■ κα■ δ■ναν ται ■στε τ■ ■γγ■ς ■ισ■ το■ ποιε■ν, Arist. ibid. That which any are willing and able to do, is ready to be done; so that God's displeasure is always in præcinctu, always ready to break out against you; yea, more and more of it, than has yet seized on you, while sin is unmortified. If there be any fear of God, or his displeasure, it will quicken you to the mortifying of it. And where there is a due sense of his righteousness and justice, there will be this fear. The goodness of God also should excite this fear, and gives it a most advantageous rise in any ingenuous temper, Hosea 3:5. Those that have tasted how gracious the Lord is, and have had experience of his infinite goodness, will be afraid to dishonour, offend, or provoke him, else they are of a base, disingenuous spirit. The highest expressions of goodness and mercy should

raise this fear of offending to the height, Psalms 130:4; even common favours oblige the soul to such a fear, Jeremiah 5:24, Psalms 72:5, and Psalms 72:4. Has the Lord forgiven those injuries and affronts, against which his just indignation might have flamed forth for ever? And shall I harbour that which will again affront and provoke him? An ingenuous spirit recoils from this as a thing frightful and shameful. Does he withhold no good thing from me? And would he have me but to part with sin, to put away this one thing for his sake, as that which his soul hates? And shall I not get this put away? This is fearful disingenuousness. The goodness, the forgiveness, yea, the common bounty of God, is apt and proper to beget, in those who are acted by the free Spirit of Christ, such a fear as will be the death of sin. The judgments of God. These, indeed, are not the first, nor the principal grounds of the fear of God; but yet, in their place and order, even those should teach us that fear of the Lord which hastens on the work of mortification; and if we learn it not thereby, those judgments are not duly improved by us, Psalms 119:118-120, and Ephesians 3:5, Ephesians 3:7; and that none may suspect it to be a legal temper, Revelation 15:3. This should be the effect of judgments upon others; much more, when they are amongst and on ourselves, and we involved in them, according to that, Luke 23:40. It is the voice of severe proceedings to every of us; wilt thou not set thyself against sin, when it has brought thee into the same condemnation? When God is smiting sin with the sword of justice, he teaches us, and, as it were, guides our hands to wound it with the weapons of mortification. Shall we dare to spare it or harbour it, when we see God himself severely prosecuting it? If we fear God, we will not dare to do it; and when will we fear, if not when he appears terrible? We should learn righteousness by his judgments, Isaiah 26:9; and mortifying of sin is the first part of this lesson, without which the other can never be learned to purpose.

Make use both of those other perfections of God and also of his judgments, to possess you with awful apprehensions of God; and walk under the sense and power of such apprehensions, so as they may influence you in your actings and endeavours against sin, for the purging of it out, and getting of it taken away. The fear of God is destructive of sin; it will not suffer you to think yourselves safe, unless sin be mortified.

(5.) Mortifying means, those which the Lord has appointed for this end. Make use of those weapons wherewith the Scriptures furnish you; use them daily, carefully, conscientiously, diligently; let it be the business and design of your lives. Look upon it as part of your work every day, and make account you have not done the work which God calls you to, and employs you in every day, if you have not done something against sin. Every day should help on the work of mortification, but especially days of affliction; then, if ever, the work should go on apace, otherwise they will be days of blackness indeed.

Let this be your chief care, as being your great concernment. Make conscience of it, as that which you are highly obliged to; and what you do against sin, do it with all your might, with all diligence. Imitate the apostle, 1 Corinthians 9:26. Paul did not use such weapons as were only for exercise, such as they call lusoria; he did not make a flourish, and only beat the air, with an intent only to shew his skill, not to hurt his adversary; he did not ventilare, but pugnare; he did fight in good earnest, as for life and death; his weapons were such whereby he might kill sin, and get it quite subdued, 1 Corinthians 9:27.

More particularly, [1.] make use of the word. That is a most powerful engine for the overthrowing of sin; it is called ‘the sword of the Spirit,’ and the Lord has put it into your hands on purpose to do execution upon sin. It is one of those weapons which are ‘not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of sin’s strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,’ 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

Every part of the word is powerful, and should be made use of for this purpose.

First, Commands; such as that, Isaiah 1:16; and that, Colossians 3:5. There is authority in such commands, engaging us to fight when we would draw back, or loiter, or spare ourselves; and so sin is cut off from the advantages it might here gain upon us. And there is encouragement in them. They are like the voice of a general, calling on his troops to charge; this rouses their courage and spirits, especially when they know he will second them, and is never wont to come off without victory. And there is a virtue goes along with the commands, to a heart that will comply therewith, empowering to do what is commanded. It is not a bare, empty word; but a word of power and efficacy, through the concurrence and assistance of the Spirit enabling to do what it enjoins: ‘He said, Let there be light, and there was light,’ his word effected what he said; ‘He sent out his word, and healed them,’ Psalms 107:2; ‘He commanded, and it was done,’ Psalms 33:9. His commands to us will be as effectual, through the working of his Spirit and power, when we make due use of them.

Let the command be often in your minds; lay your hearts and consciences under the authority of it; comply with it, as if you heard his voice, and had it from his own mouth; as though you heard him thereby calling on you to charge, as though you saw him ready to second you, and make you assuredly victorious by his successful conduct. Remember, it is he that calls upon you, who will stand by you, and make you more than conquerors, if you flinch not, and betray not yourselves.

Secondly, The threatenings. These are as a sacrificing knife at the throat of sin, as corrosives, threatenings against sin. These shew it is condemned to die; they are the sentence of death passed by the Lord upon it; and hence you may be assured he is ready to assist you in the execution. Threatenings against those who do not mortify it: Romans 8:13, if you do not die to the flesh, you shall die. A threatening believed and applied close to the heart, and kept there by serious and severe thoughts of it, deads the heart to sin. It quells inclinations to it; quashes thoughts of harbouring or sparing it; confutes all the promises and flattering pretences of sin, by which it pleads for life and further entertainment; makes them appear to be lies and delusions; and shews, that not what sin offers or makes fair show of, but the quite contrary, will come to pass, and must be expected; and so cuts off all hopes and expectations of any true pleasure, or real advantage, or anything else desirable, to be had by sin; by which hopes it maintains itself, and is kept alive in deluded souls. And when these expectations are given up, and these hopes expire, the heart of sin is broken, and the heart of the sinner dies to it; and so far as the heart dies to it, so far sin is mortified, for its life is bound up therein. There is enough in the threatening so to embitter sin as no delight can be taken in it; it holds forth the wrath and displeasure of God as that which will be the issue of sin, instead of any advantage which it deceitfully offers, and so leaves you not the sight of anything for which sin should be suffered to live; but shews all reason why it should die, presses the soul against it, enforces and hastens to the execution of it. Even in the heat of

temptation, a threatening duly apprehended and thought on would be as water to a kindling fire; it checks it, damps it at first, and continuing to pour it on, in fine, will extinguish it.

Believe but the threatening, and you will not believe, you will not regard what sin pleads for its life. The reason why it escapes and is forborne, is because we believe sin rather than God; the threatening, if mixed with faith, would lead sin to execution, without delay, without mercy.

Thirdly, The promises. These contribute much to the mortifying of sin, 2 Peter 1:4, 2 Corinthians 7:1. The promises have not only the force of an argument, but a real efficacy to this purpose; they have a powerful influence upon the children of promise, in their engagements against sin. These raise their spirits, heighten their courage, inspire them with resolution; and how much courage and resolution will prevail, even in those who are overpowered with strength and numbers, the world is full of experiments. These give them full assurance of divine assistance, of present relief when they are distressed, of all refreshment when they are ready to faint, and of a glorious issue of the conflict in victory and triumph. Here they may have a vision of the Lord of hosts engaging with them; of the Captain of their salvation, Jesus, ever victorious, leading them on; and of his Spirit teaching their hands to war and their fingers to fight the Lord's battles; such as are so unquestionably. In them you may hear the voice of God himself, speaking to you comfortable and encouraging words indeed, Isaiah 41:10-15.

Here is ground enough of confidence that we shall overcome, if we endeavour it. And then what glorious things they are assured of who overcome! Revelation 2:7, Revelation 2:17 and Revelation 3:5, Revelation 3:12, Revelation 3:21. Here is enough, considered and believed, to strengthen the weak hands and the feeble knees, and to raise the faintest to such a height of courage as will bear down all opposition. And further, the promises out-bid what sin would bribe us with to spare it; and shews that in comparison there is nothing it tempts us with but trifles, shadows, and vain empty shows; that it would defeat us of the inestimable treasures in the mines of the great and precious promises, and put us off with a feather or a bauble; and so they engage us to proceed against it, as an unparalleled cheat and a pernicious deceiver.

[2.] Cut off the provisions of sin. Those by which it is nourished and maintained, kept in life and strength, and enabled to hold out against you. When an enemy is strongly seated, so as there is no storming nor undermining him, the way to subdue him is to fire his stores, cut off his water, intercept his convoys and provisions. Such a course should you take against sin; if you would subdue it, you must starve it, Romans 13:14. Observe what it is that kindles lust, maintains sensuality, upholds worldliness, nourishes pride, or any other evil that you are subject to, and let these be removed. Gratify not your corruptions herein, and you take the course to starve them. Take away the fuel, and the fire will go out.

Use. 2. For information. From hence we may give an account why troubles and afflictions befall the people of God. This is it which has much amazed both those that were acquainted with God, and the heathen too; that those who are best meet with hard measures in this life. But considering that those who are best are not perfect, and that there is a mixture of evil in those that are good, and that afflictions are the means to free them from that evil, it need be no wonder that the best are afflicted. The providence of God is not hereby impeached, but rendered more glorious; the wisdom and goodness of it is herein conspicuous. It is not because the Lord regards not human affairs, or cares not what befalls his creatures, but because he has a special care of his people,

and sees it needful, considering what the complexion of their souls is by reason of sin, to exercise them with afflictions. He does it not without cause, he has a design therein suitable to his infinite wisdom. This end is expressed in the text; it is to purge their iniquity, &c. Sin is as rust upon their spirits, it must be filed off, and this cannot be done ordinarily without sharp tools. There is chaff mixed with the wheat, corruption with their graces; there needs a rough wind to separate them. There is dross in the best metal, there needs a furnace or a fining pot to work it out. There are distempers in their souls, which impair their health, and endanger spiritual life; there is need of physic to purge them out. Afflictions are such physic, administered by the great physician of souls for this end, that hereby their iniquity may be purged.

2. And from hence we may give an account why their afflictions are their ordinary fare; so that it is the complaint of some, which was the Psalmist's, Psalms 73:14, 'All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.' Sickly tempers must have a physical diet; to purge spring and fall will scarce secure some from the malignity of their distempers. The Lord knows our frame, and sees what is usually needful for every temper; and when he afflicts most frequently, he does no more than needs must, than he sees requisite for the purging of sin.

3. We may see also from hence why the troubles of the righteous are many, and why they are grievous. It is because less is not enough to attain the end. A gentle purge will not move every body, and that which works not may do more hurt than good. A wise physician will give that which will work, though it make his patient sick at heart in working. Is it not better he should do it than let him die? A father that will not have his child undone will give many stripes, when fewer will not serve the turn. When a slower fire will not serve the refiner's end, he heats the furnace hotter and hotter. The people of God are not 'in heaviness through manifold temptations,' but 'if need be;' as the apostle expresses it, 1 Peter 1:6. And need there is, if fewer and easier will not purge our iniquity.

4. We may learn also from hence why troubles and afflictions are continued, and drawn out to a great length, why means for removing them are ineffectual, and hopes of deliverance is blasted. Why is the metal kept long in the fire, but because it is not soon refined? The Lord 'afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men;' he delights not to protract our troubles; it is we that prolong them, because we continue unpurged, unrefined, unmortified. He shews us the way to shorten, and put an end to them quickly. Let us but comply with his design, and get our iniquity purged, &c., and deliverance will come speedily. The God of our salvation will come, and will not tarry. It is we that make him slow, and obstruct the way of deliverance; and if we should still delay, if he should cause our carcases to fall in the wilderness, if he should cause us to consume our days in troubles, it is because, Jeremiah 6:29, 'the bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed by the fire,' but we are not purged.

Use. 3. For instruction. If the end of afflictions be the purging of iniquity, this teaches,

1. Patience and contentment under afflictions. No reason to murmur or repine, or to give way to any sallies of impatience, or expressions of discontent, whatever our troubles be, how many, how sharp, how long soever. Will you not be content the Lord should cure you, and proceed in that method which his wisdom sees best and most effectual for that purpose? While you are under afflictions, you are under cure; and is it not better to be under cure, though the method seem unpleasing, than to be left languishing under soul distempers without remedy? Such lancing is

painful. Oh, but what is the end of it? It is not to let out your blood, but to let out your corruption. Should you not be content to submit to any course of physic to free you from desperate distempers, when infinite wisdom prescribes it too? ‘The cup that my Father gives me,’ &c., John 18:11. What though it be a cup of trembling, and flesh and blood shrinks at it? Yet it is a Father that mingled it. Though the ingredients be bitter, they are wholesome. It is to free you from the danger of deadly poison; such poison is that iniquity which the Lord hereby is purging out. He is hereby whipping out of you that folly which is bound up in your hearts. Oh, that is a foolish child indeed, of no understanding, who had rather have his folly than the rod, that had rather be ruined than smart a little.

2. Cheerfulness under afflictions. Let not your spirits sink under them, though they may be heavy and tedious. Bear up cheerfully; faint not when you are rebuked, fall not into despondency. Look to the Lord’s end in all severe proceedings; though affliction in itself be grievous, yet the end thereof is not so, that is matter of joy rather, 2 Corinthians 4:16. What though the receipt be bitter, it is to make me well; it is to heal my languishing and diseased soul; it is to purge out that which is my greatest misery.

3. Thankfulness. If the Lord should correct us merely for his pleasure, we ought to be contented; but since he chastens us for our profit, we ought to be thankful. Oh what cause is there of thankfulness, when we are assured that we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world; that he chastens us that we may be thereby freed from that corruption for which the world will be condemned, and which would be our condemnation also if it were not purged out; to chasten us, to make us smart a little; thereby to free us from the greatest, the most dreadful, the most deadly evil; to free us from sin, an evil incomparably worse than the extremity of all outward sufferings; and to free us from condemnation, in comparison of which all the calamities of this life are but as the prick of a pin. Oh, who would not be thankful for such a cure in such a way! The most afflicted condition on earth, ordered for the purging of sin, is incomparably a greater mercy than the most prosperous and flourishing condition in the world with an unpurged soul. Oh bless the Lord for those wounds, how deep soever they pierce into your estates, health, liberty; if they let out the corruption of your hearts, if they take away your sin, you will see cause to bless the Lord for them to eternity.

4. To love the Lord. Even his chastening of us should provoke to love him; for he afflicts us not to satisfy his anger, but to do us good; to purge our iniquity, i. e. to free us from the very worst of evils. So that he afflicts us not as an enemy, but as a father; not because he hates us, and would be revenged of us, but because he loves us, and would render us capable of more and greater expressions of his love, by freeing us from that which renders us unlovely, and abstracts the current of his loving-kindness. Herein are those affectionate expressions verified, ‘As many as I love,’ &c. So infinite is his love, that it breaks forth where we could least expect it, even in judgment he remembers mercy; even when we think him most angry, when he makes us smart, he is expressing love; he is taking away our sin, and therewith our misery. Now, love calls for love again: ‘We love him, because he loved us first.’ We are obliged to love him, wherever he shews love to us. If we love not him that we find loves us, we are worse than publicans; for they, the worst of sinners, do so.

Oh let us love him, not only because he spares us, because he showers down mercies on us, because he sent his Son to die and suffer for us, but because he makes us suffer, because he afflicts out of so much love as to take away our sin. Oh he has not such a love for the world, as he has for his children, when he seems most severe in afflicting them.

5. To trust him. He has declared that by this our iniquity shall be purged, that this is his end and design in afflicting. Let us then believe that this is his end, and that it shall be accomplished; let us believe that it shall be to his afflicted people according to his word, that by this our iniquity shall be purged, that 'this shall be the fruit to take away our sin.' A soul that duly values so great a mercy, as the subduing of his iniquity, and the mortifying of his sins, will be ready to say, Oh, if I were but sure that this would be the issue of my sufferings and afflictions, I should not only be patient and contented with them, but would be cheerful under them, and thankful for them, and love the Lord for inflicting them. But this is my fear, they will not have this effect upon me. Why, but what assurance can you desire to encourage your faith, and to secure you from this distrustful fear, more than is here given you? You have for it the word of him who is truth itself, on his part; heaven and earth shall perish, rather than one title of it shall fail of performance, if you be not wanting to yourselves; if you walk in the way laid open to you, and use the means I have given an account of; if you wait on the Lord, and keep his way, assuredly his word will be made good, 'By this shall your iniquity be purged; and this shall be the fruit, to take away your sin.' THE CONVICTION OF HYPOCRITES

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.—Matthew 7:22-23.

These words are part of Christ's sermon on the mount. The latter part of it he applies for conviction, the conviction of hypocrites, those that pretend to be what they are not. These are of three sorts:

1. These are so apparently, both to themselves and others, who pretend they are Christians, but are so no further than in outward profession. They bear the name, but express not the thing; such as the apostle speaks of, who profess they know God, &c., Titus 1:16; profess they love Christ, but in their actions crucify him; live in known sins, in visible wickedness: so as their own consciences may testify to themselves, and their conversations do testify to others, they are no Christians indeed; they have nothing of the reality, and they are a reproach to the name. There is a visible contradiction betwixt the words whereby they profess it, and their actions and practices.

2. Some are so apparently to themselves, but not to others. Those who have the outward lineaments, but want the soul of Christianity; and either are, or easily may be, conscious to it. Such an hypocrite is a stage-player in Christianity. He outwardly acts the part of a Christian, has his words, and garb, and gestures, and actions; but look within him, and he is quite another thing. The description of hypocrites which Christ gives us, agrees exactly to him: outwardly he is like a whited sepulchre, but within full of dead bones and rottenness. He has a form of godliness, but denieth the power thereof.

3. Those that are so apparently neither to themselves nor others, but are so really, and in the sight of God. They may account themselves sincere Christians, for some slight resemblance; and they

may be so accounted by others, for their outward conformity to the laws of Christ, and yet in Christ's account they may be workers of iniquity, such as he will not own hereafter as his people. Of this last sort are the hypocrites in the text. He spoke these words for the conviction of such, and so we shall endeavour to handle them. In pursuance hereof, we observe three things: 1, their presumption; 2, their plea; 3, their doom. Their presumption; they persuade themselves that heaven is theirs. They put in their plea for it at the bar of Christ; argue with him as though it were not equal, not just, that they should be excluded, so confident are they of salvation. Hence,

Obs. Many think themselves sure of heaven, when it is sure they shall never come there. Many are persuaded they shall enter into heaven, whom Christ is resolved to shut out of it. This is clearly implied in the text; yet because it is but implied, I shall not much insist on it; and it is not that which I principally aimed at. Only it will be necessary to take notice of the grounds of this woful mistake, that they may be avoided. And they are such as these:

(1.) Ignorance and inadvertency. There are many who know not, or at least consider not, what is necessary to bring a soul to heaven; where the way lies, and what Christ requires of those that would enter into it. They consider not that there must be regeneration; that 'unless a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' that there must be a new creation; that the new Jerusalem is only for new creatures. There must be an universal change in every part of the soul, in the whole course of their lives; that old things must pass away, and all things become new; new heart, and new way. There must be a holiness in the life, growth, power, and exercise of it; that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' There must be self-denial; a denying of their own wisdom, will, humour, interests. A renouncing of the world; they must be crucified to the world; they understand scarce what it is to be crucified. Mortification; they must mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts; die daily. A taking up the cross: that if any man will come after Christ, that it may cost him tears, sighs, bonds, imprisonment, his estate, his relations, his limbs, his blood, his life, and all; that he must be fully resolved to be at the expense, whenever there is occasion; that it requires all diligence, 2 Peter 1:1-21; that he must strive, and break through all difficulty, what sweat and toil soever it cost to crowd in, Luke 13:24; that he must wrestle, employ all his strength, Ephesians 6:12; that he must run, put out all his might, so run as he may obtain; that he must fight, be in a continual war, fight the good fight; that he must beat his body, 1 Corinthians 9:27; that he must take heaven by force, if he will have it. If they did know and consider this, they would not be confident of heaven, when they are strangers to these things which are required of all those for whom heaven is intended.

(2.) Negligence, slothfulness. If they know these things, yet will not take the pains to examine their state by them, they will not be at the trouble to compare their hearts with the rule. They will not spare a few hours seriously to inquire whether they come up to what the word requires.

Alas, for the wretched carelessness of men as to their own souls, and their everlasting state! One that seriously observes, would think that the greatest part of people amongst us are either atheists or madmen; either they believe not that there is a God, or that the Scriptures are his word; or that their souls are immortal; or that there is a state of everlasting misery or happiness for every one after death; or that there are evidences in the word, by which they may know whether they shall be eternally damned or saved. Either they believe not these things, and so are plain atheists; or if they believe there is such a God, and such a soul, and such an eternal state, and such a word

wherein they may have directions to know whether their souls are bound for heaven or hell, would they not make use of these directions? Would they not spare some hours to examine seriously whether heaven or hell be their portion? Would they not do this presently? Would they not do it seriously, as a matter of eternal life or death requires, if they were not madmen indeed, if they were not quite bereaved of all spiritual sense and reason?

No; rather than they will thus trouble themselves, they will take it upon trust that they shall go to heaven, when, alas, they have no ground for a trust but what Satan suggests, or their own deceitful hearts prompts them; and thus they hang the whole weight of eternity upon a cobweb; and thus they pin the everlasting concernments of their souls upon a shadow, as though it would hang there safe enough, where it can have no hold at all. Would any do this but a madman? What! trust without trial in a matter of eternal consequence to body and soul. What need I put myself to this trouble? I will trust God with my soul, say some; what need I take any care further? But alas, wretched creature! this is not to trust God, but to trust Satan with the soul; and oh what a woful account will he give thee of it one day! Now, when men are so careless of their souls, when they will not trouble themselves to inquire after their eternal state, no wonder if they be so wofully mistaken as to promise themselves heaven, when nothing but hell is reserved for them.

(3.) Self-love. This possesses men with a good conceit of themselves, a good opinion of their souls' condition; so that if they come to examine their state, or be called to try it in the public ministry, they come to the work prepossessed. Self-love will not suffer them to deal impartially with their souls; they catch greedily at anything that seems to make for them, and are careful to stave off everything that would make against them; or, if they cannot yet put such a favourable construction on it, as partial men will do when they are resolved to defend a bad cause, they look upon that word as an enemy, that would shake the rotten pillars of a false hope. They deal with it as the prophet did with the king's messenger, make sure to shut him out. As self-love makes them flatter themselves, so they would have the word of God to flatter them; they love not plain, searching, awakening truths; they will have a good opinion of themselves, whatever be said to the contrary. They say, as Laodicea, that they are 'rich and increased,' &c., though Christ in the ministry say the contrary, they are 'poor, wretched,' &c. Though this be plainly manifested, yet self-love makes them both unable and unwilling to discern it. A blind man cannot judge of colours; and self-love blinds them, they cannot judge of the complexions of soul, whether the features, the characters of heaven or hell be on it; care not for looking in a true glass lest the visage of their soul, if truly represented, should trouble them. Satan blinds one eye, and self-love closes the other, and the deceitfulness of sin seals both. No wonder if they call darkness light, &c.; no wonder if they fancy themselves in the way to heaven when they are in the high road to hell. The blind leads the blind, you know what will be the issue; no wonder if when they think they shall be safe ashore in heaven, and their feet near the very banks of happiness, at that very moment they are falling into the ditch.

(4.) Misapprehensions of God. If light and conviction proceed so far as to discover to a sinner that he comes short of the rule, and that what the word calls for, as necessary to salvation, is not to be found in him; if he cannot misapprehend his own state any longer, rather than he will quit his vain deceiving hopes, he will misapprehend God and think him more merciful than the word represents him. It is true, says the sinner, in this case, the rule is strict and the way to heaven seems to be strait, and much is required of a sinner that he may be saved, and I am to seek in this or that; but

God is merciful, and he may save me, though I find not this or that which seems to be required. Though I allow myself in this or that sin, and fall into it now and then, why it is but a little one, and God is gracious, he is not so strict and rigid as some would make him. What though I be not so strict and precise as some others, must none be saved but such as they? God forbid. Though I come not up to the rule, God is gracious, he may dispense with me, I may be saved as well as the best of them. But alas, poor deluded sinner! if here be all thy hopes, thy case is hopeless. Will God be so merciful as to contradict himself and go contrary to his word? Will he shew thee so much mercy as to neglect his truth? Will he save thee when he cannot do it without making himself a liar? Doest thou not tremble to see that thou hast nothing to bear up thy hopes of heaven but plain blasphemy?

If thou find not what he requires as necessary to salvation, if he should save thee without it, he should deny himself, abandon his truth. Dost thou think he will make himself no God that he may make thee happy? Oh, how sad is thy case, when even as thyself has stated it, thou hast no hopes of heaven, but upon such terms as the very thought of them deserves hell for ever!

(5.) They have many vain and insufficient pleas for their salvation. (That leads me to the second part of the text.)

2. The hypocrite's plea. That is express. They have many things to allege for themselves why they should be admitted into heaven. Let us survey them a little. Their first plea is in the word Lord: that includes much. It is of the like import as the same word, ver. 21. This denotes that they did acknowledge and profess Christ, acknowledge him as their Lord, and profess him zealously, so some explain it; or that they did pray unto him, that they prayed frequently and fervently, as the doubling of the word, Lord, Lord, intimates, and that they did believe on him as their Lord. They had some faith, either of assent, affiance, or both. So Chrysostom and others. Vid. Maldonat. Have we not prophesied? &c. Here is their next plea; and prophesying in Scripture is preaching: 1 Corinthians 14:3, 'He that prophesieth speaketh unto men, to edification, exhortation, consolation;' or praying: Genesis 20:7, 'He is a prophet, and when he shall pray for thee;' or singing: 1 Chronicles 25:1, so probably it may be taken, 1 Corinthians 11:5; or foretelling things to come: that is the ordinary acceptation of the word; or for explaining the prophetical writings.

Now, if we take it in its full latitude, their plea is fuller: they had preached Christ, explained the prophecies concerning him; they had prayed to him, and sung his praises; and by his Spirit had foretold things to come, for the confirmation of his truth and doctrine. And in thy name cast out devils. By the power of Christ they had dispossessed Satan, and in a miraculous manner cast him out of those bodies that he had possessed. And this was not the only wonder they had done for Christ; they had done many more. And in thy name, they had done works for him, many works, and many wonderful works; not mira only, but miracula; works truly and properly miraculous, beyond the whole power of nature.

Thus much they had done for Christ, and all this in his name, by his authority, in his strength, for his glory. Whatever they intended, these works did tend to glorify him in the world, and that eminently and extraordinarily; all this they allege for themselves, and they allege them truly. Christ objects not against the truth of their plea, but against the sufficiency of it. Though all this was true, yet it was not enough to make them capable of heaven, and there he excludes them.

Obs. Many shall go far towards heaven, and yet never reach it. They may go far in the ways of Christ, and yet miss heaven in the conclusion. This is evident in the text. Here are many who had professed Christ, and been zealous professors; who professed him not in word only, but had really worshipped him; had been much in hearing, preaching, praying, praising him. Nor did their religion consist only in outward acts, they had believed on him too; nor was their faith without works, it was accompanied with many works, with many wonderful works; and yet for all this, when they shall come to allege these things at the day of judgment for their admission into heaven, Christ tells us here that he will shut them out, he will disclaim them, and profess to them that he knows them not, i. e. that he never loved them, never approved them; he will command them to depart from him, and give them their portion with the workers of iniquity. There needs nothing more for evidence to this truth. But the Question here will be, How far may professors go in the ways of Christ, and yet come short of heaven?

I shall resolve this according to the method of the text, by endeavouring to shew how far they may go both in ordinaries and extraordinaries.

1. In extraordinaries.

(1.) Revelations, dreams, visions. God may reveal himself by dreams and visions. It is no peculiar privilege of the godly which is promised, Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16, ‘Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men see visions.’ For dreams, it is evident in Nebuchadnezzar, to whom the revealer of secrets, as Daniel speaks, by dreams made known what should be hereafter. His dream arose not from an ordinary cause, it was sent from the Lord, the revealer of secrets. The subject of his dream was not ordinary, but secrets and things future; even the most remarkable acts of providence that should come to pass to the end of the world: the rise, periods, and revolutions of the world’s monarchies, and the erecting of the kingdom of Christ: the stone cut out without hands, Daniel 2:34, which should crush all the kingdoms of the world, and raise his throne upon their ruins. Here is a remarkable revelation, almost comparable to any mentioned in Scripture. Another you have, Daniel 4:4-5. Pharaoh also had a revelation by a dream. Genesis 41:25, Genesis 41:28; and when Saul complains that the Lord answered him not either by dreams or prophets, it implies that he did reveal himself by these before he was cast off, 1 Samuel 28:6. This is confirmed, Deuteronomy 13:1-2. For visions, we have a clear instance in Balaam, the wizard or enchanter, who used to seek for enchantments, Numbers 24:1; even to him did the Lord reveal himself by visions. God came unto him, Numbers 22:9, and conferred with him, and revealed to him both what he should say, and what he should do, Numbers 22:12, Numbers 22:20. He had the vision of an angel, Numbers 22:31. So Numbers 23:3-4, God met Balaam, and put a word into his mouth. Two several immediate revelations we have in that chapter, and two, chap. 24 whereto the preface is observable: Numbers 24:23, ‘The Spirit of God came upon him, and Balaam took up his parable, and said, The man whose eyes are opened,’ &c., ‘which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes opened;’ and Numbers 24:16, ‘Which knew the knowledge of the Almighty.’

(2.) The gift of prophecy. Those whom Christ shuts out of his kingdom, and will take no notice of them, and had this plea for themselves, ‘In thy name have we prophesied.’ It is known that Saul was at best but an hypocrite, yet, 1 Samuel 10:10, 1 Samuel 10:10, 1 Samuel 10:23, ‘the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he prophesied.’ Hence the proverb, ‘Is Saul also among the

prophets?' And there is scarce a clearer prophecy of Christ at such a distance than that of Balaam's, Numbers 24:16, where he also foretells the ruin of several nations, Moab, Edom, Amalek, the Kenites, Assyrians, and Romans, and who should ruin them, which the event has proved true, 1 Kings 13:21-22.

(3.) The power to work miracles. They may do signs and wonders, heal all diseases, cast out devils, yea, it is possible for them to remove mountains. For proof, see Deuteronomy 13:1-2, 'If there arise amongst you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, saying, Let us go after other gods.' Idolaters may do these. They may also cast out devils. This they plead whom Christ will not own: 'In thy name have we cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works,' Matthew 7:22. Yet what they were appears by Christ's profession, Matthew 7:23, 'Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' The children of the unbelieving Jews had power to cast out devils, as appears by Christ's question, by what power they cast them out. Matthew 12:24, Matthew 12:27. The disciples tell Christ they saw one casting out devils in his name, and rebuked him. That it is possible for those who are not godly to have a miraculous faith, so as to remove mountains, is evident, 1 Corinthians 13:2, for we cannot suppose the apostle would argue from an impossibility. But we need not make use of suppositions, since it is express that Judas had power to work miracles; for, Matthew 10:1, 'Christ called his twelve disciples,' whereof Judas was one, 'and gave them power against unclean spirits, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases.' We cannot doubt but Judas was one, since he is named amongst them, ver. 4 and Mark 3:17, immediately after Judas named, he adds: 'These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received,' &c.

(4.) The gift of tongues: 1 Corinthians 13:1, 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels.' Donum linguarum in summo gradu quale esset, si quis omnibus linguis loqui possit. For these are not saving gifts, and therefore may be given to those who shall never be saved. By the way, observe a delusion in those who prefer these before saving graces, and by the appearance of those will be drawn to embrace errors, whereas it is wholesome advice, which we find in the epistle to Hero, ascribed to Ignatus, π■ς ■ λ■γων παρ■ τα διατεταγμ■να, κ■ν ■ξι■πιστος ■, κ■ν σημε■α ποι■, κ■ν προφητευ■, λ■κος σοι φαιν■σθω. And after, κ■ν ψωμ■ση τα ■π■ρχοντα πτωχο■ς, κ■ν ■ρη μεθιστ■, κ■ν παραδ■ το σ■μα ■ις κα■σιν, ■στω σοι βδελυκτος.

2. In ordinaries.

(1.) In knowledge they may go far. This we may discover in the text; it is included in the word prophesy; for whether we take it for teaching and publishing the truth, or foretelling things to come, it necessarily supposes and imports knowledge. And this knowledge may be,

[1.] Great for the extent of it. It may reach many truths that are out of the reach of many sincere Christians. Their minds may grasp more of truth than the understanding of others is capable of; may admit more light than others can let in. They may dig further into the mines of truth, and make greater discoveries. No question Judas knew more than many of those he preached to, though we may suppose some of them sincerely converted. If he had not known more than his hearers, he had not been, διδ■κτικος, apt to teach, fit to be their teacher. And Christ, who would have this to be observed as a qualification in those that we choose, would not himself choose one destitute of

it. But that their knowledge may be exceeding great, the apostle puts it out of question, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. All knowledge they may have, and yet want charity (saving grace), and have nothing that accompanies salvation, ver. 9; all, i. e. knowledge in a high degree, of a large extent. They may know not only all necessary truths, those that are vital and radical, being the foundation of religion, but those which raise the structure, and tend to edifying; nay, those which are for the finishing and completing of an intelligent Christian, which tend to make him a thoroughly furnished and accomplished man as to his intellectuals.

All knowledge is a large expression, and will reach thus far and farther, without stretching; he may far outgo a true saint in the largeness and extent of his knowledge; know much more clear and evident, solid and convincing. He may apprehend truth not only truly, but clearly, distinctly, evidently; so as the clearness of his conceptions may convince his conscience, and satisfy his judgment of the truth he apprehends. His notions may appear in his mind with such a clear ray of evidence as may scatter all doubt, leave no room for question or contradiction. He may be able to convey his notions clearly to others, so as to convince and satisfy them. A sincere soul, as to many things, may be much in the dark compared with him.

Such a clear, convincing knowledge may be in them who apostatise, &c., Hebrews 6:4. These expressions, which the Arminians would have to be so many characters of true believers, that thereby they may prove the apostasy of the saints, may all be applied to Balaam, a wizard, and no saint. The Holy Ghost ascribes the like things to him.

Enlightened. ‘The man whose eyes are opened,’ Numbers 24:1-25, ‘who knew the knowledge of the Almighty,’ Numbers 24:16; ‘tasted of the heavenly gift,’ i. e. of Christ. Unbelievers may taste him, believers only feed upon him. Balaam had some foretastes, some foresight of Christ; for he prophesied of him, and that as clearly as any at such distance. ‘Partakers of the Holy Ghost:’ the Spirit of God came upon him, Numbers 24:2-3. The gift of prophecy: ‘tasted of the good word of God.’ He had tasted of the gospel, the best word of God; his prophecy is evangelical, a prophecy of Christ; good, because it brings good tidings of great joy. ‘Powers of the world to come;’ hence his desire, ‘Let me die the death of the righteous,’ Hebrews 10:26, ■π■γνωσις; after they have made such a clear discovery of the truth as convinces judgment and conscience, and brings it to an acknowledgment that it is the truth, and worthy of acceptation, entertainment, approbation; and yet for all this clear knowledge they are evidently hypocrites, else they could not sin that sin, nor incur that doom.

[2.] Divine as to the object of it; divine matter. They may have great and clear knowledge of the things of God, of the truths of Christ, of the doctrine of the gospel; not only of those truths that are more common and obvious, but of the more mysterious and subtle parts thereof, those which are called the mysteries of the kingdom, arcana imperii: Matthew 13:11, ‘To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.’ Mysteries of God: 1 Corinthians 4:1, ‘Let a man account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.’ The apostle’s discourse, 1 Corinthians 13:2, implies that he who has no true grace, may know all mysteries, all gospel mysteries. Mysterium est sacrum arcanum, a divine secret; such as could not have been known but by divine revelation; such as no light of nature, no human understanding, could have ever reached, had they not been brought down by the Spirit of revelation. He may see far into these mysteries; he may have access unto the most retired of those secrets; he may wade far into the

deep things of God, as if all were fordable. Those things which are δυσν■ητα, difficult to others, may be easy to him. As for speculative points, there is no question. They may soar aloft in those notions, and be as eagles in the clouds, when a sincere soul may flag, never rise to so high a pitch, and be more apt to admire them than able to follow them. As for truths questioned, intricate controversies, they may decide them with clearness and satisfaction, when others do not understand the terms, or think the arguments against the truth unanswerable, or are nonplussed, and gravelled in the difficulty and abstruseness of the things. As for practicals, they may resolve those cases of conscience with ease and evidence, when an upright heart is sadly entangled, and sees no clear or safe way out. As for experimentals, though they have but this knowledge at the second hand, yet they may have more at the second than those of experience have at the first. By experimental discourses, and conversing with experienced Christians, they may come to great attainments in this kind. They may draw the lineaments of a new creature so exactly, and to the life, as though they had a pattern thereof in their own souls. They may give such an account of the work of grace, as you may think they were transcribing their own hearts, and that their expressions were but copies of some original there. They may hold forth the conflicts betwixt the flesh and the spirit, as though the combat were in their own quarters, as though they had really felt some such thing as you hear. They may express the actings of grace in such and such a duty, such an occasion, under such a temptation, in such a manner, as you would think nothing could teach them, but their own experience. They may have the exact idea, the true notion of these things in their heads, when there is nothing of all this in their hearts. As for textual divinity, the understanding of the Scriptures, they may excel herein. They may overcome those difficulties, which some obscure places make impassable and unfordable to others. They may understand not only the words and phrases, and so become masters of the letter of the Scripture; but they may, with a great sagacity, find out the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost, and may outstrip many herein who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. The apostle's expression, all mysteries, will, I think, bear me out in all this, if experience did not witness it. And, indeed, being on a ticklish point, in a slippery place, I will not venture to go without hold; and that which I will lean upon all along shall be Scripture, in its expression or consequences, or else clear reason and experience. They may, with a great happiness, find out the meaning of prophecies, which are for the most part the darkest parts of Scripture; for in the text it is said, 'Have we not prophesied?' and 1 Corinthians 13:2. And if they may have the gift of prophecy to foretell things to come, which is rarer and further out of our reach, sure they may have the gift of prophecy to explain what is foretold, this being more common and ordinary.

[3.] Spiritual as to the author of it, such as proceeds from the Spirit of God. They may attain their knowledge, not only by their pains and industry in searching after it, not only by reading, study, conference, &c.; but the Holy Spirit may dart this light into them, either in the use of means or immediately, Hebrews 6:1-20. Those who were never in a saving condition, are said to be enlightened. And who it was that enlightened them, we may learn by another clause in that verse, 'partakers of the Holy Ghost.' They partaked of the Holy Ghost, because they were partakers of the light, and other gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost. They did partake of him, as he communicated himself to them, and this was one way he enlightened them; not only in a common way, as all light and knowledge in the world may be said to come from the Father of light, and as Christ is said to enlighten every man that comes into the world, viz., by implanting in their minds that light which we call natural, and with a common concurrence with the endeavours of those that

are industrious, helping them to an increase and improvement of that light: for this he vouchsafes, as he is God and Governor of the world. But he enlightens them in a more special and peculiar manner (though not the most peculiar) as he is Mediator, and the great Prophet of his church, sending his Spirit (in the execution of his prophetical office) to spread abroad a divine light in the minds of some who enjoy the gospel, whereby they may discover the deep things of God. The Spirit of God may come upon such a man as Balaam, or Saul, or Caiaphas, and may shine into their souls, if not ordinarily now with a prophetical light, yet with an evangelical light, to discover to them the secrets of Christ, and the mysteries of the gospel, and the things of the world to come. You have all these in that verse: the gift of God, i.e. Christ, as some; and the word of God, i.e. there is the precious mysteries of the gospel, &c. They may partake of the Holy Ghost, and be thereby so enlightened as to see these things, and so see them as to taste them; they may by this light discover the excellency, goodness, sweetness, of these things, so clearly and convincingly as if they did taste them. Such a light, such a knowledge, they may have from the Spirit of Christ, in that respect a spiritual knowledge, and yet have their portion in outer darkness.

[4.] Operative. Their knowledge may be in great measure effectual; it may have a mighty efficacy both upon their souls and lives, both upon heart and affections, and upon their conversation; it may have an influence both upon inward and outward man, powerful to change both in some degree. The inward efficacy of it may be clearly collected from that of James 2:19. The devils have such a clear knowledge of God as they cannot but believe what they know; and this knowledge, which brings them to believe, makes them tremble; here is the efficacy of it, it works fear and horror. Now why knowledge may not work this in men as well as devils, I apprehend not; and why it may not work other affections as well as fear, no reason can be assigned; and I shall shew how the affections in particular may be moved, in the next head.

Now since this knowledge may have such power upon the affections, and seeing affections are but the acts and motions of the will, it follows that it may have some efficacy upon the will. Now the will being the great wheel that, moved, sets all the parts of the whole man on motion, it is hence evident that their knowledge may be operative upon the whole man, it may have a working influence upon every faculty within, upon every part and member without. For the inward efficacy of it we have said sufficient at present, it may excite fear, hope, joy, sorrow, &c.; and as it may make some alteration within, so may it effect a reformation without. The apostle expresses this evidently, 2 Peter 2:20, he speaks of some apostates here, who, therefore, were in a damnable condition, and yet had ‘escaped the pollutions of the world,’ the sinful abominations of the wicked world, and the means whereby they escaped is the knowledge of Christ. The light of this knowledge did discover their former evil ways to be so sinful and abominable that they fled from them, ■ποφ■γοντες, as one would fly from an ugly fiend; they so fled from them, as they seemed to have made a real escape from the evils of an unconverted state, ver. 18, ■ντως. See here the efficacy of this knowledge as to reformation of life; it may make them not only avoid sin but fly from it, to fly from it as from a pollution, as though they loathed and abhorred it; not only to go but to fly from it, as we do from that we are greatly afraid of, and to fly so far, so fast, as one would think it could never overtake, one would hope they had made a clear escape. Such, so powerful may be the knowledge of those that are no better than hypocrites; thus far may they go in knowledge, it may be so great, clear, &c., and yet Christ may profess even to these at the great day, ‘I know ye not.’

Let not ignorance take encouragement from hence. If such knowledge will not bring a man to heaven, to what purpose is it to labour after knowledge? Say not thus; methinks this should rather strike ignorant persons with fear and trembling. If so much knowledge will not bring a man to heaven, how far art thou from heaven who hast so little, none at all? If these whose knowledge brings them so near it, within sight of it, shall not enter, how far are you from it who come not near them, who shall fall short of it? If he who stays a mile off the palace cannot lodge in it, can he expect to lodge there who stays twenty miles short? If those who come so near to heaven as they can discover it, take some view of it, come within sight, shall yet never enter, how can they look to enter who stay ten thousand miles off, who stay in the suburbs of hell? Such is ignorance; you are so near hell as you are within the shadow of it, hell overshadows you. Darkness and the shadow of death are joined in Scripture. Ignorance is spiritual darkness, the very shadow of eternal death. There is but a small partition between you and hell. Hell is outer darkness, and ignorance is inner darkness; it is the very next room to hell. Oh consider your sad condition. Will you stay far short of those who fall short of heaven? If those who come so near Canaan as they can descry it, so near it as they taste some of it, shall yet fall in the wilderness and never enjoy it, how can they come to Canaan who will not stir out of Egyptian darkness? How can you come to the land of promise, come to heaven, who stay in your ignorance, that which is worse than Egyptian darkness, and a condition further from heaven than Egypt is from Canaan? A man with thus much knowledge may possibly perish, but an ignorant person shall certainly perish, Isaiah 27:11.

Quest. But if they may go so far in respect of knowledge, wherein does their knowledge come short of that which is saving? Wherein do they differ? How may they be distinguished, so as I may know whether my knowledge be saving, or only such as hypocrites may have?

Ans. I shall endeavour to distinguish all along betwixt that which is common, and that which is saving, lest this doctrine, which is so necessary for the conviction of counterfeits, may not be hurtful to any soul that is sincere in the least degree, to trouble or disquiet them, whom the Lord would not have troubled; but I shall be brief in this part, because the text leads me not directly to it. Their knowledge comes short, in that it is not, 1, truly experimental; nor, 2, practical, thoroughly efficacious.

1. Experimental. They may have more natural knowledge in the letter; know more of the nature of divine objects, more distinctly, methodically, and vent it more plausibly. A great difference, as betwixt the knowledge which a naturalist has of manna, and an Israelite. He, by reading and discourse, knows more of the nature and effects of it, but he that hath tasted it, fed upon it, knows it more feelingly, satisfyingly, inwardly. ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good,’ Psalms 34:8; ‘If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,’ 1 Peter 2:3. A formalist knows God in his nature, attributes, subsistences, operations; notionally, by reason, revelation, but not experimentally; knows what he is in himself, not what to him and in him: as the Israelites knew the land of Canaan before they came to it, but far otherwise when in possession of it; as the knowledge of Balaam prophesying of Christ, and Simeon having him in his arms; Zaccheus from the tree, and in his house. The godly know God’s attributes experimentally, acting within them. Omnipotence enabling them to believe, Ephesians 1:19; subduing lusts, overcoming the world. If there were no other arguments ab extra to prove it, this would be sufficient to convince them. Omnisciency, by detecting the heart’s deceitfulness, discovering secret sins, pride, hypocrisy, self-will; immensity, by God’s special presence in their hearts, acting, supporting, comforting; mercy, infinite grace in

pardoning sin. They know Christ experimentally in his offices: as priest, saving them from guilt; as prophet, enlightening them; as king, conquering sin, the world, Satan. The Spirit in its functions, convincing, regenerating, uniting, helping infirmities, sealing.

Formalists know these, but not within them; know he is almighty, but have not felt him so, &c.

2. It is not efficacious. True saving knowledge is transforming knowledge, changeth the subject into the likeness of the object. This light leaves a lustre, a beauty behind it, as the sun. It is a heavenly vision, a vision of God. Now the sight of God assimilates: ‘We shall be like him, for we shall see him,’ 1 John 3:2. It is effectual in the mind, does spiritualize it in others; as the sun more lightsome, but nothing cleaner and sweeter on a dunghill. In the conscience, makes it tender, sensible. This light makes those characters appear, which custom in sin wears out; so as the conscience can put them together, and thereby frame its charges, accusations for sins past, though small in ordinary account. And its warnings and prohibitions against sin for the future, makes sin as a prick in the eye, not as wounding only, but as polluting. In the will, inclines it to the object known, according to the clearness of the discovery. A great sympathy betwixt these faculties. The will must either not move at all, or move as it knows. When the beams of Christ’s beauty shine in the mind, the will leaps to him, embraces him: ‘Come in, thou blessed of the Lord.’ In others there are some languid motions, faint inclinations. It brings not the will quite off from other things, so as to close fully with Christ. It may move the scales, and bring the will to some indifferency, to some stand, but it brings not full weight, swaying down the will to full resolutions for Christ. There is something in the other end of the balance, some gainful or delightful lust, that doth counterpoise whatever the light discovers of Christ, and keeps the will from a downright determination to sell all for him. In the affections, light and heat are inseparable; divine light in the mind conveys a heat into the affections. As this heat melts the will into the will of God, so it kindles the affections into holy flames, love, desire, zeal, joy, when the object is good; dissolves it into fear, sorrow, shame; raises in it hatred, indignation, when the object is evil. Light is always hot; but the direct beams are not so hot as the reflected. The beams of a formalist’s knowledge are not reflected; his mind refracts them. It is like the sunshine in winter, it may give some lustre and refreshing to the earth, and may thaw and mollify the outside, but at night all is frozen up; it makes not the plants grow, or the earth fruitful. In the life it is practical, makes him active. There is a conformity betwixt life and light, knowledge and practice. He lives up to his light, detains not truth in unrighteousness. He does what he knows. ‘If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them,’ John 13:17. He is obedient to the heavenly vision; he dares not do that which he knows to be sinful, nor omit that which he knows to be his duty. The formalist’s knowledge is weak and partial, may restrain him from the pollutions of the world; but saving knowledge will avoid that in which the world sees no pollution.

2. They may go far in respect of graces and affections; the Holy Ghost may work in them such graces, stir up in them such affections as have a great resemblance with those that are saving. They may in these respects partake of the Holy Ghost; for there are some whom the apostle tells us may be partakers of the Holy Ghost, and yet have nothing in them that accompanies salvation; and may shew it by falling away, and turning apostates, Hebrews 6:4, Hebrews 6:9. They may be partakers of the Holy Ghost upon this account, because the Holy Ghost may make them partakers of many spiritual gifts and common graces, such as are highly valuable in themselves, and exceeding useful and profitable unto others, and much for the ornament and comfort too of those

that have them; and though they be not saving, have no necessary connection with eternal life, yet they are very like to, and have a near affinity with, saving graces; so as it will be very difficult to distinguish them, and to make the difference evident to a soul under doubts and jealousies of its spiritual condition: so like they are, that they sometimes go under the same name in Scripture, and are held forth to us under the same expressions. Those who have no saving grace may yet taste of the powers of the world to come, may have some tastes of that glory and happiness that shall be revealed. They may taste of the good word of God, some tastes of the sweet and precious things of the gospel; they may taste of the heavenly gift, have some tastes of Christ, frequently called ‘the gift of God,’ John 4:10. They may taste that the Lord is gracious, but yet not as true believers taste; for they taste Christ so as to let down what they taste, as a hungry man eats his meat, or a man ready to faint with thirst tastes his drink; they let it down with delight and greediness. So do true believers receive what they taste of Christ: they let it down as a choice delicacy; they retain and digest it. It is turned into nourishment, and proves life, and health, and strength to their souls. These taste Christ too, but it is with some disrelish; so as they either spit out what they taste, or let it down so sparingly, that it proves no advantage as to spiritual life and health; or vomit up again what they have let down, as not agreeing with their foul stomachs, with their unpurged hearts, which they make visible in their apostasies.

However, some tastes they have, and that from the Holy Ghost; by him also they are enlightened (as before), and partake of him, not only in respect of illumination, but also as to some kind of sanctification; not that which is saving, but that which is very like it, Hebrews 10:29. Those who fell so wofully, so desperately, as to tread under foot the Son of God, are said to have been sanctified.

We need not, I think, restrain this to an external church sanctification; as if they had been said to be sanctified because they had separated themselves from the world to come to the church, and to partake of the privileges thereof, whereby they were visibly dedicated and set apart unto God. Nor to a reputed sanctification, as though they had been only sanctified in the opinion of others, who, judging charitably, took them to be inwardly holy, because they were so outwardly, having a visible holiness in their conversations. For there is a sanctification besides these, which is inward and real; not in outward expressions only, or in the repute of others, and yet is not saving, how much soever it resemble it. There may be in such as those whom the apostle speaks of a real change, a change in the soul, a change in every part of the soul, so that every part may be in some measure changed, and so far sanctified; and yet not savingly changed, renewed, sanctified, though, for the near resemblance betwixt them, many may mistake the one for the other.

There may be a change in the mind: that which was formerly darkness may be now full of light; as before. In the conscience. It may be awakened to a sense of sin which was asleep before; some tenderness, before seared. It may be more faithful in accusing for sin, and restraining from it; in suggesting that which is good, and spurring on the soul to the practice of what is well-pleasing in the sight of God, 1 Timothy 1:19. They had a conscience in some kind or degree good, else they could not have put it away. In the will. There may be new inclinations, a strong current of the heart may run another way, in a new channel, some tendencies towards God and things of heaven. Such a change there was in Uzziah, wrought by the ministry and instructions of Zechariah: 2 Chronicles 26:5, ‘He was to seek God.’ Something must be added to make up the sense, and the least that can be added is, ‘He was inclined to seek God;’ and there was some strength in his inclinations. And therefore some render it, ‘He gave himself to seek God.’ He was freely addicted

to it, and his inclinations were acted; and yet, look on him in the latter end of this chapter, and you will find grounds of jealousy that his heart was not upright with God.

There may be new purposes and resolutions. Experience tells us this, That an unregenerate heart may be bended to excellent resolutions, and yet shew what it is by starting off, and returning, like a deceitful bow, to its unbent posture. How many under afflictions or convictions, under impressions of fear or apprehensions of death, will resolve as much, and as well, one would think, as any out of heaven could do? How often were the Israelites brought to such resolutions; and how often did they express them by engaging themselves solemnly in covenant with God; and yet the Lord complains, Psalms 78:57, that ‘they turned back, and dealt unfaithfully: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.’

There may be new designs and intentions; designs for God, for his worship, his ways, for what tends to his glory. So it was in Jehu; a design for reformation against the idolatry of Baal. He gives it out, it was for the Lord. And good Jonadab, much taken therewith, engages in it. Yet Jehu shewed his hypocrisy sufficiently afterwards. Thus, and much more, may the will be changed. In the affections. He may love that which he formerly hated, and dislike that which he formerly loved; he may be grieved for that in which he before delighted, and that may please him which before was his grievance; he may desire that which before he avoided, and may shun that which formerly he desired; he may esteem that which he formerly contemned, and slight that which once he highly valued. This I shall clear and prove particularly afterwards.

Briefly, the Spirit of God may move upon the face of the soul, before it be formed into a new creature, and may raise therein divers motions truly spiritual and holy; such motions there may be in it, though not of it. They cannot be called the acts of such a soul, because they have not their rise from it, nor have due entertainment in it. Even as when Satan raises wicked motions in a regenerate heart, suggestions tending to blasphemy, self-murder, or the like; if these rise not from the heart, and meet not with consent and entertainment in it, these are counted not the acts of that soul, but the acts and sins of Satan, who injects them. So we may say of those spiritual and heavenly motions that the Holy Ghost raises in an unregenerate soul, they come immediately from the Spirit, are his act, the soul is passive in them; they owe not their holiness to the heart wherein they are, but to the Spirit from whom they come.

Thus there may be holy motions in an unholy heart; and as a regenerate person, finding such wicked suggestions in his heart, may charge himself with them as his own sins, and thereupon may draw sad conclusions against himself, so an unregenerate person, finding such spiritual motions in his soul, may challenge them as his own acts, and from thence may conclude that he is sanctified savingly, when there is no just ground for either.

Thus much in general. Proceed we now to shew particularly what graces and affections there may be in hypocrites. There may be,

1. Some kind of repentance. It is said of Judas, Matthew 27:3, that ‘he repented himself.’ And the men of Nineveh have this testimony from Christ himself, Matthew 12:41. There was some reality in their repentance, something that deserved the name, else Christ would not have so called it; there was no gross dissimulation in it; and yet, not long after, they relapsing into their evil ways, the Lord appoints the prophet Nahum to denounce their utter destruction. And from hence some collect,

that (at least as to the generality) it was not saving repentance.

More particularly, they may go far as to the several acts of repentance.

(1.) Confession. This is one act of repentance which the Lord calls for in returning sinners, Jeremiah 3:12-13. Now, such as are not in a saving condition may confess their sin, and confess it particularly, and aggravate it in their confessions, and take shame to themselves in the acknowledgment of it. So the Israelites, who provoked the Lord to swear in his wrath, &c., confess their sin, Numbers 14:40. And Saul, 1 Samuel 15:24. So Judas confesses his sin, and that in public; he specifies, contents not himself with a general acknowledgment, I am a sinner, but I have sinned in doing this; and he sets it out with its heavy aggravations, I have betrayed, betrayed blood, betrayed innocent blood, Matthew 27:3. Cain cries out of the weight and grievousness of his sin. So Pharaoh acknowledges his sin, condemns himself for it, and justifies the Lord, Exodus 9:27.

(2.) Sorrow for sin. That is another act of repentance; they may mourn for sin with its attendants, bewail it bitterly; the sense of it may be the grief of their hearts, the affliction of their souls; they may express exceeding much sorrow for it. The Israelites, after their sin in the golden calf, being convinced of it, and threatened for it, they mourned, Exodus 33:4, and put off their ornaments, thereby acknowledging themselves worthy to be debased and stripped naked of all that was precious to them. And, after their murmurings, Numbers 14:1-45, it is said, Numbers 14:39, ‘they mourned greatly,’ and yet they continued a people of provocations, see Numbers 14:44. Ahab, when the prophet Elijah had convinced him of, and threatened him for, his sin, he expresses an extraordinary sorrow for it, and that in the most significant expressions, I meet with none that goes beyond him, 1 Kings 21:27.

He rent his clothes. Thus they used to express their greatest sorrow; thus did Jacob express the grief and anguish of his soul, when he apprehended that his dearest child was devoured and torn in pieces, Genesis 37:34-35. Here was an extraordinary sorrow, and he thus shews it. And so does Ahab express his.

Sackcloth upon his flesh. Not over his other garments, but next his skin; this was another expression of exceeding grief. Jacob thus expresses the greatest sorrow that ever seized on him. Ahab seems to go one step further, he lay in sackcloth, he wore it night and day; as he walked, so he slept in it. And fasted. So they were to afflict their bodies when they were called in an extraordinary manner to afflict their souls; they hereby manifested soul-affliction. And went softly. This was a sign of grief and mourning, Isaiah 38:15. Such was Ahab’s sorrow, and such were the testimonies of it. Nor was all this merely hypocritical, only in show and outward appearances; there was real inward grief in the heart, in some degree answerable to these expressions. There was no gross dissimulation, for it is said, and it is the Lord who testifies this of him, ‘He was humbled before the Lord,’ ver. 29. It was not only before men, outward expressions may serve for that; there must be some inward soul humiliation, that a man may be said to be humbled before the Lord. If it had been nothing but dissembling, the Lord would not have so much countenanced it as to have reproved* him for it. The Lord saw so much reality in it, as he thought fit to exempt Ahab in great part from what he had threatened, ver. 29.

Pass we to Judas. His grief and sorrow was more grievous to him than death; and what sorrow can be greater, more grievous than that? His sin sprung such grief and anguish in his soul, as drowned the sweetnesses of life, and overflowed all the comforts of his life; they were all under water, so that he saw nothing why he should desire to live in such anguish of heart, and so he sought ease and refuge in death. A sorrow more bitter and grievous than death, is sure an exceeding great sorrow. Yet such was that of Judas.

They may express this sorrow by abundance of tears, and pour them out in great plenty. So did the Israelites in Mizpeh, 1 Samuel 7:2, 1 Samuel 7:6. Their heads were the fountain from whence they drew this water, and that which they poured out before the Lord was their tears; and that which raised this flood of tears was their sins: 'We have sinned,' &c. And yet this was the people who did that which in the very next chapter is recorded to be a rejecting of God. Such sorrow was found in the generality of the people, 1 Samuel 7:5, 'all Israel;' and yet what they were, as to the generality of them, is apparent all along in their story, Hebrews 12:17.

Such may be their sorrow, and may prevail for pardon. Some kind of pardon it may procure, even that which the Scripture calls so sometimes; not a dissolving of their obligation to eternal sufferings, but a deferring thereof, and a freedom from temporal sufferings. The Israelites, where they are said to mourn so much, had such a pardon, Numbers 14:20, so Psalms 78:37-38. There may be such a sorrow as may obtain such a pardon, in those whom Christ will at last condemn.

(3.) Hatred of sin. This is essential to repentance, and is accounted a certain evidence of that which is saving; yet there may be some hatred of sin in those who are not in a saving condition, Romans 2:22. Abhorring is an high degree of hatred, yet there may be an abhorring of one sin, together with an allowance of another, which is inconsistent with a saving state. Judas could hate profuseness. Prodigality, it seems, was odious to him, Matthew 14:3-5, this was the object of his indignation, and yet what a character is given of him upon that expression, John 12:5-6. Jehu hated the false worship of Baal, if pursuing of it to destruction be a testimony of hatred, 2 Kings 10:26-27, 2 Kings 10:30, yet his heart was not upright. Some hate pride, haughtiness, disdainful supercilious carriage; others lasciviousness, uncleanness, open profaneness; others superstition, human inventions and innovations in divine worship; others errors, schisms, heresies. And we see injustice, oppression, passion, fury, unmercifulness, cruelty, dissembling, and hypocrisy seem generally hated. Yea, further.

It is possible there may be a falling out with a bosom sin, and that which has been much loved may be no less hated. See it in the Jews.

Idolatry seems to have been their beloved sin, their peccatum in deliciis, that to which they were most addicted for many generations; yet after the captivity we may discern in them a special hatred of this sin above others. They would die rather than suffer an image in their temple, so far were they from worshipping them. When Pilate attempted to set up the statue of Tiberius in the temple, the Jews exposed their necks to him, and told him they would choose death rather than suffer it. And the like resolution they shewed upon the like attempt in Caligula's time, as Josephus relates. So that they might truly be said to abhor idols. Here is some hatred of sin in them, and yet who more unbelievers, more impenitent?

(4.) Resolution against sin. This is a principal ingredient in true repentance, yet some resolution against sin there may be found in formalists. I think we may rationally conclude that if Judas, after he had felt what burden and anguish there was in his sin, had been in a condition to act it anew, he would rather have chosen death than that act; for we see he chose death to free him from the anguish of it, and he does what he can to hinder the progress of it; tells his tempters that it was a sin, a bloody sin, and throws back the money, which was the price of his treason. Do ye think he would have been tempted to that wickedness? Can we think his heart was not fully resolved against it? And why may not others under like sense of sin be as much resolved against former evil ways, and yet be as far from saving repentance as he?

What an high resolution was that of Balaam's against disobedience? Numbers 22:17-18, Numbers 22:38. Balaam's bosom sin in all probability was covetousness, 2 Peter 2:15, and here is a temptation that suits his temper exactly, strikes the right string. What would not a covetous man do for an house full of gold? &c. Yet this is his resolution notwithstanding.

What Nineveh's repentance was I shewed before. This was one part of it, they were resolved to turn from their evil ways; they were not only resolved to do it, but they did it; the Lord saw that they did it, Jonah 3:10. And which is much, for that sin which probably reigned most amongst them, and so particularly specified, the violence which was in their hands.

Thus far they may go in a way of repentance, such confession, sorrow, hatred, resolution.

Quest. But if they may go thus far in a way of repentance, wherein do they fall short? Who is there goes further? If this be not repentance unto life, which has such confession, sorrow, &c., where is it to be found? Wherein is such a repentance defective?

Ans. This I will give you a short account of, that while I intend the necessary conviction of some, I may not leave others under unnecessary scruples. But briefly, this being not the design of the text, yet so as this design may not miscarry.

Let us then take a short view of these acts of repentance, and shew their defects in formalists, so as thereby those that are sincere may have the comfort of their sincerity, discerning wherein they go beyond them. For confession. That is no evidence of saving repentance, but as it proceeds from hatred of sin, is accompanied with sorrow, and seconded with resolutions against sin. The trial must be by these, not by the outward act; for herein a hypocrite may go as far as any. Without these, confession is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; a sound that signifies nothing of sound repentance, that which accompanies salvation. Proceed we then to those acts wherein the distinction may be discovered. In the next place, Their sorrow is defective upon a threefold account.

(1.) They mourn not for sin, but its consequents. Not as it is sin, a violation of law; not as it is an irregularity in the sight of God, contrary to God, his pure essence, holy will; not as it is evil, a privation of good, opposite to holiness. They love not good as good in itself; nor can hate evil as evil. As they delight not in that which is spiritually good, because it is spiritual, so they mourn not for that which is sinfully evil as it is sinful; not for sin itself, but the train of sad consequences.

(2.) Not for consequents in reference to God, but themselves; not as it displeases, dishonours him, tramples on his authority, advances the creature above him; burdens him, crosses his designs,

grieves his Spirit, gratifies Satan, wounds Christ. If mourn for his displeasure, rather for the effects of his displeasure than because he is displeased; because he will shew himself displeased, than because he is so; because he will make it appear to their smart and loss that he is grieved.

(3.) Not in all its consequents in reference to themselves; not as it defiles the soul, deprives it of his beauty, strength, health; debars it from communion with Christ; keeps it at a distance from God; makes it more uncapable of grace; hardens it, disposes it to more sin, leaves the seed behind; indisposes it for holy duties, makes it unserviceable to God. But as it is exposes to wrath temporal, eternal; contracts guilt, leaves horror; deprives of outward mercies, liberty, health, riches; makes obnoxious to hell. Their hatred of sin is defective, comes short of that which is essential to true saving repentance, in that,

(1.) It is not extended to all sin. They hate not every evil way. The Jews hated idolatry, but not sacrilege, Romans 2:22. They hated gross sacrilege too, they were far from breaking or robbing their temples; none more zealous for the temple. As many formalists amongst us, very zealous for God's house, for the externals of worship, the outside of religion, and think themselves far from sacrilege upon this account, while they make no conscience of robbing God in another way; defrauding God of that spiritual service, that soul worship, which is indeed the soul of worship, of highest value with him; and the outwards of religion of no other account than a dead carcase without it.

Sincere hatred is universal. He that truly hates any hates all. Now formalists may hate gross sins, but those which the world counts small they will have a toleration for, some or other; this is but a little one, I may live in it without danger.

They may hate open wickedness, but they hate not secret sins. Their hearts do not rise against the secret motions of sin which arise in their hearts; they do not abhor these, nor loathe themselves for them.

They may hate a sin which is generally hated, which is cried down by the times, and abhorred by the people amongst whom they live. They may be carried down with the stream thus far. But they will scarce hate a sin that is in credit, countenanced by the times, encouraged by the example of those that are great or many; or if they hate such a sin, it will be because they love not those whose sin it is.

They may hate an unprofitable or an expensive sin, which is like to bring them in no revenue of profit or pleasure; but scarce will they hate the sin of their calling, that which they have lived by, and has been as a right hand unto them, to bring them in riches or pleasures.

They may hate a sin from which their nature is estranged, which is contrary to their temper and complexion, but they will not hate the sin of their constitution, that to which they are carried with an eager and delightful propensity.

(2.) They hate others' sins rather than their own. Judas could hate an appearance of profaneness in another, but not that real covetousness that was in his own heart. Jehu could shew some hatred of the idolatrous worship of Baal, but yet retain the idolatrous worship of Jeroboam; hate the idolatry of the house of Ahab, but continue an idolatry of another kind in his own house.

(3.) Their hatred is rather directed against the persons than the sins of others. Who would not think the scribes and pharisees were zealous haters of Sabbath-breaking, when their jealousy was so quick-sighted, as they would spy it where it was not, even in the disciples, and Christ himself? Yet it was not the sin, but the man they hated: We will not have this man to rule over us. This man was the mark at which their hatred shot; the sin was but the blind, or the stalking-horse.

(4.) They hate rather the effects of sin than sin itself. They hate shame and reproach, sorrow and suffering, terrors and anguish of conscience, torments of hell. These are real evils in their apprehensions, and they may really hate them as the effects of sin, and yet not hate the sin itself.

(5.) It is not hearty. They hate it not with all their hearts, neither does it reach the heart of sin. They may hate some of the excrements of sin, pare its nails, or shave its hair, as the Israelites were to do with the captives they intended to marry; or possibly they may cut off some members, but they would not the main body; they spare the life of the old man. They may lop off some branches, but they strike not at the root. Their hatred does not reach the corruption of their natures; they loathe not that, they pursue not that to the death with mortifying endeavours; they confine it indeed that it break not out into outrageous acts, but they do not crucify it. If their hearts did hate it, they would pursue it to the death, nothing else would satisfy. Their resolutions are defective.

(1.) In their rise. They rise not from an inward, universal change. Not from a principle of holiness, but from apprehensions of present ruin and destruction, as Nineveh; or from terrors and anguish of soul, as in Judas when upon the rack; or from the power of restraining grace, which keeps them from resolving to sin, rather than helps them to full resolutions against it, in which case their resolutions are rather negative than positive. Thus it was with Balaam, Numbers 22:18, Numbers 22:38. He says not, I will not, but I cannot; he had a good mind to it, but the Lord overpowered.

(2.) Continuance. They abide not, they are not followed to full execution. The cause from whence they rise is not constant, and that being removed, they vanish. They flow no longer than they are fed by their spring from whence they rise; and that is not like those waters which spring up to eternal life. It is but a flash of fear or terror, or anguish, which passes away like a land flood, is quickly gone, and so the resolutions fall with them. When they are come off the rack, you hear no more of their resolutions, at least you see nothing of them in their practice. So it was with the Ninevites. So with Balaam. Their goodness is like the morning cloud. Nothing more ordinary. David apprehended this danger, it is like, when he puts up that prayer for the people, who then seemed well resolved, 1 Chronicles 29:18.

They may go far in respect of faith. They may have a faith so like to that which is saving and justifying, as they themselves may take it to be the very same; and others too may judge it to be the faith of God’s elect, even those that have the spirit of discerning. Simon Magus believed, Acts 8:13. Such a faith he had, and so expressed it, as Philip and the church took him to be a true believer, and accordingly admitted him to those privileges which are peculiar to true believers, and which they could not lawfully communicate to him, but that upon some sufficient ground they may account he had true faith. Those that received the word into stony ground believed, Luke 8:13. Such a faith they had, as by the description of it, seems not to differ from saving faith (that of the good ground) save in the root; the difference is not apparent, it lies under ground; those that will discern it must dig for it. The discovery of it must be referred to time, or the day of trial; till then it is not easy, if it be feasible.

There are four several acts of faith, each of which do claim to be the saving, the justifying act. And there are many strong pleas put in by divines of great note to make good the claim; and undoubtedly one or other of them cannot fail of it. Now such as these in the text may go far in them all, and so far as it will be no very easy matter to discover wherein any other may go further. The acts are assent, consent, dependence, assurance. We will endeavour to shew how far they may proceed in every of them.

1. Assent. They may have that faith which is placed in assent. And some there are who place saving faith herein, whose names or arguments I will not trouble you with; but keeping close to the matter, shew what this assent is, and in what degree it may be found in temporaries. Assent is an act of the mind, judging that which is propounded to be true. And faith in this acceptation is an act of the judgment or understanding, giving credit to the doctrine of Christ, judging it to be the truth. Such a faith, such an assent hypocrites may have, and that without dissimulation. They may believe the doctrine of Christ, assent to the truths revealed in Scripture, close with them as divine truths. Yea, after some strugglings and reluctancies from temptations, to doubting and unbelief, the power of these truths may become victorious, so as to triumph in the mind, and captivate the judgment to an obedient assent. More distinctly and particularly this assent may be.

(1.) Universal. He may believe all the truths contained in Scripture, so far as he is acquainted with them, and he may be acquainted with more than those that are true believers. He may know more than most of those who have learned Christ as the truth is in Jesus, and consequently he may believe more than they; his faith may grasp those truths which they have not yet reached. As his knowledge may be more extensive, so his faith may be more comprehensive. In this kind of faith he may go as far as the apostle expresses his progress, Acts 24:14. Paul was confident that Agrippa had so much faith, Acts 26:26-27.

He may believe all things contained, both in the law and in the gospel, and that not only implicitly, but expressly, so far as they have come within the reach of his apprehension, and there are none that expressly believe any more.

He may believe, not only matters of fact there related, but matters of faith there propounded; not only what is obvious to sense, or may be discovered and proved by reason, and confirmed by experience; but that which is far out of the reach of sense, above the discovery of reason, without the encouragement of experience, even such things as depend wholly on revelation.

He may believe that the relations are true, both of things ordinary and miraculous; all the commands are just, and the prophecies shall be fulfilled; all the promises accomplished, all the threatenings executed. There is no question but the devils may believe this, James 2:19. They believe it, and are affected with it; much more such men who live under the hopes, the light, the power of the gospel.

(2.) Supernatural. Such a faith as could never have been engendered merely by the light and power of nature; such a faith as has its original from heaven, and is inspired by the Holy Ghost. For there are two ingredients which make up this faith: the one is light to discover the truths that are to be assented to; the other a power inclining the mind to give its assent. Now both these they may have from the Holy Ghost, both the discovering light and the inclining power, both this illumination and this inclination. And we have proof of both in that Hebrews 6:4. Those who had

nothing accompanying salvation were enlightened, there is the former; and tasted of the heavenly gifts, there is the latter; and both from the Spirit of God; for in respect of both, they are said to be partakers of the Holy Ghost, in the third expression. By heavenly gifts some understand Christ, many understand faith. Indeed, those expositions are not inconsistent, both come to one; for it is by faith that Christ is tasted, and this faith is a gift, a heavenly gift; the Holy Ghost bestows it, by giving light to discover the truths of Christ, and by inclining the mind to assent to them, and close with them. In both respects this faith or assent is not a work of nature, it is not an act of natural strength; it is not of themselves, it is the gift of God; a heavenly gift, a supernatural act.

(3.) Divine. They may have a divine faith, not only in respect of its original and efficient, but in respect of its ground and foundation, The ground of their faith may be a divine testimony, it may be raised upon a divine foundation, viz. the truth of God. They may ground the credit they give to the doctrine of the gospel, not only upon probable reason, which is the ground of that assent we call opinion; nor upon evident reason, the ground of that assent we call knowledge or science; nor upon human testimony, the ground of human faith; but upon divine testimony, which is the proper ground of divine faith. They may believe the truths revealed in Scripture upon this ground, because they are persuaded that God, who cannot lie, has revealed them. To believe the truths of God, upon the account of the truth of God, is a divine faith. Thus the Israelites, a great part of whom were no better than those in the text, believed the Lord, and his servant Moses, Exodus 14:31. Seeing that miraculous work, they then believed what Moses had declared to them, being persuaded that it was from God; they gave credit to Moses's message, being convinced he had it from God, whom they believed to be truth itself.

(4.) Firm. They may stedfastly believe all the truths necessary to salvation without doubt or wavering; they may count it a high wickedness to call any of them into question; they may be so confident of the truth of Christ's doctrine as to trust their salvation thereon, and be ready to hazard their lives for a testimony thereto. The apostle tells us, Romans 3:2, that unto the Jews, many of whom were but Jews outwardly, were committed the oracles of God, and they received and preserved them accordingly; they had no more doubt thereof than of an oracle, than of an oracle of God, questioned it no more than that which they were persuaded was uttered by the mouth of God, Hebrews 10:26. Those who may fall into that unpardonable sin, may come to such an acknowledgment of the truth, as proceeds from a conviction, that beyond all doubt it is the truth indeed; that is the import of ■π■γνωσις. They may arrive at a great height of confidence concerning Scripture truths; so did the Jews, who were only so in name, Romans 2:19.

(5.) Approving. This assent may be accompanied with a high approbation of divine truths; they may not only account them true and faithful, but worthy of all acceptation; not only good, but the best; the most certain, worthy to be received with confidence; the most comfortable, worthy to be received with joy, Luke 18:13; the most blessed and enhappying, worthy to be received as the words of eternal life, John 5:39; the most excellent, and so worthy of their best affections and endeavours, of their highest esteem and approbation, Romans 2:18. Being instructed out of the law concerning the will of God, he discerned such things therein as he approved as most excellent.

2. Consent, another act of faith. Consent to take Christ as he is offered; this is the heart's receiving of Christ, and this receiving is called believing, John 1:12. To believe on Christ to adoption, &c., is

to receive and consent to take him, is the soul's receiving of him; for the heart, before shut up against Christ, by consent is opened to let him in. Hence many define justifying faith by this consent, or acceptance of Christ as a Lord and Saviour.

Let us inquire how far such as these in the text may consent to take Christ as their Saviour, as their Lord. That they may be willing to take him as their Saviour is out of question; ready to accept of him for the benefit of his satisfaction and purchase; willing to have Christ, to satisfy justice, appease wrath, remove the curse, deliver them from hell; willing to have Christ for pardon, peace, adoption, glory; content to have the gift of righteousness, redemption through his blood, forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance amongst those that are sanctified. Experience assures us many, otherwise utterly strangers to the life of faith, are willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour. But can they consent to accept of him as their Lord, to be at his command? as their king, to be governed by his laws? Here it seems to stick; let us see how far they may come off. Here are some in the text who acknowledge Christ to be their Lord; who profess subjection to him as their Lord; who worship, who serve him as a Lord; who had done many eminent, extraordinary, wonderful services for him; and this in the name of Christ, by his authority, through his power, to his glory. If you will not believe them when they profess zealously that Christ is their Lord, they will shew you their faith by their works, many and wonderful; they will convince you by miracles. Yet Christ disowns them.

Others, though they cannot reach extraordinary, yet will give you ordinary proof in abundance, that they do consent to have Christ for their Lord, and to be governed by his laws.

They may yield as much satisfaction unto Christ, as kings demand of their subjects; they are ready to obey the laws of Christ, so far as obedience is required to the laws of princes; and what would you have more to shew them good subjects? They may go as far in a visible observing of Christ's laws as any believer on earth; they may submit to all his ordinances, not only the royal law, but positive institutions; as the primitive Christians, they may continue stedfastly in the doctrine of the apostles.

They may be ready to practise all known duties, and to avoid all open known sins, not one pollution of the world to be seen in them; they may forbear the gratifying of a beloved sin, a darling lust, rather than disobey Christ, as Balaam, Numbers 22:1-41; nay, upon the signification of Christ's will and pleasure, they may turn from such a lust, even from a reigning sin, as the Ninevites, Jonah 3:1-10; thus far they may accept of Christ as their Lord; thus near they may come to that faith which consists in a consent to embrace Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

3. Dependence. Something of this faith of dependence temporaries may have, John 2:23; those with whom Christ would not trust himself are said to believe in his name. To believe in the name of Christ, credere in Christum, is more than to believe Christ credere Christo. To believe him is but to give credit to his word; but to believe in him, denotes some dependence on him. The devils may believe him, but I find not that they are said to depend on him. This is expressed by a singular phrase in the New Testament, a preposition, ■ν, ■ις, ■πι, being added to the verb πιστ■υειν, a phrase not used by other Greek authors; no, nor by the Septuagint; but it is frequent in the New Testament, and that in compliance with those expressions in the Old Testament, which holds forth faith in such phrases as denote dependence. To trust in God, or to believe in him, is to rely on him, to rest, to stay, to lean on him; and since the Holy Ghost does most frequently express faith in

such like terms, I think it is a good argument to persuade that the nature of that faith, which the Scripture so much commends and calls for, even that faith which is saving and justifying, consists in dependence. Let us see, then, how much of this may be attained by formalists, how far they may proceed towards a faith of dependence. Phrases there are by which the Holy Ghost expresses this faith of dependence, or trusting in God; and if the faith sometimes ascribed to unregenerate men be held forth in the very same expressions, we may safely collect that some such thing as this faith of dependence, some degree towards it, or some near resemblance of it, may be attained, acted, expressed by those that shall not be saved. Proceed we then in this way, which will be both clear and safe, though narrow, and but little if at all traced. To trust or depend on God is

(1.) To cleave to him, Deuteronomy 4:4. It was now forty years since their coming out of Egypt, the unbelieving generation were fallen in the wilderness; those that remained expressed more faith, and are therefore said to cleave unto the Lord. To cleave to God is to trust in him, as is evident, 2 Kings 18:5-6.

Now, such professors as we have in the text may have something of this faith of adherence. Such as these are said to cleave unto God: Joshua 23:8, ‘As ye have done,’ &c.; he speaks of the generality of the people, and yet there were strange gods amongst them, Joshua 24:23. Though idolatry was not tolerated publicly, yet had they idols which they worshipped in secret. No better are they, Jeremiah 13:1-27, who yet are said to have cleaved, Jeremiah 13:11, and yet they were disobedient, Jeremiah 13:10. By virtue of that kind of faith, by which they have their adherence ascribed to them, they seem to cleave so to God, as though they were glued and soldered to him; for ■■■, which comes from the word rendered to cleave (in the forequoted places), signifies glue and solder, as Isaiah 41:7. This may be the reason why such professors are said to be in Christ, John 15:1-27; they may have such a faith as gives them some kind of union; they may so cleave to Christ, as they may be said to be in him.

(2.) To stay on him, Isaiah 10:20; Isaiah 50:10; Isaiah 26:3, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.’ Now, this is ascribed also to those that are not in a saving condition, Isaiah 48:2, ■■■■■; these made the Lord their support, they stayed up their hearts on him (as Ahab is said to be stayed up in his chariot), 1 Kings 22:35; yet what they were, see 1 Kings 22:4. It is the same word by which David expresses his faith, Psalms 71:6, and Psalms 112:7-8. Some faith like this they may have, and so act it, as if God was their trust, as if Christ were the stay, the support of their souls.

(3.) To lean on him. To lean is to trust in Scripture, Isaiah 36:6, Proverbs 3:5. And thus the spouse her faith in Christ is expressed by leaning on him, Song of Solomon 8:5. And some such thing may be found in those that are not in a saving state, Micah 3:4; what they were, see Micah 3:9-10. These would lean upon the Lord as a God that owned them, and be confident that in this posture, leaning, trusting, they should be safe: ‘No evil can come upon us.’ They lean upon God as a weak man leans upon a staff. The word is ■■■; and from thence comes ■■■■, a staff. Even wicked men may thus lean upon Christ as if he were their rod and their staff, their comfort and support; lean upon him that they may be upheld by him, that they may not fall into hell and eternal misery, and may be confident thereupon that no such evil shall befall them.

(4.) To rest on him. Thus is the faith of Asa expressed, 2 Chronicles 14:11. Such as these in the text may rest in God, 2 Chronicles 32:8; they rested on the words of Hezekiah, which indeed were the words of God; and to rest on the word of God, is to rest on God himself. Thus did that people, who some few years (about ten or twelve) after are said to do worse than the heathen, 2 Chronicles 33:9-10; such as these may rest on God, may rest on God in a promise. Look upon the words again, and you will find that they contain a promise, 2 Chronicles 32:7-8. Here is a promise, an absolute promise too, which is many times found more difficult for faith to apply and rest on than a conditional; yet on these words, on this promise, they rested; they applied it to themselves, and rested on it, and thereby supported their hearts in this extremity, when they saw ruin and misery seem to approach; so that hence it appears, that those who are not in a state of salvation, may rest upon Christ, and that in a promise. We shall give more evidence to this in the ensuing discourse.

(5.) To rely on him. So Hanani the seer expresses it, 2 Chronicles 16:7-8. Asa did trust God before he did rely on him, and had the reward of his faith against the Ethiopians; but now his faith was to seek, he trusted the king of Syria rather than God; which is expressed by his relying upon him, and not relying upon God. Those that are worse than Asa, are said to rely upon God, 2 Chronicles 13:18. Now, Abijah was one of those that are said to rely upon the Lord. Indeed, he is the man who expresseth this faith or relying on God; and you may find very remarkable actings of this faith from 2 Chronicles 13:5-13, and such as may become the best of believers, and yet Abijah was far from uprightness, 1 Kings 15:3. Such a man as this could express his relying on God, and have the Lord's testimony that he did so; yea, and make the covenant of God the foundation of his faith and reliance, and act it all along upon the promise. Yet thus it was, the covenant, the promise, is the groundwork on which he begins to raise his confidence, 1 Kings 15:5. The promise he intends is expressed, 2 Samuel 7:16. This promise he applies; he relies on it with confidence that the Lord will perform it, even when an army of eight hundred thousand men were in his view to cut off all hopes from the promise, and when he had but half so many to resist them; yet then the promise helps him to such a height of confidence, and to such high expressions of it, as I know not where we shall meet with higher. And if you observe, they have all some reference to the promise. So that here you have another proof that unregenerate men may rely upon God, may depend upon Christ; and that in the promise, pleading the covenant of God, and applying the promise to themselves as the ground of their trust. Let us offer a little more proof of it. The men of Nineveh believed God, Jonah 3:5. One would think it a wonder that they should thus believe; the God of heaven was a strange God to them, they had other gods of their own, whom they accustomed to serve and worship; the God of Israel was a strange God, and the prophet was to them a strange man. They had no experience of him; why should they trust him? We are not apt to believe strangers in matters of such importance; yet they believed, at least they had a legal faith; that which they believed was the threatening, Jonah 3:4. Now, it seems far more easy for those who live under the gospel, though unregenerate, to apply a promise, than for those of Nineveh to believe a threatening; there seems more difficulty to apply a threatening than a promise. In applying a threatening, we are like to meet with more opposition, both from within and from without. From within, for a threatening is like a bitter pill, the bitterness of death is in it; no wonder if that hardly go down. From without too, Satan will be ready to raise opposition; he is afraid to have men startled, lest the sense of their misery denounced in the threatening should rouse them up to seek how they may make an escape. He is more sure of them while they are secure, and will

labour to keep off the threatening, lest it should awake them who dream of peace and happiness while they are sleeping in his very jaws. But now, in applying a promise, an unregenerate man ordinarily meets with no such opposition. Not from within, for the promise is all sweetness; the promise of pardon and life is the marrow, the quintessence of the gospel. No wonder if they be ready to swallow it down greedily. And Satan will be so far from opposing, as he will rather encourage and assist one who has no interest in the promise, to apply it; for this he knows will be the way to fix and settle them in their natural condition. A promise misapplied will be a seal upon the sepulchre, make them sure in the grave of sin, wherein they lie dead and rotting. And therefore if unregenerate men may apply a threatening, which is in these respects more difficult, as appears they may by the example of the Ninevites, and by the experience we have of divers under the spirit of bondage, why may they not be apt to apply a promise, where they are not like to meet with such difficulty and opposition?

Further, is it not more easy to believe a promise for pardon and happiness, than to believe a promise for a miracle? But natural men, such as in the text, may apply a promise for a miracle. They may have a faith of miracles; so had these in the text, so had Judas; the apostle supposes it, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Now, a faith of miracles depends upon a special promise, whereby God reveals his will to have such a wonderful work done by them. They believe it, depend upon him for it, and it is done. If unregenerate men may apply a promise for a miracle, why may they not apply a promise for mercy? This is clear enough; and by this time you see how far they may go towards a faith of dependence. They may cleave to God, stay, lean, rest, rely on him; and that in the application of a promise.

4. Assurance (that passes for another act of faith), which is a persuasion of a personal interest in God, and a title to Christ and his benefits, with a confidence that he has right to them, and has, or shall have, possession of them. Lutherans and foreign divines generally place saving faith in such a persuasion, and so were many of our own wont to do; and some, that make it not the vital act, that which justifies, yet make it an eminent act of justifying faith. This grace embracing Christ, and depending on him, is faith in its infancy; but this grace ascertaining and persuading, is faith in its growth and proficiency, in its state and triumph. They make it a high attainment of faith to arrive at such assurance, such a persuasion.

Let us inquire how near hypocrites may come to this. And I shall make it evident, (1.) that they may have a persuasion of their personal interest in God, and their title to heaven; (2.) that this persuasion may be strong, and stand unshaken against all opposition; (3.) that it may continue, and hold up, even to the death; (4.) that it may be grounded, established upon those grounds, which have a very near resemblance of those that are the supports of God’s elect.

(1.) That they may have such a persuasion, will be clear both by Scripture and experience. Those that are strangers to God, may be persuaded of a personal interest in him; those whom Christ will utterly disown, may be confident of a title to him as their Lord and Saviour; those who are heirs of hell, children of wrath, may persuade themselves that heaven is their portion. The first of these is the foundation of all the rest. Covenant interest in God is the first link in that golden chain which reaches from time to eternity. All blessings, positive and relative, temporal and eternal, are linked to it. He that persuades himself that God is his God, lays hold on the first link, which draws all the rest, he may easily persuade himself that all are his, 1 Corinthians 3:22-23.

Now in Scripture I find many no better than these in the text, who claim interest in God, and confidently speak God to be their God. Balaam the wizard could do this, Numbers 22:18; he takes it for granted that the Lord was his God, yet he was an enchanter, and gave that pernicious counsel whereby the Israelites were joined to Baal-peor, Numbers 25:2-3. There seems to be more weight in Abijah's speech; he asserts it with more spirit and confidence, grounds it upon God's covenant with them, and their keeping covenant with him, 2 Chronicles 13:10. As if he had said, As for you, O Israelites, ye have forsaken God, broke covenant with him, you can have no confidence to claim interest in him, or expect any success or blessing from him; 'but as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him.' And who is this that is so confident of his interest in God? See 1 Kings 15:1-34. But he speaks this to Israel. Israel is more confident, and pleads this to God himself, Hosea 8:2. Here is a particular application, which should be the act of faith only, 'My God.' And it is grounded upon the covenant; they plead covenant interest in God, wherein he had engaged himself to be their God, and they to be his people. In the Hebrew, Israel is the last word in the verse; and Jonathan's Targum to make out the sense, adds, 'Israel thy people.' And this is the form of the covenant, Deuteronomy 29:12-14. Grounding their confidence hereon, they lay claim to the Lord as their God in covenant: 'My God.' And who are they that speak thus in the language of faith? that speak in Thomas's language, when he most expressed his faith? Why they are such as, ver. 1 and 3, had transgressed God's covenant, and trespassed against the law, and that had cast off the thing that is good. The Jews who set themselves against Christ, were settled in this persuation; Christ himself could not beat them out of it, John 8:1-59. He insinuates that they were slaves to sin and Satan, John 8:33; expresses it, John 8:35; they answer, They are free, they are Abraham's seed, John 8:33; he grants they are Abraham's seed by natural descent, but insinuates that they had a worse, another father, upon a spiritual account, John 8:38-39, John 8:41; they reply, they are no children of fornication, they had no father but one on a spiritual account, and God was their Father. Here was their confidence, which they will retain, say Christ what he will; they counted themselves the children of God, and so expected the love and portion of his children.

They may be persuaded that Christ is their Saviour, and that he redeemed them. So those wretches, 2 Peter 2:1-22; they are said to be bought or redeemed by him, because thus they presumed, this was their persuasion. And so some take it, and not without warrant from Scripture, for the Holy Ghost speaks so in other places, of things as if they were really so, when they are so only in the opinion and persuasion of men: 2 Chronicles 28:23, 'He sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him.' Not that they really smote him, but that he was so persuaded. As in the former place, they are said to be bought or redeemed by him; not because Christ did really redeem them, but because they were so persuaded.

They may be persuaded that heaven is theirs, and that eternal life shall be their portion: John 5:39, 'Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.' They made account to have eternal life, and they gathered this from the Scripture; and so were the more confident and assured of it, because they thought they had Scripture ground for it.

It remains to shew wherein this faith is defective, wherein it comes short of that which is saving and justifying. And this I shall endeavour to discover in those acts which are most apt to occasion scruple and trouble, to those that are sincere but weak believers. But this very briefly, because I have fully discoursed of faith upon another subject,* and the text leads me rather to a detection of

hypocrisy, than a discovery of sincerity. Yet this must be briefly discovered, lest that be mistaken, and so the main design of the text miscarry.

1. Their consent has a double defect.

(1.) As to the act, it is but a semi-consent; imperfect, not full; some tendencies, no peremptory motions; some inclinations, no absolute resolutions; convinced, not persuaded; almost persuaded, not altogether, ■ν ■λ■γω, open half way to Christ. They would enter the marriage chamber, but not strive to enter; would purchase the precious pearl, but not come up to the price; would drink of the water of life, but thirst not; hunger not after the bread of life, though they see some necessity of it.

(2.) As to the object, they consent not to take whole Christ; they will embrace him as a Saviour, &c. But will they accept of him as their Lord and King? Why, yes, they may go far in yielding subjection to him as their Lord; but then they will not have him to be an absolute Lord. They like not an absolute subjection; they would have his sovereignty limited in this or that particular, where it seems to entrench too far upon that liberty which some lust or carnal interest desires. His way must be a little enlarged, made a little wider in one place or other, it seems too strait, too narrow; his yoke must be made a little lighter, it pinches too much upon that which is dear to them in this or that particular; whereas a sincere believer counts all the ways of Christ pleasantness, even when they are straitest, and give least room to the flesh. The yoke of Christ, when it is laid on him in his full weight, he accounts it easy and his burden light. His sceptre, how massy and weighty soever, is precious to him as gold, more precious than fine gold; if he might have a dispensation in this or that, he would not be exempted.

They will accept of Christ to save them, but will they have him to sanctify? Why, yes, some kind, some degree of sanctification they would have; but not thoroughly sanctified, not wholly mortified. How Christ comes, and so how he must be entertained, the prophet shews us, Malachi 3:2-3. There are some hypocrites, Malachi 3:1, who impatiently desired Christ, and expostulated with God, why he was so long in sending him; but little did they think he would come in such a way as is here described, as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap. If Christ would come with a pencil and draw a face of holiness upon their conversations, they would be willing so to entertain him; they are willing to have some tincture of holiness there, and to have it garnished with the most specious acts of religion, and plausible works of charity. Or if he would draw the lineaments of sanctification upon the surface of their souls, they can well enough endure such a superficial work. Let that be gilded and adorned as much as he will, they will not stand with him. For any tincture in the surface, either of heart or life, for a superficial change in either, if that will serve his turn, it will serve theirs too; they are content, upon these terms he may come and welcome. But to come as a refiner's fire, to burn up their lusts, to consume all their dross, and utterly to dissolve the old frame of nature, to melt their souls, so as to make them run into a new mould, they like not this. As this seems harsh and painful, so there will be waste and loss in refining, they are apt to think it needless. There is some dross which is as precious to them as silver, why should this be consumed? They like their old frame too well to have it quite dissolved. Would it not be enough to have it furbished and gilded over? Must it be quite melted? Must this be the work of their lives, to make use of Christ as fire, to be continually consuming their lusts? Must that which is so dear to them pass through the fire? Must they be always improving the purifying virtue of Christ as fuller's

soap, to wash out the stains and spots of sin, some of which they count their beauty and delight? Must this be their daily care? and must they be at this trouble continually all their lives? And will not Christ come and be entertained upon any other terms? Why, then, who may abide the day of his coming? who may abide it? Why, not any hypocrite in the world. He is a sincere believer, indeed, that will embrace Christ when he comes as a refiner's fire, that will not shrink and shrug at the heat and painfulness of it; but will admit it into the very inwards of his soul, and there nourish it till it have consumed whatever is offensive to Christ, how dear soever it has been to him.

2. Dependence on God, resting on Christ in a promise. This makes as fair a show of saving faith as anything can do. Wherein falls it short? Why, it is defective on this account, because it is not accompanied with that self-resignation which is either essential to faith, or inseparable from it, Luke 14:32. A hypocrite may rely upon Christ, but he will not resign up himself wholly to him; and that will appear in one, or all of these three severals.

(1.) In point of performance. He will not comply with the whole will of Christ discovering his duty. Indeed, if ye ask him in general, if he be willing to do whatever Christ requires of him, it is like he will affirm it peremptorily and with confidence. He himself may be deceived herein, as well as deceive others, while he stays in generals; for dolus latet in generalibus. But come to particulars; it may be you may mention a thousand particular duties to him, and he may be willing to submit to them all. You may easily miss that duty which he sticks at, when possibly it is but one duty or two among ten thousand that he cannot digest; but if ye be directed to hit right, and inquire of that duty which pinches upon his credit, and will expose him to disgrace and reproach, if he be popular, and affect vain-glory and applause, if that be his humour; Or which entrenches upon his profit, makes a breach in his estate, hazard his impoverishing and undoing in the world; if he be covetous and inclined to the earth, if that be his complexion; Or which robs him of his ease and pleasure, and cuts him short of those delights, wherewith he has been wont to make his life sweet and comfortable; if he be slothful and sensual, if that be his temper:

Inquire of such a duty, are ye willing to do this now when Christ calls for it? This will puzzle him; here will he stick. He will either plead, Sure this is not a duty, Christ is not such an hard master as to require that which will tend to disgrace me, or undo me, or make my life uncomfortable; or if ye convince him it is a duty, why, then he must be dispensed with; I will do whatever else the Lord would have me, only in this, the Lord be merciful to me: 'The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing,' as Naaman said about his going into the house of Rimmon, 2 Kings 5:18: herein the hollowness of his heart, the unsoundness of his faith, may be detected. See it in Abijah, he who makes such a flourish with his faith as few true believers go beyond him, 2 Chronicles 13:1-22. It is said of him, 1 Kings 15:3, 'His heart was not perfect as David's.' Now wherein lay the uprightness or perfectness of David's heart? See that Acts 13:22, π■ντα τ■ θεληματα. That was the index of David's uprightness, and this was the index of Abijah's hypocrisy; his heart was not perfect like David's; he would not fulfil, &c. His faith was not accompanied with a full resignation of himself to the will of God.

(2.) In point of relinquishment. He is not willing to part with every sin. There is some sin or other has deeper root in his heart than his faith. Ask in general if he be resolved to abandon every sin, and he may express his resolution with a great deal of confidence. Come to particulars; and if you specify ten thousand sins to him, he may be severally resolved against them all. But lay your hand

upon the head of his bosom sin, that which is rooted in his complexion, or commended to him by example and custom, or endeared to him by some harvests of pleasure or profit that he has reaped by it, ask him, Shall this sin be crucified? Here he is at a stand. Either he will contend it is no sin, and you will hardly fasten a conviction on him; or if he cannot avoid it, to satisfy conscience, and keep up some hopes of heaven, he will be content to proceed against it, as though he intended its death. He will imprison it, confine it; it shall never see the light, never break forth into open act; and there it shall have but prisoner's fare, he may cut off much of those large provisions that he has formerly afforded it; nay, he may bring it sometimes to the block, as if it were for execution. He may be drawn to those mortifying duties, which, if they were heartily managed, might be the death of it. Ay, but when the axe is falling upon its neck, when the sacrificing knife should go to its throat, he cannot find in his heart to do it. When it says to his heart, as Benhadad's servants pleaded to Ahab, 'I pray thee, let me live,' 1 Kings 20:32, he cannot but spare its life, whatever come on it. Here is the unfaithfulness of his heart; notwithstanding all his shows of faith, he has some lust or other that he will not resign up to death for Christ. Thus it was with Herod: he 'did many things;' the ministry of John brought him a great way, and a little is much for a king; but when John touched his Herodias, he touched him to the quick; there he flies off. Many things he did, but this one thing he would not do. Thus it was with Abijah, that famous instance of a temporary faith; he did not leave that sin which was commended to him by the example of his father, 1 Kings 15:3.

(3.) In point of suffering. He is not willing to part with all, to suffer all for Christ. Indeed, while sufferings are not in view, ask him, Are you content to have Christ accompanied with poverty, disgrace, displeasure of friends, hatred and persecution of enemies, imprisonment, banishment, tortures, death? And while these sufferings are at a distance, he may seem as resolute as any; but when it comes to trial, he falls off. A temporary faith has not root enough to stand in such storms. See this in the stony ground: Luke 8:13, 'In time of temptation they fall away.' What temptation this is, see Matthew 13:20-21, 'persecution and tribulation.' But can I have no evidence of my sincerity till such a trial?

Why, yes; the former particulars may suffice for that. Indeed, it is possible that an hypocrite may not be discovered to others, no, nor to himself, till the fiery trial; but that is much through his own default, not making a strict and impartial inquiry into the state of his soul. If he did, he might discover his heart to be in league with some sin or other; and that would be a sufficient discovery both of the unsoundness and unstableness of his faith, that it is not sincere at present, nor will hold out for time to come. Whereas a true believer may make use of the contrary, as an evidence both of the sincerity and stability of his faith; both that it is sound, and that it will abide the fiery trial; for I take this for a sure rule, established upon good reason, he that will part with his most endeared sin for Christ, will be ready to part with his life for Christ, when he shall be called to it.

Proceed we now to those other graces and affections which hypocrites may, in some measure and degree, seem to partake of.

3. They may have some love to God; some affection to Christ, some love to the people of God; yea, to holiness and the ways of God.

(1.) Some love to God, which may be raised upon such grounds as this: they may apprehend God to be good in himself. The heathens gave him the title, not only maximus, but optimus; not only the

greatest, but the best good: the summum bonum, the chief good. The Platonists make him τ■ ■γαθον, the idea of goodness, goodness in perfection, in whom there is a concurrence of all perfections, a confluence of all things amiable and excellent. A natural man may apprehend him to be so good, as other things deserve not the title of good compared with him. This we may infer from Christ's discourse with the young man: Matthew 19:16, Since thou dost not conceive me to be God, why callest thou me good, knowing that none is good but God? None comparatively good; none good as he is, originally, essentially, perfectly, unchangeably. Now goodness is the proper object of love; and an object duly propounded to its proper faculty will draw out some act or motion to it. As an hateful object, propounded as most hateful, does usually raise some motion of hatred, so an amiable object, propounded as most amiable, does usually raise some motion of love.

Further, they may apprehend him to be the fountain of goodness, not only to be good in himself, but to be the author of all good to others. So does Plato describe God to be good, and the cause of good. The light of nature leads men to subscribe to that of James, James 1:1-27. A natural man may discover not only goodness in God, but riches of goodness, and that distributed, and that duly expended and laid out upon the sons of men; and the apostle tells us, this discovery is such, as does lead, &c., Romans 2:4; nay, it does not only lead, but draw (it is not καλ■ι, but ■γει). Now, how does it draw? How is goodness attractive but by virtue of love? In this manner, what cause have we to love him, who is so rich in goodness? And how should it grieve me to have offended him, whom I have so much cause to love?

Moreover, they may apprehend that all the good things they enjoy do come from God; that they are parcels of that treasury of those riches of goodness which are in God. Laban, though an idolater, and that in dark times, could see and acknowledge, that what he enjoyed was from the blessing of God, Genesis 30:27. Now here is a stronger engagement to love, when God is apprehended, not only good in himself, and good to others, but good to him. This we find will beget some love in the brute creatures; no wonder if it raise some motions of love in the more apprehensive sort of men; who, notwithstanding the fall, have yet this advantage of beasts, they can apprehend a good turn, an engagement to love more clearly, and have more ability to reflect upon the Author of it.

Further, they may conceive the blessings they enjoy proceed from the love of God, Psalms 44:3. They may conclude, because he blesses them, he therefore loves them; and this is a strong engagement to love, even upon the worst of men, Matthew 5:46. The worst of men cannot resist such an engagement. The publicans will return some love for love. And may not natural men, apprehending strongly that God loves them (and has many ways expressed his love to them), make some return of love again?

Lastly, they may conceive they have a special propriety in God, believe that he is their God. Now propriety, though it be but in fancy, is a great endearment; we are apt to love our own things. I have proved before, that hypocrites may be confident of their interest in God; let me but add one text more, Romans 2:17, 'Thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God.' He speaks to those who were but Jews outwardly, nomine tenus, one who had nothing but the name; yet such a one can rest in the law, i. e. trust in it, for to trust and to rest upon are the same in Scripture phrase; he trusted in the law. Now the first words of the law are, 'I am the Lord thy God.' This he believed, and of this he boasted, that the Lord was his God; and he was not

alone in this. Now propriety is a strong engagement of affection.

Upon these accounts a hypocrite may have some love to God. And that we may not rely upon reason, see if the Scripture hold not forth as much. Jeremiah 2:2, the day of their espousals was when the Lord took them to be his people, and brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the wilderness. Then the Israelites had some kindness for the Lord, some love to him. And yet then what a character does Moses give of them, Deuteronomy 9:6, Daniel 9:24.

They may have some love to Christ too, and that upon the grounds premised. There is more of the loveliness of Christ discovered in the gospel than the light of nature can discover of the attractive goodness and excellencies of God. There is love in its triumph, in its highest exaltation, displayed before the sons of men; such expressions of love as one would think might force love from the devils, could they but persuade themselves of any interest in it. But now there are some hypocrites who can be confident they have interest in it, they are the objects of it; all this love, and the expressions of it, were for them; this I proved before. They can believe that Christ lived and died, &c., for them. And will not this be enough to command some common affection, to draw out some motions of love to Christ? See Matthew 10:37, ‘He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.’ This expression implies that there are some who may have a kind of love for Christ, while they have a greater love for other things; such as think him worthy of some love, and yet are unworthy of him, and so never shall have saving benefit by him. Those Jews in the prophet seem passionately affected to Christ, Malachi 3:1. The same word is used to express the affection of Shechem to Dinah, Genesis 34:19, who refused not the hardest terms that could well be propounded, so that he might have her to wife, see Genesis 34:3. Such an affection these Jews seemed to have for the Messiah, and yet what they were, see Genesis 34:7, and Genesis 2:17.

They may love the people of God. See this in Herod, Mark 6:20. He reverenced John, had an observant respect for him, delighted to hear him, and was exceeding sorry when Herodias had compassed his death. All which argue his love to John; and the reason of it is observable: he affected him because he knew he was a just and a holy man. A hypocrite may respect a holy man because he is holy. And further, John was a severe, a searching preacher, a sharp and impartial reprover of sin; one who would not spare the king himself, would not baulk the bosom sin of Herod; told him plainly what none of his courtiers durst tell him, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife, Mark 6:18; and yet for all this did Herod thus affect him. So that a hypocrite may affect a searching minister, one who uses to ransack his conscience, to enter into his bosom, and there to wound his darling sin. Such a minister he may reverence, he may take pleasure in him, and delight to hear him. Herod was none of the highest flown hypocrites, yet could he reach such a pitch. What may those do who are of a more refined strain, when a tyrant, an adulterer, could do this?

They may have some love to holiness and the ways of God. Holiness is an observance of the law of God, for this is the rule of holiness. Now the light of nature, with a little help from Scripture, can discover that a general due observance of the law of God would bring such order, concord, contentment into the world as would make it a new world, transform it into a kind of paradise, and restore the golden age. And is not this sufficient to render holiness, or, which is all one, an observance of the law of God, lovely and amiable?

Ephraim, in the prophet, is said to love the ways of holiness, Hosea 10:11. This, well understood, does evince our purpose. To understand it, observe, that walking in the ways of God, in the paths of holiness, is in this chapter, as in many other places, set forth in terms belonging to husbandry, by ploughing, sowing, reaping, thrashing, as Hosea 10:12. In this verse it is set forth by threshing (for their way of threshing was a treading out the corn with the feet of oxen or heifers). To tread out the corn, applied to Ephraim, is to walk in the ways of God, and this Ephraim is said to love. She had some love to the ways of holiness, yet far she was from holiness itself, as appears by the Lord's complaint, Hosea 10:13; so that, though she loved to walk in the ways of holiness, yet there was scarce a footstep of holiness to be found in her. It was some extrinsecal consideration that endeared holiness to her, of which I shall give you an account presently; for the distinction betwixt this love and that which is sincere and saving, lies in the text before us, and therefore we will offer it to your observation before we proceed further. A hypocrite may love the ways of holiness, but it is not the holiness of those ways that he is in love with, but some outward advantage that he meets with, as he walks therein. This is notably held forth in the phrase of treading out the corn. It was forbidden by the law to muzzle the mouth of the beast that trod out the corn, Deuteronomy 24:1-22; so that the heifer was feeding all the time she was treading, and this was it that made her like the work. It was not the labour, but the food, that she was in love with; if her mouth had been muzzled, she would have liked her work no longer, she would soon have been weary of it. Upon this account did Ephraim love the ways of God, as any hypocrite may do; while they walk therein, they reap some outward advantage thereby, some gain and profit, some credit and applause, some temporal blessings, of which godliness has the promise. It is not godliness itself, but some attendants of godliness, that they were in love with. While they are fed with these, they will love to tread the corn, love to walk in the ways of holiness; but it is not the work that they love but, these wages. Let them but be muzzled, let but these outward advantages be subtracted, and they will quickly grow weary of the way of holiness. As for their love to the people of God, it is but some slight affection, which a carnal respect or interest, when there is occasion, will over-rule and command out of doors. We see it in Herod; his respect and affection to Herodias prevailed in him against the very life of John the Baptist. And though they may seem to love them because they are holy, so as their love may seem to be grounded upon their holiness, yet indeed their holiness comes in but at the second hand. The first and chief ground of their affection and respect is something else, to which holiness is made subservient.

We may see this in Herod also. It concerned him to keep up his respect and reputation with his people. And the people they had an high opinion of John, as a just and holy man; they counted him a prophet, Matthew 14:5. And therefore was Herod concerned to countenance him, and shew him some affection. And so the first ground of Herod's respect to him was his repute amongst the people; his holiness was but considered as the ground of the people's respect. As for their love to God and Christ, it is not ingenuous, nor superlative.

(1). They love God not for himself, because he is good, but because he does good. Love him for the loaves: John 6:26, 'You seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat, &c., and were filled.' Self-love is the rise of this love; now the streams rising no higher than the spring, it must be base love. (2). It is not a love of union. Not from a love to be near him, with him, in him, in his presence, here and hereafter, in ordinances, and in heaven. (3). It is not a love of complacency, because they are pleased with God above all, with all in God; and all that comes

from him, works, word, mercies, afflictions, threatenings, promises. It is not a love to be like him, 1 John 4:17. (4). It is not transcendent. They do not love him more than all, wishing more good to him than all, preferring him and his will before all, Mark 10:37, Luke 14:26. He does not apply all his faculties to love, and manifest love, Deuteronomy 6:5.

4. They may have some desires, like those which are found in the people of God, nearly resembling those desires which are as the pulse of an holy soul, by the feeling of which we are wont to judge of its spiritual temper and constitution. Their desires may be drawn out after heavenly and supernatural objects; they may have some desires after heaven and salvation, after Christ, the author of salvation, after those ways which lead to it.

(1.) They may desire heaven, that glory and happiness, those joys, and that rest which remains for the people of God. We see this in Balaam, Numbers 23:10. He knew that the death of the righteous was but a step to happiness, and that the end of their life here was the beginning of eternal life. Such a death, such an end, he desires; such as would instate him in eternal happiness. The heathens had some apprehensions of that happy immortality which succeeds the death of righteous men; that the soul, in a state of separation, would be happier than in conjunction here with the body; and this future state some of them have desired rather than life. Nonnus reports of Cleombrotus, that lighting on Plato's Phædo, his dialogue of the soul, and learning there that the soul would be happier when parted from the body, he was so transported with desires of that happy, immortal state, that he forthwith deprived himself of life to enjoy it, ■ρριψε ■αυτ■ν ■π■ το■ τε■χους κ■ι τ■θνηκεν.

If an heathen could be so transported with desires of happiness, who saw it so little, and had his hopes of enjoying it, no wonder if temporary professors do long for heaven, when it is so clearly discovered, when life and immortality is brought to light by the gospel.

They may desire Christ, the author of salvation; they may apprehend him to be the way, the truth, and the life; and so may desire him as the true way to life. The stiff-necked Jews did long for Christ, they did ardently desire the coming of the Messiah; as he was the desire of all nations, so in especial manner the desire of that nation, as expecting he would be the glory of his people Israel, Malachi 3:1, 'Whom ye seek, whom ye desire,' ■■■, it signifies a desire expressed by prayer, and the use of means for the attaining what is desired. Thus did they desire. It is true, that which much engaged their hearts to long for the Messiah, was an expectation of his coming as a glorious temporal monarch; but this was not all, they expected more from him than is comprised in such a notion, as appears by that of the woman of Samaria, John 4:25. Certainty of all things concerning the worship of God as the way, and salvation by him as the end, as appears by the preceding discourse in the former verses. And we see the foolish virgins, they expected the coming of Christ, they waited for his glorious appearing to consummate his marriage with his espoused people; they prepared for this, trimming their lamps, and going out to meet him; they desired his coming that they might enter with him into the marriage-chamber, that where he was, they might be also; they express the importunity of their desires, as in the former ways, so by knocking and calling.

They may have some desires to know the ways of Christ, to be acquainted with the way that leads to life, and some desires to walk therein, Isaiah 58:2; they seek him daily; and what do they seek? they ask of him the ordinances of justice; they would be acquainted with the righteous ways and

holy ordinances of God; they behaved themselves as those that desired to know the ways of the Lord, to be acquainted with his will, as those that had a mind to walk in his ways and comply with his will; yet they were but hypocrites in their most specious actings, Isaiah 58:3-4. But we have a notorious instance of this in the address of those Jews to Jeremiah, Jeremiah 42:1-3; they all here unanimously and importunately desire to know the will and way of God; and, if any words whatsoever could be an infallible sign of the motions of the heart, we might collect from their words that they desired to know the way of God out of a design to walk in it; for they call God to witness, in a solemn manner, that this was the bent and resolution of their heart, Jeremiah 42:5-6; yet they were hypocrites in all this, as we see, Jeremiah 42:20.

5. They may have some joy and delight in that which is spiritual and heavenly, some joy in spiritual objects, some delight in holy employments, some rejoicing in the gospel, in Christ, in their interest in Christ, in the ways of Christ; and these are the chief objects of this affection of the people of God, of that joy which is unspeakable and glorious. Hypocrites may have like acts upon the same objects.

(1.) They may rejoice in the gospel; it may be a joyful message to them, and so they may receive it; they may entertain it, welcome it, as tidings of great joy; they may hear it with joy and gladness; so did Herod, Mark 6:20. The phrase seems to import such an affection as the psalmist expresses, Psalms 122:3. Those whom the apostles admitted into the church are expressed by the character, Acts 2:41. Herod had such an affection, something very like it, for the Holy Ghost holds it forth in the same phrase, Mark 12:37. Herod and such hypocrites may rise up in judgment against such amongst us who are so far from hearing the word gladly, as they care not how little they hear of it, who rather loathe this manna, with the Israelites seem cloyed with it; think they should have too much, if they should have as much as is offered; so far are they from receiving it gladly. How far do these come short of heaven, who come so far short of hypocrites? They can receive the word with joy, and rejoice in the light of the gospel; so did those Jews, John 5:35; yet such as came short of life, ver. 40. Though John was a plain, severe, a searching, a convincing teacher, a burning and shining light, that both searched and scorched their consciences, yet they embraced his doctrine with joy, and rejoiced in it; so the stony ground, Mark 4:16; Matthew 13:1-58. ‘With joy.’

(2.) They may delight in Christ. If John Baptist, who was but Christ’s harbinger, was welcomed with joy by temporary professors, well might they entertain Christ himself, whose harbinger he was, with rejoicing; if John, who was but as the morning star, was looked upon with delight, how much more the Sun, Christ himself, the Sun of Righteousness? ‘Light is sweet,’ Ecclesiastes 11:7. Light is sweet to the eye of the body; so is spiritual light to eye of the soul; it is a pleasant thing to behold the light of life, the Sun of Righteousness. It is so even to some hypocrites; it was so to the disobedient Jews, though they saw him but afar off, at some hundred years’ distance; though they had but such glimmerings as could be in the sky so long before the rising of this Sun; some dawnings thereof in prophetical Scriptures, shadowed with much darkness; yet even such appearances of Christ was their delight, Malachi 3:1. The Angel, the Mediator of the covenant of grace, in whom, and for whose sake, that covenant of life and peace was made, and in whose blood it was sealed and ratified; in him, in this messenger, they delighted. So those who had nothing accompanying salvation, tasted some sweetness in Christ, Hebrews 6:4; there is heavenly sweetness in Christ the heavenly gift, and this they tasted, and the taste of it could not but be sweet and delightful; they tasted something herein like the joys of heaven, and therefore are said

to partake of the powers of the world to come; and yet these, for all the sweetness they have tasted in Christ, all the delight they have taken in him, may fall off from him, and so shew that at the best they were no better than hypocrites.

(3.) They may rejoice in their interest in Christ, a supposed, presumed interest; for such as is real they have none. That hypocrites may have persuasions of their title to Christ and his benefits, I shewed at large, &c.; that the result of this persuasion may be joy and rejoicing is so evident as needs no proof; as he that has found the pearl of great price will rejoice, so he that does but persuade himself he has found it, may be surprised with rejoicing; for, indeed, it is the apprehension, not the reality, that is the immediate cause of joy. He that has real interest in Christ, yet not apprehending it, may go mourning all the day long: while he that is a stranger to Christ, yet presuming upon a title to him, may rejoice as one that finds spoils; and, indeed, a hypocrite may far exceed a true believer upon this account; he may have a spring-tide of joy, it may flow and fill its banks, when the comforts of a sincere soul are at a low ebb, Job 20:5-6. Though his joy be but short, yet it is great, what it wants in time is made up in measure; it is a joy like that of a triumph, and what is comparable to that? puts his soul into a triumphant posture, so as his excellency mounts up to the heavens, and his head seems to reach the clouds; so that, carnal Jew, Romans 2:17, καυχ■σαι ■ν Θε■, thou gloriest in God. He gloried in this, that God was his God. The word imports a jetting or strutting of the neck; when the spirit is elevated, and moves in a triumphant posture, then it glories. David's soul was in such a posture when he breaks forth into those expressions, Psalms 34:2, 'My soul shall make her boast,' &c.; by the same phrase does the apostle express this formalist, he boasts, he glories. Comfort is more than peace, and joy is more than comfort, and glorying is more than joy; it is joy in its highest exaltation, joy exulting, making the spirit jet and strut as one marching in triumph; such may be the rejoicings of a formalist. His soul is so full of joy as it cannot be contained, but breaks out into triumphing shouts, and songs, and exaltation. That is the import of the word, in Job 20:5.

(4.) He may delight in the ways of God; may rejoice, not only in his privilege, but in his duty. We have this twice expressed in one verse, Isaiah 58:2. They not only delight to know, but to do; demean themselves as those who delight both to find out the way to God, and to walk in it; they delight to approach; yea, and the ways wherein they delighted was that wherein the flesh takes no delight. One of them was a duty which tends to macerate and humble the body, and afflict the soul; for that is the instance immediately adjoined, ver. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?' &c. So Ezekiel 33:31-32 : 1, they come frequently; 2, attend devoutly; 3, hear with delight. They took pleasure in the prophet's sermons, as in a most delightful song set off with exquisite music. But now their delight is defective, in that it is,

(1.) In something external, not in divine objects themselves. In the saints, not because holy, strict, but because kind, affable. In ministers, not as God's instruments to regenerate, search the heart, discourage sin, but as learned, eloquent, plausible delivery, sweet deportment; in the gospel preached, for notions perfecting the intellectuals, not as it teaches to deny ungodliness; in prayer, not as enjoyment of God, communion and communication, but as it gets them applause, upholds credit, satisfies conscience.

(2.) It is in general confused. Descend to particulars, it vanishes. In the gospel offering Christ as a Saviour, with pardon, reconciliation, liberty; but come to the terms upon which Christ is offered,

denying self, taking up the cross, &c., they go away offended.

6. They may have some zeal for God and his concernments. Zeal is an affection which much honours God, and is much honoured by him. The Lord expresses an affectionate resentment of the zeal of Phinehas for many generations, Numbers 25:11, Numbers 25:13; Psalms 106:30. Zeal, when it is of the right stamp, is a character, not only of a true, but of an eminent Christian. Now such professors may express much zeal; it may flame as high (sometimes higher) as that which is kindled from heaven. To give you an account of this more distinctly, in some particulars,

(1.) They may have zeal towards God; not only for themselves and their own interests, but for God. So had Paul before his conversion, and the Jews while unconverted. We may take the apostle's word for both, Acts 22:3. He gives this testimony, not only of himself, but of those who then persecuted him. His zeal was drawn out, not he says towards his own reputation, and advantage, preferment, but towards God. So says he of these Jews here, and so he testifies of them, Romans 10:2. They had, even the rejected Jews, they had a zeal, he says; he says not a zeal of their own carnal interests and worldly concernments, but 'a zeal of God,' such a zeal as engaged the apostle's heart, drew out his desires after them, obliged him to pray for them, Romans 10:1. Their zeal is assigned as the cause of all this, Romans 10:2. It was a zeal of God, according to the best of their knowledge.

(2.) They may be zealous for reformation, zealous against false worship. See this in Jehu, 2 Kings 10:16. Here is zeal made visible by action, and so confident as it dare expose itself to view: 'Come, see.' Offers itself to the test of Jonadab. And it is zeal for the Lord. Zeal, when it is not for God, is but wildfire; when it is not in the cause of God, it is out of its place; like fire in the thatch, not in the chimney, more apt to consume the house than to be serviceable to it. 'It is good,' Galatians 4:18. Now he was zealously affected in a good thing; it was a business wherein the Lord employed him. It was zeal against sin, against false worship, against the idolatrous worship of Baal; a zeal which consumed the place, the means, the instruments of that false worship; a zeal for reformation, which the Lord rewards with a kingdom to him, and his posterity for some generations, 2 Kings 10:30. And yet Jehu was not sincere for all this, see 2 Kings 10:31. But whatever he was, his zeal for reformation, and against corrupt worship does bear witness against, and condemn that lukewarmness and indifferency of many amongst us as to reformation and purity of worship. It is a lamentable thing to see so many ready to fall back to those old corruptions; forward to return to their vomit, to lick up that superstition which the Lord in a sharp course of physic had brought us to disgorge. A lamentable thing to see such lukewarmness and indifferency as to the worship of God refined from its old dregs, and reformed according to rule; to see this even in those that should be of a better temper. Such indifferency when we are engaged for reformation by all that is solemn and sacred; such indifferency, as though reformation had cost nothing, no prayers or tears, no treasure or blood, no hazards or sufferings; such indifferency as though those old corruptions had been no ground of God's controversy with us; no ground of former persecutions, banishment, imprisonments, and sufferings of all sorts to those of whom the world was not worthy, as though the precious gospel of Christ itself had not been apparently hazarded thereby; such indifferency as will be determined by a worldly interest, so as this shall turn the scales for a corrupt way, those antiquated corruptions; and that, notwithstanding the word of God, the principles of reformed churches, and all our engagements be put in the other end of the balance, these shall be no weight against a worldly interest, a carnal respect. Sure this is to be

bewailed and laid to heart. I confess a sincere soul may be overswayed by a worldly interest in a particular act; but beware when this becomes a temper, when it is predominant, when it is constantly or commonly prevalent; then it is of sad importance. Whatever things or relations we secure thereby, we hereby forfeit our relation to Christ; he will not own such as his disciples. In Christ's account we miscall such when we call them Christians; their proper name is worldlings; the denomination should be regularly from that which is predominant. But not to digress. If Jehu be condemned, notwithstanding his zeal for reformation, how shall such lukewarmness and indifferency as to the worship of God escape?

(3.) They may be zealous for the ordinances and institutions of God. As against false worship, so for the true worship of God; as for reforming worship corrupted, so for continuance of worship reformed. Paul, before his conversion, was exceeding zealous for the ordinances, Galatians 1:14; the ordinances delivered by God to the fathers. So it is taken by interpreters, and not restrained to pharisaical traditions. He was zealous for those institutions which were established by the law of God, for which the believing Jews were zealous, even after their conversion, Acts 21:20.

(4.) They may be zealously affected to the people of God, zealous for their salvation. So were the false apostles for the believing Galatians, Galatians 4:17. The apostle commends Epaphras for his affection to the Colossians in a like phrase, Colossians 4:13. The false apostles had a great zeal for the Galatians; they were zealous for their salvation; they endeavoured to bring them into that way which in their judgment was the only way to salvation. They mistake the way indeed, and therefore he adds, 'but not well.'

Yet formal professors may know the true way, and then there is no reason but they may shew as much zeal therein for the salvation of others as these false teachers did for the Galatians.

7. They may have some fear of God. To fear God is the most signal character of the people of God in Scripture. Yet some fear of God may be found, even in those that have no saving interest in God; nay, some fear of God may be found in devils, James 2:19. Here is fear, and that which proceeds from believing; here is a great fear; and such as is effectual, manifests itself by trembling. But this fear, you may say, arises from apprehensions of wrath and justice; it is a legal, a servile fear. It is true. But there is a fear that springs from apprehensions of mercy and goodness; an ingenuous fear, such as the prophet speaks of, Hosea 3:5. Now some such a fear as this we find in the Israelites, those who for their rebellions against God fell in the wilderness, and were not suffered to enter into the land of promise, Exodus 14:31. Here is a fear accompanied with faith; they believed and feared; here is a fear arising from the Lord's mercy and goodness, vouchsafing them a gracious and miraculous deliverance from the hands of their enemies. This is mentioned immediately before, Exodus 14:30. Here is a fear attended with joy, breaking forth into the praises of God, Exodus 15:1. And we find it repeated, Psalms 106:11-12. Here seems to be that happy concurrence, that sweet mixture of joy and trembling, whereby the soul is kept in that temper which is the best, a middle temper, then it is upon the right bottom; fear moderating the excesses of joy, that the heart be not too much exalted; and joy alleviating the pressures of fear, that the soul be not too much dejected. Such a temper as the Lord himself delights in, and calls for, Psalms 2:11. The Israelites had some semblance of this; they feared, there is their trembling; and sang his praises, there is their joy. But what were this people, whose temper seems so excellent? The words immediately following discover them to be no better than those in the text,

vers. 13, 14. They soon forgot them; indeed as soon as their song is ended we find them murmuring, Exodus 15:24. But three days interposed betwixt that seeming excellent frame of spirit and this detestable distemper, betwixt this fear of God, and this mutiny wherein they murmured against him. So speedily did all their faith, their joy, their fear end in a mutiny.

Further, the fear of God may be exceeding great in natural men. So it was in those mariners, who used to be most fearless, Jonah 1:10; when they apprehended the nature of the prophet's sin, and saw the effects of it, then were the men exceedingly afraid. Though Jonah tells them, Jonah 1:9, he feared the Lord, yet they seem to be possessed with more fear of God than Jonah. Even natural men, upon some occasions, may express more fear of God than a prophet, than some eminent servant of God, when under a temptation. But here their fear seems to be from apprehension of danger, and so more servile; see Jonah 1:16. You will see a fear of a more ingenuous strain. Now, the storm was over, the sea was becalmed, the danger was past, deliverance appeared, and that as the consequent of their prayer; and yet now they feared the Lord, and that with a great fear (as it is in the Hebrew), such as is accompanied with acts of worship, and resolutions of praise and obedience. Such a fear of God may be in heathens (for I find not any divines determine that they were converted, nor find I any certain ground in the text for such a determination). Now, if such an affection may be in heathens, strangers to God, and the discoveries of God in Scripture, what may there be in those who may see God by the light of Scripture, and live under the discoveries of God, both by the law and the gospel?

8. They may have some contempt of the world; yea, a high degree of it. This seems to be the property of the Lord's redeemed, those who are redeemed from the earth by the blood of the Lamb. But yet some men of the world may despise the riches and honours, the pomp and vanities, of the world; they may reject them, relinquish, deny themselves the possession and enjoyment of them, forbear the pursuit of them. They may look upon the most splendid things in the world as things below them, unworthy of their thoughts, affections, or endeavours. There seems to be the greatest allurement, the strongest temptation, the subtlest snare in riches. Here is a snare which few seem to escape; the people of God are here too much entangled, therefore I shall insist on this most, and shew how natural men may despise, refuse, and trample upon riches; and demonstrate this, not in words only, but in their practice. Peter, in the name of the rest of the disciples, seems to boast of their relinquishing the world for Christ, Matthew 19:27. His speech has reference to the young man too much in love with the world, who would part with Christ rather than his possessions. Ay, but, says he 'We have left all.' This was an argument of great self-denial and contempt of the world, to forsake their houses, and what estates they had, to follow Christ, in a poor, despicable, afflicted condition, but this they all did; he speaks it in the name of the twelve. And to the twelve Christ applies his answer, Matthew 19:28. Now, Judas was one of these; he had forsaken all as well as the rest. A Judas may shew such contempt of the world, as to abandon and relinquish all he has in it.

Paul was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles in self-denial and estrangement from the world. Who is there that could less regard earthly things than he, who was crucified to the world, and minded riches no more than a dead man? And yet see the false apostles would out-vie him in this very thing. Whereas he received maintenance from the churches to which he preached, they would receive none, they would preach gratis; and forced the apostle to do so also, that he might cut off their occasion of glorying, as if they were greater contemners of the world than he, 2

Corinthians 11:12. Would we not take it as a great argument of contemning the world, if we should see a rich man sell his estate and bring the price of it into a common treasury for the maintenance of others, reserving only a part of it to himself? Would ye not take this as an evidence of an heart not valuing riches? Would it not prove a shrewd trial, if professors amongst us should be put upon such an act? Yet Ananias and Sapphira did thus much, Acts 5:1-3. They sold their possession, brought the price of it to be disposed of for the relief of others, and they would not be the disposers of it themselves neither, as those that are most liberal would desire to be in such a case; they lay it down at the apostles' feet, they reserve but a part of it for their own use.

Ay, and they did this voluntarily; it was a free act; for, as appears by verse 4, there was no necessity laid on them to sell their possession, or part with so much of the price of it. They might have kept it unsold, or kept the price of it to their own uses, and yet have continued in communion with the church, not have been judged unworthy of the apostles' fellowship. There was no decree made by the apostles, no injunction laid upon the primitive Christians, to sell or alienate their possessions; for Peter clearly sheweth that Ananias might justly have kept his own, in land or money. It was a voluntary act, and so is a greater evidence of a less esteem of his possessions. So that hence it appears, an hypocrite may so little value riches as to sell his whole estate, and dispose of the greatest part of it for the relief of others; so far they may contemn the world.

There is an appearance of some contempt of the world in that deluded generation amongst us, which we call Quakers. The papists, whom they herein follow, and by whom they seem in most things to be influenced, come not short of them in this. The retirements, abstinence from meats and marriages, voluntary poverty, and other severities observed in some of their stricter orders, is looked on as a contempt of riches and pleasures. But if this were real and not counterfeit, if we saw a lively face of this amongst them, and were not deluded with a vizard, yet would they have no great cause to boast, since The Essenes, a superstitious sect amongst the Jews, and no better than half pagans, could vie with them herein. Indeed, the Papists are but their apes; as in other monastical observances, so in this shew of contemning the world, as Plato and Josephus represent them, they had more of this in reality, and little less in appearance. But to mention nothing but what is to our purpose, besides their abstinence from sensual pleasures, they so little valued riches, as none was admitted into their society but he must part with all his possessions; and so they lived together, as not any one of them had anything of his own.

Nay, this is to be found in mere heathens. The Lacedæmonians, the gallantest and most powerful state in Greece, when Greece was in her greatest flourish, lived in a visible contempt of riches and other vanities which the world much admires, and that for many years together.

Let me give you some particular instance, wherein this contempt of the world has been visible amongst heathens. It is observed, that some of the gallantest men wherewith the more refined part of the heathen world has been honoured, have lived in extreme poverty; and that not out of necessity, but out of choice; not because they wanted opportunities to make themselves rich, but out of a contempt of riches, and because they thought it better to want than to enjoy them.

It is reported of Epaminondas (the great Theban general, the gallantest commander that Greece ever bred, and who by his brave conduct had raised Thebes, a contemptible state before, to be the most powerful city in Greece) that the condition wherewith he contented himself was so low and poor, as it afforded him but one sorry coat; so that when he sent this to the fuller, he was glad to

keep house till it was returned, for want of another. It is like he could not want opportunities to enrich himself in those great wars wherein he commanded in chief and was always victorious; but, as they represent him, he was so far from seeking riches, as he would not accept of them when they sought him; for besides other rich offers which he rejected, when the king of Persia presented him with a large quantity of gold (πολ■ χρ■σιον, says Ælian), he would not accept of the present. We would look upon him as an elevated soul in these days, as one raised high above the world, who would not stoop to such a golden offer.

Phocion, a man so eminent for abilities in government both in peace and war, as he was forty-five times chosen governor of Athens, yet is reported to have lived all his time in the lowest poverty; and this he did voluntarily and out of choice too. For when Alexander sent him an hundred talents (which in our account amounts to nineteen thousand pounds, a vast sum in those days), and besides this, the choice of any one of four cities in Asia for a constant revenue, he refused both the one and the other. Why, says he to Alexander's messengers, does the king send me such a rich present? Because, answer they, he counts thee the best and most upright man in Athens. And why then, replies he, will he not suffer me to continue so? ο■κο■ν ■ασατω μ■ τοιο■τον ε■ναι. Insinuating that it was more difficult to be a good man in the midst of riches than in the lowest poverty, and intimating that this was the end why he preferred poverty before riches.

Let me but add one more, it is that famous cynic, whom they represent speaking in a strain something like Scripture language: that he was a pilgrim, a wanderer here; that he was not at home while he was in the world; that he was absent from his country; that he was poor, poorly clad, and had nothing but from hand to mouth; and yet no less contented with this poor condition than Alexander with the empire of the world, vid. Ælian, p. 125. He would not change this poor estate for one more plentiful, though it were in his choice; for when that great monarch offered him what he would desire, he desired only that he would stand out of his light. So little did he value these things of the world, which others value more than their souls.

I could easily cloy you with such examples, but I forbear. Indeed, I use not to trouble you with foreign instances, but this part of my subject seems to require it, and the usefulness of them may make up an apology, if any be needful. We may see something herein that may provoke Christians to emulation. How should we be ashamed to admire these things so much, which the light of nature discovers to be so contemptible; to lay out so much of our thoughts, time, endeavours upon riches, which the heathens counted not only unworthy of their hearts and endeavours, but of their acceptance. However, by this it is plain, that there may be a contempt of the world in those whom Christ will not own.

They may go far in a way of obedience; make a great progress towards heaven in respect of their practice. What they have of religion and godliness, may not only be notional but practical; such as consists not in some light and knowledge, some inward heat and affection only, but which may make a great, a fair appearance in their practice, both in their addresses to God and in their dealings with men, in public and private, in acts of holiness and righteousness.

There may be a visible holiness in the face of their conversations, a visible conformity to the rule of holiness, a visible compliance with the revealed will of God, both as to moral and positive preceipts. Their lives and deportment in the sight of the world may be both blameless and beautiful. So was the outward carriage of the Pharisees, by Christ's own testimony, beautiful

without, Matthew 23:27. He searches the heart and could see what was within; that which was visible was beauty, and such as got them the repute of very holy men. So far as one man can judge of the acts of another, their obedience may seem as good as the best, and we being to judge of men by their acts, they may be reckoned amongst the best in their generation. Thus they may live, and thus they may die; live as saints and die as martyrs, in the account of others and in their own account too, and yet, in the judgment of Christ, may be no better than workers of iniquity; no better than these in the text, and in the end have no better reward. But not to stay in generals, a distinct and particular account hereof will be more satisfying and convictive, and this way I shall lead you to a discovery, a prospect of a formal professor in his utmost obedience, by three steps.

(1.) There is a negative obedience, in not doing that which is evil; this consists in an observance of negative precepts, and appears in avoiding sin, declaring* what the Lord forbids.

(2.) There is a positive and active obedience, in doing that which is good; this consists in a conformity to positive precepts, and appears in the practice of those duties which the Lord commands, a performing of those acts of morality, charity, or godliness, which are enjoined in the law or the gospel.

(3.) There is a passive obedience, which consists in suffering what is inflicted, either for the profession or practice of what is according to the mind and will of God, either for the profession of his truth or obedience to his will, in case upon trial we resolve to obey God rather than man.

Now formal professors may go far in each of these, in avoiding what is forbidden, doing what is commanded, and suffering for their faith or practice. I will shew this particularly, and when all is put together, you will see that the same will amount to no less than what I delivered in the general account.

[1.] They may go far in avoiding sin, there may be a notable exactness in their negative obedience, strict in avoiding what is offensive to God. I shall lead you to the height of their progress herein by these several degrees.

First, They may avoid gross sins, shun that wickedness which is the practice of the profane world, so as no such blots shall be seen in them as are too visible in the lives of others. Such a representation we have of the Pharisee, Luke 18:11: he was far from being plunged in that wickedness which other men are sunk into; his spot was not the spot of the publican. This was the temper of that sect generally; their avoiding of gross sins, such as were condemned by the letter of the law, was the ground of their confidence that they were righteous. They were not so bad as others, and therefore thought they were good enough. And this was the occasion of the parable, Luke 18:9. This sect, whom Christ will condemn, may go thus far, Luke 18:14. The apostle speaks of some who had escaped the pollutions of the world, and yet were far from escaping hell, 2 Peter 2:20. They had got out of the puddle wherein the profane world does wallow, and yet afterward returning to their vomit, shew their natures were never truly changed; they were dogs still, by running back to the mire shew they were never thoroughly washed, never truly sanctified.

Secondly, They may avoid the open commission of smaller sins. Not only such as civil men are afraid and ashamed of, but such as the world will scarce count sins, will not easily be convinced they are sins. It is known that the Jews, at that time when they rejected Christ, were so far from worshipping idols, as they would not suffer any image in their temple; so far from profaning the

name of God by wicked oaths, as they forbore the use of it in their common discourse, lest it should be profaned; so far from breaking the Sabbath by following the works of their callings, or spending any part of it in sports or recreations, as they scrupled works of necessity, lest these should be a profanation of it.

Paul, while unconverted, says he was blameless as to the observation of the law, Php 3:1-21. So he was not only free from gross acts of profaneness, but from smaller acts of disobedience before men; he had been blameable, if he could have been charged with these. The way wherein he was engaged, held forth the most accurate strictness to the eye of the world, and, therefore, did avoid the open practice of smaller sins, Acts 26:5, κατ■ τ■ν ■κριβεστατην ■■ρεσιν τ■ς ■μετ■ρας θρησκ■ιας. The apostle speaks of some drawn to apostasy, who had clean escaped, 2 Peter 2:18, ■π■φυγοντες. They did not only avoid sin, but fly from it. They fled so far and so fast, as they seemed to have made a clear escape; they seemed to have broke all the snares, great and small, else they were not quite escaped. If we see a bird entangled in any part, if she stick but by one claw, we say not she is clean escaped. These in the text, as to outward appearance, were quite got out of the net; they seemed not less or more entangled, were not openly inveigled in any sinful practice, greater or less. Such an escape may hypocrites make from open sins, more and less heinous. But no wonder if any of the Jews (their light being such, as the rest of the world compared therewith was darkness) made conscience of smaller sins, since we see that the light which the heathen had, led them to make conscience, not only of their words and actions, but even of their looks and glances. Pericles, his speech to the Tragedian, is memorable to this purpose; he taking Sophocles tardy upon this account, perceiving his eye too much taken with a beauty that passed by him: One in your place, says he, should not only restrain his hands from covetous practices, but his eyes also from wanton looks, Valer. Max. p. 212. If such conscientiousness was to be found in heathens, whose consciences might easily be asleep, being so much in the dark, how much more tenderness may there be in professors under the gospel, whose light is like that at noon-day, whenas that of the Jews was but as twilight, that of the heathens but as star-light? How does this condemn a great part of those who go under the name of Christians!

Thirdly, They may be careful to avoid some secret sins, such as the eye of the world can take notice of; they may be careful to avoid sinful thoughts, yea, sinful dreams, more excusable than thoughts, because less voluntary. Epiphanius, relating several severities and hardships to which the Pharisees inured themselves, as to their lodging, and the posture wherein they slept, assigns this as their end therein, δια τ■ δ■θεν μ■ σωματικ■ν τ■ παθε■ν, to prevent nocturnal pollution, that no impure dream might occasion any outward involuntary defilement, vid. Casaub. p. 44. The heathen could see this, that a righteous man would avoid secret sins as well as open. Notable is that of Plato, ■ δικαιος ■ν■ρ κ■ν τον Γ■γο■ λ■βη δακτυλιυν ■να μ■ ■ρ■ται, &c. A just man will not do an unrighteous act though he could do it invisible. What their practice was in secret is not discernible, and therefore instances of this kind cannot be expected; but this was their principle, which Ælian thus lays down, p. 414. He is a bad man, not only who does wrong to others, ■λλ■ και ■ ■ννο■σας ■δικ■σαι, but who thinks of doing them wrong. Now we may reasonably suppose that their light leading them to this, some of them would follow it; for so we find they did in other cases. But the light in those that live under the gospel is more clear and strong as to the discovery and condemning of secret sins, and no doubt but it may procure some compliance in inward acts, since we see it carries all before it as to those acts that are outward

and public.

Fourthly, They may avoid the occasions of sin; not only sin itself, but the occasions of it; they may shun these themselves, and they may remove them from others.

Thus Jehu not only removed the idolatry of Baal, but the occasion of it; he did more herein than some of the good kings of Judah; though they removed idolatry out of the temple, would not suffer it there; yet they tolerated the high places, as the Lord often complains. But he destroyed the very place of that false worship, 2 Kings 10:27. He both broke the eggs, and pulled down the nest, that idolatry might be hatched no more there.

It is reported of some of the Pharisees, that they wore hats so deep as to cover their eyes; and others of them, when they went abroad, would shut their eyes, lest through those windows, the occasions of sin should glide into the heart. If there was such strictness amongst the Pharisees, whom Christ so much condemns, how shall that looseness amongst us escape the damnation of hell! Mihi timorem illa incutiunt. These things make me afraid, says Nazianzen; lest when we should exceed the Pharisees, we be found worse than they; lest there be more reason to call us serpents and a generation of vipers. But to our purpose. No wonder if formal professors may avoid occasions of sin under the gospel; since the Pharisees seemed careful to shun them under the law. But what shall we say, if such strictness may be found amongst heathens? Ælian relates this of Clitomachus, that when any act of the brute creatures, which might be incentive to lust, was offered to his view, he would forthwith turn aside from it; and if at a feast he heard any immodest discourse, he would immediately rise and quit the company. This was much for a heathen. May we not expect more from those that live under the gospel? Formal professors have much more light, though they have no more grace.

Moreover, they may not only shun the occasions of sin themselves, but they may be careful to remove the occasion of sin out of the way of others; yea, when that cannot be done without their own damage and prejudice. Valerius Maximus gives us a pregnant instance thereof in a heathen, Sparina, a young man exceeding beautiful, perceiving that he was therefore much observed, and fearing the consequences of it, he disfigured his face, lest his beauty should prove a snare to others. Deformitatem sanctitatis suæ fidam, quam formam irritamentum alienæ libidinis esse maluit, p. 224. He had rather have his deformity an argument of his own purity, than beauty to be an incentive of uncleanness unto others. May not this heathen condemn such amongst us, who are so far from disfiguring themselves, lest they should prove a temptation to others, that they will disfigure themselves to seem more beautiful, and will patch up a beauty rather than want one, whatever be the consequences of it? How can those who have less conscience than heathens have more hopes than heathens! But though we have some worse than heathens, under the vizard of Christians, yet some we have will go as far as they in this particular, as to the shunning occasions of sin, and yet may come as far short of heaven as they who live without hopes of heaven in the world. Hypocrites may both shun and avoid sin.

Fifthly, They may be careful to avoid the appearance of evil, not only sin itself, and the occasions of it, but the very appearance of sin. Idolatry seems to be a sin to which the Israelites and Jews were most addicted; you may find this all along in the Old Testament. This seems to have been the beloved sin of that nation for many ages. But after the captivity, when the Lord had made them smart for it under many sufferings, they so much abhorred idolatry as they would not endure any

appearance of it. Josephus gives us a remarkable instance to this purpose. Herod had built their temple in a most magnificent manner; over the great door thereof he placed a large golden eagle. This was no idol, no image either of the true or of any false God. Ay, but it was an image; the Jews looked on it upon this account as an evil appearance; so they took umbrage at it; it was an eye-sore to them. Thereupon a company of them conspire together, and down they throw it to the ground. They would rather hazard their lives than endure such an appearance of evil. And indeed it was not only the hazard, but the loss of their lives; Herod burned them quick for this act. Thus zealous formalists may be even against the appearance of evil.

Sixthly, In reference to the avoiding of sin, they may use divers mortifying exercises; such as tend to tame the flesh, to beat down the body, and so to weaken sin. They may cut off those provisions for the flesh, whereby the lusts thereof are gratified, nourished, and so fulfilled. They may abridge themselves of those lawful comforts, which are so apt to be abused for the advantage of the flesh, and are so ordinarily abused by the best when they take their full scope therein. They may deny themselves those delights which the flesh so much desires, and which prove snares to the people of God, when they are not very watchful, cautious, and spiritual, and keep not a strict hand and a vigilant eye over their hearts in the use of them; I mean the delights we take in relations, meat, lodging, apparel, and habitation. Formalists may deny themselves much in these; may neglect them, and content themselves with mean fare, hard lodging, plain habit, poor habitations. They may displease and cross the flesh herein, keep it down, and disable it from acting those lusts, to which these outward things are supports and incentives. They may afflict the flesh with much abstinence and many austerities, which seem to have some tendency to starve and mortify it. The Pharisees were much in fasting, humbling, and afflicting their bodies, Luke 18:12. Twice a week was their constant practice, besides their occasional fasts: Luke 5:33, ‘Fast often.’ And then they abstained from all kind of nourishment from evening to evening. But the abstinence of the Essenes, another sect amongst the Jews, was greater. If we compare our fare with theirs, their whole life may seem to have been a continual fast; they content themselves with one meal a day, only a supper, and then they had no other drink but water; no meat, but bread and salt. Another dish some of them had, but that was only hyssop, and those that used it were counted more delicate than ordinary. The papists boast much of their fasting, but the strictest popish fast is a feast compared with the Essenes’ best fare. So abstemious they were in their diet, and their habit, lodging, houses were answerable; all carried a great appearance of contempt of the world, and neglect of the body. That is the apostle’s phrase, Colossians 2:23. And some think he there represents to us these same people. ‘Touch not, taste not, handle not,’ was their rule, and so was their practice; they lived at a distance from the delights and softnesses of the world, and so little gratified the flesh as they seemed plainly to neglect it, Colossians 2:23. These things had a specious show of wisdom, i. e. of holiness; for so wisdom is sometimes taken in Scripture. Much of holiness consists in self-denial and mortification, and there is an appearance of these in this neglect of the body, when it is not in any honour, no respect had of it, the flesh, for its satisfaction in outward things.

[2.] They may go far in positive and active obedience; as in avoiding that which is evil, so in doing that which is good. Their conversation may not only be clean from the blots and pollutions of the world, but adorned and beautified with the visible acts of holiness and righteousness. They may seem exact and conscientious in acts of piety towards God, and acts of righteousness towards

men; they may go far in the outward performance of those duties which the Lord requires, and has appointed to be the visible way to heaven. The evangelist gives Herod this testimony, that he did many things when he heard John, Mark 6:28. Now, he that considers what education and examples Herod had, even the worst that could be, what his place and state was, the evangelist calls him a king; what his snares and temptations were, those that are common to great men, and some peculiar to him; may reasonably judge that it will be more easy for a private person (not in such circumstances as he was) to do all (as to the outward act) than for him to do many things, and yet as far from heaven as he, Mark 10:17. And, indeed, some there were amongst the Jews so exact as to the duties of the first and second table, that they thought they were obedient in all, omitted nothing which the law required. This you may see in the young man coming to Christ in the Gospel; he was one of prime nobility and great possessions. Luke calls him a ruler, ■ρχων; he shews his zeal in running to Christ; he shews an honourable respect to Christ in kneeling to him (much more than many of his quality) acknowledging him a teacher sent of God. He shews great care of his soul in his inquiry; he propounds no frivolous question, such as the Pharisees did; his inquiry is after eternal life, how his soul might attain it. Christ frames his answer according to the form of the question; if thou wilt have life by doing, Matthew 19:17, ‘Keep the commandments.’ Why, he had kept all these, and that from his youth; observed these commands, as to the letter of them, and the outward acts required therein; he is confident he never violated any of them since he had the knowledge of good and evil. Now I am apt to think that he spoke as he thought, and was verily persuaded he had done as much as he said (not understanding the extent and spiritualness of the commands): for it is said, Matthew 19:21, ‘Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.’ Christ would not have been so affected therewith if he had grossly dissembled. He had been so careful in an external observance of the law, as he thought he had omitted nothing; and yet was far from the eternal life he inquires after; for he leaves Christ (though sorrowful) rather than he would part with his possessions. But this young man did not understand how much the law required. It is like the apostle Paul, before his conversion, was more knowing; yet he professeth, that while he was unconverted, as to his observance of the law, he was blameless, Php 3:6. So exact and punctual was he in obeying the law, that as none could blame him for any open commission of sin, so none could blame him for any omission of duty, as to those acts that were then acknowledged to be sins or duties; he was unblameable in both respects; he had not been blameless if he could have been blamed for either. And yet for all this righteousness, which seemed so spotless, if he had not found another righteousness besides that of his own, that of the law, he had been lost. But though he was so strict in his obedience that man could not blame him, yet his own conscience might blame him. Conscience will accuse those who are so exact as men cannot at all charge them. Was he unblameable in his own conscience? See for that, Acts 23:1. Here he professeth solemnly, in a great assembly, that he had lived in good conscience, in all good conscience, and that before God, and this all his life long; not only in the Christian, but in the Jewish religion, not only after, but before his conversion; for so far both interpreters and the words carry it: ‘until this day.’ He had all his days, unto that very day, acted sincerely and uprightly, according to his conscience. He walked conscientiously while he was a Jew. He did not act that which conscience condemned, nor did he decline that which conscience enjoined him, and yet if he had died in that state he had gone to hell. Thus conscientious may such be, who shall never enter into heaven. But we have more* formalists in acts (that are outward) of righteousness

towards God and men. Many not only go as far as ordinary sincere Christians, but even as far as the apostles, the holiest and most exemplary Christians, 2 Corinthians 11:1-33; so did the false teachers amongst the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; as to a visible form and specious appearance; as to the outward lineaments of godliness; as to the external acts of holiness, self-denial, mortification, contempt of the world, they were even as the apostles of Christ. The Corinthians did so take them, though they were the most knowing, discerning intelligent people amongst the primitive churches. They were so much taken with them, as the apostle is put to argue them out of this delusion. Even as Satan (says he) may assume such a shape, and make a glorious appearance of heavenly light and holiness, as he may be taken for an angel of light and glory; even so those, that are no better than the ministers of Satan, may in their outward actings put on such a beautiful form of holiness and righteousness as they may be taken for the ministers of righteousness, yea, for the very apostles of Christ. There was such an appearance of light and holiness in these false teachers, it shined so bright in the eyes of the Corinthians, as it cast a shadow upon Paul himself, though he was not behind the very chief of the apostles. We see in this epistle he is hard put to it to continue in the esteem and affections of the Corinthians; so far did these false teachers seem to exceed him. But let me give you a more particular account of this. They may go far in acts of morality, charity, piety, and religion.

First, For acts of morality. Not only carnal Jews and formal Christians, but the very heathens have made a strange progress herein. They have some of them gone so far, as I know not who can go beyond them, staying in the outward act. For temperance; abridging themselves in those delights which the flesh so much affects, not gratifying it at all. Examples before. For continence. Some, even men, not yielding a jot to the most tempting allurements that impudence could devise; as they report of Zenocrates, Valer. Max. p. 212; and some women preferring their chastity before their lives, as they relate of Hippo, p. 316, who, being taken by an enemy's fleet, cast herself into the sea lest she should be defiled. For mercifulness. Those that ruled over Israel, after the division, had that repute; so the servants of Benhadad, 1 Kings 20:30-31; though we cannot find one good king, one godly man amongst them. For truth and faithfulness. Some have valued their word more than what is dearest to us in the world, more than liberty and life itself. So they report of Attilius Regulus, rather than he would break his word, he would part with relations, country, liberty, and life too; yea, and did thereby expose himself to a most cruel death. For liberality, the noblest kind of it, in a generous expending of their estates for the service of God, and the promoting of his worship, we have an instance of it in those Israelites, whose carcases for their sin fell in the wilderness. When Moses invited the Israelites to contribute towards the building and furnishing of the Lord's tabernacle, they offered their precious things so freely, as he was glad to restrain them, Exodus 36:5-7. Here was liberality, indeed, that must be restrained by proclamation; and yet this was the people who would give their golden ear-rings also to make a molten calf of, Exodus 32:1-35.

Araunah, though a Jebusite, and one of no great quality, if we may guess by his thrashing, yet was free as a king when there was occasion for the service of God, 2 Samuel 24:22-23.

Cyrus, though an heathen, sent for the service of God in the temple at Jerusalem, five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver, Ezra 1:11.

Herod was a noble instance hereof, though a prodigy of wickedness otherwise. He built the temple of God at Jerusalem; and made it more large, sumptuous, and magnificent than that of Solomon's

was, if we may believe Josephus, who saw it both standing and destroyed. For patience. We find those who have borne their great losses thankfully, and have suffered wrongs and injuries, without seeking any revenge. I might produce many examples, but I will desire your patience for two only. Nonnus reports of Antisthenes, that suffering shipwreck, and having all his estate cast overboard, he cried out, ε■γε ■ τυχη χαριν σο■ ■μολογ■, &c., I thank thee, O providence, that thou hast taken away all that I had, even to my threadbare coat; ε■χ■ριστως φ■ρων τ■ν ■σομον■ν α■τ■ πεν■αν, he took his future poverty with thankfulness. To bear injuries without seeking revenge, is by some counted such a virtue as the heathen could not attain; yet Phocius (if truly represented) seems to have expressed it; he having done many great services for his country, and they most unworthily rewarded him with a violent death: when he was about to suffer, left this injunction to his son, That he should not revenge his death upon his persecutors, Ælian, p. 385. This was much in an heathen; but more may be expected from professors of Christianity, who have greater engagements, and a higher example of patience. For justice, we might present you with many memorable instances from foreign relations, but since Scripture affords one sufficient, I shall go no further. We may find justice appearing most impartially in Saul, though otherwise a hypocrite, 1 Samuel 14:1-52. Saul being in pursuit of the Philistines, adjures the people, lest the execution should be slackened, not to taste any food till evening. Afterward the Lord not answering him, 1 Samuel 14:37, he concludes some of them had broke that engagement, and resolves, whoever it was, he should die. Upon a scrutiny, it appears to be Jonathan, his son and heir-apparent of the crown. Who would not expect but that he should now relent? No, but he is impartial, even Jonathan himself shall die, 1 Samuel 14:44. And, but that the people overpowered him, he had been as good as his word, 1 Samuel 14:45. Thus impartial may formalists be in the administrations of justice, so as that natural affection, the strongest temptation, may not prevail with them to spare their dearest relations obnoxious. I should be tedious if I should lead you to the utmost extent which they may reach in moralities, but these may suffice for a taste, and by this you may judge of the rest.

Secondly, They may go far in acts of piety and godliness, those acts of worship which are directed unto God, and tend much to his honour when duly performed, prayer, hearing the word, meditation, sanctifying the Sabbath. For Prayer. An act of divine worship, which the Lord so much requires, so much encourageth, which has so many promises, so many privileges, which is so pleasing to God, so prevalent with him, when ordered according to his will. They may be much in prayer, and shew much affection in it; they may pray long, and pray often, and pray affectionately, so as they may seem to keep pace herein with the best of God's people, so that none but the Spirit of God can discern anything, but that they pray by the Spirit, and that the Spirit of supplication breathes and speaks in them.

They may pray long, persist in the duty with much perseverance. Three of the evangelists tell us of the Pharisees' long prayers, Mark 12:40. And Christ blames them not because their prayers were long. He requires it of us on some occasions, and it was his own practice, he continued in prayer all night, Luke 6:12. We are to 'continue instant in prayer,' Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2. But then it is blameable when in pretence only, and for a wicked design. When a man is weary of a full meal, a bit and away is best with him, it argues a weak or a distempered stomach. It is a sign of a carnal heart, to be soon weary of this spiritual and heavenly employment. 1 Thessalonians 5:17, the apostle bids us pray continually. The Pharisees, as Epiphanius represents them, did seem to

comply herewith; they did pray συνεχ■ς, give themselves so much to this duty, as if they prayed without ceasing. Nor were they alone in this. We meet with a sort of men in church history who, taking the words of Christ, Luke 18:1, according as the letters found, not in the true and sound sense, ascribed so much to prayer, and continued so much in it, as they were denominated from this duty, were called euchetæ or precatores, prayers or supplicants, yet for other wickedness mixed herewith, were excluded from communion with the church, and ranked amongst heretics. This about the fourth age after Christ. Formalists will be much and long in prayer, especially under affliction, Hosea 5:15, early, or as some render it, diligently. He that is diligent will be at his work early, and continue at it till it be late. I might give you some instances in heathens who have continued whole days, whole nights, in prayer, but I forbear.

They may pray often, it may be their frequent exercise, their daily employment. So did those formalists seek God, Isaiah 58:2, jom, jom, i. e.* as the phrase in Scripture is used, constantly, incessantly, frequently, every day, in a constant and continued course, without intermission. We are often at that wherein we delight, and they may delight in prayer, delight in approaching to God, Isaiah 58:2. The Pharisees prayed often, as they stayed long at it, so they came frequently to it, Luke 5:33. We find them at it at all times, night and day, in all places; in the temple, Luke 18:10; in the synagogues, and in the streets, Matthew 6:5; in their houses too, and in their chambers. Though they affected public prayer much, yet they are reported to have been much at it in private, in secret. They gave themselves so much to private prayer at home, says Epiphanius, that they deprived themselves of sleep, to gain more time for it, that they might watch unto prayer. He relates several devices they used to awaken them to this duty, and keep them vigilant. Some of them, when they were forced to compose themselves to rest, would hold a ball of brass in their hand over a basin, that, falling when they fell asleep, the noise thereof might awaken them to their devotion. The apostle enjoins us, Colossians 4:2, to ‘continue in prayer, and watch in the same,’ so that these Pharisees seem to comply exactly with the rule.

They may pray affectionately. There may be a great appearance of zeal and fervency, of ardent desires and much importunity, meltings of heart and enlargement of spirit. They may be so much affected in prayer, as though they were transported, carried up in this duty, as though they were in a rapture, a divine ecstasy; their spirits may be so raised, so elevated, as though they were not in the body.

I shall clear this gradually to you as it is propounded. The ingemination of the word, Lord, Lord, in the verses before the text, denotes zeal in their acknowledgment of Christ, importunity in their addresses to him. Those formalists represented to us by the Psalmist were earnest in their inquiries after God, fervent in seeking him when his hand was upon them, Psalms 78:34. The word ■■■, translated, early, signifies earnest and vehement importunity: They sought God with earnest desires, importunate fervency, and yet they were but hypocrites, Psalms 78:36-7. The Ninevites cried mightily unto God, Jonah 3:1-10. They did not only pray but cry, and they cried mightily; they sent up strong cries, so strong as they pierced the heavens, reached the throne of grace, came up before God, and prevailed with him, so much as that he repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not, as we have it, Jonah 3:10. So the Jews (though what the generality of them was, is well known) express heart-meltings and enlargements in their prayers under affliction, Isaiah 26:16. ‘Poured out;’ it is a metaphor taken from water, of which men are not sparing when there is occasion, pour it out freely and largely. In Scripture phrase, when persons

are said to pour out their spirit or their prayer, it implies a large drawing out of their spirits and affections, with plenty of sobs and tears, vid. Engl. Annot usque fin. Their hearts were melted, and run out together with their words; their souls seem as it were dissolved, and poured out in their prayer. A prayer. The word ■■■ signifies a soft, sweet, lowly speech, such as takes the heart more than the ear (vid. Leigh); such a prayer as has more spirit and fervour in it than words and language. For raptures, it is a strange story which Nonnus, a Christian author, relates of a heathen philosopher, that in the winter time he continued in prayer all night long, πανν■χιος ■υχ■μενος; and though the season was so exceeding cold, yet he was so transported, τοσο■τον μετ■ρσιος γ■γονε τ■ν ψυχ■ν, his soul was so transported, as his body was not at all sensible of the cold. We need not stumble at it, if those whose conversations be otherwise offensive, pretend to raptures and transportments in prayer; it seems this is no more than may befall a heathen. Satan, who can so transform himself as he shall be taken for an angel, whereas he is a devil, can so transport a person as he may seem to be in heaven, rapt up above the body, when he is indeed sunk into sin, and abides in the suburbs of hell. And he can do this so cunningly, with such artifice, as it shall be taken for the act of the Spirit of God, for the extraordinary working of the Spirit of supplication. And upon this account the prayers of a hypocrite may sometimes seem to be divine ecstasies, heavenly raptures; his soul in prayer may act at such a rate of freedom and elevation, may so soar aloft to such a height as though the clog of flesh and sense were shaken off, as though the soul were set free from its dark and heavy commerce with the body, as though it were already in glory, and acted and spirited by the immediate vision of God. Satan has played many such pranks as these in the world ere now, and they tempt him to do it who prize raptures and ecstasies more than a settled spiritual frame of heart, who look more after visions and revelations than that good old way and that sure established rule. But enough of this. You may see how much formalists may be in prayer, and how much affected therein. For hearing of the word. Formalists may hear diligently, attentively, with delight and pleasure, with fear and trembling, with resolutions to obey it, with a great compliance and submission to it; some fruitfulness and active obedience, so as to be enlightened, convinced, restrained, reformed; they may be led by it so far, as it will be hard to discern who may go further.

We learn, by the parable of the sower, that three parts of men will hear, though but one in four hear savingly; three to one that hear the word of life fall short of eternal life.

They may hear frequently, in season and out of season. They may watch daily at the gates of Wisdom, and wait at the posts of her doors; they may be as diligent herein as the best, Ezekiel 33:31; they may flock as diligently, sit as attentively as my people, as the best of the people of God; those that care not how little they hear, neglect opportunities when they are offered, fall short of formalists, are a degree lower than hypocrites; and yet Christ burdens these with so many threatenings, heaps woes upon them, as one would think might sink them into the lowest part of hell; yet it seems contemners of the word will sink lower.

They may hear with joy and delight. So did the perverse Jews hear John Baptist; so did the common people hear Christ; so did the stony ground receive the seed.

They may hear with fear and trembling. It is a commendation of the Corinthians, that they received Titus with fear and trembling, 2 Corinthians 1:15; yet a formalist, a heathen, may tremble at the word. So did Felix the judge tremble before the prisoner, Acts 24:25.

They may hear with resolutions to obey. So did the Israelites hear Moses, Exodus 24:3, Deuteronomy 5:27; yet the Lord suspects them, as is intimated, Deuteronomy 5:29. So they heard Joshua 24:16, Joshua 24:18, Joshua 24:21, Joshua 24:24. Who could seem more resolute for God? Who could express higher resolutions to serve him? Yet how they served him appears almost in every page. So they promise to hear Jeremiah 42:5-6.

They may hear it, so as to comply far with it. They may give some answer to the call of God therein; they may be in some degree fruitful, and may reap some fruit by it; their minds may be enlightened, their judgments convinced, their consciences awakened, their affections moved, their wills inclined, and their lives reformed, and their souls persuaded, almost persuaded, to a thorough close with Christ, as Agrippa; in a word, all that light, those affections, that obedience in all its several acts and degrees, may be the fruit of their hearing the word; it may bring them to do much, to suffer much, to leave much for Christ; they may be brought to work, to do many works, many wonderful works. For meditation. A duty of high excellency and singular advantage; but too much neglected by those who should most delight in it. It argued an excellent spirit in David, that he made the law, the word of God, his meditation day and night. Can a formalist do this? Why, even the Pharisees did attempt it; they used means apt to keep the law in their minds and thoughts, day and night; they did more herein than others. Two things Christ mentions, which were used for this purpose in the day time, phylacteries and fringes, Matthew 23:5. The phylacteries, as is generally agreed, were little scrolls of parchment, wherein part of the law being written, they wore on their foreheads, and left arms' wrists, that thereby they might always be put in mind of the law; and thence they derive the word from φυλ■ττω, to keep, because hereby the word was to be kept in their thoughts, conservatories of the law. The rise of them is supposed to be from that command, Deuteronomy 6:8, Exodus 13:9, 16. Now, some of the Jews, supposing such schedules of remembrance were here enjoined, did use them in a less form; but the Pharisees wore them broader, as a sign of more care to keep the law in their thoughts always, than others had. The other means was fringes or borders of their garments; and this was of God's own institution, Numbers 15:38-39. You see them here prescribed for this end, that it might give them frequent occasion to remember and meditate on the law. Now, the Pharisees did not only wear these as others, but enlarged them, as though they desired to have the word more in their minds and thoughts than others; nay, as a severe monitor, they used to wear sharp thorns in those fringes, acutissimas in iis spinas ligabant, says Hieronymus, that these pricking them, whether they walked or sat still, the pain might bring the law ever and anon to their thoughts with a sharp and quick remembrance. This for keeping the word in their minds when they were up; then, at their lying down, Epiphanius tells us that some of them used to lie upon boards no larger than an handbreadth, that being subject to fall, their falling might awaken them to thoughts of God and his word.

I shall conclude this head with the testimony of Philo the Jew, concerning the speculative Essenes. He says the exercises wherein they spent the day was prayer and meditation; and therefore, as he calls them ■υχ■ται, supplicants or prayers from thence, so from the other, θεωρητικο■, or meditators, having their name from that which was the great employment of their lives.

Thirdly, Thus I have shewed you what a way formalists may proceed in acts of morality and religion. Let us now view them in their acts of charity, wherein I shall be brief. That Ananias and Sapphira should sell their possessions, and dispose of them to the relief of others, seems an high

act of charity; it would be so looked upon, if such an act could be seen in these times; but Crates, though an heathen, went farther: he parted with all, if they represent him truly, ε■■ιψε τ■ δημ■, he threw all ha had amongst the people (says Nonnus), expressing withal why he did it; Crates will keep none of his possessions, lest they should keep possession of Crates. But we need no other testimony, that of the apostle is so pregnant, 1 Corinthians 13:3; he supposes that it is possible for a man to give all his goods to the poor, and yet have no charity. This seems stranger, that where there is the greatest charity in the world's account, there should be no charity at all in the sight of God. What greater act of charity can there be in the world, than for a man to bestow all that ever he has on the poor? Yet so charitable he may be, and yet have no charity at all; he may do thus much who has not the least dram of saving grace. An hypocrite may give all his goods to the poor, and when he has done, have no other reward but what the workers of iniquity shall have. The Pharisees were much in giving alms, they gave them freely and solemnly, and yet were rejected.

Thus I have helped you to a discovery of formal professors, in the acts, and degrees, and extent, of their negative and active obedience.

Thirdly, Let us now view them in their sufferings, and see how far they may proceed in passive obedience; that is the third and last part of our undertaking.

Active obedience is far more easy than passive. Many may be ready to do much for God, and yet unwilling to suffer anything; the flesh rises up against sufferings with all its might, as most unpleasing, yea, destructive to it; many, while the world smiles and shines upon them, may flourish in their profession of, and actings for, God, flourish like a green bay-tree; but a storm of persecution will blast and overthrow them. Those hearers resembled by the stony ground, who rise up to such an height of faith and joy; yet, when persecution arose, they fell away. Here is the greatest trial. May hypocrites stand out in persecution? may they resist unto blood? may they be willing to suffer for God? Why, yes; they may not only do, but suffer, suffer for the cause of God; suffer much, yea, suffer as much as any; they may suffer loss of estate, suffer loss of all dearest relations, suffer tortures and imprisonments, yea, suffer death too.

First, They may suffer in their estates, suffer the spoiling of their goods; endure the loss of all rather than disobey God, or do an act that they do but conceive to be unlawful. To waive other proofs, it is known that the Jews would suffer their goods to be spoiled, and all they had to become a prey to the enemy, rather than make resistance on the Sabbath-day, because they conceived that resistance (in any case but for life) was a breach of the Sabbath. This was their principle many hundred years since, when the observation of the seventh day was a duty, and they retain it still, for anything I know; and a formal Christian may go as far, in like cases, as a carnal Jew.

Secondly, They may endure sufferings in their dearest relations, the death and tortures of their dearest children. This to some would be almost as great a trial as their own death and sufferings. David's expression speaks as much for him: 'O Absalom, would God I had died for thee!' Thus much formalists may suffer willingly. Those hypocrites offer it, Micah 6:6-7. The prophet had been upbraiding them with their ingratitude, unworthy dealing with God. They, to quit themselves of such an odious charge, make large and free offers of what they would do for God: they would think nothing too dear, nothing too much, so that they might please him; they would give him plenty of burnt-offerings, thousands of rams, and oil in excessive abundance; or if he were less pleased with these sacrifices, they would sacrifice their first-born to him; they would offer up their children, the

dearest of their children, as a burnt-offering unto God. This, to me, is the plain meaning of the expression. Nor need it seem strange that they make such an offer; for it was a custom not only to offer it, but to do it, Psalms 106:38. Even Ahaz, in whose reign Micah prophesied, made his son a burnt-offering, 2 Kings 16:3, made his son be burned alive. This is it which they profess themselves willing to do; they will do as much for God as Abraham was ready to do, offer up their Isaac, their first-born. And, indeed, why might they not be as willing to endure this for God, as others amongst them were to do it for idols? And yet methinks there scarce can be any suffering more grievous than this, which these formalists seem so ready to endure, not only the death of their children, but the burning of them quick.

Thirdly, They may suffer tortures, bonds, imprisonment. Sozomen, in his Church History, lib. v. cap. x., gives us a remarkable instance. He tells us one Basius, an Encratite (which sect the ancient church excluded from their communion as heretics), for opposing idolatrous worship in Julian's time, was grievously scourged, racked, and tortured, all which he endured with such courage and patience as astonished his tormentors, and after all was cast into prison, where he continued till Julian's death. Thus much he suffered, and that in a good cause, for opposing idolatry, the common cause of the primitive sufferers; and this too before his conversion, for he was not converted to the true faith till the churches had peace. So that a man destitute of saving grace, may suffer grievous things in the cause of God, and that with courage, patience, and perseverance.

Fourthly, They may suffer death too, die as martyrs, and yet not die in the Lord. The Marcionites, whom the ancient churches counted an execrable sect for their opinions and practices, yet gloried in their martyrs. So did the impostor Montanus and his followers, as Eusebius, Hist.

There were some amongst the Donatists (who had no communion with the ancient churches). There were some called Circumcelliones, who were so desirous of martyrdom, that they would force men to put them to death. Not to mention what Josephus reports of the Essenes, a sect amongst the Jews little better than half pagans, they endured the most exquisite torments even to death, rather than they would speak evil of Moses; rather than they would do this, or eat any forbidden meats, they were content, with wonderful patience, to be tortured, burned in the flames, cut in pieces, torn asunder with all kind of torments, vide Montan. So to say nothing of the Martyrians, of whom vide Baron. Epit.

We need no other proof but the apostle's testimony, 1 Corinthians 13:3. He supposes it possible that a man may give his body to be burned in the cause of God, and yet have no true charity, no saving grace; he may yield himself to death, to that most cruel death by fire, may be willing to be sacrificed in the flames, and yet not have a spark of true grace in his soul. So that upon the whole survey of a formalist's obedience, you see he may live in the world like a saint, and go out of the world like a martyr, and yet be entertained by Christ as a worker of iniquity.

Use. 1. For conviction. The light of this truth discovers that the greatest part of those who enjoy the gospel of the kingdom have no title to heaven, the kingdom promised in the gospel. For this inference is clear, if many may go far towards heaven, and yet be excluded out of heaven, which is evident in the text, then those who go not so far as those many, and those who will go no further than those many (of whom Christ speaks), shall certainly come short of heaven.

Now this is the sad condition of most of those who live (I say not only of those who live without Christ, and without God, and without hope in the world; those forlorn outcasts of the earth, who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, on whom the light of the gospel, the light of life, shines not) under the gospel. More particularly, this is the woful state of ignorant persons, profane wretches and formalists. These are far from heaven, even such of them as seem to themselves and others to be nearest; they are not in the state of salvation, whatever good opinion they have of their eternal state; the former, because they go not so far as those hypocrites in the text; the latter, because they go no further. Those who continue ignorant, or profane, or formal, whatever they promise themselves (and such are apt to promise themselves most, who have least reason), will find no better entertainment from Christ than those in the text, Christ will profess to them, &c. Many who have dreamed of heaven and happiness all their life, will be awakened at death or judgment with this voice of thunder, Depart from me, you have no part in me; no part in heaven, in happiness, that is prepared, purchased by me. Your portion lies elsewhere, with other companions, with the devil and his angels; in another place, in everlasting fire. Christ speaks this now in mercy to warn you, to awaken you while you have time to prevent it. He will speak it then in judgment, then it will be too late; his judgment will be irrevocable, it will be followed with sudden and immediate execution. Oh that to-day you would hear his voice, while it is called to-day, before that terrible day comes; before that dreadful voice cut you off from Christ, from heaven, from all hopes of either, and that for ever! And that this voice of Christ now may be better heard, I shall deliver it distinctly and particularly.

1. To ignorant persons. You that make it not your business to acquaint yourselves with Christ, his truths, his ways, you that will not know him here, he will not know you hereafter; you who say to Christ, either in words or actions, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways, Christ will profess to you, and say, Depart from me, I know you not. What more equal than this proceeding? Your own consciences may justify him. Why should he take notice of you then, who take so little notice of him here? It is evident from the text. Christ will be thus severe in proceeding against affected ignorance, and there is little ignorance amongst us, in the midst of so much light, but that which is wilful and affected. If so much knowledge as hypocrites have will not find the way to heaven, how shall they find the way who continue in the blindness and darkness of ignorance? If those who arrive at such a height of knowledge will come short of heaven, sure those whose ignorance keeps them far below these will never reach heaven. Hypocrites may have much knowledge, Romans 2:18-20; so much knowledge they may have, and knowledge is necessary to salvation. If they shall not be saved who have that without which there is no salvation, how can they be saved who want it? The inference is so clear as ignorance itself may see it. But if so clear a consequence do not speak it, you may hear the Lord speak it directly and positively. There is no salvation for you without knowledge. If you be ignorant, you shall perish. Those that are knowing may perish, but those that are ignorant must perish. There is no avoiding it, nothing else can be expected. Ignorance will end in destruction, Hosea 4:6; rejected by him here, rejected by him hereafter; destroyed temporally, destroyed eternally. No destroyer like ignorance; plague, famine, and sword, do not bring so many to the grave as ignorance brings to hell. They perish; this is the Lord’s voice in the Old Testament, and it is the voice of Christ too in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 4:3. He says not, they may or they will perish, but they perish, this is their present state, they are condemned already. While they thus continue, there is no hopes, for what hopes for any sinner, but either in the mercy of God or the undertaking of Christ? But neither mercy nor

Christ will relieve ignorance, the Lord cuts them off from hopes in both. Mercy itself will not save them; Christ will be so far from being their Saviour, as he will be their destroyer. The Scripture is express in both, Isaiah 27:11; there is no hopes in mercy, nor is there any in Christ. He who saves others will destroy them, he who has compassion on others will inflict terrible vengeance on them. See it dreadfully denounced, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, If there be no hope for the hypocrite, who has knowledge, sure there is no hope for these persons that want knowledge; no hopes, unless they bestir themselves to get out of that darkness and shadow of death where ignorance confines them.

2. Profane persons are hereby excluded from heaven, whether their profaneness consists in commissions of gross acts of wickedness, or in the omission or neglect of duties of holiness. Thus many whom Christ tells us shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, were of a more refined strain than the profane world; both their profession and practice speaks them better. And if Christ will shut those out of heaven that are better, sure he will not admit those that are worse; if no unclean thing shall enter into his kingdom, sure there will be no room for profane persons; no uncleanness so loathsome in God's eye as profaneness. Those who continue in the practice of known sins—lying, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, uncleanness, drunkenness, injustice, worldliness,—these are workers of iniquity with a witness. If Christ shut those out of heaven who work but iniquity in secret, so as none but his own eye sees them, sure he will never suffer them to enter who are workers of iniquity in the eye and view of the world. He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity on earth, will never endure to see such workers of iniquity in heaven.

Hypocrites have escaped the pollutions of the world, they have got the start of these, and yet shall never reach heaven; how shall they reach it then who stay so far behind hypocrites, and lie entangled in the toils of Satan, even into the suburbs of hell? Hypocrites seem righteous in comparison of profane persons; now, 'if the righteous shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?' Where but at Christ's left hand? The consequence is evident; but if Scripture consequence will not convince, hear what it speaks directly: Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 6:9, Ephesians 5:5-6.

There is a profaneness also in omitting, neglecting holy things, spiritual employments; neglecting and slighting the worship of God in public or private. Esau is called a profane person upon this account, Hebrews 12:16. Before the priesthood was instituted under the law, it was the privilege of the first-born to be the administrator of holy things; they performed acts of worship in private families or public assemblies, they offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, Exodus 24:5. When it was said Moses sent the young men to offer, the Chaldee paraphrase renders them ■■■■■, the first-born. Esau, by parting with his birthright at so easy a rate, to which this privilege was annexed, slighted the worship and service of God, and so comes to be counted a profane person. Those are profane persons who slight, neglect the service of God in public or private, who set not up the worship of God in their houses, who instruct not those under their charge, who pray not in their families; when this is their duty and privilege, part with it for nothing, are more profane than Esau in this respect. Those also who neglect the worship of God in public, are weary of the word and prayer, care not how little they hear, once a day is enough for public service though that day come but once a-week; these are worse than those in the text; they are further from heaven than hypocrites, whom Christ professes shall never come there; for they may be diligent in acts of worship, public and private, as before. Some are apt to think their eternal state safe enough if they be not guilty of commissions, if they avoid gross acts of sin, though they omit, neglect holy duties;

but, alas! they will find it otherwise. Oh that they would consider it before it be too late! The day is coming when Christ will pronounce the sentence of condemnation upon the profane world for omissions, Matthew 25:45-46. If there be no heaven for the hypocrite, certainly there is none for the profane person. He goes not so far towards heaven as those that come short of it, and therefore sure he can never reach it.

3. Formalists are not in the state of salvation; those who are neither ignorant nor profane, but have a form of knowledge and godliness without the power of it, the outward lineaments of righteousness without the life of it, and rest in this as an evidence of a saving state; such as these, if they rest there, will never reach heaven, because they go no further than those in the text, whom Christ professes shall never come there. Whatever confidence they have to be saved, and whatever be the grounds of their confidence, they are never like to enter into the kingdom of Christ, unless they advance further. The truth, as I have opened it, discovers both the vanity of their confidence and the vanity of those grounds upon which it is raised, viz. their own righteousness. The Scripture is so clear against ignorance and profaneness, so clear, that no unrighteous person shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, that none who will open their eyes, or whose consciences are any way awakened, who can be satisfied about their eternal state unless they have some righteousness or other to rest on.

Satan, who goes about every way seeking how he may devour souls, by stratagem as well as plain force, since men will have a righteousness, he is content, provided they rest in such a one as will not deliver them out of his clutches. He can so order the righteousness of men, as it shall be a strong hold in their way to keep them out of the kingdom of God, persuading them to sit down in such a righteousness for salvation as is not sufficient to save them. Thus does he delude formalists. No stronger delusion than this, none more subtle, more hard to be discovered; and yet scarce any more common and ordinary. The apostles, especially Paul, bend themselves much to the detection of this delusion; so does Christ: it seems to be his design in the words before us. The Jews of old, the professors of Christ in all ages, have been apt to split themselves on this rock; it has slain its thousands, yea, its ten thousands. More particularly, there is a threefold righteousness, which the more refined sort of men ordinarily rest on, the insufficiency of which, as to salvation, appears sufficiently from what this text has afforded us.

(1.) A negative righteousness. Many think they are righteous because they are not so unrighteous as others, conclude their condition good because they are not so bad as other men. They are no atheists, no idolaters, no profane swearers, no gross Sabbath-breakers, no murderers, adulterers, extortioners; they blaspheme not God, profane not his name, deny not his truths, persecute not his people; they do no wrong, oppress or defraud no man. There is none can charge them with any such unrighteousness, and therefore conclude they are righteous. Not so profane as others, therefore holy; not so worldly as others, and therefore fit for heaven; no open workers of iniquity, and therefore servants of righteousness; they have escaped the pollutions of the world, and therefore shall escape hell; as though hell were only provided for gross wickedness, as though it were a place for none but publicans and harlots. This is the reed upon which some men rest, as though it were strong enough to uphold their souls from falling into hell; but, alas! it is a broken reed, those that lean on it will find it so. It will break under you, and let you sink as low into hell as the Pharisees and hypocrites; for indeed this is no other righteousness but that of the Pharisees; nay, it is not so much as a gross hypocrite may arrive at. The Pharisee in the parable, against

whom Christ passeth sentence, had this, and more, Luke 18:11, Luke 18:14.

(2.) A moral righteousness. Some, because they are not only free from gross vices, but adorned with moral virtues, conclude their condition safe and good, and their hopes of heaven well grounded, because they are chaste and continent, temperate in the use of outward comforts, just in their dealings, candid and ingenuous in their deportment, contented with their condition in the world, and liberal to those that are in want, free for good uses, compassionate to the afflicted, patient in bearing wrongs, &c., make these the ground of their confidence that Christ will admit them into heaven. But those that build on these, build on the sand, for here is no more than may be found in heathens; and therefore such who go no further, have no better grounds for their hopes of heaven than those whom the apostle leaves hopeless, Ephesians 2:11-12. These in the text went far beyond such, and yet Christ professes they shall never reach heaven.

(3.) A religious righteousness, consisting in the performance of holy duties, in public, in private, in secret. They are diligent in hearing the word, in season and out of season, frequent in meditation, much in prayer and fasting, careful to read and study the Scripture, forward to discourse of the things of God. Many make these their refuge, and think herein to secure themselves, conclude they are safe as to their eternal condition; whereas indeed this is but a refuge of lies. Many may shroud themselves herein who shall never take sanctuary in heaven; for this is no more than the righteousness of the Pharisees, who were strict in observing the Sabbath, &c.; and Christ declares that to be insufficient, Matthew 5:20.

Examine your state, inquire what are your hopes, and what are the grounds of them. If you have no better foundation for them than such a righteousness, you may read your condition in the latter end of this chapter: Matthew 5:26-27, ‘He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.’

Use. 2. Instruction to the people of God. This teaches you care, caution. If a hypocrite may go so far, you that dread the state and the reward of hypocrites, be careful to go further. Be careful so to walk and act as if you cannot have the testimony of men, yet you may have the testimony of God and of your own consciences, that you do really exceed and outstrip formalists. This concerns you as much as your assurance of heaven comes to. If you come short of them, nay, if ye be but near them, if you do not leave them out of sight, Satan will be apt to suggest that you are no better than they, and so shall fare no better at the last day. And how oft has this suggestion prevailed with sincere souls? To prevent this,

1. Be diligent. Shake off a slothful, lukewarm temper; that is very like the hypocrite’s habit. Content not yourselves with a lazy profession. You that live the life of God, be not satisfied to live at such a cheap and easy rate of duty to him; decline not those duties that are painful, chargeable, or hazardous. It is a diligent hand that makes rich, that brings riches of assurance, such riches as Satan cannot easily cheat you of, by charging you as hypocrites. Diligence is the spiritual part of duty, is an attainment that a hypocrite cannot reach. If you would make sure work, you must give all diligence, 2 Peter 1:10. If ye do this, though you may be shaken with such a temptation, yet you shall not fall, 2 Peter 1:11,—‘abundant entrance.’—Laziness and slothfulness in the ways of God, will leave you so near the hypocrite’s quarters as you may be taken to serve under the same

commander. Frame not to yourselves a religion made up of ease and indulgence. ‘Strive to enter in at the strait gate;’ hypocrites may seek to enter, but you must strive. A hypocrite may have some diligence, you must give all diligence. He will walk a great way, you must run if you would outstrip him. He will seek the kingdom, &c.; you must seek it first and most, before all, above all, more than all. He may skirmish with his lusts, you must beat them down, subdue them, crucify them. He may put forth his hand to the kingdom of God, you must offer a holy violence to it, and take it by force. Be diligent in spiritual duties, especially the spiritual part of them: that is the way to leave a hypocrite behind you.

2. Content not yourselves with a small, a weak measure of grace. Small things are not easily discerned, and what you cannot easily discern, you will hardly be able to distinguish. It is no easy matter to distinguish hypocrisy in its height and elevation, from grace at its lowest ebb. Riches of grace occasions riches of assurance. There is but little difference as to their estates betwixt a poor man and a bankrupt. Grace, when it is weak and low, does but ordinarily afford weak and low assurance. Assurance is from the testimony of the Spirit; now the Spirit witnesses, together with our spirit, and our spirits give testimony, according to the measure, workings, and evidence of our graces. If it be weak and low, assurance is weak and low, and so more easily dashed out of countenance by the specious flourishes of a formalist. A hypocrite will not mind growth in grace; indeed, it is to no purpose to bestow culture, or water that which is not planted.

3. Keep grace in exercise; it is best discerned when it is in motion. View the outside of two watches, and how will you know whether of them wants a spring, if neither of them be in motion? Exercise of gifts may gain you credit, but it is exercise of grace that alone will gain you comfort in reference to your sincerity. A hypocrite will be much in exercise of gifts, but as to the exercise of grace he is at a loss; and where he is at a loss, there must you find sincerity.

4. Take heed of concluding your sincerity from insufficient grounds, upon anything that may be found in a hypocrite.

(1.) You must not ground it on extraordinary acts, visions, or revelations, or miracles, or raptures. If you had dreams, visions; if you had the Spirit of prophecy; if you could speak with the tongue of men or angels; if you could cast out devils or remove mountains, these would not argue a saving state; these are but common dispensations, vouchsafed sometimes to heathens, sometimes to hypocrites.

(2.) Nor upon any outward act, how glorious, how heroical soever. There is not any outward act that can be performed by a godly man but a hypocrite may do it; no outward act of obedience, how eminent soever, ordinary or extraordinary, but a formalist may come up to it. Even that renowned obedience of Abraham, in attempting to sacrifice his only son, was not only attempted, but acted by his posterity, when they were degenerated into idolaters. A slave may do as much outward service for his master as a child for his father, sometimes more, as having more strength for servile work. It is true, there is a vast difference as to the affection with which, and the end for which, these two work, but this is inward, and so invisible. No difference in the outward work, which is visible, but that which is to the child’s disadvantage, who may want ability to do as much, though he have a mind to do more.

(3.) Nor upon every inward act, though holy and spiritual. There may be holy motions in an unholy heart. The faculties wherein saving grace acts are the understanding and the will. The memory and conscience are but the same understanding under distinct notions, and the affections are but the motions of the will. Holiness acting in the understanding can hardly be distinguished from what is to be found in the minds of hypocrites, except by the influence which such intellectual actings have upon the will. In the will, then, we must chiefly look for a distinction. And the two prime acts of the will afford two characters which are never found imprinted on a hypocrite, the velle, or election of the will, as it respects God, the greatest good; the nolle, or aversation of the will, as it respects sin, the greatest evil.

[1.] The will, savingly sanctified, gives God the pre-eminence, makes ease, credit, pleasures, profits, honours, relations, enjoyments, hopes, and all, stoop to him.

[2.] It hates every evil way. Where these are found in truth, the condition is saving, and the person will be owned by Christ, when he professes to others, 'I know ye not.'

SOUL IDOLATRY EXCLUDES MEN OUT OF HEAVEN For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.—Ephesians 5:5. The apostle, in the former chapter, and the beginning of this, we find exhorting the Ephesians to holy walking. He proceeds herein positively, Ephesians 5:1-2. The argument is, 'Hereby ye shall be followers of God.' Ye are his children, dear to him upon many accounts; and it becomes children to follow, to imitate their father; to follow him, though it be not passibus æquis; to follow him at a distance, though ye cannot come up to him: Ephesians 5:2, 'Walk in love.' The argument drawn from the love of Christ, the most forcible argument to a member of Christ: 'The love of Christ should constain,' &c. It answers all objections. How? Love those that hate, revile, disparage, &c. Christ died for enemies. Walk in love, Christ died in love. To die is more than to walk.

2. Negatively: Ephesians 5:3, the argument, 'It becometh saints.' Those that are separated to God as his in peculiar, should be so far separated from these pollutions as they should not name them, but as they name that which is shameful and abominable. They should be so far from committing them, as they should not mention them without detestation.

Ephesians 5:4. He extends it not only to their actions, but to their words; not only worldly, filthy, blasphemous talking should be avoided, but 'foolish talking, that discourse which is vain, idle, unedifying; not only that which is foolish, but that which is counted witty. Scurrilous, abusive wit is not convenient for saints. He uses that very word, ■υτραπελ■α, by which Aristotle expresses one of his moral virtues. By which we may perceive the dimness of the light of nature in those who saw clearest. Those that have no better guide may mistake a vice for a virtue.

He adds the reason, Ephesians 5:5; argues a concessis, 'This ye know;' a covetous man, and the like may be understood of the rest, is an idolater, and no idolater hath any inheritance, &c. Not only the covetous, but the unclean, are idolaters; for the apostle, who here makes covetousness to be idolatry, counts voluptuous persons idolaters also, where he speaks of some who make their belly their God, Php 3:1-21. Indeed, every reigning lust is an idol, and every person in whom it reigns is an idolater. 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,' i. e. pleasures, and riches, and honours, are the carnal man's trinity, the three great idols of worldly men, to which

they prostrate their souls; and giving that to them which is due only to God, they hereby become guilty of idolatry, according to that remarkable speech of Cyprian, (Serm. de jejun. et tent.) Diaboli in regno genu flexo concupiscentiæ suæ idolum quisque colit. In Satan's kingdom, every one bowing himself to his lust worships it as an idol. That this may be more evident, that covetousness, uncleaness, and other lusts are idolatry, let us consider what it is, and the several kinds of it. Idolatry is το λατρε■ειν τ■ κτισει παρ■ τ■ν κτ■σαντα, Romans 1:25, to give that honour and worship to the creature which is due only to God. Or as Nazianzen, Orat. 33, μετ■θεσις τ■ς πρ■σκυν■σεως ■πο το■ πεποιηκ■τος ■πι τα κτισμ■τα, to transfer that respect which is due only to God, from him to the creature. There is some honour, some worship, which is proper to God alone, Isaiah 42:8, Matthew 4:10, Isaiah 45:23. Now when this worship is made common, communicated to other things, whatever they are, we hereby make them idols, and commit idolatry. Now this worship due to God only is not only given by heathens to their false gods, and by papists to angels, saints, images, &c., but also by carnal men to their lusts. For there is a twofold worship (as all agree) due only to God, internal and external.

1. External, which consists in acts and gestures of the body. When a man bows to, or prostrates himself before, a thing, this is the worship of the body; and when these gestures of bowing, prostration are used, not out of a civil, but a religious respect, with an intention to testify divine honour, then it is worship due only to God.

2. Internal, which consists in the acts of the soul and actions answerable thereto. When the mind is most taken up with an object, and the heart and affections most set upon it, this is soul worship, and this is due only to God. For he being the chief good, and the last end of intelligent creatures, it is his due, proper to him alone, to be most minded and most affected; it is the honour due only to the Lord to have the first, the highest place, both in our minds and hearts and endeavours.

Now according to this distinction of worship there are two sorts of idolatry,

1. Open, outward idolatry, when men, out of a religious respect, bow to or prostrate themselves before anything besides God. This is the idolatry of the heathens, and part of the idolatry of papists.

2. Secret and soul idolatry, when the mind and heart is set upon anything more than God; when anything is more valued, more intended; anything more trusted, more loved, or our endeavours more for any other thing than God. Then is that soul worship, which is due only to God (and that which he most respects and calls for) given to other things besides him. And this is as true, as heinous idolatry, as the former, though not so open, discernible, nor so much observed. And it is this secret, this soul idolatry which the apostle intends, when he calls voluptuous men idolaters, Php 3:1-21; and when he calls covetousness idolatry, Colossians 3:5; and when he styles unclean, covetous persons idolaters in the text. Hence,

Obs. Secret idolaters shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. Soul idolatry will exclude men out of heaven as well as open idolatry. He that serves his lusts is as uncapable of heaven as he that serves, worships idols of wood or stone.

Before we come to confirm and apply this truth, it will be requisite to make a more clear discovery of this secret idolatry, the most that are guilty of it not taking notice of their guilt, because they account nothing idolatry but what is openly and outwardly so. In order thereunto, observe, there

are thirteen acts of soul worship; and to give any one of them to anything besides the God of heaven is plain idolatry, and those idolaters that so give it.

1. Esteem. That which we most highly value we make our God. For estimation is an act of soul worship. Cultus et veneratio denot ant præcipue internam rei excellentis æstimationem, worship is the mind's esteem of a thing as most excellent. Now the Lord challenges the highest esteem, as an act of honour and worship due only to himself. Therefore to have an high esteem of other things, when we have low thoughts of God, is idolatry. To have an high opinion of ourselves, of our parts and accomplishments, of our relations and enjoyments, of riches and honours, or those that are rich and honourable, or anything of like nature, when we have low apprehensions of God, is to advance these things into the place of God; to make them idols, and give them that honour and worship which is due only to the divine Majesty. What we most esteem we make our god; if other things are of higher esteem, ye are idolaters, Job 21:14.

2. Mindfulness. That which we are most mindful of we make our God. To be most remembered, to be most minded, is an act of worship which is proper to God, and which he requires as due to himself alone, Ecclesiastes 12:1. Other things may be minded; but if they be more minded than God, it is idolatry, the worship of God is given to the creature. When ye mind yourselves, mind your estates and interests, mind your profits or pleasures more than God, you set these up as idols in the place of God; when that time, which should be taken up with thoughts of God, is spent in thoughts of other things; when God is not in all your thoughts, or if he sometimes be there, yet if other things take place of him in your thoughts; if when ye are called to think of God (as sometimes every day we should do with all seriousness), if ordinarily and willingly you make these thoughts of God give place to other things, it is idolatry.

If either you do not think of God, or think otherwise of him than he is: think him all mercy, not minding his justice; think him all pity and compassion, not minding his purity and holiness; think of his faithfulness in performing promises, not at all minding his truth in execution of threatenings; think him all love, not regarding his sovereignty: this is to set up an idol instead of God. Thinking otherwise of God than he has revealed himself, or minding other things as much or more than God, is idolatry.

3. Intention. That which we most intend we make our god; for to be most intended is an act of worship due only to the true God; for he being the chief good must be the last end. Now the last end must be our chief aim, i. e. it must be intended and aimed at for itself; and all other things must be aimed at for its sake, in a reference, in a subserviency to it.

Now, when we make other things our chief aim, or main design, we set them up in the stead of God, and make them idols; when our chief design is to be rich, or great, or safe, or famous, or powerful; when our great aim is our own ease, or pleasure, or credit, or profit and advantage; when we aim at, or intend any [thing] more, or anything so much, as the glorifying and enjoying of God: this is soul idolatry. And oh, if men would impartially search their hearts, and examine their intentions, how much idolatry might they discover, which is not now taken notice of!

4. Resolution. What we are most resolved for we worship as God. Resolvedness for God, above all things, is an act of worship which he challenges as due to himself alone. To communicate it to other things, is to give the worship of God unto them, and so to make them gods. When we are

fully resolved for other things, for our lusts, humours, outward advantages, and but faintly resolved for God, his ways, honour, service; When we resolve absolutely for other things without limitation or restriction, and but conditionally for God, upon such and such terms; to serve him, so as ye may serve yourselves too; to seek him so as to enjoy your lusts with him; When resolve presently for other things, but refer our resolves for God to the future; let me get enough of the world, of my pleasure, of my lusts, now; I will think of God hereafter, in old age, in sickness, on a death-bed: these are idolatrous resolutions; God is thrust down, the creatures and your lusts advanced into the place of God; and that honour which is due only to him you give unto them. This is unquestionable idolatry.

5. Love. That which we must love we worship as our God; for love is an act of soul-worship, idem est, προσκυνε■ν κ■ι φιλε■ν. To love and to adore are sometimes both one. Quod quis amat, id etiam adorat, that which one loves he worships. This is undoubtedly true, if we intend hereby that love which is superlative and transcendent; for to be loved above all things is an act of honour, worship, which the Lord challenges as his due in peculiar, Deuteronomy 6:5. In this the Lord Christ comprised all that worship which is required of man, Matthew 22:37. Other things may be loved, but he will be loved above all other things. He is to be loved transcendently, absolutely, and for himself; all other things are to be loved in him and for him. He looks upon us as not worshipping him at all, not taking him for a God, when we love other things more, or as much as himself, 1 John 2:15. Those that are φιλ■δονοι μ■λλον ■ φιλοθεοι, 'lovers of pleasures,' 2 Timothy 3:4, they make their pleasures, their bellies, their god, Php 3:19; those that love their riches, the things of the world, more than, or equally with, God, they make these their gods, worship a golden calf: this is the idol in the text. Those that love their relations, &c., Matthew 10:37, Luke 14:26, those that love themselves more than God, idolise themselves. Love, whenever it is inordinate, it is an idolatrous affection.

6. Trust. That which we most trust we make our god; for confidence and dependence is an act of worship which the Lord calls for as due only to himself. And what act of worship is there which the Lord more requires, than this soul-dependence upon him alone? Proverbs 3:5, 'With all thy heart.' He will have no place there left for confidence in anything else; therefore, it is idolatry to trust in ourselves, to rely upon our own wisdom, judgments, parts, accomplishments; the Lord forbids it, Proverbs 3:5. To trust in means or instruments. The church disclaims this, Psalms 20:7; as also Psalms 44:6, 'I will not trust in my bow.' Asa is branded for dependence on physicians, 2 Chronicles 16:12. To trust in wealth or riches. Job disclaims this, and reckons it amongst those idolatrous acts that were punishable by the judge, Job 31:24. David joins this and the disclaiming of God together, Psalms 52:7; and our apostle, who calls covetousness idolatry, dissuades from this confidence in riches, as inconsistent with confidence in God, 1 Timothy 6:17. To trust in friends, though many and mighty, Jeremiah 17:5. He fixes a curse upon this, as being a departing from, a renouncing of, God; an advancing of that we trust in to the room of God, Psalms 146:3. These are such idols, when trusted, as those who have eyes, &c.; hence, Psalms 118:8-9, 'Better to trust,' &c. As in the mighty, so in the many, Hosea 10:13. Idols are called lies in Scripture; such are these, &c., Isaiah 31:1. The idolatry of this confidence is expressed, in that the true God is laid aside. Trust in the creature is always idolatrous.

7. Fear. That which we most fear we worship as our god; for fear is an act of worship, est adoratio quæ timorem significat (Thurasus Nicen. 2). He that does fear, does worship that which is feared,

which is unquestionable when his fear is transcendent. The whole worship of God is frequently in Scripture expressed by this one word fear, Matthew 4:10, and Deuteronomy 6:13; and the Lord challenges this worship, this fear, as due to him alone, Isaiah 51:12, Isaiah 51:19. That is our god which is our fear and dread, Luke 12:4-5. If you fear others more than him, you give that worship to them which is due only to God; and this is plain idolatry; hence the fearful are reckoned amongst idolaters, and the same sentence denounced against them as against idolatry, in the text, Revelation 21:8. Those, therefore, who fear other things more than God; who are more afraid to offend men than to displease God; who fear more to lose any outward enjoyment, than to lose the favour of God; who fear outward sufferings more than God's displeasure; who had rather sin than suffer; more afraid of troubles in the world, than of losing peace with God; those whom the sight of man will more restrain from sin than the all-seeing eye of God; who will venture to make more bold with God than men, and stand in more awe of others than God: they stand guilty of idolatry, that which is here threatened.

8. Hope. That which we make our hope we worship as God; for hope is an act of worship; qui sperat, adorat, that which we make our hope we worship, and worship is due only to God. It is his prerogative to be the hope of his people, Jeremiah 17:13, Romans 15:13. When we make other things our hope, we give them the honour due only to God; it is a forsaking of the Lord the fountain, and advancing of broken cisterns into his place, hereby worshipping them as God only should be worshipped. Thus do the papists openly, when they call the virgin mother, the wooden cross, and saints departed, their hope; and thus do others amongst us, who make their prayers, their sorrow for sin, their works of charity, or any acts of religion or righteousness, their hope; when men expect hereby to satisfy justice, to pacify God's displeasure, to procure heaven. Nothing can effect this, but that which is infinite, the righteousness of God; and this we having only in and from Christ, he is therefore called our hope, 1 Timothy 1:1; 'our hope of glory,' Colossians 1:27. Those that make their own, righteousness the foundation of their hope, they exalt it into the place of Christ, and honour it as God; and to honour anything as God, is evident idolatry. And so it is, not only in expectation of eternal glory, but outward happiness. When our principal hope is in friends, riches, &c., it is idolatry; for this is to worship them instead of God. And Job ranks it with that gross idolatry of worshipping the sun or moon, Job 31:24, Job 31:29.

9. Desire. That which we most desire we worship as our god; for that which is chiefly desired, is the chief good in his account who so desires it; and what he counts his chief good, that he makes his god. Desire is an act of worship; Est adoratio quæ desiderium significat, that we most adore which we most desire; and to be most desired is that worship, that honour, which is due only to God. To desire anything more, or so much as the enjoyment of God, is to idolise it, to prostrate the heart to it, and worship it as God only should be worshipped. He only should be that one thing desirable to us above all things, as to David, Psalms 27:4. Those that desire corn, and wine, and oil, more than the light of God's countenance, the favour of great men more than the sense of God's love, and to live in mirth and jollity, in abundance of worldly enjoyments, rather than holily in spiritual communion with God; to be rich in the world, rather than to be rich towards God; those that desire anything in heaven or earth, as much or more than they desire God, are idolaters, such as the apostle threatens.

10. Delight. That which we most delight and rejoice in, that we worship as God; for transcendent delight is an act of worship due only to God; and this affection, in its height and elevation, is called

glorying. That which is our delight above all things we glory in it; and this is the prerogative which the Lord challenges, 1 Corinthians 1:31, Jeremiah 9:23-24. To rejoice more in our wisdom, strength, riches, than in the Lord, is to idolize them. To take more delight in relations, wife, or children, in outward comforts and accommodations, than in God, is to worship them, as we ought only to worship God. To take more pleasure in any way of sin, uncleanness, intemperance, earthly employments, than in the holy ways of God, than in those spiritual and heavenly services wherein we may enjoy God, is idolatry. Thus those who take most pleasure in drinking or eating, make their bellies their god; and those who most delight in fulfilling their lusts, be it a worldly, or an unclean, or a revengeful lust, they exalt their lusts above the God of heaven, and worship them; and this is a more heinous idolatry than to fall down and worship the sun or moon, angels or saints, because these are more worthy of honour than base lusts; nay, it is worse than to worship the devil, since Satan himself, being a creature, is not so vile as the lusts of men. And yet this is the common sin of unregenerate men, and the whole world of them lies in this idolatry, worshipping not only the creature, but their base lusts, before the God of glory.

11. Zeal. That for which we are more zealous we worship as god; for such a zeal is an act of worship due only to God; therefore it is idolatrous to be more zealous for our own things than for the things of God; to be eager in our own cause, and careless in the cause of God; to be more vehement for our own credit, interests, advantages, than for the truths, ways, honour of God; to be fervent in spirit, in following our own business, promoting our designs, but lukewarm and indifferent in the service of God; to count it intolerable for ourselves to be reproached, slandered, reviled, but manifest no indignation when God is dishonoured, his name, Sabbaths, worship, profaned; his truths, ways, people, reviled. This is idolatrous; for it shews something is dearer to us than God; and whatever that be, it is an idol; and thy zeal for it is thy worshipping of it, even with that worship which is due only to God.

12. Gratitude. That to which we are most grateful, that we worship as God; for gratitude is an act of worship, est adoratio quæ gratiam notat. We worship that to which we are most thankful. We may be thankful to men, we may acknowledge the helplessness of means and instruments; but if we rest here, and rise not higher in our thanks and acknowledgments; if the Lord be not remembered as him, without whom all these are nothing: it is idolatry. For this the Lord menaces those idolaters, Hosea 2:5, Hosea 2:8. Thus when we ascribe our plenty, riches, to our care, industry; our success to our prudence, diligence; our deliverances to friends, means, instruments, without looking higher, or not so much to God as unto these, we idolize them, sacrifice to them, as the prophet expresses it, Habakkuk 1:16. To ascribe that which comes from God unto the creatures, is to set them in the place of God, and so to worship them.

Thus you see wherein this secret idolatry consists, and how many ways we may be guilty of it. Many more might be found out, but I shall but add this one. Then we are guilty of this idolatry,

13. When our care and industry is more for other things than for God. No man can serve two masters. We cannot serve God and mammon, God and our lusts too, because this service of ourselves, of the world, takes up that care, that industry, those endeavours, which the Lord must have of necessity, if we will serve him as God; and when these are laid out upon the world and our lusts, we serve them as the Lord ought to be served, and so make them our gods. When you are more careful and industrious to please men, or yourselves, than to please God; to provide for

yourselves and posterity, than to be serviceable unto God; more careful what you shall eat, drink, or wherewith be clothed, than how you may honour and enjoy God; to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, than how to fulfil the will of God; more industrious to promote your own interests, than the designs of God; to be rich, or great, or respected amongst men, than that God may be honoured and advanced in the world; more careful how to get the things of the world, than how to employ them for God; rise early, go to bed late, eat the bread of carefulness, that your outward estate may prosper, while the cause, and ways, and interests of Christ have few or none of your endeavours, this is to idolize the world, yourselves, your lusts, your relations, while the God of heaven is neglected, and the worship and service due unto him alone is hereby idolatrously given to other things.

Argument 1. Such idolaters are not in covenant with God. It is the covenant of grace alone which gives right and title to the kingdom. Those that are not in covenant, have no title to heaven; and those that have no right nor title to it, shall have no inheritance in it. They are not in covenant; for the very first article of the covenant is, that we take the Lord for our God, and that we have no other gods but him. But idolaters have many other gods. Their hearts never subscribed the covenant of grace; they are in league with other gods, with the world, the flesh, their lusts. No entering into covenant but by renouncing of these. Till then, ye are in covenant with hell and death; no title to the inheritance, no hopes of it.

2. Such idolaters are not yet born again, are not yet converted; and without the new birth, no inheritance in the kingdom; those only are heirs of this kingdom, who are born of God, who are born again. The Lord Christ affirms this twice together, to make it sure, and affirms it with a double asseveration, John 3:3, John 3:5. No receiving this inheritance till conversion, till turned from darkness, from the power of Satan, who engages all his power to continue sinners in the service of other gods, Acts 26:18. No entering the kingdom except ye be converted, Matthew 18:3. Now conversion is, the apostle tells us, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, a ‘turning from idols;’ not only from those with which men commit open, but secret idolatry. Till the heart be turned from idols, till this secret idolatry be renounced, there is no conversion; and without this no salvation, no inheritance in the kingdom of God, &c.

Use. 1. Information. This shews us the misery of a great part of the world; nay, of the greatest part of Christians; nay, of many of them who have escaped the gross idolatry of pagans, or apostate Christians. Not only open, but secret idolatry, excludes from any inheritance in the kingdom of heaven; and this secret idolatry is so common, as the disciples’ question will not be unseasonable. Alas! ‘Then who shall be saved?’ Where is that heart in which some idol is not secretly advanced? Where is that soul that does not bow down to some lust or vanity? Where is that man that does not give that soul-worship to the creature which is due unto the Creator? Some there are, indeed, though few, that are not defiled with this idolatry; but they are none of this number who are yet in the state of nature. Every natural man, let his enjoyments, privileges, accomplishments, be what they will, is an idolater. He that is not converted, changed, born again; he that lives in any known sin, be it uncleanness, or covetousness, or pride, besides the visible guilt of these gross sins, he is a secret idolater; and no idolater shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Quest. Whether may the regenerate be guilty of this secret idolatry? Whether may those who are truly sanctified give this soul-worship to other things, which is due only to God? It seems difficult to

determine this either way, the reasons being weighty for both, affirmative and negative; for,

If it be denied, what shall we say to those many instances which Scripture affords, whereby it is too evident that the people of God may fall into incest, drunkenness, murder, adultery, denying of Christ, nay, idolatry itself? Solomon is a sad example hereof, yet he a chosen vessel. The name Jedidiah, given him by the Lord, tells us he was beloved of God; yet he, 1 Kings 11:7-8, &c. But if it be granted on the other side, other difficulties occur; for how can this be consistent with the state of grace, since the sincerity of that state consists in this very point, that the interest of God be advanced in the soul above all other interests? Besides, this is a plain breach of the contract with Christ, for secret idolatry is spiritual adultery. It passes under this name ordinarily in Scripture. Other failings a husband may endure in his wife; but such unfaithfulness tends to dissolve the conjugal covenant. And this in the text is not the least difficulty: for how can they retain a title to the inheritance under this guilt, since the apostle is peremptory, such shall not inherit the kingdom? &c.

Ans. Take the resolution of this difficulty in these three conclusions:

1. There is an aptness and propenseness, in those that are sanctified, to this idolatry as to other sins. Man's corrupt nature is the nursery, the seed-plot of every sin, and this amongst the rest. The fruit of our first sin in Adam is the corruption of our natures, which consists in a proneness, a disposedness, to all abominations, idolatry not excepted. Grace being imperfect in this life, does but correct this corruption in part, it does not extinguish it; it weakens this disposition to idolatry, it does not abolish it. Those natures that are most sanctified on earth are still a seminary of sin; there is in them the roots, the seeds of atheism, blasphemy, murder, adultery, apostasy, and idolatry. Though the virtue of these roots of bitterness be weakened by renewing grace, yet it is not quite lost; the old man abides in those that are most renewed, and it is furnished with all its members; though they may be weakened, maimed, mortified, yet not one of them is quite perished. And what these members are, the apostle gives us an account, and reckons this very idolatry amongst the rest, Colossians 3:5. He writes to those that were sanctified, and yet he speaks of this and the rest as their members: 'Mortify your,' &c. This is a member of the body of death, which has place in the most sanctified heart on earth; though it be mortified in them, yet is not annihilated. This disposedness to idolatry remains more or less in the best, while the body of death remains; and this we part not with till the soul part from the body. This is idolatry in semine, in the seed and root of it, the proneness of our depraved natures to it. We may call it virtual idolatry; and of this the regenerate are guilty, and will have cause, while they live, to bewail their guilt.

2. They may be guilty of idolatrous acts and motions. This proneness and disposedness to idolatry may come into act; this root of bitterness may sprout and bud; this seed of idolatry in their natures may fructify, and bring forth too much of this cursed fruit; this member of the body of death may act and move. The old man is not dead in those that are sanctified, though it be dying, and while it is alive, it will move, it will be in action more or less, some time or other. And that the saints may be guilty herein, the reason is here evident. The apostle calls covetousness idolatry here; and voluptuousness idolatry, Php 3:1-21; so far therefore as any be guilty of covetousness, &c., so far they may be tainted with idolatry. But the regenerate may be guilty of covetousness, not only in respect of proneness and disposedness to it, but actually; chargeable with covetous acts and

motions, and therefore with idolatrous acts and motions. And if in this particular, so in the rest formerly specified; for wherein does the idolatry of covetousness consist, but in this? That it is an inordinate, an immoderate love of riches. Now if love in the renewed may be inordinate, so may other affections, desire, delight, zeal, fear, sorrow; there is like reason for all. And if there may be inordinacy in these motions of the will, there may be the like in the acts of the mind. And therefore the regenerate may be guilty of idolatrous acts and motions, both in mind and heart.

3. They are not guilty of habitual idolatry, as unrenewed men are. The Lord has the habitual pre-eminence in their hearts, when other interests are actually advanced, as a king may keep his throne, when rebels may prevail in part of his dominions.

They are not habitual idolaters. They yield not [to] these idolatrous motions knowingly, willingly, constantly, as others do; they are not tolerated, allowed; they are not unresisted, unlamented; they offer not themselves thereto, but are surprised by them; they are against the constant bent of their hearts, against purposes and resolutions, against prayers and endeavours. When they discover these motions, they are astonished at them. They loathe and abhor, they judge and condemn themselves for them; they bewail and lament them, they are their grief and soul affliction; they fly to the blood of Christ for pardon, to the power of Christ for strength against them, and are diligent in the use of mortifying duties to get them subdued; they cry to the Lord with strong cries, as the ravished virgin was to cry out, to shew it is not by consent, but violence, that these prevail. There is a resistance, not only from conscience, but the will, even when it too far consents. So that these inordinate motions, though idolatrous, are not the idolatry of natural unrenewed men; it is not reigning habitual idolatry. And so the difficulties objected are overcome; for it is this reigning habitual idolatry (not that which is virtual, not that which consists in some inordinate acts and motions resisted, bewailed, pardoned) which is inconsistent with sincerity of grace, which is that spiritual whoredom with which a covenant with Christ cannot consist, which excludes from the inheritance of the kingdom. Of this the regenerate are not guilty; with the two former they may be tainted.

Use. 2. Examination. Try whether you be guilty of this soul idolatry or no. Idolatry is (according to its etymon) a worshipping of idols. It speaks two things, worship and idols. Therefore, that we may make a full discovery of it, let us inquire both after the objects and the acts; search both what are those idols that are worshipped, and what are those acts of worship that are given to them. And to stir you up to this examination, let me premise these two things, the danger and secrecy of this.

1. The danger. It is a sin will endanger your loss of heaven, make it exceeding difficult, or altogether impossible. If one should tell you of some mischievous person lurking in your house, with an intent to murder you, or set your house on fire, &c. The apostle tells you of something more mischievous; that which is more dangerous, and nearer to you; that which will endanger the loss of an inheritance, of a kingdom.

2. The secrecy of it calls for diligent search. Nothing more common or more concealed. How common is this soul idolatry in the soul of every unsanctified man! There are chambers of imagery (to allude to that in the prophet, Ezekiel 8:12), idols set up in every room, in every faculty of man’s soul, which he worships in the dark, in secret; so much in the dark, as others cannot see it, himself will not acknowledge it. None more ready to disclaim it than those who are most guilty; take it for a groundless and injurious slander if any charge them with idolatry. They acknowledge the true God,

and have none, worship none but him, whatever pagans and papists do. This is the confidence of most. They know of no idols, are conscious of no idolatry, whereas in every corner of their hearts there are multitudes of idols; and the most acts of their souls are idolatrous worship of those idols. They are apt to say, as Jacob to Laban of his idols: Genesis 31:32, 'With whomsoever thou findest these gods, let him not live;' whereas they are hid in every man's tent, covered in the stuff, hid so secretly as an ordinary search will not discover them, so as to convince the party of his guilt.

Yet, though few will own it, nothing is more common. And therefore it is necessary something be spoken in order to conviction, that ignorance may not be pretended; that men may come to the knowledge of this sin; that you may see it, be ashamed of it, be humbled for it, see a necessity of Christ his blood to wash away this crimson sin; or if men will not see, they may be left without excuse. Search: 1, idols; 2, worship.

1. Every man in the state of nature makes an idol of himself; exalts himself when he should advance God; minds himself more than he minds God; aims at himself, when he should aim at God: rests in himself, when he should depend upon God; loves himself more than God; honours himself more than God; seeks himself more than God; would have that ascribed to himself, which is to be ascribed only to God; would have himself eyed, admired, praised more than God. Self-conceit, self-love, self-seeking, they are all secret strains of idolatry, and ourselves are naturally our own idols.

Nay, further, he makes every part of himself an idol.

2. He makes his understanding his God, by preferring his own wisdom before the wisdom of God; making his own judgment his guide, and not the word of God, which infinite Wisdom has prescribed as our rule and guide; quarrelling at providence, as though he knew what is more good, more fit for him than God himself; as though he could dispose things more wisely than infinite wisdom. How ordinary is this, both in respect of public and private dispensations! If I had had the disposing, the ordering of those affairs, of this or that event, it should have been otherwise ordered, it should have gone better with the church, with the state, with myself! So relying upon his own understanding more than the wisdom of God; depending on, and being more confident of, his own projects and contrivements than on the providences of God.

3. He makes his own will his God; idolises it, by preferring his will before the will of God. This ye do when ye will not submit to the will of God in suffering what he inflicts; when ye will not obey the will of God in doing what he commands, in avoiding what he forbids. You hereby set your wills in the place of God's. To instance:

It is God's will you should accept Christ upon his own terms. You will not; you break his bands, &c.; count his burden too heavy, his yoke not easy.

It is God's will you should live holily, according to the rule of the gospel. You will not; you count it too strict, too precise, brand it, &c.

It is his will you set up his worship in your families.

It is his will you avoid swearing, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, uncleanness, break off these sins by repentance. You will not. Do ye not evidently herein prefer your wills before the will of God, and thereby idolise them? Here is a double guilt in every such sin, indeed in every known sin; here

is both disobedience, not doing the will of God, and idolatry, preferring your own will before his. Such rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft; such stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry, as Samuel to Saul, 1 Samuel 15:23.

4. He makes his fancy, his senses his gods; idolises them in seeking to please his fancy, his senses, rather than God. How common is this! When that preaching which is most pleasing to God will not please men, but that which most gratifies a vain, a wanton fancy; when men will displease God rather than displease their eye, in turning it from ensnaring objects; displease God rather than turn away their ear from filthy and unclean discourse; rather than not gratify a brutish sense, in lascivious gestures and wanton dalliance; rather displease God than put themselves to the trouble of making a covenant with their eyes, and keeping a strict watch over their senses: hereby you shew you had rather please your senses than please God. And what is this but to advance them into the place of God, and idolise them?

5. Others make their belly their god. Of this, Php 3:19; do more for their bellies than they do for God; care more what they shall eat or drink, than how they shall serve or honour God; aim more at their own ease, and the commodities of this present life, than they regard God or the life to come; make it their end rather to provide for this than to provide for their souls. This is to serve their bellies instead of God. Such idolaters are epicures, whose language is, Let us eat and drink, &c.; life is short, therefore let us be merry while we live. Such idolaters are gluttons and drunkards. All inordinacy in this kind has a tincture of idolatry. Such idolaters are the poorer sort of people, who are immoderate in caring for the things of this life. The apostle thus explains this idolatry, when he adds, ‘who mind earthly things,’ &c. Such idolaters are the richer sort, when they will spend more on superfluities than they are willing to lay out for God, grudge to lay out so much for the refreshing the poor members of Christ, maintaining the gospel, or other religious uses, as they will ordinarily spend in a feast. Such are those who will offend God rather than not gratify their appetites. In a word, such are those who make it the main end of their callings, employments, endeavours, to provide for themselves plenty. This is to serve their bellies, not Christ, of which the apostle, Romans 6:8. And to serve this instead of God is to advance it into the place of God, to idolize it.

6. Some make their pleasures their God. Either sensual pleasures, of which before, or intellectual pleasures. Whatever the heart immoderately delights in, whether objects of sense or objects of the mind, he makes it an idol. The apostle prophesies of such idolaters in the text, 2 Timothy 3:4. Thus men offend, not only in unlawful pleasures, but those that are indifferent. To instance in recreations; when men spend that time in recreations which should be spent in serving God, either in duties of general or particular callings, this is to serve themselves more than God, to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

7. Men make their credit their god, preferring their credit and repute in the world before the honour of God. This idolatrous humour was the cause why the Jews rejected the Son of God, John 5:44; ‘They loved the praise of men,’ John 12:43. This appears, when men will not endure a reproof for sin, though it proceed out of zeal to the glory of God; when they can better endure to hear and see God contradicted in the lives and words of men, than to have themselves crossed or contradicted in a word or deed; when they can more patiently see God dishonoured, than hear themselves disparaged; when it grieves not men so much to see Christ undervalued, neglected, as themselves slighted and disrespected; his word, ordinances, messengers, contemned, despised,

as their own parts, judgments, disesteemed or disparaged; can pass by affronts, indignities offered to God, but their hearts rise against those who diminish their own reputation amongst men. When men make it more their aim to be well accounted of, well reported of in the world, than that God be glorified, Christ advanced, and the gospel adorned, this is to prefer their own reputation before God's glory, and to idolize it. When men do their good actions to be seen of men, make a show of more outwardly than there is within, are more zealous, active, enlarged, in the view of the world than in secret, when God only sees; this shews they seek their own repute more than the honour of God, and so make it their idol, advancing it into the place of God.

8. Men make wealth and riches their god, when their hearts and minds are more set upon the things of the world than upon God. Then is this world idolized; and this the Scripture calls again and again idolatry. Nothing more evident and common, and yet nothing more difficult, than to convince men of their guilt herein. But if you will impartially answer these questions, you will see reason to suspect yourselves, and cry guilty, and bewail your guilt herein.

(1.) Do ye not value these things more than the light of God's countenance?

(2.) Do ye not love them more than holiness, than spiritual riches, the riches of Christ?

(3.) Do ye not desire the increase of them more than growth in grace?

(4.) Do ye not delight in them more than in communion with God, fellowship with Christ?

(5.) Do ye not grieve more for disappointments herein than God's withdrawings?

(6.) Are ye not more affected with worldly crosses than soul distempers?

(7.) Are ye not more afflicted with wants of these things than spiritual wants?

(8.) Are ye not more eager in seeking these than following after God?

(9.) Think ye not earthly enjoyments to be greater security than the great and precious promises?

(10.) Are not the thoughts of them more pleasing, welcome, than the thoughts of heaven and of Christ?

(11.) Do ye not esteem others more for these than for their interest in God?

(12.) Are not these your hope and confidence of security against an evil day?

(13.) Do not these employments make you omit holy duties, or cut them short, or perform them in a careless, heartless manner, hereby serving God as though ye served him not, as though ye cared not to enjoy him?

(14.) Do not your hearts stick so fast in this thick clay (as the prophet calls it), as you can scarce raise them towards God in prayer or heavenly thoughts?

(15.) Do ye prize these more, out of any other respect, than because hereby you may be most serviceable to God?

(16.) Are ye not more careful to increase or preserve them than to employ them to the utmost for God? If it be thus in any of these respects, much more if in all, it is too evident your hearts and

minds are carried idolatrously after this world, it is too much your idol. You mistake if you think all is well, while you covet not that which is another's, or seek not to get them by unlawful means. If you be innocent herein, you may yet idolize the world in all the fore-mentioned respects, and many more than I can now mention. This may suffice to discover their sin, to those who are willing to know it.

9. Some make their relations their god, idolize husband, or wife, or children, by setting their affections more upon them than upon God; and this appears when they take more comfort in them, rejoice more in their company, than in the enjoyment of God; when they are more impatient of their absence than of God's departings, hiding or concealing himself from their soul; when more afflicted for the loss of them than for the loss of God's favour, in the comfortable sense and effects of it; when more fearful to part with them than to live at a distance from God; when more careful for their comfortable subsistence than that they may be serviceable to God. This is to prefer them before God, to idolize them.

10. Some make their friends and allies their god. When they rely more on them than on the Lord, they idolize them. Judah is charged for thus relying on Egypt, Isaiah 31:1, Isaiah 31:3. When they depend upon these for counsel, advice, for help, assistance, for supplies or provisions, more than they rely on God for these, they are idolized. When the heart is borne up with cheerfulness and confidence, while these outward dependences are afforded, but when they are removed, sinks into perplexities, discouraged, it appears in this case that these are more your confidence than God, that these are preferred.

11. Many make their enemies their god, when they fear man more than God, 1 Peter 3:14-15. When we fear him that can only kill the body, more than him who can cast both body and soul into hell, then God is not sanctified, i. e. he is not worshipped. That worship which is due unto God only is given unto man. When men are immoderately troubled, disquieted, perplexed at apprehensions of danger to their liberty, estates, lives, from men, not being so apprehensive of danger to their souls from the justice of God; when venture rather to provoke God than to provoke a man of power; when the wrath of a powerful enemy is more dreadful than the wrath of the almighty God; when ye are more startled at the threatenings of men than those threatenings that are denounced against sin by the word of God: then men are exalted above God, and our enemies are idolized.

12. Some make the creatures their god, so are guilty of idolatry (to waive other instances) when they swear by the creatures. Swearing, in Scripture, is frequently put for the worship of God, as being a special part of his worship. (And so it appears, what horrible profaneness it is, to swear by the name of God vainly, rashly, customarily, as many ungodly persons use to do in common discourse.) So it is used, Deuteronomy 10:20, Isaiah 19:18, for worship in the New Testament, Isaiah 65:16, Jeremiah 12:16. We profess that to be our god by which we swear; for an oath is an invocation of God, as a witness of the truth sworn, and a punisher and avenger of falsehood. Now, invocation is a part of worship; and, therefore, when we swear by anything but God, we worship it as God, which is plain idolatry; hence that fearful expression which should strike terror into all guilty of such swearing, Jeremiah 5:7.

Thus it is idolatry to swear by the saints departed, by Mary or Peter; idolatry to swear by the rood or mass; a popish, idolatrous custom too common amongst us. This is to swear by the idol of the papists, and so to acknowledge it as our god. See how dreadfully the Lord threatens a sin just like

this, Amos 8:14. Sin is the idol of Samaria, who, in their revolt from the true God, worshipped the God of Israel, in the similitude of the creatures set up in Dan and Bethel; as the papists do in other resemblances. Those that swear by this idol, the Lord threatens they shall fall, &c. And is it not as great a provocation to swear by the popish idol, the mass, the rood? It is idolatry to swear by the light, the heavens, fire, or other creatures; the sin of the Pharisees, for which Christ reproves them, Matthew 5:34. To swear by the name of God, as men do in common discourse, is high profaneness. To swear by any but God, is idolatry; for that by which ye swear, is worshipped as God only should be worshipped, and so idolized.

13. Men make Satan their god, giving that to him which is due only to God. Indeed, when any idol is set up, and worshipped with the soul, or with the body, then the devil is worshipped, 1 Corinthians 10:20; and what he speaks of the Gentiles, is spoken also of the Israelites, Deuteronomy 32:17; hence Jeroboam's idols are called devils, 2 Chronicles 11:15. It is like they intended to worship God in their idols; but, in the Lord's account, it is a worshipping of devils.

More especially, Satan is idolized, when men go to wizards, cunning men, as ye call them, such as are in covenant with the devil. This is forbidden, and joined with the abominable idolatry of Moloch, Leviticus 20:6; it is expressed by a phrase, by which the Lord uses to express idolatry, to 'go a whoring after.' This sin was Saul's ruin, 1 Chronicles 10:13-14. To inquire of these, is to inquire of the devil instead of God, and so to prefer him before God; horrid idolatry! But this idolising of Satan is more common and universal than this consulting of wizards. Something of this idolatry is to be found almost in every sin; for then we idolize Satan, when we obey him rather than God; which appears when we yield to his suggestions and temptations rather than to the commands of God in his word, rather than to the motions of his Spirit in our hearts. This is to obey Satan, this is to serve the devil rather than God; and his servants ye are, whom ye obey; that is the apostle's rule. Now, by becoming his servants, you advance him into the place of God, giving him that service which is due only to God; and so he is called the god of this world, 2 Corinthians 4:4. Not that he is so, but because sinners, by serving and obeying him, by entertaining his suggestions, yielding to his temptations, do, in reference to this obedience, make him so. When Satan is obeyed rather than God (as he is in most, if not in every, sin), then he is preferred before God; and Satan is made the idol which you worship.

14. Men make their lusts their god, when they serve their lusts rather than God. As it is idolatry to serve and worship the creature more than the Creator, Romans 1:25, so it is idolatry, and much more abominable, to serve our lusts more than the Creator, these being the vilest things in earth or hell. There is a service due only to God, Matthew 4:10, and when we yield this service to our lusts, then we serve them as God only should be served, when we serve them absolutely. That this may be clear, observe there is a twofold service: 1, absolute, which is without reference and subordination to another, and this is due only to the God of heaven; 2, relative, when we do service to others, but in reference and subordination to God. Thus we may serve one another, as we are exhorted, Galatians 5:13. But this service of others must be in reference to God; we must serve them for God, as the apostle directs, Ephesians 6:7.

Now, we cannot serve our lusts, in reference to God, nor for his sake; these are quite opposite, no way subordinate; and therefore, if we serve our sin at all, we serve it absolutely, as God only should be served, which is plain idolatry. We cannot serve the Lord in serving our lusts; no man

can serve these two masters; and therefore, so far as we serve sin, we are the servants of sin, not of God; it is our idol. So the apostle, Romans 6:16-17; that is your god which you thus serve; and, therefore, they serve divers gods, who serve divers lusts, Titus 3:3; Romans 6:12-13. But when do men thus serve sin? Why, always, when they 'obey it in the lusts thereof;' when they obey their lusts rather than God; when they yield their members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, rather than instruments of righteousness unto God; when yield to the motions of corrupt nature, rather than the commands of God Then ye serve sin, as God only should be served. Examine, then, whether guilty. When a worldly lust moves you to lay out your thoughts, endeavours, affections, upon the things of this world, and the Lord commands you to use the world as though you used it not, to rejoice, love, &c., which of these is obeyed? When the flesh prompts you to uncleanness, intemperance, and that either speculative or actual; and the Lord commands ye to suppress these motions, and mortify the flesh: which of these is obeyed? When corrupt nature moves you to revenge, to use means to come even with those that have wronged you; and the Lord commands you to love your enemies, to return good for evil: which of these do you obey? When a proud, ambitious lust tempts you to slight, undervalue others, to prefer yourselves before them; and the Lord commands you to be vile in your own eyes, to prefer others in honour before yourselves: which do you obey? If these lusts be obeyed before the Lord's commands, you prefer your lusts before God, you shew yourselves servants of sin, rather than servants of the God of heaven. You idolize, &c., when you delight more in gratifying these lusts than in the service of God. When you take more care, more pains, to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, than to comply with the will of God, in using all means to mortify these lusts, you serve your lusts rather than God; you render that service which is due to God unto those lusts that are viler than any toad or serpent; you make your Bin your God. And if it be thus, how common then is this abominable sin of idolatry! how innumerable are those idols which men set up in the stead of God! If, not only as the prophet upbraids the Jews, 'according to the number of your cities,' Jeremiah 2:28, but according to the number of your relations, of your senses and faculties, nay, according to the number of your lusts, which are as sand on the sea, &c., so are your gods. O enter into your own hearts, search them out, be ashamed of them; fly to Christ for pardon of them, for strength against them. See here the horrid sinfulness of a corrupt nature, how it swarms with idols, how it is wholly idolatrous, and from hence see the necessity of a Saviour, of pardoning, mortifying, renewing grace.

2. We have searched out this idolatry by inquiring after those idols which are worshipped instead of God, let us search after it further by inquiring what acts of soul worship they are which are given to these idols. Hereby the guilt of this secret sin will be more fully discovered, and the examination tend more to conviction. These acts of worship are many. Examine,

1. What are your apprehensions. The Lord being infinitely and most transcendently glorious and excellent, he challenges our highest apprehensions, as due only to himself. If he be not in our judgments preferred above all things, he is not worshipped as God. Whatever is advanced above him, or equally with him, in our esteem that is idolized. Now because this in general will be denied, examine it by these particulars. In generalibus latet dolus.

(1.) What knowledge do ye most affect? The soul will be prying into that which it counts most excellent. The angels, 1 Peter. If ye be without the knowledge of God, if ye desire it not, Job 21:14. If ye study not this more than anything in the world, count it not most excellent, so as to count

other things dross, Php 3:1-21. If ye can better be without this knowledge of God in Christ than without the knowledge of those things that concern your health, estate, repute in the world; if more industrious, &c.

(2.) What is it you would most appropriate to yourselves? What is it you most endeavour to make sure of? That which a man accounts most excellent, that he will labour to make most his own. Give ye all diligence to make sure your friends, your estates; and are you negligent to make sure your interest in God? Think ye no assurance too much there? and can ye be content to live at uncertainties, content yourselves with weak hopes and probabilities here? A sign, &c.

(3.) What is it you admire? Can you admire worldly excellencies, while the discoveries of Christ affect you little? Can you admire the parts, the achievements, the labours of others, while ye have low thoughts of God? Are ye better pleased to have yourselves admired than the Lord extolled? A sign God is not highest.

(4.) What do ye most praise? That will be most praised which you apprehend most excellent. Are ye much in the praises of God; often speaking such things of him to others as may endear him to them, as may raise their esteem of him? Take ye all occasion to speak great things of his name; or are ye much in the praising of men, means, instruments, little in praising God? Can ye rejoice more to hear yourselves praised, extolled, than ye do in praising God? A sign God is not praised as he ought.

(5.) What do ye glory in? That which ye count most excellent will be your glory. Do ye glory in your wealth or friends, in your parts or performances, in your wit or strength, in anything or all together, as much as in God? Jeremiah 9:23-24, Galatians 6:14.

(6.) What do ye value others for? Because they are great, or wise, or rich, or powerful, or fair? Do ye esteem them for anything more than for their interest in God, or their resembling of him? A sign God is not highest.

(7.) Are you willing to part with all for God? A man will be ready to lose all rather than that which he esteems more than all. He in the parable resolved to sell all he had, that he might purchase the pearl of great price. Paul counted all things loss, Php 3:8; the disciples left all to follow Christ. If you be not willing to part with riches, embrace poverty, when Christ calls for it; part with relations, hate father and mother; part with ease, accept of sufferings; part with credit, welcome reproaches, for Christ's sake; you have higher apprehensions of others. He that 'will not leave houses and lands,' &c., Matthew 10:37, 'is not worthy of me.' Not worthy, because he has not worthy thoughts of him, prefers other things. So it is evident, when men will part with Christ rather than their sins; will not leave deceit, worldliness, intemperance, uncleanness for Christ; Christ is undervalued, these are idolized. The worship which is due only to God you pay unto them; thus this idolatry will be manifest by your apprehensions.

2. What are your thoughts? Much of the inward worship of God consists in thoughts of him. That which your mind is most set upon, that which your thoughts are most taken up with, that you worship as God; where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also; that which your thoughts do chiefly run upon, that is most precious to you, that you ordinarily make your chief good. David was a man after God's own heart; why? His thoughts, his heart, ran most after God: 'My soul thirsteth for thee; I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches,' Psalms 63:6;

‘I have set the Lord always before me,’ Psalms 16:8; ‘When I awake, I am still with thee,’ Psalms 139:18; ‘Yea, I am continually with thee,’ Psalms 73:23. Hereby he shewed he had no other gods but the God of heaven, as he professes: ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth that I desire besides thee,’ Psalms 73:25. Hereby he manifested he was not in the number of those idolaters that are far from God, that go a-whoring from him, of whom he speaks, Psalms 73:27. Try by this if you are not in this number.

(1.) If you have any thoughts of God, are they not few and rare? Do ye not forget God? Are ye not unmindful of him whole days, whole nights together? Do not the thoughts of other things take up your hearts, and leave no room for thoughts of God, even when you are called to meditate on him? Are there not some, of whom for the most part we may say, God is not in all their thoughts; who live a great part of their days without God, without thoughts of God in the world? The mind is in the mean time employed, though God be not the object of it. That which is entertained when he is excluded, that takes place of God, is set up as an idol; and those thoughts which are due to God, are the idolatrous worship of this idol.

(2.) Are not thoughts of other things more pleasing, more welcome, than thoughts of God? find they not easier admission and freer entertainment? When the mind is right for God, it is of David’s temper, Psalms 139:17-18. These were precious guests to David; so precious, he knew not sufficiently how to value them. And though they were more in number than the sands, yet did he not grudge them entertainment; they had free admission into his soul: ‘Continually, night and day, I am still with thee.’ He reckoned this amongst his chief treasures. Are not you of another temper? May ye not truly say, How precious are the thoughts of my worldly comforts and enjoyments to me! how sweet are the thoughts of revenge to me! how delightful are the thoughts of forbidden pleasures to me! whenas the thoughts of God, of glory, of Christ, of spiritual things, are a burden. By this you may know what god you serve; whether the world, your pleasures, your lusts, vanities, or the God of heaven. What thoughts fill you most with contentment and comfort? What are your greatest refreshment? If thoughts of God be most delightful, then you serve, you worship him; if thoughts of the world, &c., be most pleasing, most welcome, then you serve, you worship them, Psalms 94:19. What are the objects of those thoughts which are the comforts, the delight of your souls, &c.?

(3.) What thoughts are most abiding, most fixed? Are the thoughts of God passant and fleeting, when other thoughts make their abode with you? Do vain thoughts lodge within you, when thoughts of God and heavenly things give but a short visit, and away? Are these your inmates, dwell in your minds as at home; when those are but strangers, and have scarce encouragement to sit down, or make any stay in your souls? Why, then, it is suspicious, the objects of those thoughts that are so consistent are advanced into the place of God; they have that worship which is due only to the God of heaven.

3. What is your last end, your chief design? God being the chief good, should be the last end; and to be chiefly aimed at, most intended, as a principal act of soul-worship, due only unto God as the last end. Now, most men have other ends; God is not the last, the chief. But how shall this be known, since few or none will acknowledge it? It may be discerned by the effects and properties of the last end.

(1.) It excites the agent; finis movet ad agendum. It stirs up to actions, and may be assigned as the chief reason of our actings. Try, then, by this. You are in continual action and motion one way or other, what is it that sets you on work? what is the principle of your motion? why do you drudge and toil, take such care and pains, go to bed so late and rise so early? Is it that you may be great or rich? is it that you may live in plenty or pleasure, and leave enough for posterity? Is this all? or is this the chief motive that sets you a-work? Why, then, God is not your end, other things are advanced into his place. Otherwise your chief motive would be, in all your cares, labours, that ye might honour God, that ye might please him, that your employment might be more serviceable to him. These would be your aim above all, but that other things are above God in your intentions.

(2.) It directs the agent; dat ordinem mediis. If God be your end, you will be ordered by him, so as to move to that first which is next to himself. You would give that the pre-eminence which is best, which is next to the last end. Try, then, by this: do ye not prefer worldly employments before spiritual, prayer, meditation, self-examination, &c.? Do ye not seek riches, pleasures, more than holiness? Do ye not neglect to seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof? Do ye not mind the world more than your souls? Must spiritual duties be content with the second place, or no place at all? Would ye not omit a spiritual duty rather than lose a worldly advantage? Is not heaven less regarded than earthly things? If thus, it is evident God is not your last end; something else takes place of him, is idolised, and aimed at more than God. If the Lord, as the last end, were your motive, director, you would move first and most to those things, to those employments, that have most affinity with him, most spiritual, most heavenly advantage.

(3.) It regulates the agent; limits him to those means only which serve to attain the end. He that makes riches his end, will not be prodigal or careless; for these tend not to promote his design, but are destructive to it. He that makes credit, honour his end, will not be seen to act those things which tend to his shame or reproach; his end restrains him from these; those means are only chosen which are subservient. So if it be your chief end to honour, please, enjoy God, you will not live in any known sin; for this is utterly inconsistent with, quite repugnant to, this end. Nothing dishonours, displeases, deprives of God but sin; those therefore that allow themselves in any evil way whatsoever, it is impossible God should be their end. It is evident they give this worship to something else besides the living God, and herein are idolaters.

(4.) It moderates the agent; finis dat modum et mensuram mediis. It prescribes bounds to the use of means, so as one shall not exclude another. If God were your end, if ye aimed at him above all, you would not be so eager after earthly things, and so lukewarm in holy duties. You would not be so industrious for your bodies, and so careless of your souls; you would not be so forward for outward advantages, and so backward for God. While it is thus, &c.

(5.) It facilitates; finis dat amabilitatem mediis. It makes the means lovely and pleasing which tend to advance it. If the Lord be your end, then the ways of God will be the ways of pleasantness. Then it will be your meat and drink to do his will. The duties of mortification will not seem so harsh and difficult. You would not be so backward to, so weary of, prayer, hearing, reading. Meditation of God and spiritual things would be delightful. Self-examination, communing with your hearts, would not be tedious. Strict and holy walking, watchfulness over your hearts and ways, would not be looked upon as your bondage. While it is otherwise, God is not your end, some other thing does displace him in your hearts, and is preferred before him.

(6.) It compensates the agent. When attained, it is counted a sufficient recompence for all the care, pains, labour taken in pursuing it. If the Lord be your end, whatever you get by your endeavours, nothing will, quiet, will satisfy you, but the Lord himself. Suppose you get a competent estate by your industry in your callings; suppose you have compassed your designs in point of credit, or profit, or other outward advantage: if you rest in this as a sufficient recompence, it is a sign your chief aim was not God. For when he is your end, nothing will quiet you, except you enjoy more of God in the increase of your enjoyments. If when your endeavours succeed in the world, you say with him, 'Soul, take thy rest,' applaud yourselves in outward successes, rest here, look not beyond these outward things, though ye enjoy no more of God, though ye are hereby no more serviceable to him, though ye bring no more glory to him, then the Lord is not your last end, other things are more aimed at, more intended, and the worship due only to God is given to them. Thus you may discover this secret idolatry by your ends and designs.

He that makes Christ his chief aim, if at length he finds him whom his soul loveth, this quiets his heart, whatever he want, whatever he lose besides. He counts this a full recompence, for all his tears, prayers, inquiries, waitings, endeavours.

4. What are your supports? What do ye depend upon in troubles and perplexities, in fears and dangers, in wants and necessities? That which your souls rely on you worship as god. For soul dependence is an act of worship due only to God: Php 3:1-21, 'Worship God in the spirit.' They who have confidence in the flesh, worship not God in the spirit; they give this spiritual worship to something besides God. But since every one will be ready to disclaim this, and profess that their trust is in God, and him only, let this be examined in these severals.

(1.) Do ye not sometimes make bold to use unlawful means? Do ye not use some indirect course to compass your ends, to obtain your desires, or free you from trouble? Why do men step out of those callings wherein providence has disposed them? Why do they use unwarrantable practices in their callings, lie, deceive, oppress, dissemble? Why do they use lawful means unlawfully, immoderately? Why so eager upon worldly things, as to neglect God, heaven, their souls? Why? But because God is not their support; and when the soul is not stayed upon him, it relies upon something else idolatrously. This was Saul's sin; the apprehension of an apparent danger from the Philistines put him upon that which the Lord had forbidden, 1 Samuel 13:1-23. And for this the Lord cast him off. More inexcusable are they who use indirect courses, when they have no such temptation; who, to get a small advantage, will be unjust, unfaithful, unrighteous; care not to defraud others, so they may gain by it; come short of the heathens in point of true and just dealing. Nothing more evident than that the Lord is not your confidence, when ye use such practices. You idolize something else. Isaiah 28:16, 'Makes no haste.'

(2.) Do ye not seek less unto God, when your affairs are hopeful, prosperous, and means visible to accomplish your designs? Are ye not then less in prayer, not so frequent, not so instant, not so importunate, not so fervent in spirit? Are ye not more careless, more indifferent? This is a sign means and instruments are your support, rather than God. Where there is much confidence in God, there will be much seeking to him; for this is the vital act of confidence. Who is there, even amongst those who make conscience of seeking God constantly, that are not less in this duty, less hearty, zealous, enlarged, when their affairs prosper, and are like so to continue, than when they are in fears, danger? This argues the heart is something taken off from God, and stays more upon

the creature.

(3.) Do not your hearts sink into perplexities and discouragements, when outward means fail, when your wanted supports are removed; when you are in want, and see none to relieve you as formerly; when you are in troubles, and see no means of deliverance; when you are in fears and dangers, and see no outward securities? Are your hearts then troubled, perplexed? Is such a condition too heavy for you? Can you not bear up cheerfully under it? Why, this argues those outward means now removed were more your support than God; otherwise he continuing still the same, your hearts would stay upon him, and find repose and security there, when all outward supports fail. So with David, Psalms 73:26; and the prophet, Habakkuk 3:17-19. This is the proper season for acting of faith, Isaiah 50:10.

5. What are your expectations? To expect that from other things which only is to be expected from God, is to give that to them which is only due unto God. Soul expectation is an act of inward worship, Psalms 62:5. Try by this. Do ye not expect heaven for your harmless carriage or good deeds? Do ye not expect pardon for your prayer, or mournings, or purposes not to sin? Do ye not expect your good duties will be accepted, merely because they are (as you think) well performed? Now what is this, but to expect from your performances what only should be expected from Christ? Do ye not expect contentment and satisfaction from the creatures, from outward comforts plentifully, peaceably enjoyed? Whereas nothing can satisfy the soul of man but God only. Would ye not expect happiness from things below, if ye might enjoy them according to your hearts' desire? Is not this to expect from the world and outward enjoyment what only can be found in enjoying God? Do ye not expect your ends, merely because ye use the means, without looking further; expect knowledge, because you read or study; expect a competency in the world, because you are frugal, diligent, careful; expect your undertakings will succeed, because you manage your affairs with prudence, and follow your business with industry? Do ye not expect all these without looking to God for them? Oh no, every one will say, this will be universally disclaimed. Oh, but if you expect not these things but from God, why do not ye seek God for them? How is it that ye neglect prayer in your families, and when you go about your employments? How is it you do not frequently lift up your hearts to God, and send up your desires to heaven for success, for a blessing? How is it that you are so negligent in prayer, when you are diligent in using outward means? If ye did expect these things from God, you would seek to him heartily, constantly for them, and your hearts would be as busy, as diligent, as earnest in praying as you are in following your other business, Isaiah 36:17. Would your friend think you expect anything from him, if you never seek to him for it? Men's neglect of seeking God, or careless heartlessness in seeking him, shews plainly their expectations are more from something else than from God. Thus may you discover this secret idolatry by your expectations.

6. Where are your affections? Upon what do ye most fix them? That on which you most set your hearts and affections, that you worship as God. Examine, then, whether your affections be idolatrously placed more upon other things than God. Instance in love, fear.

(1.) What do ye most love? If ye love anything more than God, or equally with him, you are guilty of this idolatry. Idolatry is ordinarily called whoredom and adultery in Scripture. The apostle answerably calls those who immoderately love the things of the world, adulterers and adulteresses, James 4:4. Love of these things is idolatrous. She is an adulteress in soul who loves

another more than her husband. So is he a soul adulterer, and so guilty of spiritual adultery, who loves anything more than God.

Oh, but you will say, God forbid that we should love anything more than God; he is not worthy to live that does not love God, love Christ, above all. This is generally taken for granted. Oh that it were not a general mistake! That we may not be deceived, try it thus.

[1.] Do ye love holiness above all other accomplishments in the world? Otherwise ye cannot love God above all things; for this is the image of God, the nearest resemblance of him upon earth. Now those that hate holiness, that scorn it under the names of puritanism, preciseness, they hate God indeed, whatever affection they pretend in word. Naturalists write of a beast that bears such an antipathy to a man, as he will tear and rend his picture. Those that manifest such antipathy to holiness, the image of God, do really hate God, however they disclaim it; and since they hate him, if they love anything in the world, they love it more than God.

[2.] Do ye love the people of God above all others? Those that are born of God are holy, strict, exemplary in their conversation. If these be not loved above others, others are loved more than God, 1 John 5:1, and 1 John 3:20. If these be the objects of your love, you will choose them before others for your companions; they will be the men of your counsel, of your delight, your eyes will be upon the faithful, Psalms 101:6, whereas vile, profane persons, you will avoid them; you will take no pleasure in their society. Those that hate, scorn, reproach, revile the people of God, inasmuch as they do it unto them, they do it unto God. They shew how they are affected unto Christ, by their disaffection to his members. If you hate these, represent them under what notion you please, you hate God; so far are ye from loving him above all others. Profane persons are the professed enemies of God; if you delight in their society, your hearts are joined to those whom the Lord hates, &c.

[3.] Do you hate sin, every evil way that ye know to be evil? Otherwise ye love not God at all, Psalms 97:10, Psalms 119:104. If ye delight in sin, willingly act it, live in it, notwithstanding the Lord forbids, threatens, hates it. Deceive not yourselves, if there be any truth in the word of God, the love of God is not in you. He that will not leave his sin for God, loves his sin better than God, idolizes it, gives that worship to his lusts which is due only to the God of heaven.

[4.] Do ye endeavour to obey Christ impartially? John 14:21, John 14:23, ‘If ye love me, keep my commandments.’ He will do whatever he commands, how unpleasing soever it be to the flesh; how prejudicial soever it may prove to him in the world; however it cross his carnal humours and worldly interests; how inconsistent soever it be with his own ease, credit, advantage; how great, how small soever. He that lives in the neglect of any known duty, loves not God so much as that which moves him to neglect it. That has the pre-eminence, and is preferred before God.

[5.] How do ye bear the absence of Christ? Love is affectus unionis; it affects union, more of his presence, more intimacy, nearer enjoyment. Because he is most near in his ordinances, therefore he prizes, loves, longs for them; because he is nearer in heaven than in the ordinances, therefore he loves, longs, for the appearing of Christ. By this ye may know. Can ye not tell what it is to enjoy Christ, to be near him, to have communion with him? Can ye live contented at a distance from him, so be it you have but outward comforts in abundance? Can ye better endure the withdrawing of Christ than the absence of some endeared relation? Can you better dispense with the loss of his

favour, in the comfortable sense of it, than the loss of wife, children, lands, goods? Would you offend Christ by sin, rather than suffer for him? Why, then other things have more of your love than Christ, and so are idolised. Thus discover idolatry by love.

(2.) Whom do ye most fear? There is so much of the worship of God in fear, as I told you, it is ordinarily put in Scripture for the whole worship of God. That which you most fear, that you worship as God; and if you fear anything more than God, you shew yourselves herein idolaters; but how shall it be discovered that we fear others more than God? Why, by these particulars:

[1.] Are ye not loath to reprove men for sin, lest ye should offend them? To admonish them when they offend God, lest ye should incur their displeasure? Do ye not connive, if not countenance it? Are ye not silent, if ye excuse not the sins of familiars, or others, lest by rebuking sin ye should exasperate the sinner against you? What is this, but to fear men more than God? When the fear of men is more powerful to hinder from performing that which God commands, than the fear of God is to move you to the practice of it, do ye not choose herein to offend God rather than man? more afraid to displease them than displease God?

[2.] Do ye not decline the profession of those truths, the practice of those duties, which profane men do jeer and scoff at, such as will expose you to their taunts and reproaches? What! be so strict, so precise, pray by the Spirit, repeat sermons, scruple at such and such small matters, play the dissembler! These are the reproaches of a profane world. Does the fear of this hinder you from any holy duty, from strict conscientious walking? Why, then you fear men more than God.

[3.] Are ye not more afraid to suffer than to sin? Do ye think it folly to be so scrupulous as to hazard your liberty, or estate, or life, rather than do what is unlawful? Would ye take liberty to sin rather than lose your liberty? strain your conscience rather than venture your estate? dispense with yourselves in omitting some known duty, or denying some truth, or admitting some unwarrantable practice, rather than endanger your life? Why, then, it is clear you fear something more than God. He that is not more afraid of sin than any loss or suffering whatsoever, is more afraid of something else than God, and so idolizes it.

[4.] Is not the threatenings of men more dreadful to you than the displeasure, the power, the threatenings of God? If men in power should send a pursuivant, and denounce to you, that in case ye are guilty of swearing, Sabbath-breaking, &c., he would see you put to death, and seize on your estate, would not this message daunt ye, startle ye, make ye tremble? Why, the God of heaven sends you many such messages. He has again and again threatened eternal death to many sins that you are guilty of; yet you tremble not, you little regard it. Is it not plain, then, that you fear men more than God? Is not this such idolatry as is here threatened with the loss of heaven?

[5.] Are ye not more bold to sin in secret than in the view of the world? Are ye not careful to restrain sinful thoughts as well as scandalous acts? Are ye not more fearful of such acts as the law of the land will punish, than such as the law of God condemns, such as are reserved for the tribunal of Christ? Are ye not afraid to sin, when no eye sees you but the eye of God? Do not soul-sins, secret lusts, inward corruptions, afflict and trouble ye? Why, then, it is apparent you fear something else more than God. You give that worship unto others which is due only to God, which is the soul-idolatry here threatened.

7. Examine by your elections; what is your soul's choice, when Christ and the world, Christ and the flesh, come in competition? That which you choose as the greatest good, that you make your god. If you choose Christ, then the Lord is your God; if you follow the flesh, embrace the world, then these are your gods. This choice of them, as the greater good, is that worship (and a principal act of worship it is) due only unto God; and when the flesh and the world carry it, they are idolized.

These are the great competitors for the soul of man, Christ, and the world, and flesh. That interest which prevails, the soul bows down to it, worships it as God should be worshipped. They are both importunate suitors, and offer great things to win the soul's consent; and that which it chooses it worships. The flesh attempts the soul thus: If thou wilt follow me, live after my dictates and motions, close with my suggestions, make provision to satisfy me, then thou shalt live in ease and pleasure, gain many advantages in the world, avoid that trouble, those dangers, that persecution, that reproach and scorn, which the zealous followers of Christ cannot avoid.

Christ moves the soul thus: If thou wilt choose me, thou shalt have pardon, and peace, and life. 'He that findeth me, findeth life,' Proverbs 8:35. Thou shalt be freed from wrath, justice, hell; thou shalt have interest in all those glorious things that I have purchased with my blood. With such offers does Christ importune the soul in the gospel to accept of him.

Now, which of these prevails with you? Which of these offers seems best? Which motion do ye yield to? I know there are few or none but will be ready to say, it is Christ that I choose, I renounce the world and the flesh; the offers of Christ are gracious, and I have been always ready to yield thereto; God forbid that I should choose or prefer any thing before my Saviour! This is generally taken for granted; but, alas! it is generally mistaken, otherwise Christ's flock would not be so little, and those that are saved so few. Many suppose they choose Christ, while they embrace an idol. And this is the fatal mistake, the ruin even of most who enjoy the gospel. But how shall this be discerned? Why, Christ has discovered this clearly, if men were willing to see, if they had not rather be deceived than be at the trouble to examine by the rule. The soul that chooses Christ is willing to accept of him upon his own terms; this is the touchstone, &c. He that will not take Christ upon his own terms, his heart did yet never choose him. But what are Christ's terms? See Matthew 16:24. Now, do they deny themselves who will not deny a lust for Christ? Do men deny themselves, when self-love, self-seeking, self-pleasing, is so predominant, so visible? Do they take up the cross who lay it upon others? Are not they far from choosing to suffer for Christ rather than sin, who will sin when they are not tempted to it by fear of suffering? Do they follow Christ who walk contrary to him, who decline his ways as too strict, too precise; who brand zeal as madness, holiness as hypocrisy, circumspect walking as needless preciseness? Such do plainly refuse Christ, and choose their lusts and the world before him. That choice of Christ is only real and sincere, when the soul takes him, not only as a Saviour, but as a Lord. Try, then, by this. Are you as willing to be commanded by Christ, as to be saved by him—to submit to his laws, as to partake of his benefits? Do ye desire him as much to make you holy as to make you happy—as much for sanctification as for salvation—as much to free you from the power sin as from the guilt of it—not only that it may not damn you, but that it may not have dominion over you? If you do not choose Christ for this, and in this manner, you choose him not at all.'Tis plain, while you would have Christ for your Saviour, something else is your god. The interest of the flesh and world prevails, and this you choose as a greater good in life, though ye would be saved by Christ at death.

8. Examine by your inclinations. Your souls are always in motion. Now, whither does this motion chiefly tend, whither are they bound? The inward worship of God does much consist in the motion and inclination of the heart towards God. When it moves most towards him, and but to other things as helps and furtherances in the way to him, then he is worshipped as God. But when the heart moves more to other things than to God, those things are idolised, and that worship is given to them which is due only unto God, which is the idolatry we are now inquiring after.

Feel, then, the pulse of your souls; observe their motion, that ye may know whether or no it be idolatrous. Whither do the inclinations of your hearts most carry you? Which way do they most move, and to what objects? Do they move most towards heaven or towards the earth? towards Christ or sin? towards the enjoyment of God, or towards outward enjoyments? towards spiritual objects, grace and glory, holiness and heavenly communion with Christ, or towards carnal objects, your relations, sensual pleasures, earthly advantages? If your hearts work more after these, these are your idols, and these inclinations are idolatrous. The idolatry lies here in the degree; it is lawful to move towards these outward things; but when the heart is more carried after them than after God; when it is inordinate, then it is idolatrous. Now, that you may discern in what degree your inclinations are, observe these severals:—

(1.) Is your motion after God absolute, and your inclinations to other things but subordinate and relative? Are your hearts carried after these outward things for God? Move your hearts towards them, that by the help of them you may move faster after God? When your inclinations are drawn out after relations, is it principally because they have special interest in, or some resemblance of, God? When you move towards the world, is it principally that you may be more serviceable to God in your generation? If not, you idolise them. If your hearts move to these things for themselves absolutely, and not in reference to God, because they are like him, or because therein you enjoy him, or because thereby ye may better serve him; if not thus, your inclinations are idolatrous, your hearts hereby run a-whoring after them, as the Scripture uses to express idolatry.

(2.) Are your inclinations after God stronger than after other objects? Is there more life and vigour in your motions heavenward? Are they not more easy, more ordinarily, and with less displacency, obstructed and diverted, than those other things? Is the bent of your heart after God, when you are employed about worldly things? Is it not the affliction of your souls, that they move no faster, no more forcibly, towards Christ and glory, and that they are so easily turned aside to vanities? Can you say with David, ‘My soul followeth hard after thee’? If your inclinations be strong to the world, your relations in it, employments or enjoyments in it, when weak and faint after God, these inclinations are idolatrous.

(3.) Are your inclinations after God more effectual than after other things? This will be discovered by your prayers, by your endeavours. The soul that moves effectually towards God breathes out many sighs and prayers and tears after him, is ever reaching at him, stretching out itself to meet him, to lay hold of him, to apprehend him. When he seems to withdraw, it follows him with strong cries and mournful complaints, ‘How long, Lord, how long, &c.; O, when shall I come and appear before thee!’ Now, then, if, when thou find not the comforting and quickening presence of God, yet, notwithstanding, you are still and silent in this sad condition, either pray not, or stir not up yourselves to pray with fervency, importunity, but content yourselves quietly in your ordinary way; why, then, it is evident your hearts are moving after something else more than God. So for your

endeavours. If you can be diligent, careful, industrious in worldly business, but slack, negligent, careless in the ordinances, it is suspicious your inclinations are more after other things than God, which is idolatrous.

9. Examine by your fruitions. What is that in which you take most contentment, complacency, that which gives you most satisfaction? What is your sweetest and most delightful enjoyment, in which you rest best pleased? To delight in the Lord above all things is a special act of soul worship, due only unto God. When you delight in anything more, in anything so much as him, you give that worship due only to God unto other things, which is the idolatry here spoken of. If any enjoyment be more pleasing, satisfying, than the enjoyment of God, you erect an idol in the place of God. Examine: are not the ways of sin, intemperance, uncleanness, revenge, worldliness, more pleasing than the ways of holiness, wherein ye may walk with God and enjoy him? Do ye not more delight in earthly success, abundance, prosperity, than in the light of God's countenance, sense of his favour? Take ye not more contentment in worldly vanities than spiritual enjoyments? Take ye not more comfort in relations, wife, children, &c., than in communion with God and fellowship with Christ? Are not sensual pleasures more delightful than those which arise from spiritual and heavenly objects? Are not recreations or worldly employments more pleasing than those duties, exercises, wherein the Lord may be enjoyed? If they be, it is too evident the Lord is not your chief enjoyment. The heart is more taken, pleased, satisfied with something else than with God, which is to idolise it. To examine this more punctually.

(1.) Can we rest satisfied without assurance of interest in God? Can we be content without the sense of his love? Can we be quiet in his absence? Are ye satisfied when ye find not the presence of God, the comfortable and powerful effects of it in your souls? Do ye rest in outward accommodations, health, plenty, friends, when ye have no certainty that the Lord is at peace with you? Do ye rest in the performance of spiritual duties, though ye find not the presence of God in them? Content with ordinances, though ye find not, enjoy not God in them? Why, then, God is not your chiefest enjoyment; something else does please you as well, if not content you better. You may see this in a familiar instance. The infant's most pleasing enjoyment is the breast; if it want this, nothing else will quiet it. Offer it heaps of pearl or mines of gold, nothing will content it without the breast. So it is with the soul that makes the Lord his chiefest enjoyment; nothing can content, quiet his heart, but the presence of God, the sense of his love, the power of his Spirit, the effects of his presence in his soul in spiritual light, life, strength, activeness, comfort. Outward comforts are unsavoury to him if he find not, enjoy not the Lord in them. The pleasures of the world are bitter to him while he misses his chief delight. He will sigh in the midst of others' mirth while the Lord, the joy of his soul, is removed. The ordinances themselves seem empty, when he sees them not filled with the glory and power of the Lord's presence. As she, 'What do all these avail me?' Give him riches, or honours, or friends; let corn, and wine, and oil increase; his heart is not quiet. What will all these avail me if the Lord be absent, hide his face? If you be satisfied with other things, without regarding whether God be present or no; contented though God be absent, though in part withdrawn.

(2.) Are ye not backward to spiritual communion with God? more hardly drawn to those duties, exercises, wherein ye may enjoy him, than to some other enjoyments, some other exercises in the world? Do not your hearts hang back from secret prayer, meditation, exercise of faith? Find you not yourselves much more forward to some other things? Oh, if the Lord were your chief delight,

your sweetest enjoyment, you would be more eager, more forward to follow after him. You need no enforcements; you go on your own accord after the world, your relations, your pleasures, recreations; and do ye need so many motives, persuasions, inducements, enforcements, to draw you to God? Why, then, have ye not cause to fear something else has more of your hearts? The fruition of something else is sweeter than that of God. This soul-worship is misplaced.

(3.) What cheerfulness find ye in drawing near to God in those ways wherein he is to be enjoyed? How cheerful are we when there, where they most delight to be! How pleasant is the fruition of that which is their joy! Can you be thus pleasant and cheerful in the company of friends, in the employments that tend to your advantage in the world, and yet so dull, untoward, heartless, in those services wherein ye may draw near to God, as though ye were cloyed with them? move here as if ye were out of your element; drive on heavily in these ways, as though the wheels were off, and come to these duties as to a meal with a full stomach? It is suspicious you delight in something more than God, give that worship to something else which is due only to God.

(4.) Are you not easily drawn from God? Are you not less discontented with a diversion from God than from some other things on which your hearts are set? That which you will easily part with, you are not much pleased with. Will not a temptation to take you off from close walking with God, prevail sooner than a motion to leave some sensual delight, ensnaring vanity? Can ye be more fixed and constant in other enjoyments and delights, but more easily, more ordinarily removed from God? This argues some distaste, some dislike of spiritual enjoyments. When the apprehension of such a pleasure, such an advantage, will be more powerful to turn ye aside from God than the promises of the word, the motions of the Spirit, and former experiences are to keep you close to him, this argues the Lord is not your most delightful enjoyment. Men do not easily part with that which is their chief delight; and if the Lord be not, something else is; and whatever that is, it is an idol.

(5.) Neglect ye not that which would make ye capable of the fullest enjoyment of God? Do ye not neglect holiness? Are ye not content with some low degrees of it? Is it your design, your endeavour to come up to the highest pitch of it? There is no seeing, no enjoying God without this. And the more of this, the more of God is seen, the more enjoyed. When this is in perfection, the enjoyment will be perfect. When this is weak, enjoyments will be small, and at a distance. The soul that counts the Lord his sweetest, most delightful enjoyment, will never think he has enough of him, and therefore will be ever labouring for that which will make him capable of more. If an opinion of holiness will serve your turn, or the beginnings, the principles of it, without the life, strength, exercise, increase of it, it is suspicious; you place not your happiness in the fruition of God; and if not in him, then it is in something else; and whatever that be, it is an idol.

Use. 3. Exhortation. Be exhorted, in the fear of God, to avoid this idolatry. It is the apostle’s exhortation, with which he closes his epistle, 1 John 5:21. Search it out, else how can it be avoided? Make use of the directions in the former use for that end at large delivered. If you discover it not, since such a discovery has been made thereof, it is because you will not see; and then henceforth this abominable sin in you is wilful, and yourselves inexcusable, and the justice of God clear, if any perish for it. When you have found it, bewail it. Bewail it with sorrow proportionable to the heinousness of the sin. Use it as an aggravation of your other sin, wherein, for the most part, there is a mixture. It may be thou art not an open blasphemer, an actual

murderer, or a wretched apostate, but art thou not a soul idolater? Nay, there need no question be made of this. Go then in secret and blush before the Lord, and take shame to thyself, and be humbled for it, humbled deeply, for it is an high provocation.

Fly to Christ for pardon. O that this might be the issue of all delivered on this subject, to drive ye to Christ; not only to beget in you some slight ineffectual apprehensions of some need of a Saviour (with which too many content themselves to the ruin of their souls), but to possess you with deep apprehensions of an absolute necessity of him, of his blood. Nothing else can wash off the deep stain of this crimson sin. One act (though ye be guilty of millions) of this idolatry, will be enough to sink you into hell, enough to kindle the everlasting wrath of God against you; that wrath which will burn for ever, which will burn so as none can quench it, except the blood of Christ be applied to that purpose. See into what a sad condition this sin has already brought ye. Hereby,

1. You have forfeited an inheritance. It is not some parcel of your estate, some of less value, worth less consideration, but your inheritance, your whole inheritance, and that for ever. For a man to lose his whole inheritance is a great, a sad loss; but this is it you lose by this sin. ‘An idolater,’ says the text, ‘shall have no inheritance.’

2. Oh, but it may be the inheritance is little worth, and then no great matter if it be lost. Oh no; it is a rich, a large, a glorious inheritance you lose hereby; it is no less than a kingdom. The loss of a crown, the loss of a kingdom, sticks deep. Oh what hazards will not men run to save a kingdom! Their treasure, their blood, their lives, yea, and the lives of thousands, will men lose rather than lose a kingdom. Why, this is it you lose by this sin, no less than a kingdom. ‘An idolater shall have no inheritance in the kingdom.’

3. Oh, but it may be it is some inconsiderable kingdom, some petty jurisdiction, then the loss is not so great. Oh no; it is the loss of the kingdom of God, and that is more than the loss of all the kingdoms of the earth. It is not the kingdom, the empire of a Cyrus, or of a Cæsar, or of an Alexander, or Othman, but it is the kingdom of God. You lose hereby such a kingdom as the empire of the world is but a span, a mote, yea, nothing, compared with it. Oh, what dreadful bloody conflicts there have been for the empire of the world! how many millions have been sacrificed to secure it! And will ye lose the kingdom of God rather than sacrifice this sin? The retaining of this sin will be the loss of that. So the text, ‘An idolater shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of God.’

Oh, but though this loss, this hazard, be exceeding great, yet it may be avoided; though I continue in this sin, yet is there no hope in Christ? May not he admit me into this kingdom notwithstanding? Oh no; Christ has no kingdom for such; he never purchased a kingdom for those that will continue in this sin. Christ, who has made way for others to the kingdom, will himself shut soul-idolaters out of it. The text tells us this too, ‘No inheritance in the kingdom of God, of Christ.’

Obj. But is this certain? Is this dreadful loss unavoidable? May it not be otherwise? Oh no; to dream of such a thing is madness; nothing is more certain. The apostle is in nothing more peremptory; mind the words, he says, ‘An idolater shall not,’ &c. He speaks not doubtfully, as of a thing uncertain, that may be or may not be. He says not, peradventure an idolater may not, but he shall not. As sure as the word of God is true, as sure as the apostle was directed by the Spirit of God, without all peradventure, a soul idolater shall have no inheritance, &c.

Obj. But is not this strange doctrine, to speak at this rate, of soul, of secret idolatry, a sin so common as few can acquit themselves of it; to say that all guilty of it shall certainly have no inheritance, &c. Is not this strange doctrine?

Ans. If it be strange, it is ignorance makes it so, for in the apostle's time it was a known, an acknowledged truth; there was no question, no doubt, made of it. The first word of the text tells us this, 'This ye know.' As if he had said, You certainly know, you undoubtedly acknowledge this; you make no question, no doubt of this, 'No idolater shall,' &c. No idolater, that is so habitually, perseveringly, shall. This idolatry, though it be secret, though it lodge in the retired chambers of the soul, though its pavilion be darkness, and no eye see it but the all-seeing eye of God, yet if it be not forsaken, lamented, resisted, subdued, it leaves no title, no way to the inheritance. Methinks this should be a sufficient dissuasive from this sin, a loss so great, so irreparable, so certain. This should effectually stir you up to search out this sin, to seek pardon of it, to get power to subdue it, to expel it. But further to stir you up against this sin, consider 2. How it is represented in Scripture, in what colours the Holy Ghost sets out idolatry.

(1.) It is called the worshipping of devils, not only in the Gentiles, 1 Corinthians 10:20, but also in the Jews, Deuteronomy 32:17. Yet these, in their idolatrous service, did not intend to worship devils, no, nor to worship their idols; but, as the papists pretend, to worship Jehovah, the true God, in those representations, as appears, Exod. [Exodus 20:4?]. Now, what a horrible abomination is it to worship the devil! Samuel, when he would aggravate Saul's sin to the height, tells him it was like the sin of witchcraft and idolatry, these being the worst of sins. Yet, if we compare these, idolatry seems worse than witchcraft, for witchcraft is but a compact with the devil, but idolatry is a worshipping of the devil; now, is it not worse, a greater abomination, to worship than to make an agreement with him?

(2.) It is called whoredom and adultery, Judges 2:17; 'Went a-whoring,' &c., 2 Chronicles 21:13, Jeremiah 3:9; idolaters are called the 'children of whoredoms,' Hosea 2:4, and Hosea 4:12. It is spiritual adultery. The Lord can no more endure idolatry in his people, those that profess him, than a man can endure adultery in his wife; other failings may be borne with, but this calls for death or a divorce. Hence the Lord, where he forbids this sin, he adds this reason, Exodus 20:1-26, 'For I am a jealous God.' This provokes the Lord to jealousy; he will no more endure a competitor in his worship than a husband will endure a partner in the affections and enjoyment of his wife. He is a jealous God.

(3.) This is the principal character of antichrist. Babylon, the seat of antichristianism, is not called the tyrant of Babylon, nor the heretic of Babylon, but 'the whore of Babylon,' the mother of fornications and abominations, with whom the kings, nations, and kingdoms of the earth commit fornication, Revelation 17:5. Babylon,—mystery. It is a mysterious spiritual whoredom; her great abomination is whoredom in a mystery, opposite to the great mystery of godliness, the mystery of the true worship of God. Now, is it not a dangerous thing to have the least character, the least part of the mark of the beast, that mark by which the Lord has designed her and her partakers out to most dreadful and remarkable destruction?

(4.) The Lord does most severely, most dreadfully threaten and punish idolatry above other sins. You may read the heinousness of it, in the grievousness of Israel's, of Judah's sufferings for it, Daniel 9:12. 'Under the whole heaven,' &c. The word confirmed hereby was the threatenings

executed for this sin, than which the Lord threatened no sin more, none so much, by his servants the prophets. He punishes not only the idolaters themselves, but even their posterity to many generations after them, for this sin, according to the tenor of that threatening, Exodus 20:5; and the Jews are so apprehensive of it, as to this day they have a saying, That no judgment befel the Jews for those many hundred years after they left Egypt but there is an ounce of the golden calf in it.

Obj. But this was gross open idolatry, worshipping of images; it was not this secret, this soul idolatry; the Scripture speaks no such thing of that.

Ans. This secret and soul idolatry, is in some sense worse than open idolatry; and, therefore, those Scripture expressions setting forth the vileness and danger of that, may be applied to humble us under the sense of this. That this may appear, and mistakes may be prevented, remember wherein these two sorts of idolatry do consist. It is open gross idolatry when that outward worship, which consists in the gestures of body, bowing, prostration, &c., is given in a religious way to others besides God. It is secret idolatry, when that inward worship, which consists in the acts and motions of the mind and heart, are given to other things besides God. Now, when both inward and outward worship together are given to the creatures, that is the worst of idolatry of all; then the sin is complete in all the dimensions of its guilt. But now, if we compare these two sorts of worship apart, it is far worse idolatry, when inward worship is given to other things than God, than when outward worship only is communicated to them. And in this sense I say, that secret soul idolatry is worse than that which is gross and open, and that in divers respects.

1. The Lord more respects inward worship than outward, the acts and motions of the soul, than the acts and gestures of the body. ‘My son, give me thy heart.’ ‘The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit,’ John 4:28. It is inward, spiritual, soul worship, which the Lord most requires, most respects, most delights in, is most honoured by; and therefore it is a greater provocation to give this soul worship to other things than that of the body. It is worse idolatry for the soul to bow down to a lust, than for the body to lie prostrate before an idol.

2. Even in worshipping God, a man may be excessive in outward acts and expressions, in the motions and gestures of the body; but there can be no excess in the inward acts of worship. Ye cannot love God too much, nor trust, fear, desire, delight, nor have too much esteem of him, and this argues a greater excellency in, a greater necessity of this inward worship, than of that which is outward, and therefore a greater provocation to give that soul-worship unto others, than this of the body.

3. The objects of secret idolatry are worse than those of open idolatry, the idols worshipped are more vile, more abominable; and, therefore, the idolatry more to be abhorred. For the idols here worshipped, the objects of soul-worship in this secret idolatry, are for the most part the lusts of men. Now, there is not the basest creature that ever the blindest of the heathen worshipped, that is so vile as our base lusts. There is no creature so mean (not such as the Egyptians worshipped) but has some goodness in it, Genesis 1:1-31, something of worth or use as it is a creature; but there is no goodness at all in the lusts of men, nothing but what is altogether and upon every account most abominable, and that in the eye of God, who judges of things as they are, and so judges righteous judgment. He looked upon all that he had made as good, even the meanest of his creatures; but he cannot endure to look upon men’s lusts, he is of purer eyes than to behold

iniquity; so vile, so loathsome, so abominable, so full of provocation, he cannot look upon them but with indignation. Now for men to give that divine honour, that soul worship which is due only unto the Majesty of heaven, unto their vile abominable lusts, must needs be more heinous, more intolerable, than if it were given to the works of God's hands, than if it were given to the sun or moon, yea, or to wood and stone, yea, or to toads and serpents; for these are better, have more worth in them than our lusts, for they are the works of God's hands; whereas your lusts are the loathsome issue of filthy impure hearts. When your lusts have more of your hearts, thoughts, delight, desires, love than God, it is worse idolatry upon this account than if you should bow to a sun or moon, than if you should lie prostrate before a toad or serpent.

Obj. But some may say, If we did make vows or prayers, if we did burn incense, or offer sacrifice to our lusts, then might we be charged with this idolatry; otherwise the censure seems to want good ground.

Ans. I have instanced at large in many acts of worship besides these, which are due only to God; and it is idolatry to give any one, not only these. But as for this objected, see if there be not something answerable to these, nay, something exceeding these acts of worship given by men to their lusts.

1. As for prayer and invocation. If the desires of your hearts be more after the fulfilling of your lusts, and making provision for them, than after the pleasing and honouring of God, why then, you pray more to your lusts than unto God. For if the desires of your souls be not after God, as they cannot be while your lusts prevail, why, then, that which you count praying to God is but the carcase of a prayer. Your lusts have that which is the soul and life of prayer. For the essence of prayer consists in the ardent desires of the heart, the expressions and gestures are but formalities and circumstances, not at all regarded by God except in displeasure, when the other is absent, Isaiah 29:13. This was no praying; but Hannah's was without expressions, 1 Samuel 1:13, 1 Samuel 1:15.

2. As for vows. If you purpose and resolve to live in sin, and follow the motions of your lusts, is not this a mental vow? This is equivalent to, and has the strength and firmness of, a vow, and is stronger than any resolution for God can be, while the strength of sin is unsubdued.

3. As for sacrifices. If you give up yourselves to any way of sin, you sacrifice more thereto than the cattle of a thousand hills. A man given up to a lust, he sacrifices his time, his strength, his enjoyments, his parts, his endeavours, his thoughts, his affections, nay, his soul thereto. And are not these more valuable than the sacrifices of bulls or goats? than any sacrifice of that nature in use among the Jews or Gentiles, Psalms 51:16-17. An heart broken, i. e. subdued to God, ready to yield to his will in all things, is a sacrifice to God. So is a heart subdued to a lust, ready to yield to its motions, it is a sacrifice to it; such a sacrifice as God requires for himself, and would be well-pleased with it, if it were offered to him; better pleased than with all external sacrifices.

Obj. But what does this concern the people of God already in covenant? Though they may be guilty of some inordinate, i. e. idolatrous motions, yet are not they hereby brought within the compass of this threatening. They cannot lose their title to the inheritance, that which they were ordained to, that which they are born to. 'The foundation of God standeth sure,' &c. 'Whom he has predestinated,' &c.

Ans. Be it so. They fall not directly under the threatening; yet does it sometimes concern them. If it did not, yet are there other weighty considerations that should make this sin dreadful even to God's people.

1. Though it make not their possession of the inheritance impossible, yet will this make it exceeding difficult. The apostle gives direction, 2 Peter 1:11, how an entrance may be ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom. Though the people of God, giving way to these motions, may possibly have an entrance, yet not abundantly ministered. It is one thing for a man to creep into his inheritance; another to be carried with full sail into it. The apostles speak of some that shall be saved, but so as by fire, 1 Corinthians 3:15; though they may escape this threatening, yet very hardly, with much danger and difficulty; even as out of the fire he shall be, ■■■ ■■■, as a firebrand. The Lord Christ makes it such a difficulty as is next to an impossibility, Mark 10:23, &c. Now to prevent a mistake, he tells them, it is not the having, the possessing of riches, but the idolizing of them, trusting in them, ascribing that to them which is due only to God; which makes it thus exceeding difficult for those that have riches, &c. And there is the same reason of all other things inordinately affected. He that inordinately loves, fears, delights, desires, esteems anything in the world, it will be exceeding difficult for such a one to enter. And lest any should make light of it, he further expresses the difficulty by a comparison, Mark 10:25. There is but the difference of a letter betwixt κ■μηλος, a camel, and κ■μιλος, a cable; and this latter way some render it, 'It is easier for a cable,' &c. Take it which way you will, it speaks a difficulty impossible to be overcome by the power of man. And so he explains it, to allay the disciples' astonishment, Mark 10:26-27. It is possible only to almighty power, which alone can so disengage the heart from riches and other objects, as it shall not immoderately affect them, inordinately love, desire, prize. There is no other way possible to heaven, but by subduing this idolatrous humour of trusting in, idolizing of, riches. And the same is true of any other object whereon the mind, the heart, is more set than upon God: 'It is as easy,' &c.

If you give way to these inordinate motions, affections, &c., you will find the way to heaven, like the Israelites' way to Canaan, tedious, difficult, dangerous. It was idolatry made it so to them. The Lord might have brought them a short, a safe, an easy way, to the promised land, and made it a journey of as few days as it was years; but their idolatry, with other sins, provoked the Lord to swear in his wrath, &c. And this very thing, both sin and punishment, is proposed as ensamples to us, lest, being ensnared in their sin, we should fall by their punishment, fall in the wilderness, and come short of Canaan, 1 Corinthians 10:6-7, 1 Corinthians 10:11-12. If this shut not the people of God out of his rest, yet it may make your way thither exceeding woful and perilous, exceeding difficult and hazardous; it may bring ye back into the wilderness, when ye are in sight of the land of promise; may dash your hopes, darken your evidence, and make your way on earth a dry and comfortless desert, a perilous and howling wilderness.

2. This will blast the prosperity of your souls, endanger the life of holiness, keep ye back from the power of godliness, bring your souls into a consumption, keep them in a languishing condition, even near unto the gates of death. And what greater miseries can befall a servant of God in this world? Oh, if we could look upon things with a spiritual eye, these distempers would be more dreadful than outward sufferings. When anything in the world is inordinately, i. e. idolatrously minded and affected, it is a soul disease, like to those diseases of the body which draw all the spirits and nutriment to the distempered part, and leave the rest weak and languishing in a

consumption. While ye love other things inordinately, you lose your first love to Christ; while ye are so eager after the world and other vanities, you must needs be lukewarm in the ways of God; while ye are so active after a soul-idol, you cannot but be barren and unfruitful towards God. And how dangerous are these distempers, how odious to the Lord, how severely does he threaten them! This idolatrous plant will suck away all the juice and sap of your souls, and leave grace to wither and languish. It cumbers the ground wherever it takes place, and makes all about it barren.

There is no coming up to the power of godliness, to the vigorous exercise of grace, to the lively actings of holiness, no access to intimate communion with God, where this is tolerated. And what is the life of a Christian without this, but a shadow of death? If the hearts of lukewarm, formal, backsliding professors (who abound everywhere) were searched, some such imposthume would be found there, some lust or vanity idolatrously affected, imposthumating their hearts, and eating as a cancer; nor can our souls ever prosper, but will still be backsliding, till the ulcer be lanced. And are not such distempers dreadful, which bring the soul so near to apostasy? Should not this be a forcible motive?

3. If you continue in this guilt, you may be sure some sharp affliction will befall you. If the Lord have any love to you, he will not lose you: ‘As many as I love, I chasten,’ Revelation 3:1-22. Either he will pluck that from you which ye immoderately value and affect, or else he will so embitter it to you as you shall find by sad experience that it is an evil thing and a bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, to set up other things instead of him, Jeremiah 2:19. He will make this very wickedness to correct thee, and thy backsliding hereby occasioned to reprove thee; he will turn those idolized comforts into gall and wormwood, and convey a sting into that which thy heart, with such delight, embraces. If thou fall not in the wilderness (as habitual idolaters), yet will he turn thy idols into serpents; so that instead of the comforts thou expectest to refresh thee, thou shalt find a sting to wound thee. The Israelites’ sufferings for idolatry and other evils are proposed as ensamples to the people of God, 1 Corinthians 10:1-33. If thou expectest to enjoy thy idol quietly, thou art deluded; if thou belong to God, he will make thee smart for it. If you will not speedily put away these spiritual whoredoms out of your sight, the Lord will strip ye naked, and make ye as a wilderness, Hosea 2:3; see Hosea 5:6-7.

4. The Lord will withdraw himself from you. There must needs be an eclipse when the earth gets betwixt you and the sun. You will find the light of his countenance clouded when such gross vapours, such lusts, such inordinate motions abound. The Lord is a jealous God; if he do not send you a bill of divorce, yet ye shall have little of his presence; he will be separated in part, though not totally and for ever. And oh how sad will your condition be, if outward afflictions and spiritual desertions should meet together! If the Lord, for your idolizing the things of the world, should leave you destitute of them; if ye should fall into poverty, disgrace; if cast off by friends and relations, too much valued; if he should cast you into languishing sickness, and then wound your conscience, drop bitterness into your spirits, and set his terrors in array against you; if you should cry to him in this condition, and he refuse to hear you; if seek him, and he not be found of you; if he should send you to the gods that ye have served; if he should bring to remembrance your idols, your credit, riches, pleasures, sports, company, relations, and say to you, as to them, Judges 10:13-14, Go and cry to these idols that you preferred before me, let them deliver you, let them speak peace to you, let them save you, let them free you from the wrath to come, let them secure you from going down into the pit. You have slighted, undervalued, cast off me when you prospered; and do ye

come now to me when ye are afflicted? Nay, go to the gods that ye have chosen. You thought them more worthy of your thoughts, affections, hearts, than me; make much of your choice, eat the fruits of your doings, I will have nothing to do with you: Oh what a dreadful condition will this be? There is but even a span betwixt hell and it. Now, by continuing under this guilt, you are in the high way to this woful condition, you are posting towards it. Oh remember it before it be too late.

Quest. But since this soul idolatry is so dangerous to all sorts, how shall it be avoided? What means may we use, to escape out of this dangerous snare?

Ans. For satisfaction to this, observe these directions.

1. Get new natures. All other means will be ineffectual without this. The regeneration of the soul is the only way to the destruction of this sin. The first beginnings of spiritual life, are the first pangs of death to soul idolatry; and as grace increases, as holiness grows, so does this sin decay. It ceases to be habitual and reigning, when the principles of grace are first implanted; and as holiness, which is Christ's interest in the soul, grows stronger and stronger, so the interest of the flesh and world, wherein the life and power of this sin consists, grows weaker and weaker. They are as the house of David and Saul. This is the woful misery of an unrenewed condition; and oh that it might be laid to heart by those whom it concerns! While ye are in the state of nature, unconverted, not sanctified, not born again, you are unavoidably idolaters. It is reigning and habitual, and so damning, and destructive, till ye be regenerated. Sin has the throne, Satan has the sceptre, every base lust and vanity takes place of God, of Christ, in your hearts. Whatever ye love, ye love it more than God. Whatever ye trust, delight in, desire, esteem, the god of this world is your god, and the lust of the flesh, eye, pride of life, is your trinity. God has no place in your minds and hearts, or but an inferior place, a place unworthy of him, below your lusts, vanities, relations, enjoyments. God has no true worship from you; that which is due to him is given to other things; and so it will be till you have new hearts, till old things pass away. Oh what a woful condition is this! Be convinced of it. Cry unto God for the spirit of regeneration, for those new hearts which he has promised. Till then, you are, you will be, such idolaters as have no inheritance in the kingdom.

2. Mortify your lusts. It is the apostle's direction, Colossians 3:5. If we inquire, as the apostle James in another case, from whence comes this soul idolatry? we may answer, as he, James 4:1, 'Comes it not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?' Here is the spring-head of this abomination. Stop up this, and the motions, the streams thereof will fail. When Delilah would destroy Samson, she inquired wherein his strength lay. Why, the strength of this idolatry lies in unmortified lusts; except ye cut these off, ye will never prevail against it. Oh that instead of those vanities, to which Satan diverts so many professors from the great concernments of their souls, this might be your care, and study, and design, to die daily. Be much in mortifying duties: 1, Search out your lusts, get more acquaintance with the distempers of your hearts; 2, Be ashamed of them; 3, Acknowledge them, with all their aggravations, be humbled for them in the sight of God, frequently, seriously; 4, Cut off the occasions which nourish, support them; 5, Beat down your bodies, and bring them into subjection; rather forbear lawful liberties, than yield any encouragement to your lusts by them; 6, Cry unto God for strength against this great multitude; look on them as more dreadful than an host of armed enemies; as more dangerous, more pernicious; say as Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:12; 7, Bewail them as your greatest afflictions; 8, Act faith on Christ crucified, and by the power of it draw crucifying virtue from him; it is through his

strength only that you must conquer. The life of this sin is bound up in the life of unmortified lusts. Crucify these, die daily unto them, and this sin will die, will fall with them.

3. Get right apprehensions of the things of the world. An overvaluing of outward things is the birth and food of this soul-idolatry. The motions and affections of the soul follow the dictate, the judgment of the understanding; if this be corrupt, no wonder if they be inordinate. The judgment is the spring of the soul's motion; if that be out of order, no wonder if all the motions of the heart be irregular. Whence is it that we immoderately love, desire, delight, trust, outward things, but because we overvalue them, apprehend more in them than there is? Let your thoughts often represent to your souls the vanity, emptiness, uncertainty, dissatisfaction, deceitfulness, unprofitableness of your choicest worldly enjoyments, and the vexation of spirit that attends them, and converse in the world under the sense of these apprehensions. Look upon them, as the Spirit of God represents them, nay, as experience testifies of them, and the ground of idolizing them will be far less. Consult with the best experience, and stand to its verdict. What did Samson or Solomon find in beauty, or Haman in honours, or Judas in his money, or the rich man in his full barns and exceeding plenty, or David in his dearest child, or Job in the wife of his bosom and choicest friends? Oh miserable comforts, miserable comforters! Are such things worthy to come in competition with God? Think seriously of these things, judge of them as they are, use them as though ye used them not. When you are crucified to the world, then will this sin languish, then will the strength of it be weakened.

4. Let your hearts be especially jealous of lawful comforts; these are the most dangerous snares. Because we apprehend least danger in them, herein we are most secure, and therefore the sooner surprised. Because we may lawfully follow our callings and worldly business, therefore men take liberty to follow them too eagerly, engage their minds and hearts too far upon them, and that before they are aware of it.

Because we may lawfully love friends and relations, we are less watchful to avoid excess in our affections. Because recreations are lawful, therefore we are apt to take liberty to exceed therein. Because we may take comfort in outward enjoyments, therefore we are more apt to let out our hearts to them, as if they were our chief comforts; especially when our employments border upon spiritual things, we are apt to think we cannot be too inordinate, whereas spiritual things themselves may be carnally used. And the extreme here is more easy to them that are conscientious, than in things apparently evil. Oh, how many who escape the gross pollutions of the world, and are far from excess of riot, are miserably ensnared in the inordinate using and affecting of lawful things! Here we lie most open to Satan; therefore, if ye would avoid this idolatry, be most watchful and jealous in these things. THE CHILDREN OF GOD SHOULD NOT BE PARTAKERS WITH OTHERS IN THEIR SINS Be ye not therefore partakers with them.—Ephesians 5:7.

Having given you a general account of the eighth verse, before I take a more particular view of the words, I thought it not amiss to take notice of a very useful and necessary truth, which this seventh verse offers unto our observation. It is this:

Obs. The children of God should not be partakers with others in their sins. Those that profess, &c., and would be accounted followers of God as dear children, should be careful not to partake with others in their wickedness. The first thing ye should be careful of, is to avoid personal sins; the next, not to be tainted with the guilt of other men's sins.

If you would walk as becometh saints, Ephesians 5:3, it is not enough not to act sin yourselves, not to be principals in sinning; you should be fearful to be accessory to the sins of others. It is the apostle's advice to Timothy, 1 Timothy 5:22. Avoid not only the acting of sin thyself, but also a partaking with others' sins. If thou couldst live free from personal guilt, yet thou mayest contract guilt enough by other men's sins to make thee liable to condemnation. The marrow of this truth lies in knowing how and in what ways we may be in danger to be partakers of other men's sins. Unless this be known, it will not, it cannot be well avoided; and therefore I will endeavour to shew how many ways ye may be guilty in others' sin, guilty of that evil which other men act; how ye may be accessory to that sin wherein others are principals. This may come to pass very many ways. To help your memories, I shall reduce as many as I have observed (for all I will not undertake to find out) to six heads, most of which are pregnant, and include in them many particulars.

Ye may partake of others' sins, by practising, concurring, causing, occasioning, countenancing, not hindering the sins of others.

1. By practising the like evils. The apostle seems especially to intend this. Commit not the like sins; act not like the children of disobedience. They are guilty of fornication, vers. 3 and 4, take heed ye tread not in their steps: 'Be ye not,' &c. 2 Kings 16:10: King Ahaz, going to Damascus, saw an altar there, and sent the pattern of it, that Uriah the priest might build one according thereto; and it is said, 2 Chronicles 28:23, that 'he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus.' Here is an evident partaking in those idolaters' sin. Those that give us the best account of that mysterious book, expound that place, Revelation 12:2, so as by the Gentiles they understand the papists. And these are called Gentiles, because guilty of the like superstitious, idolatrous worship with the Gentiles, in their worshipping of images, and praying to souls departed. They hereby so far partake of their sins as to partake of their name. That is a remarkable instance, Matthew 23:34-35. The Jews, by persecuting and killing the servants of Christ in their time, became guilty of the blood of God's servants, shed by their fathers in former times. That is the best account we can give why the Lord would bring upon that generation all the righteous blood that had been shed in all generations. By acting the like cruelty with their fathers, they did shew their real approbation of their forefathers' sins. This made them accessory to sins committed before they had a being, so far as they were to suffer for them also, not only for their own personal wickedness. Imitation is a participation; and this clears the justice of God in visiting the sins of fathers upon their children. If children imitate their fathers they partake in their sin; no wonder then if they partake of the plagues due to their fathers' sins.

Some take this as an excuse, &c. But you see how the Lord takes it. If you imitate the sins of ancestors, the Lord may not only charge the guilt of your personal sins, but the guilt of your forefathers' sins, upon your souls. Who would not tremble to hear the Lord Christ threaten to charge the guilt of all former generations upon that one generation? If ye be imitators of them, you are in some sense partakers with them; and so the Lord may justly punish you for them.

Hence we have both precept and example, to confess the sins of our fathers. Command, Leviticus 26:39-40. Example of David, Psalms 106:6; of Jeremiah 3:25; of Daniel 9:5-6. Now, why confessed, but that they may be forgiven? And forgiven to whom? to forefathers deceased? No, by no means, there is no forgiveness after death. But that they may be forgiven to the living. And why forgiven to them, but that they may be guilty of them. Guilty, then, ye may be of fathers' sins; and

how more evidently than by imitation? To imitate is to participate.

2. By concurring. A concurrence, though it be but partial, may make thee guilty of sin as an accessory, whoever be the principal in sinning.

Now there may be a sinful concurrence; you may partake of others' sins, by concurring with them, divers ways, and so be guilty of that sin which others act.

(1.) By contriving. When sin is contrived, there is concurrence of the head, though not of the hand. Thus Jezebel was guilty of Naboth's murder, though the elders and nobles of the city were the actors in it. It was her plot, 1 Kings 21:9-10. The guilt of his blood was upon her soul, though her hand was not imbrewed therein; and therefore the Lord threatens that in the very place that was the occasion of her murderous plot the dogs should eat her, 1 Kings 21:25.

Thus David was guilty of Uriah's death, though Joab was the actor, and the Ammonites the executioners, 2 Samuel 11:15.

Thus Rebekah of Jacob's dissembling. She contrived it, to defeat Esau, though he was the actor. And if he smarted for it in so many hardships after, she had her share in his chastisement.

Always the contriver is chargeable with a great part of the guilt, if not the greatest. If thou plottest and contrivest how to defraud, how to disparage, defame, how to be revenged, &c. Whoever effect what thou plottest, though thy hand be not in it, though thou be not seen therein, the Lord, who is the searcher of hearts, will charge the sin upon thy soul.

(2.) By consenting. Where there is consent to sin, there is a concurrence of the will, though not of the outward man. This consent is always guilty, whether it be free, so Saul was guilty of Stephen's death, Acts 8:1; or whether it be extorted, so Pilate was guilty of Christ's death, though the Jews seemed to overrule him thereto; or whether it be tacit, and shewed no way but by silence, qui tacet, consentire videtur. If, when anything that is unlawful is propounded, thou givest consent any way, though but as it were unwillingly and with reluctancy; yea, though it be but by silence, that sin is thine, the Lord will charge its guilt on thee, whoever act it.

(3.) By inclination. Where there is an inclination to an unlawful act, there is a concurrence of the heart, though the outward man act not. If thy inclination be such, thou couldest wish in thy heart such or such a wickedness, which others act; though thou dost not contrive it, nor expressly consent to it, nor contribute anything to bring it to pass, yet thy heart is with the actors of it, thou hast a good mind it should be done, this is enough to bring the guilt of it upon thy soul. Instances of this must be sought in our own hearts; it is hard to find them elsewhere, because inclinations are not known but by outward expressions, and so without these are not related. That of Shimei comes near it. It is like he did not contrive Absalom's rebellion, or David's sufferings thereby occasioned, nor is it probable that he was called to give his consent, nor do we find him joining with Absalom in the war, yet his words shew it was the inclination, the desire of his heart, that all this evil should befall David; and this had been enough to make him guilty in the sight of God, though he had never broke forth into such expressions before men. If thy heart be inclined to that which others act in an evil way, even this, if there be nothing else, taints thee with the guilt of their evil actings. The Lord passes sentence according to the motion of the heart, though men judge only outward actions. 'He that lusts after a woman, has committed adultery with her in his heart.'

He that desires revenge, does murder the man in his heart, though another do the act without thy consent or knowledge, thy heart concurs, because that is its inclination. And he that concurs with a sinner, so far partakes of his sin.

(4.) By rejoicing. When a man is glad that an unlawful act is done by others, he concurs in affection, though not in action. Thus was Ahab guilty of Naboth's blood. He did not contrive his death, the plot was Jezebel's; nor did he execute it, the fact was done by the nobles and elders of the city. Nay, for anything appears, he knew not of it till it was done; but when he knew of it, he was not sorry for it. His cheerfulness, readiness to take possession, shews he was glad enough that Naboth was dead, 1 Kings 21:16. And this makes him so guilty, though he was neither plotter nor actor, as the Lord charges him with killing Naboth, ver. 19, and the threatening falls heaviest upon him, vers. 21, 22.

If thou art glad when others do wickedly, this will make thee guilty of their wickedness. If thou art glad at the losses, disgraces, sufferings of those thou lovest not, though thou be not the oppressor, or the slanderer, or persecutor, though thou art not otherwise than in affection instrumental herein, yet thou art guilty hereof.

(5.) By sentence and vote. He that gives his vote that an unlawful thing shall be done, though others do it, he is guilty of it. Here is a verbal concurrence, though not real. Thus Saul was guilty of Christians' death, Acts 26:10. His sentence made him guilty, if he had no way pretended to execution. The apostle advises Timothy to beware he partake not of men's sins this way, 1 Timothy 5:22, 'lay hands,' i. e. admit no man to the ministry, suddenly, without due examination, without sufficient evidence that he is fitly qualified for that high calling. 'Neither partake,' i. e. if others joined with thee, will sin in admitting unworthy persons, and will vote them suddenly into the ministry, who are suspected of scandal or insufficiency; concur not with them, lest hereby thou be partaker of those other men's sins. So it is ordinarily taken; a verbal approbation of that which is unlawful, any expression which shews a liking of that which is sinful, brings a man under the guilt of that sin, whoever act it.

(6.) By assisting. He that contributes anything to the promoting of sin, though he be not the principal actor of it, brings the guilt thereof upon his soul. Thus was Saul also guilty of Stephen's death, Acts 7:58. He did not cast stones at Stephen; so far as the relation acquaints us, he only kept the clothes of those that stoned him. Yet, promoting this sin but thus far, he made himself guilty of it. Here is a real concurrence, though but partial and inferior. So Demetrius, and the rest of the silver-smiths, that made shrines for Diana, if they had not joined in the idolatrous worship of that idol, yet their craft tending to promote it in others, had been sufficient to involve them in the guilt of idolatry, Acts 19:24. So those tradesmen amongst us, who make use of their professions to nourish pride, drunkenness, voluptuousness, helping them to what they know will be so abused, bring upon themselves the guilt of these sins. Whatever such seem to get hereby, they will find a dreadful score hereafter, when they must be accountable, not only for their own personal sins, but for the sins of multitudes, which, by the abuse of their professions, they have nourished and promoted.

(7.) By communicating in the profits or pleasures of sin. When men are willing others should continue in sin, for the unworthy advantages they reap thereby. Thus panders are guilty of whoredom, though they personally act not uncleanness. So receivers are guilty of theft; 'cast in thy

lot amongst us, let us all have one purse;' partaking of the gain, they partake of the sin: Psalms 50:18, 'When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedest with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.' So are they, who, for the pleasure they take in uncleanness, care not how many write immodest lines, or speak immodest language. The masters of the damsel who was possessed with a divining devil, had rather she should have been still in his possession, than they dispossessed of the gains they got thereby; and so were hereby accessory, both to the devil's wickedness, and the damsel's misery.

Thus are they guilty of practising with the devil, who have recourse to those that practise by him; to wizards, or, as ye call them, cunning men. By seeking to these for the recovery of things lost, or the discovery of things secret, you are accessory to their witchcraft, and tainted with the guilt of that league which they have made with the devil, by virtue of which they come to that craft after which you inquire. Which practice, of seeking to wizards, is so clearly condemned, so severely threatened, in Scripture, as none dare use it but such as are ignorant of the word of God, or such as do not regard it. But I may meet with this hereafter. Thus, you see, these seven ways ye partake of other men's sins, by concurrence with them, which is the second general I propounded.

3. By occasioning the sins of others. When we give others occasion to sin, and that may be done many ways.

(1.) By evil example. One sin of an exemplary person may occasion many. When magistrates, or ministers, or parents, or masters of families, or any one eminent in the account of others, makes bold with that which is evil, it is a pregnant sin, has many in the bowels of it. We may say of it, 'Behold a troop;' it goes not alone, it has many followers. Such cannot sin at so easy a rate as others, one evil may bring the charge of a thousand upon their souls. Peter's failing in Judaizing, conforming to their ceremonies, withdrawing from the Gentiles, to the infringement of Christian liberty, it involved many in his guilt, and so himself in the guilt of many, Galatians 2:12-13. To this day, some encourage themselves in wickedness by the examples of Noah, Lot, David. It was thought wonderful that Abraham should have issue at an hundred years of age. Ay, but evil example is more fruitful; it can occasion sin many hundred, some thousands, of years, after it first appears in the world. Our first parents' sin is fruitful to this hour. Thou knowest not but the bad influence of thy sin may operate many years after thou art dead. Masters of families, and parents especially, should consider this. Those that are under you have their eyes upon you. They are more apt to be led by example than precept; they will do as they see others do before them, not as you bid them, but as you lead them. If parents be given to swearing, tippling, gaming, whoring, scoffing, contention, superstition, &c.; advise your children as much, as seriously as you will; you shall find one ill example do more hurt than a thousand wholesome admonitions will do good. Thy sin may lead others to hell, thy children's children when thou art dead; and will not that which sinks them burden thee? One sin may this way bring along with it the guilt of many thousands.

(2.) By the offensive use of things indifferent. When a professor will go to the utmost line of his liberty, in the use of things lawful in themselves, but of the lawfulness of which others are unsatisfied, this is to stand on the edge of the hill (as Chrysostom calls it). One that is strong possibly may stand there safely; but a weak one thereby encouraged to follow him, may be carried headlong. Is it not better not to go so high, than to endanger the ruin of others by following thee?

Two great questions there were of this nature in the apostle's time; the apostle gives many cautions in the use of liberty about them. One was, whether it was lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols. The intelligent sort of Christians then were persuaded to eat them, when sold in the shambles, or used in civil feasts. The weaker sort did not so well understand their liberty herein, were not satisfied that it was lawful. Now see what advice he gives to the intelligent, 1 Corinthians 8:8. This is indifferent, and you have liberty to use them, to eat these things; but, 1 Corinthians 8:9, if one that is not satisfied be encouraged (by seeing thee use this liberty) to eat with a doubting conscience, the use of thy liberty becomes a stumbling-block to the weak, occasions him to fall into sin, by doing that which he is doubtful of.

Another question was, about the indifferent use of meats, whether it was lawful to eat what was forbidden by the ceremonial law. The more knowing Christians were satisfied of its lawfulness; the weak sort doubted. The apostle gives the like caution in this case, Romans 14:20. Why evil? Since it was lawful in itself, why, says he, it is evil to thee, because it occasions sin in others. It caused the weak to stumble; they, following the practice of the strong, when they doubted of the lawfulness of the practice, did stumble, did sin, doing it with a doubting conscience, for, Romans 14:23, he cautions them in using all things that are lawful; this may be an occasion to others of doing many things unlawful, and their guilt this way will reach thee. The apostle advises to avoid all appearance of evil. Quicquid male fuerit coloratum. For that which has but a show of evil in itself may occasion a real evil in another, and so he that committed but evil in show may be tainted with a real guilt.

(3.) By scandalous sins, either in judgment or practice; for these are not only abominable in themselves, and the occasions of sin in others by example, but also in a more dangerous and dreadful way, by strengthening the hands of sinners, and opening their mouths to blaspheme.

Those that are guilty of the licentious opinions and practices of these times, besides that guilt, heavy enough to sink them deep into hell, they also contract the guilt of the blood of those souls, who are hereby hardened against the ministry of the word, against the providence of God, in their old profane superstitious courses. They contract also the guilt of that blasphemy, whereby the name of the great God is dishonoured, and the holy ways of Christ disparaged. This is your preciseness, and this is your Reformation! See the issue of it. Is it not better to keep in the old way, than to run mad in the new? So profane persons cry out, so blind wickedness casts dirt upon the strict profession of Christ and his holy ways, because some apostates have left the way that was too good, too strict for them. But the Lord will judge righteous judgment, and stop the mouth of profaneness in his own time. In the mean time, woe be to them to open it, that put these words into profane mouths, and give occasion to such blasphemies. Offences must come, but woful will it be, both for those that give them, and for those that take them.

David's sins were highly sinful in themselves, but there was a sinfulness, besides those heinous facts, which the Lord would not pass by, when he pardoned them, 2 Samuel 12:13-14. David's adultery and murder drew along with it the guilt of blasphemy; not that he blasphemed, but because he occasioned others to do it; and for this he must smart, and so must they, &c.

Take heed of scandalous evils: they usually occasion greater sins than themselves, and bring upon the actor a greater guilt than that of his personal acts.

(4.) By provoking. He that says or does that which provokes another to sin, is at least the occasion of it; and hereby, besides the guilt of the provocation, brings upon himself the guilt of the sin to which the sinner is provoked. Hence the apostle advises so often to beware of this, Galatians 5:26, Ephesians 6:4. It does not cease to be sin, because you are provoked to it; no, it is more sinful, because more sin therein, both the provoker and the provoked. The Lord shews who provoked Ahab, when he is aggravating his sin; so far is provocation from extenuating a sin, 1 Kings 21:25. He that provokes another to pride, by overvaluing expressions; or to lust, by filthy speeches; or to wrath and revenge, by incensing words; or wordliness, by covetous suggestions, he brings upon himself both the guilt of these sins, and the effects of them, whoever act them.

(5.) By ensnaring. Those whose garb, gestures, words, are as snares, may justly be accounted occasions of sin, and so guilty of those iniquities wherein they ensnare others. We read of the whoredoms of Jezebel, 2 Kings 9:22. And no wonder, since we read of her painting, 2 Kings 9:30. Where there is the occasion, usually there is the sin; every one avoids not the snare. Tamar's whorish habit and posture was the occasion of Judah's sin, it was a snare to him, Genesis 38:14. Her guilt was double, both involved in the guilt of her own wickedness, and that of his, which she thereby occasioned. The apostle shews what direct snares, dangers, there are in words to occasion sin, 1 Corinthians 15:33. Corrupt, immodest, and such like evil communication, it is as sparks scattered amongst powder, a wonder if none take fire, if this be not an occasion of kindling an hell of lust, or other wickedness in the hearts of the hearers. But while this kindles others, he that throws abroad such sparks shall not escape scorching; the guilt is chargeable upon him as the occasion.

(6.) By leading others into temptations. So not only the devil, but men, therein like him, occasion sin, and draw the guilt of others' wickedness, so occasioned, upon themselves also. There are incarnate tempters, and such who do but expose others to temptations. So those that engage others in the company of debauched, unclean, drunken companions, are accessory to their wickedness if the temptation prevail. So those that lead others amongst seducers, if they catch infection, are answerable for it, even as he that leads another to a pest-house, if he die of the plague, is accessory to his death.

Those that present tempting objects to others, if they take, occasion the sin, and are guilty as well as the actor.

Thus was Eve guilty, not only of her own, but of her husband's sin, Genesis 3:6. Thus men partake of others' sins when they occasion them, and occasion them by leading others into temptation.

(7.) By shewing opportunities to sin. This is evidently to give occasion, and so to partake. Thus Judas was guilty of crucifying Christ, by shewing the Jews an opportunity to apprehend and crucify him. Thus the Ziphites were guilty of Saul's intended cruelty against David, by shewing him an opportunity to execute it, discovering where he was hid, 1 Samuel 23:19-20. So those that shew others opportunities to fulfil their lusts, or satisfy their revenge, or get unjust gain, or gratify any other lust, are thereby accessory to their sin, and partakers with them.

(8.) By affording matter of sin to others, that which they know or suspect will be sinfully abused, hereby occasion their sin, and partake in their guilt. Cyprian, lib. iii. ep. 16, writing to the elders and deacons of the church, reproves them sharply for admitting some to communicate before they

sufficiently testified their repentance; tells them hereby they furthered the ruin of such sinners, ut magis pereant, et plus cadant; and that the elders thus admitting such were hereby many ways guilty, erunt autem rei qui præsunt, &c. They contracted guilt, by not shewing the danger of such communicating, by not hindering such from it. As those who are grossly ignorant, or evidently live in gross sins, do, by intruding, eat and drink their own damnation, so those that admit such are hereby accessory to their damnation, and guilty of their profaneness. As when a dish or a potion, which will prove healthful to some, poison to others, is promiscuously offered to all, he that offers it is accessory to the death of those that are poisoned by it. Nor can this guilt be avoided by any, till a course be submitted to, by which, according to Scripture rules, it may be known competently who are fit, who are unfit, to whom it may be the seal of life, to whom it may be the savour of death.

If you be fearful of being accessory to the temporal death of any, should not we be fearful of being accessory to the eternal death of any? So those also that afford others matter, which will be abused to drunkenness, gluttony, &c., they are thereby guilty of the intemperance of others, being this way the occasion of it.

(9.) By not removing the occasions of sin. He that can and may remove those things which are the occasions of others' sins, and does not, is thereby the occasion of other men's sins, and so partaker with them. The Lord has a controversy with divers of the kings of Judah, because the high places were not taken away, not because they did worship there, but because they being not removed, others did worship there, 1 Kings 15:14, Asa; 2 Kings 12:3, 2 Kings 14:4, 2 Kings 15:4. The continuance of them was the occasion of others' sin, and they who had power, not removing them, did thereby partake of others' sins, and are therefore charged, condemned as guilty.

Things lawful, if indifferent (not necessary) when they are abused, and become occasions of sin, should be taken away. The brazen serpent, when the Israelites abused it to idolatry, though it was set up by Moses, and reserved as a monument, a memorial of their deliverance from the fiery serpents in the wilderness, yet when it became an occasion of sin it was broken in pieces, and Hezekiah is commended for breaking of it, 2 Kings 18:4. When the love feasts in the primitive church were abused to intemperance, the apostle regulates them.

Many indifferent things abused by the papists to superstition are upon this account excluded in the reformed churches, and retaining of some such amongst us, we find by experience has been of very ill consequence, and some can read the guilt of those who would not remove them, in the late sad providences wherewith this land has been exercised, though others will not open their eyes to see, nor their ears to hear the rod, and he that appoints it. When costly apparel becomes an occasion of pride, or delicate fare an occasion of intemperance, &c. Those that have power, magistrates, parents, should reduce them to necessaries, who abuse superfluities, else they are in danger of a participation in others' guilt. I might exemplify this in many particulars.

(10.) By authorising. When those are put into such place and office, as they are not fit, not qualified for, those that are instrumental in calling them thereto are accessory to their sinful miscarriages in the managing thereof. This is evident, especially in the great callings of magistracy and ministry; and guilt may be herein contracted, either by interposal of authority in magistrates, or by the intervening of election and votes in the people. When places, which require men fearing God, hating covetousness, dealing truly, are filled with irreligious, covetous, unjust officers, those

that are instruments to promote such are accessory to their sins. So for ministry. It was Jeroboam's brand that he made priests of the meanest of the people, 1 Kings 12:31. When people choose one scandalous in his life, erroneous in judgment, insufficient, unqualified in other respects of his life or holiness, they are guilty of the blood of their souls thereby endangered, though he be principal therein.

Accordingly, some give account of the apostle's words formerly quoted, 1 Timothy 5:22. Take heed of admitting such into the ministry, who are unworthy, unqualified, not apt to teach, not able to convince gainsayers, not exemplary in their lives, not holding the form of wholesome words. And be not partaker; for hereby, if thou authorise, admit such, thou wilt be partaker of their sins. If any perish through their ignorance and insufficiency; if any be tainted with their errors, superstitions; if any be led to or encouraged in wickedness by their evil example: it is the sin of the blind, profane guides; but thou hereby wilt be partaker of their sin, and accessory to the ruin of those souls, for he is the occasion who brings in the cause. Their blood will be principally required at their hands, but in the second place at thine, who was instrumental to bring such into place: of them as the cause, of thee as the occasion, of them as principals, of thee as accessory; of them as actors, of thee as partaker. This is the tenth way of being guilty of others' sins as an occasion, which is the third general way of partaking of other men's sins.

4. By causing, He that is the cause of another's sin, partakes thereof; not only as an accessory, but many times as a principal. Now one may be the cause of another's sin many ways.

(1.) By commanding. He that commands, enjoins another to do that which is unlawful, is the cause of his sin, and so sometimes more deeply guilty than the actor; especially if the obedience to those commands proceed rather from the authority of the commander than from the disposition of him that obeys. This holds both in public and private. In public; so those that enact things evil and unwarrantable, by laws and edicts, they involve themselves in the guilt of all that obey them. This is the highway to make sins national, and so make whole nations ripe for judgment; both magistrates and people being hereby tainted with guilt of rebellion against God. Hence the Lord denounces a woe against such decrees, and threatens desolation for them, universal calamities, of equal extent with the guilt, Isaiah 10:1, Isaiah 10:3.

Such were the statutes of Omri, whereby he enjoined the people to walk in the ways of Jeroboam, Micah 6:16. Omri was dead, and so was Ahab, yet the people's observances of their wicked injunctions are called the works of the house of Ahab. Ahab and his house were answerable for the people's offences herein, as though they had been Ahab's works. Why, Omri and Ahab's statutes were the cause of the people's sin, 1 Kings 16:25-26. Micah prophesied in the days of some kings, who repealed the wicked statutes of Omri; yet the statutes and works of Omri and Ahab are still remembered, and desolation threatened. If a people will observe idolatrous or superstitious customs, though the laws enjoining them be repealed, yet will the Lord remember the guilt of such law-givers, and bring desolation upon the observers of them: 'That I should make thee a desolation.' This is true also in private commands; thus Saul was guilty of the murder of the priests, and the destruction of Nob their city, by commanding Doeg to execute that cruelty, 1 Samuel 22:18-19. And there we have an example, shewing what must be done in case things unlawful be commanded, 1 Samuel 22:17. A king is not to be obeyed in unlawful commands; disobedience in this case is obedience in the sight of God.

Thus David was guilty of Uriah's death, for though he did but give the command, yet he is charged with the sin as much as if his own hand had murdered him: 2 Samuel 12:9, 'Thou hast killed.' So when masters command their servants, or parents their children, to lie, or to defrand others, or to profane the Sabbath, &c., both they sin in obeying, and the commanders are guilty in their disobedience; they are the cause of their sin by commanding, and so partake in their guilt, yea, are principals herein.

(2.) By threatening. He that threatens another, that he may thereby fear him to do that which is unlawful, is the cause of his sin, and so principal therein. Thus was Nebuchadnezzar guilty of all their idolatry, who were drawn by his threatenings to bow to his golden image, Daniel 3:6. This threatening involved him in the guilt of all the people, nations, and languages that fell down, &c. One word, one sentence, may make a man guilty of millions of sins.

Thus persecutors are guilty of the grievous crime of those who fall off from the ways of truth and holiness, and also of the destruction of those who are hindered from entering into those ways, for fear of what they threaten. So some wicked men will threaten their children, or those that depend on them, if they will be so strict, precise, conscientious, so much in praying, reading, following sermons; if they will not walk in the same ways of looseness, superstition, with their fathers, they shall not have their favour, their countenance, nor share in their estates; they shall be cast off or disinherited. Now, if hereby they be drawn off from ordinances, holy duties, society with the people of God, strict or holy walking, they shall die in their sins, but their blood will be required at the hands of those whose threatenings was the cause of their sin.

(3.) By counselling and persuading. He that gives another evil counsel is guilty of his sin, if he bring it into action; or if it go not so far, he is guilty so far as it proceeds towards action. Whatever sinful influence thy persuasion has upon any one, thou art tainted with the guilt of him whom thou persuadest or counsellest. Thus Jonadab was guilty of Tamar's ravishment, though Amnon was the ravisher, because he was the counsellor, 2 Samuel 13:5. He counsels him to take this course to satisfy his lust, and so is equal in the guilt. Thus Ahithophel was guilty of Absalom's incest, because he advised him to it, 2 Samuel 16:21. Thus Athaliah was guilty of Ahaziah's wickedness, because she was his counsellor, 2 Chronicles 22:3-5. A counsellor to sin is a partaker of the sin to which he advises; a persuader to wickedness is a principal therein, as being the cause thereof.

(4.) By alluring. He that entices another to that which is sinful, by promising any advantage in sinning, or proposing hopes of profit, pleasure, or credit thereby, so far as his enticements are effectual to draw others to sin, so far he sins with them. For this see Proverbs 1:10, if they entice thee with hopes of gain, as Proverbs 1:13. So the strange woman allures with hopes of pleasure, Proverbs 7:18. The force of such allurements, that they are cause of sin, Proverbs 7:21; such enticements have cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain thereby, as Proverbs 7:26; these are the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death, Proverbs 7:27. Such enticers, by destroying others, bring the guilt of their ruin upon their own heads. So when they allure others in hopes of secresy,—none shall perceive it, none shall be the wiser;—or in hopes of safety,—men shall not know, and so have no occasion to censure or punish, shall never find it out;—and God is merciful, he will not be so strict, so severe, as to damn his creature for one sin, for such a sin;—or by the example of others,—such and such, better than thou have done the like or worse things, and why shouldest thou scruple at it?

Satan, the master of this art of enticing, proceeded at first in such a method, in alluring to the first sin, as sinners have since learned of him: Genesis 3:4, ‘Ye shall not surely die.’ Here he promises safety, notwithstanding the Lord had threatened it with death, yet he assures them of safety, no such danger for all this, &c. He proceeds, Genesis 3:5, and promises advantage, your eyes, &c. He promises advancement too: ‘as gods.’ See how cunningly the arch-enticer baits his hook, and then see how it takes: Genesis 3:6, ‘Good for food,’ there is the profit; ‘and pleasant,’ there is the delight.’ ‘To make one wise,’ there is an higher advantage. Here is the effect of one enticement; they sin, the whole world sins in them, and the allurer sins in all, and so is cursed above all. The enticer to sin is always involved in the guilt of the sinner, and so in his suffering.

(5.) By deriding. Scoffing at scrupulousness and conscientiousness in avoiding sin. Jeer and abuse men because they follow not such practices, use not such language; because they fear an oath, or keep not company, or observe not their unwarrantable customs. Brand such as precisians or hypocrites, and so by discouraging a holy care to avoid sin, do what they can to make men careless in sinning. I remember not an instance of this nature in Scripture, neither amongst the Jews in the Old Testament, nor amongst Christians in the New. The more it is to be lamented that such wickedness should be found amongst us, as the history of so many hundred years does not afford an example of. Such scoffers do what in them is to open a floodgate of sin in others, and overwhelm themselves in the guilt of it, Isaiah 28:22.

(6.) By boasting of sin. Some there are who are risen up to such a height of desperate wickedness, as they will sometimes brag of it, and glory in their shame. ‘Why boastest,’ &c., Psalms 94:4. Some will boast of their uncleanness, that they have defiled others; of their intemperance, that they are strong, Isaiah 5:22; of their exceeding and overcoming others in drinking; of their craft and deceit (or wisdom, as they call it) in circumventing and over-reaching others; of their contentiousness, in wearying, silencing others.

Now this boasting of sin as though it were their glory, may be an encouragement, an inducement to embolden others in such wickedness, and so by causing others to sin, though their own guilt be unsupportable, they burden themselves, their souls, with the guilt of others.

(7.) By hiring others to sin. Thus Satan assaulted Christ: ‘All these things,’ &c., Matthew 4:8-9. Thus the Jews were guilty of betraying Christ, by hiring Judas to betray him. So are they guilty of perjury who suborn witnesses, as Jezebel in the case of Naboth. It is reported of the wicked Arian bishops, that when they could not otherwise prevail against Athanasius, that zealous defender of the truth, they hired a lewd woman to come openly into the council and accuse him of committing filthiness with her. In this case, she was the false accuser indeed, but they were principally guilty of the false accusation. So those that encourage, reward others for publishing slanders, or raising false reports of those they love not, whoever be the instruments, the guilt will be charged upon them who plainly, or by interpretation, do as much as hire them. So are those guilty of witchcraft who reward such as practise with the devil for discovery of secrets, or recovery of things lost; such rewarding is a hiring of them still to be familiar with the prince of darkness. So Judah was doubly guilty, both in his own person and in Tamar’s; both by committing lewdness with her, and hiring her to it.

Thus you see how many ways we may partake with others in their sins, by causing them. This is the fourth general.

5. By countenancing the sins of others. He that is a countenancer of others' sins, is a partaker of other men's sin; and that sometimes of sins past, sometimes of future sins. Now ye may countenance the sins of others, and so be accessory to them, many ways.

(1.) By defending them. He that defends, secures sinners from censure and punishments; does countenance them, and so partakes with them. Thus the Benjamites were guilty of that horrible wickedness which was committed by the men of Gibeah. The sin of one town involved the whole tribe in its guilt, because when justice was demanded against those sons of Belial, they refused to deliver them up to justice, they engaged themselves to protect, to secure them from punishment, Judges 20:12-14. Now, what was the issue? As they made the sin of those sons of Belial their own, by appearing in the defence of it, so the punishment of those sons of Belial fell upon them. That numerous tribe, which consisted of so many thousands, were all destroyed, man, woman, and child, except six hundred, Judges 20:47. It was but the inhabitants of one town that were the actors of that wickedness, but all the towns, cities, and inhabitants were destroyed for this sin, because all partaked of it by defending it. That sin which thou defendest by word or deed thereby becomes thine, whoever be the actor of it. Those that defend blasphemers, would not have them censured, proceeded against, thereby become guilty of their blasphemy.

Those that plead for such as the word of God censures, be their wickedness in judgment or manners, they are accessories to it, tainted with the like guilt, in danger of the same punishment.

(2.) By justifying others' sins. Denying that to be sinful which the word condemns, and that to be error which is contrary to gospel truth. Thus do some justify not only the wicked, but their wickedness, which, how sinful it is, the Lord declares, Proverbs 17:15. If ye quit those whom the Lord condemns, plead for that against which the Lord has given sentence, be it with what arguments or distinctions soever, it is an abomination; it is so in itself, and it is withal a partaking of those sins of others, which are hereby countenanced.

Those that call evil good, or darkness light, or error truth, or superstition devotion, or will-worship religion, or cruelty justice, there is a woe denounced against this, Isaiah 5:20. Christ foretells of some that would count the persecution of the apostles the doing of God good service, John 16:1. And some call that popish superstition, in placing holiness in times and places, where the Lord never placed it, an act of religion; count the doctrines and traditions of men the worship of God, as the Pharisees; abstinence from marriage holiness, and abstinence from meats, mortification. The apostle has another name for it, 2 Timothy 4:1–3. So some justify the calling in question of truths clearly revealed, under the notion of love to the truth, fear to be deceived. So others justify many gross errors under the notion of new discovered truths, plead for a boundless licentiousness under the notion of Christian liberty, or liberty of conscience; so some call the impudence of others good breeding, and the profuseness liberality, a joining with drunken companions good fellowship.

Now suppose ye be not personally guilty of such wickedness in judgment or practice, yet if ye justify them in others under such names or notions, in these or the like ways, giving them terms improper for them, colouring them over as good, which are in themselves evil, this is a countenancing them. Whoever be the actors, this makes you accessories. If thou justify those that sin, thyself art condemned as guilty of that from which thou wouldst acquit others.

(3.) By extenuating of others' sins. Those that make sin less than it is, and excuse it when it should be aggravated, when those that are guilty are insensible of the guilt and sinfulness of their evil, this is a dangerous countenancing of sin, and that which makes the excuser guilty with the actor. So some, too much inclining to popery, will excuse the papists; their idolatries must not be counted superstitions, and their heresies but errors in smaller matters. So amongst carnal people, petty oaths must be counted but idle words and thoughts free, and riotousness and uncleanness tricks of youth. Many distinctions, pleas, pretences, excuses, are found out to mince and lessen sin, when the least is great enough to sink body and soul into hell. Some excuse it from custom; he does but as others do, and shall he be singular? from age, he is but young, and youth will have its swing; from nature, we have all corrupt natures, and it will break out one time or other; from example, they do but as our forefathers before us, and shall we be so uncharitable as to think them damned? from education, excuse ignorance, they are not book-learned, want the means; from intention, though he have done ill, he means no hurt; from calling, excuse the neglect of their souls, much ado to live, and 'he is worse than an infidel that provides not,' &c.; from event or success, it proves well, and he prospers notwithstanding, and therefore God is not much offended, Jeremiah 44:11.

These, and many other fig-leaves, do men find out to cover the deformity; and though they make use of them to hide their own for the most part, yet sometimes, especially if they be concerned, they will find some for others.

It is true it is a duty to cover the failings and infirmities of others, but then they must be failings indeed. We must not make that small which is great, nor excuse them who are too ready to excuse themselves, and make little of that which they make nothing of. To excuse sin in the presence of the sinner, when he is not sensible of, not burdened with his guilt, is to countenance his sin, and to encourage him in sinning, and to make thyself accessory to his wickedness. To excuse sin before those who are like to make use of it, so as to continue in impenitency, or to make bold with that which is extenuated and excused, is a most dangerous countenancing of sin, tending not only to make others guilty, but thyself with them.

(4.) By commending. When others are applauded for their sins, then is sin countenanced in a high degree; e.g. when those that will not forgive injuries, engage themselves in unjust quarrels, public or private, are commended as men of valour and courage; when wicked politicians are cried up for men of singular wisdom; when approaching to God by mediation of saints and angels is commended for humility, and men's inventions in the service of God is applauded as voluntary worship and free-will offerings; when rejecting of ordinances is cried up as a less formal, more spiritual way of worship; when curious and dangerous opinions are admired as deep and profound mysteries, Revelation 2:24. The doctrines which Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, did then vent in the church, were called 'depths,' profound things, high attainments, but Christ tells what depths they were in his account; they spoke them depths, he calls them 'depths of Satan.' To put a commendable name upon any sin or error, is a dangerous countenancing of it; to commend the wicked as righteous, whether they be so in respect of gross or of more refined and spiritual wickedness, is a countenancing of, and so a partaking with, that wickedness, Proverbs 21:24. And well may the people curse, and the nations abhor him; because by thus countenancing the wicked, he encourages people and nations in wickedness, to their destruction. And he had need curse and abhor himself too, because as he involves others in guilt by countenancing, so himself in the guilt

of all that he countenances.

(5.) By conniving at others' sin. Not declaring the danger and sinfulness of them as occasion is offered, not shewing our abhorrence and detestation of them, as becomes those who have tender consciences, who tender the honour of Christ and the souls of men. This is a tacit countenancing of such wickedness; silence in that case may be interpreted as approbation. When we hear that Christ is blasphemed, his ordinances trampled under foot; when the prevailing delusions of Satan are related to us, the scandalous practices, the woful miscarriage, of those who bear the name of Christ; when we hear such things as should make our ears tingle and our hearts tremble, and are not accordingly affected therewith; when these are slighted, passed by as matters of small moment, especially when they are turned into matter of sport and merriment, which should not be heard or spoken of but with bleeding hearts and trembling spirits; they are hereby in some degree countenanced, when they are not, as they ought to be, detested. When others see such carriage in those that pretend love to Christ and the things of Christ, and see them no more affected therewith, they have hereby occasion to think, Surely there is not so much evil in these opinions or practices, else they would be more laid to heart by those who seem conscientious otherwise; and by imagining them less (because they see them by us less detested), they may become more inclinable to them, more ready to close with the prevailing temptations of the times. So that this silent countenancing of such abominations, may occasion the fall of others thereinto; and so we may contract a double guilt of these abominations, by countenancing them where they are, and occasioning them where they are not. Oh what guilt is daily contracted by this silent countenancing of those horrid evils we daily hear of!

(6.) By company. You may countenance wickedness by too much associating yourselves with those that are guilty of it.

It is true there is some converse necessary, and we must do offices of love to all, and the good of their souls should be endeavoured as long as there is hope and opportunity of doing them good; and this may be done, if prudence and circumspection be used, without countenancing their sin; but there is an unnecessary society, a too much familiarity, which is dangerous. When we make those who are noted for wickedness, in judgment or practice, our companions, our familiars, this may be interpreted a countenancing of their wickedness.

If you would deal faithfully with them and your own souls, according to the rule of the gospel, you should seriously admonish them; if admonitions be rejected, or they not thereby reclaimed, then they are to be avoided, 2 Thessalonians 3:14. Those Athenians are commended who would not wash in the same bath with the persecutors of Socrates; and it is reported of the apostle John, that when Cerinthus, a noted heretic in the apostle's time, came into the bath where John was, he presently left the place, would not be where Cerinthus was. And Polycarp, the apostle John's disciple, when Marcion saluted him, and asked if he knew him, Yes, says Polycarp, I know thee, thou first-born of the devil. And that was all the countenance he would give that impostor.

You know how the Lord resents it, that Jehoshaphat would associate himself with Ahab; and that expostulation which he puts into the mouth of the seer is very pathetical, 2 Chronicles 19:2. And he is afflicted also for joining with Ahaziah, 2 Chronicles 20:37. Why, but what danger was there in this familiarity? This; those that knew Jehoshaphat to be a good king, walking in the commandments of the Lord; and seeing him choose Ahab for his familiar, might thence conclude,

Surely the ways of Ahab are not so abominable, else good Jehoshaphat could not be so intimate with him. And thus the bad opinion of Ahab being something taken off, they might be more inclinable to comply with him in his ways and worship; and thus might Jehoshaphat's familiarity with Ahab be a snare to others. Noscitur ex socio. We know we judge of a man by his companion, and men are apt to think we approve of those whom we choose for our familiars; and so by your company you may countenance wickedness, and thereby partake of it, though ye never act it.

(7.) By rejoicing. Those that take pleasure in the sins of others, do hereby make themselves partakers of their sins; so did they, of whom the apostle, Romans 1:32. So are they guilty of uncleanness, who, though they do not act it, yet take pleasure to hear or read of the uncleanness of others. So they are guilty of participation, who are glad when others run with them to the same excess of riot; when others join with them in the same ways of error, superstition, or profaneness. Besides their personal guilt in acting those sins, they are guilty of the sins of their associates, by rejoicing in them. So those that rejoice in the effects of others' sins, are glad that those whom they hate are oppressed, disgraced, undone by others. So the Edomites, insulting over the Jews in their sufferings and miseries, involved themselves thereby in the guilt of the Chaldeans' cruelties, which was the principal cause of those miseries, Obadiah, Obadiah 1:11-12.

Thus you see how many ways we may be guilty of other men's sins, by countenancing them. You may countenance others' sin, and so partake of it, by defending, justifying, extenuating, commending, &c.

6. By not hindering sin. He that hinders not others from sinning, is in danger thereby to partake of their sins. It is a received rule, Qui non prohibet, facit. He that hinders not others from doing evil, does the evil himself; is guilty of, accessory to it. Only those two cautions must be added to limit the rule, cum potest et debet. He that hinders not sin when he can and should hinder it, is guilty of it. He that has both ability and authority, both power and a call to exercise it (as there are few men but have in one way, degree, or other), he is guilty of the sin he hinders not.

Indeed, if a man do all that in him lies to hinder sin, and yet it is committed, the guilt will lie upon the actor, thou art blameless, or if thou dost all that thou art called to, to hinder it; for every one is not called to act alike in all ways and degrees for hindering sin; some are called to more than others. Children and servants are not required to do that for the hindering of sin, which is the duty of parents and masters; nor are the people called to act against sin in the same way as ministers; nor are ministers called to act in the same way as magistrates. But it is the duty of all these to endeavour the hindering of others' sins, in ways which the Lord has assigned to them, and by means proper to their several degrees and places.

Now, those that do not, in their several spheres and stations, endeavour to hinder sin by all means proper to them and required of them, they thereby become accessory to, guilty of, the sins which they hinder not. And thus men may partake of the sins of others many ways.

(1.) By not punishing, censuring, correcting, in state, church, families. He that proceeds not against the sin of others according to the rules of the world, or laws agreeable thereto, makes himself guilty of it.

Thus magistrates are guilty when they execute not wholesome laws for the punishment of evil-doers. Thus Pilate involved himself in the guilt of Barabbas's murder, by acquitting him whom

he should have executed, Mark 15:15. Thus the kings of Judah were accessory to the people's superstitions and idolatrous worship, though they be commended as upright in other things, because they tolerated and suffered the people to offer in the high places, 2 Kings 12:3.

Magistrates are appointed to be ministers of God, that they may be a terror to evil works, and revengers to execute, &c., Romans 13:3-4. That evil work which he is not a terror to he is guilty of. For this end he bears the sword, that those under him may be afraid to sin, and that the fear of suffering by him should be a restraint from sin. When he does not thus improve his power, the restraint is taken off, and sinners grow bold. 'Because sentence,' &c. This is the end of that great ordinance, and of the execution of justice, Deuteronomy 13:11. The Lord commands that seducers, though they seem prophets, pretend visions, and work wonders, ver. 1, shall be put to death, ver. 6, 9. And when justice is thus executed upon seducers, the Lord promises two happy issues and effects of such severity: all Israel shall hear and fear, ver. 11, and the evil shall be put away from them, ver. 5. It shall be put away, ye shall not be accessory to, charged with the guilt of it. Whereas by the rule of contraries it follows, where such evil is tolerated, such seducers suffered, evil continues in the midst of a people; and being not put away, is chargeable upon them who tolerate it, suffer it to continue. The fear of thus partaking with others' sins made the ten tribes resolute to punish the supposed idolatry of their brethren with the sword, Joshua 22:1-34. The children of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh built an altar upon the borders of Jordan. The rest of the tribes, conceiving they had built it to offer sacrifice, contrary to the Lord's command, who had enjoined them to offer no sacrifice but in the place chosen and appointed by himself, hereupon, to free themselves from their guilt, they resolved to proceed against them in battle, Joshua 22:12; and they declare the reason of it, Joshua 22:18. Wrath will fall, not only upon you, but upon us, because, if we tolerate this, we shall be guilty of it, and so punished for it. Wrath will fall upon all; for, though you be principals, yet we, by suffering it, shall be accessories, and being hereby involved in the guilt, shall be involved in the punishment. And they prove it by an instance, Joshua 22:20. And it is an argument from the less to the greater. If the whole congregation fall under the wrath of God for Achan's sin when they know not of it, much more shall we, if, knowing your sin, we tolerate it, and proceed not against it. The zeal of the Israelites, this jealousy over their brethren, is recorded to their praise, and if they had thus continued, they had not been overspread with guilt, nor overwhelmed with public calamities.

Men of place and office have much to answer for the sins of others. If all the excrements in a town should be laid at their doors, they would look on it as an high affront, a great displeasure. How much more grievous will it be to have the sins of towns and countries laid at their doors, charged upon their souls as guilty of them, by not hindering them, by not punishing and proceeding against them!

Thus churches may be guilty of the sin of a particular member, by not censuring the sin, and proceeding against the offender according to gospel rules.

Paul exhorts the church of Corinth to proceed against the incestuous Corinthian, to put away from among them that wicked person, to deliver him up unto Satan, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. And he gives this reason, 1 Corinthians 5:6. The leaven, which is but a little at present, being but in one person, it may diffuse its guilt through the whole church, may leaven the whole lump. If they tolerated this wickedness, they would be leavened by it, tainted with its guilt; therefore he urges, 1 Corinthians

5:7, to purge it out.

Though Christ commend the church of Pergamos for many things, yet he has a controversy with her for tolerating those that taught false doctrine and loose practices, Revelation 2:14-15. And all the works, charity, service, faith, patience, of Thyatira, with her increase in these, could not exempt her from Christ's censure for tolerating false teachers and seducers, Revelation 2:19-20.

Thus masters are guilty of servants' sins, and parents partake of their children's sins, if they correct them not for sinning; if they suffer them to lie, swear, profane the Sabbath, neglect the ordinances, without correction. 'He that spareth,' &c., 'he hates his child;' for what greater sign of hatred, than to let him run on without let in that which will ruin both soul and body? He hates himself, too, by bringing his soul under the guilt of that sin, which he hinders not by correcting the sinner for it.

He that, according to his place and calling, does not punish, censure, correct sin, is accessory to it by not hindering of it.

(2.) By not complaining of sin. He that has not power to punish sin, may complain of it to those that have power; and he that complains not, is in danger to be accessory to the sin which he conceals.

I confess there are many temptations to keep men from the practice of this duty. It is counted odious to be an accuser; and so it is, when it proceeds from spite, malice, and revenge, and not from tenderness to the glory of God and thy brother's soul; but against the temptations which may hinder thee from complaining of other sins, set the danger of sin to him, to thee, and the command of God; see how strictly and punctually he enjoins it, without respect of persons and relations, how near and dear soever, Deuteronomy 13:6, Deuteronomy 13:8. And it is prophesied there shall be such zeal in the times of the gospel, as the Lord here requires under the law; see Zechariah 13:3. And whereas it may be objected, If I should complain to magistrates, and cause open offenders to be punished, this is the way to be hated; it is answered, ver. 6, if the sinner be thereby reclaimed, he will be so far from hating thee as an enemy, as he will look on thee as a friend. What are these wounds? How comest thou to suffer at the hand of justice? Then he shall answer, &c., Those that occasioned them, inflicted them, were friends to me in so doing; they were friends to my soul, hindered me from that which would have ruined it.

There are many wholesome laws in force amongst us for the punishing of drunkenness, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, wizards, and other crying sins, for which the land mourns. The magistrate has discharged his duty in enacting these; justice cannot lay hold of them if they be not complained of. Where, then, will the guilt of this unrestrained wickedness lie, but upon those who conceal them; upon those who fear, or favour wicked men, more than they regard the favour or displeasure of the righteous God? Who will run the hazard of their own souls, and the souls of those sinners, rather than offend them, by bringing them to that shame or suffering, that might restrain them from sin. Oh what cause have we to be ashamed of, and humbled for our guilt in this particular! How heavy is it; how universal is it!

It is true, where private admonitions will prevail, and church censures may be had, these are first to be made use of; but where that is not regarded, or these cannot be exercised, if thou complainest not, thou art accessory to the sin which thou concealest, and mayest be involved in the same punishment. We read, 2 Samuel 21:1-22, there was a famine in Canaan for three years;

David inquires of the Lord what was the cause of it. He answers, it is because Saul slew the Gibeonites. The sin was Saul's, and his house; and it is not probable the Lord would make so many suffer for his sin, but that they were some way accessory to it; and how more likely than because they did not inform David of the Gibeonites' unjust sufferings, that so justice might be executed on the offenders? We see, when this was done, the famine ceased.

He that conceals sin from justice, when he is called to inform of it, is accessory to it; for he does not what in him lies to hinder it.

It may be thou art no blasphemer, nor seducer, no swearer, or drunkard, or open Sabbath-breaker; it is well. But dost thou not conceal these wickednesses? Dost thou not neglect to complain of them, that they may be discouraged, restrained, when thou art called to it? Why, this is enough to make thee accessory to these sins; thou dost not what thou canst to hinder them.

(3.) By not reproving or admonishing sinners. He that rebukes not, nor does not admonish, according to the quality of those who are guilty, makes himself guilty with them, Leviticus 19:17. To reprove another is a thankless office, and carnal men take it as an expression of hatred; but see how the Lord judges of it: 'He that rebukes not his brother does hate him in his heart.' The Lord knows how averse we are to this duty, and accordingly he proceeds; he begins with the answer of an objection, and concludes with an argument, And not suffer sin upon him; or, as the original may be as well translated, That thou bear not sin for sin;* so that he who reproves not the sin of his neighbour, bears his sin for him, burdens himself with the guilt.

Thus ministers become accessory to the people's sins when they reprove them not, are loath to displease them; sew pillows under them, and cry Peace, peace, &c., to those that continue in wickedness; tell them not wherein they sin, warn them not of the sinfulness and danger of their evil ways. And though those that are faithful in so doing be usually ill requited, yet better are the worst returns from men than the guilt of the blood of souls; see Ezekiel 3:17-18. If he know they live in any sin, and warn, admonish them not of it, 'they shall die,' &c.; 'but their blood,' &c. So parents are guilty of their children's sin, and accessory to their eternal damnation, if they rebuke them not sharply; if the sharpness of the reproof be not answerable to the heinousness of the sin. We have a dreadful instance of this in Eli, 1 Samuel 2:1-36. His sons were wicked, and he admonished them of it, but too mildly, with too much indulgence, not according to the nature of their offence; and for this the Lord threatens to ruin him, his sons, his family, and to judge it for ever, 1 Samuel 3:11-14. The Lord will judge his house for ever; not for the iniquity which he acteth, but which he knoweth; not for sins he committed, but for sins he restrained not; not because he joined with them, but because he frowned not on them. He was not severe enough in rebuking their sins; and so the Lord proceeds severely against the whole family, whereof he, being the head, was concerned as an accessory in the sin, and as a partaker of the suffering. The Lord has appointed reproof as a means to hinder, to restrain sin; he that for fear, favour, or any sinister respects, forbears reproof, does not what he can to hinder it, and so is involved in the guilt of it.

(4.) By not mourning for it. He that mourns not for the sins of others, is in danger to partake of them. Mourning is a means to hinder the increase of sin; he that bewails not the sins of others, does not what he can to hinder them, and so may be accessory to them. The Lord, Ezekiel 9:1-11, representing the destruction of Judah, he sends a man to mark those who mourned for the abominations of the city, that they might be preserved, while all the rest perished, Ezekiel 9:4-6.

Now we cannot suppose that all those who were destroyed were principals in those abominations, but accessories they might be, by not mourning for that which others committed; but those that sigh and cry for the abominations of Jerusalem, all of them escape, as being neither principals nor accessories to those desolating sins. Their grief and sorrow for them acquits them; and therefore the Lord takes such special care to secure them, that the public calamities might not touch them. The apostle, where he tells the Corinthians of their danger to he leavened, to be tainted with the guilt of that wicked person amongst them, in the same chapter he tells them the cause of it, they had not mourned for this wickedness, 1 Corinthians 5:2. He calls them to repentance for another's sin; he would have them affected with grief and sorrow for it, that they might not be tainted with it. And when they had approved themselves herein, he commends their sorrow for that incestuous person's sin, by the effects which evidenced the sincerity of it, 2 Corinthians 7:11. Your sorrow for his sin appears to be after a godly manner, in that it wrought carefulness to correct the offence; clearing of yourselves, you hereby clear yourselves from the guilt of that wickedness, and the tolerating of it; indignation, you shew you are so far from approving, as you detest it publicly; fear, you shew yourselves afraid to partake of another man's sin; vehement desire, of removing scandal, and satisfying those that were offended; zeal, the intenseness of your desire to use all things for removing this evil; revenge, by censuring the offender, and casting him out, not suffering such wickedness to pass unpunished. By these effects the truth of their sorrow appeared, and by this sorrow they approved themselves to be clear in this matter, not accessory to his sin, not tainted with his guilt. Those, then, who do not thus mourn for the sins of others, cannot clear themselves from the guilt of others' sins.

It may be thou art not personally guilty of the blasphemies, apostasies, and scandalous evils of the times or places wherein thou livest; but dost thou not sigh and cry for these abominations, as those mourners in Ezra?* He that can be charged for not mourning for the sins of others, cannot plead not guilty to the sins of others as accessory, though not as principal; as not hindering, if not as acting their sins.

(5.) By not praying against the sins of others. Prayer is a sovereign means to hinder sin. He that prays not against it, is accessory to it, by not endeavouring to hinder it. Job knew the efficacy of this means; and, therefore, apprehending his children in danger of sin, he continually made use of it, Job 1:4-5. It is the virtue of Christ's prayer that still preserves his people from destructive evils, destroying sins, Job 17:5. The apostle directs that prayers be made for kings and magistrates, though in those times the wicked persecutors, that their cruelty and wickedness might be restrained, so as the people might lead a quiet and peaceable life, 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

If ye pray not against the impostures of antichrist, that they may be detected and defeated; against the delusions of Satan as an angel of light, that he may be unmasked, his snares broken, and seduced souls, ensnared by him, reduced and delivered; against Satan's prevalency as a prince of darkness, that gross wickedness may not abound to the dishonour of the gospel and the profession of Christ; if ye pray not against the sins of the times, and those evils that appear in the places where ye live: ye do not what ye can to hinder sin, and so are accessory to it.

(6.) By not affording means whereby sin may be hindered. He that denies others the means requisite to the avoiding of sin, when it is his duty to afford them, is accessory to the sins of others by not hindering them; e. g. as we say, he that denies a man food, without which death cannot be

prevented, is accessory to his death. So it is in spirituals; e. g. nothing is more destructive to the reign of sin and kingdom of Satan, than the preaching of the gospel. Therefore magistrates and others, that endeavour not (as it is their duty) to propagate the gospel, are accessory to the sins which reign in the absence of it. So those that are careless of their children, servants, or other relations; provide not that they be taught to read, do not catechise, instruct them; allow them not time or means to get knowledge: they are hereby guilty of their ignorance, accessory to that soul-destroying sin.

(7.) By not applying severe providences for the hindering of sin. The Lord sometimes speaks from heaven against sin by remarkable acts of providence. These, if not applied by those that discern them, may involve such in the guilt of those sins, against which they are intended; e. g. when our brethren in America were in danger to be over-run with monstrous opinions, two women, the chief broachers thereof, brought forth such monsters instead of children, as might well be interpreted the voice of God against their monstrous errors. These were seasonably applied, and contributed much to the rooting of them out. The applying of such providences tends much to the restraint of sin. And he that clearly discerns them, and does not apply them to this end, does not what he is bound to do for the hindering of other sins, and so is accessory to them.

Thus you see how many ways ye may partake of the sins of others, by imitating, concurring, occasioning, causing them, by countenancing, not hindering them.

Use. Learn hence your necessity of Christ. This is the end of law and gospel; this is the end of all our preaching, all your hearing: to learn your necessity of Christ. And what more shews a necessity of Christ than the multitude of sins? And how does this truth shew the multitude of thy sins, since it hence appears thou mayest sin so many ways in the sins of others? The multitude of thy personal sins are wonderful, even to astonishment; but add to the numberless multitude of thy own sins, the multitude also of thy other-men's-sins; and then consider what the weight of thy guilt is, and what necessity thou hast of a Saviour. For thy personal sins, that before conversion, every act, word, thought is a sin, tota vita, &c. The character of an unconverted sinner is that of the old world, Genesis 6:5. What cause to complain, as Psalms 38:4, 'Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.'

Then add to this incomprehensible number, the multitude of thy other-men's-sins, those which thou art accessory to. How many sins art thou guilty of by imitating others in sinning? How many by concurring? How many hast thou occasioned? How many hast thou been the cause of? How many hast thou countenanced? How many hast thou been guilty of by not hindering them? How many hast thou not corrected when it has been thy duty to do it? How many hast thou concealed, not complained of? How many hast thou heard and seen, and not reproved, rebuked? How many are there, which thou didst never mourn for, never pray against?

Oh what sums are here! Who can reckon them? What man or angel can take an account of them? Psalms 19:1-14. Who can stand under such a burden? Who can appear in the sight of justice with such guilt?

Men and angels cannot satisfy for any one sin, for the least sin. And who can satisfy for such numberless millions? Yet justice must be satisfied before any sinner find mercy.

Oh then, what need of Christ! What necessity of a Saviour! Flee to him who only has a righteousness sufficient to cover all these sins. Fly to him whose blood only can expiate all this guilt. Make haste to that fountain, that is set open for sin and uncleanness. There is not a drop in all the creatures, and nothing can cleanse thee but a fountain. Oh make haste to it, it is opened in Christ, and him only. Thy soul is pierced with millions of wounds, every sin wounds the soul. Oh look up to the brazen serpent, to Christ lifted up in the gospel. Without him thou art a dead man; all the world cannot save thee from eternal death. Give no rest to thy soul till thou be assured that, as thou art partaker of others' sins, so thou art partaker of Christ's righteousness.

UNCONVERTED SINNERS ARE DARKNESS Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.—Ephesians 5:8.

Having given you a general account of these words before, I come to take a particular survey of them in the several parts.

You may look on them either as an argument, &c., the premises, conclusion; or as a description of the state of the Ephesians. He tells them what they were before conversion, darkness; what they are by the conversion, light; what they should be and do after conversion, walk.

These three parts offered us so many observations. From the first, their state before conversion, 'ye were darkness;' and what they were, that are we, and all men, till converted. This is not peculiar to the Ephesians, but common to all mankind since the fall; till conversion, all are darkness.

Obs. Those that are not converted are darkness. All and every one of the sons and daughters of men, till they be changed, converted, are darkness. For explication, let me shew you what must be understood by conversion, what by darkness. By conversion is meant that universal change which I described, &c. Let me only add this, that in Scripture, conversion, regeneration, vocation, renovation are the same thing, expressed by divers terms; the difference rather verbal than real, rather in word than reality. Conversion is the same thing with the new birth, with effectual calling, with renewing of the whole man, the planting of the principles of holiness. So that, when I say, he that is not converted, &c., it is all one as if I said, He that is not born again, or born of God; he that has not the image of God repaired in him, that image which consists in holiness; he that has not Christ formed in him. Not converted; i. e. he that is not effectually called, he that continues in unbelief and impenitency; he that answers not the call of Christ in the gospel; when he calls for faith, does not believe; when he calls for repentance, abides in the love and practice of sin; when he calls for obedience, lives as a child of disobedience. Not converted; i. e. not renewed throughout in body, mind, and spirit, in heart and life; he that has not a new heart, a new spirit; he that is not a new creature, a new man, both inwardly and outwardly.

He that is not thus born again, thus called, thus renewed, is not converted; and he that is not converted is in darkness. But what is that?

You must not take it for outward darkness, the absence of that light which the eye, the outward sense, sees; you must not conceive so grossly of it. It is spiritual darkness which is here meant, and the Holy Ghost expresses an unconverted state frequently by this term, 1 John 2:9, 1 John 2:11, i. e. not born of God, 1 Thessalonians 5:4, John 12:46. You have descriptions of conversion, where darkness and light are made the terms of it, Acts 26:18, 1 Peter 2:9, Colossians 1:13. But

what is it to be in darkness? What is this unconverted state that the Holy Ghost so often calls darkness? Take it in these four particulars. To be in darkness is (1.) to be in sin, the work of darkness; (2.) to be under Satan, the prince of darkness; (3.) under wrath, the fruit of darkness; (4.) near to hell, the place of darkness. The Scripture by darkness ordinarily expresses some or all of these. When an unconverted state is called darkness, we are to understand by it a most sinful and miserable state.

(1.) In sin, the work of darkness. Sin is called in this chapter a 'work of darkness,' ver. 11. And he that lives in sin acts that work; he is said 'to walk in darkness,' 1 John 1:6. He that is not converted, he is wholly in sin, under the power, the pollution, the guilt of sin.

All the qualities and motions of his soul, all the acts of his life, are sinful, John 3:5-6. He that is but once born, not born again of the Spirit, owes his being to no other birth but that of the flesh; he is flesh, he is so wholly, only. By flesh is meant the corruption of sin: 'is flesh,' i. e. wholly corrupted by sin; his whole soul is full of sin, mind, conscience, will, affections; all are tainted with it, possessed by it, overspread with the pollution of it, Titus 1:15. There is nothing in his soul but what may be called flesh, i. e. sinful and corrupt, no principle of holiness.

Such a soul is sunk into sin; he is encompassed and quite covered over with sin. Hence that of the apostle, Romans 8:1-39, 'in the flesh.' Nothing that they have, nothing that they do, can possibly please God, because all they have or can do is sinful, and so abominable to God. The state of Simon Magus is the condition of every unconverted sinner, Acts 8:23. And why was he in this state? Because, though he was baptized and professed faith in Christ, yet he had neither part nor lot in regenerating, converting grace, Acts 8:21. A sinner, till converted, is so held in the bond of iniquity as he can do nothing but sin. Baptism and the profession of faith cannot free him from this bondage to sin; nothing but converting grace can break this bond by which he is held in such slavery, as he can do nothing but sin: John 15:5, 'Without me,' i. e. out of me; till ye be in me, united to me, ye can, &c. Now a sinner is never brought to union with Christ till conversion; till then he can do nothing that is spiritually good, and if so, he can do nothing but sin.

Even his sins are but a better sort, a more grossy* kind of sins, splendida peccata. 'The sacrifice of the wicked,' Proverbs 15:8-9, Proverbs 26:9. And further, though he can do nothing but sin; and so every thought, word, act, is put in the number of sins, by the Lord's account; yet not one of these sins can be pardoned till conversion. For there is no pardon till faith and repentance, and no repentance till conversion; till then he lies under the guilt of every sin. This is to be in darkness, to be in sin, the power, pollution, the guilt of it. He that is not converted is under sin, the work of darkness.

(2.) Under Satan, the prince of darkness. That is his title. The whole world is divided betwixt these two potentates, Christ the prince of light and life, and Satan the prince of darkness. Those that are converted, they are free subjects of Christ; those that are not converted, they are the vassals of Satan. He is their ruler, Ephesians 6:11-12. These principalities and powers are the devils, and they are the rulers of the darkness, &c., i. e. of all those sinners that are yet in darkness, that are not yet converted and turned from darkness to light. The following words shew that those who are not thus turned are still under the power of Satan. He acts them, he commands them, he rules them, he possesses them, he challenges them as his own; till by conversion, they be 'translated from the power of darkness into,' &c., till then sinners are his children, John 8:44; his instruments,

Ephesians 2:2; his captives, 2 Timothy 2:26. They wear his badge and livery, do his work, obey his commands. The image of Satan, the impressions of darkness, are on their souls; by this he challenges them as his own. If you pretend to Christ while unconverted, he may ask, Whose image and superscription is this? If prevailing lust, unsubdued corruption, speak it his, why, then, give unto Satan the things, the persons that are Satan's; he will not lose his due. If the image of Christ, the image of light and holiness, be not on your souls, you bear the image and superscription of Satan, and nothing can raze this out but converting grace. Till conversion, you are under Satan, the prince of darkness.

(3.) Under the wrath of God, the fruit of darkness. The day of God's wrath and indignation is called a day of darkness, Joel 2:2. And this dismal day will never end until conversion, in respect of temporal or spiritual judgments. The favour of God is called light, 'the light of his countenance.' Till this light shine on a sinner, he cannot but be in darkness, and this light never shines until conversion. To be in darkness, then, is to be under the Lord's indignation, under the curse of the law, under the threatenings of the word, under the sentence of condemnation, under the stroke of revenging justice. These are the expressions of wrath, which make the state of an unconverted sinner a state of darkness. All the calamities and miseries that are the effects of the Lord's wrath are called darkness in Scripture, Ecclesiastes 5:17, Ecclesiastes 6:4. To be in an unconverted state is to be exposed to all the expresssions of wrath.

(4.) Near to hell, the place of darkness. That is 'a land of darkness, as darkness itself.' It is called 'utter darkness,' Matthew 8:12, Matthew 8:22; Matthew 12:25, Matthew 12:30. So near is an unconverted state to hell, as it joins to it as an outer room; there is but a small, a weak partition betwixt them. If conversion do not bring the sinner out of this state, the partition will be broken, death will overthrow it, and then no passage, but into the outer room, into utter darkness. Hell is called the 'mist of darkness,' 2 Peter 2:17. While a sinner is unconverted, he is in fetters, though not in chains; and his fetters will be turned into chains, if the power of converting grace break them not. He lies under the guilt of those offences for which the damned are adjudged to these chains. He is but under a reprieve; the sentence will be executed, if converting grace prevent not. Until thou be converted, thou art a child of darkness; this is thy portion, it is reserved for thee, thou art every moment in danger to fall into the woful possession of it. Thou canst lay claim to no other portion, canst hope for no other inheritance until conversion. To be in darkness is to be in danger of hell; it is a state bordering upon hell, it is in the confines, in the suburbs of it.

Use. Information. This shews the misery of an unconverted state. It concerns all sorts to take notice of it: those that are converted, that they may rejoice in their Redeemer, and be thankful for deliverance from this woful condition; those that are not converted, that they may bewail their misery, and thirst after deliverance. The misery of an unconverted state is so great, as even this darkness will discover it. Let us follow the metaphor a little, the better to discern it.

1. Darkness is uncomfortable. So is the state of an unconverted sinner. How sad was the condition of Egypt, when the Lord plagued it with darkness that might be felt! Exodus 10:21. Alas! the darkness that overshadows thy soul is more lamentable. That might be felt; the misery of this is so great, it can scarce be understood. That was but for three days; this will be to the days of eternity, if conversion prevent not. How sad would the condition of the world be, if that which is metaphorically spoken were really effected; if the sun should be turned into darkness, and the

moon into blood! Who would not be weary of his life upon earth, if the sentence of continual darkness should pass upon it? Alas! more miserable is thy condition if unconverted, because the want of spiritual light is a greater misery than the want of sensible light. The very light that is in thee is darkness. Oh how great then is that darkness! This is one aggravation of the lamentable condition of Paul and his companions, in danger of shipwreck: Acts 27:20, 'Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared.' Far worse is thy condition if unconverted; no sun, no star appears. The Sun of righteousness, the bright Morning Star, has never appeared in thy soul since thou wast born, nor ever will until born again. Thou livest in a woful region, thou sittest in a region of darkness, and in 'the valley of the shadow of death.' The sun shines not on thee; it is another world, another kind of men that enjoy it, those that are antipodes to thee.

It is true when the Lord is about the work of conversion, when a sinner is in the pangs of the new birth, or when a soul converted is deserted, he may be in such a condition as the prophet describes, Isaiah 50:10, he may for a while 'walk in darkness, and see no light.' Ay, but such a one has some comfort, some support; he may 'trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself,' &c.; as the mariners, 'though they saw neither sun nor stars,' Acts 27:20, yet 'cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for day.' They had anchors, though no light; and hopes of it, though it was not yet day. So has a soul in this condition, if converted or converting; he has anchor-hold, he may trust, &c.

Ay, but while thou art unconverted, thou hast neither light nor support; and though thou mayest strike some sparks out of worldly enjoyments, and compass thyself in them, yet 'for all this thou shalt lie down in sorrow.' Thy darkness is too great to be scattered with such sparks, ver. 11. How can they choose but lie down in sorrow, who must lie down in darkness, never to see the light!

2. Darkness is dangerous. He whose way lies near snares and pits, who is to pass over precipices, rocks, the brink of dangerous gulfs, and has no light to direct him, every step is the hazard of his life. No less dangerous is the way of man ever since sin entered into the world. So many snares has Satan laid, so many pits has he digged, so near we walk to the brink of the bottomless pit, as without light we cannot make one step in safety. Even those that are converted have light little enough to secure them from ruin. Alas! then, what shall become of them who have no light at all, all whose paths are darkness? They are every foot in danger to be ensnared, to fall, to bruise and wound their souls, yea, to tumble into the bottomless pit before they be aware. Thus dangerous is an unconverted state, for it is darkness. The Lord Christ expresses this, John 12:35. He knows not truth from error, good from evil, runs into dangerous mistakes; he knows not whether he be right or wrong, whether his way lead to heaven or hell, whether to the bosom of Christ or to the den of the devouring lion. He sleeps amongst serpents or murderers, and knows not where he is. He walks upon the very ridge of destruction; if he slips, he is ruined for ever; and yet he sees not where to set his foot. Alas! he is in darkness, Proverbs 4:19, John 11:9. Though that stumbling-block be just before him which will ruin his soul and tumble him into hell, yet he knows not at what he stumbles, he sees it not, he is in darkness. Thus dangerous is thy unconverted state; it may sink thee into utter darkness before thou perceive. Oh that the misery of it might move to make haste out of it!

3. Darkness is fearful. We read of the 'horrors of darkness,' Genesis 15:12. What more apt to engender fears than darkness, when dangers are on every side, and nothing visible that may

afford confidence! So the state of nature. The condition of a sinner unconverted is a fearful condition. He is encompassed with terrors on every side; such as, if he were sensible of them, would dash all his mirth and carnal jollity. An unconverted sinner, he is a Magor-missabib, like Pashur, Jeremiah 20:3, he has fear round about him. Those whom the Lord has enlightened to see the dreadfulness of that state, they wonder that such can sleep quietly, or take comfort in any enjoyment, while they are not converted. Is it not a fearful thing to stand guilty in the Lord's sight of millions of offences, every one of which deserves eternal death, and the Lord, in justice, is engaged to inflict it? To stand guilty, whenas the Lord will by no means clear the guilty? Yet this is the state of the unconverted. Is it not a fearful thing to be delivered up to Satan, to be possessed by him, to be a slave unto him, to have no other guide but him, who will lead thee no other way but to ruin; to be disowned by Christ, as those who yield allegiance to the prince of darkness? Yet this is the state of such. Is it not a fearful thing to 'fall into the hands of the living God;' to lie under the wrath of an unreconciled God; to lie open to the challenges of revenging justice; to find nothing belonging to thee in the world but the curse, and to have enjoyments mixed with the Lord's indignation? Yet this is the case; children of darkness are children of wrath. Is it not a fearful thing to lodge the next room to hell; to find no other portion for thyself in the Lord's testament but everlasting fire, no other inheritance but the region of outer darkness? Yet this is the state of the unconverted.

Oh how dreadful is that state, where the terrors of sin, the terrors of Satan, the terrors of God, the terrors of hell, encompass a poor sinner, and he sees no way to avoid them! For he is in darkness, such as he sees nothing to support him under them, but some false rotten props, some broken reeds. The true grounds of confidence are hid from his eyes, cannot be discerned in this darkness.

Mercy is a support, but none find mercy but converted sinners. Christ is a support, but none shall find any saving benefit by Christ but converted sinners. The word is a support, but this speaks not a word of comfort to any but those that are converted.

Oh how fearful is that condition that shews no glimpse of hope, affords no ground of confidence! In the midst of such dangers, miseries, that can discover nothing that may cheer or support in those things that are the only grounds of comfort and support; nothing in mercy, nothing in Christ, his love, his blood, nothing in the word, nothing in the great and precious promises, to bear up thy soul in this woful condition. When the terrors of death, and sin, and hell encompass thee, where wilt thou go for comfort? What will be thy refuge? what will support thy sinking soul? A converted soul, when he feels the wounds of sin, can look up to the brazen serpent for healing virtue; but what can he see, whither will he look, who is in darkness? A converted soul, when the terrors of death or the greatest fears in this life assault him, he can cast up his eyes above the mountains, and discover salvation approaching. But what can he see, what can he discover, who is in darkness?

Wretched sinner, thou who goest on merrily in thy evil ways, no more minding conversion, &c., than if it were a fiction, be entreated to admit at last this one serious thought: time is coming, when fears and terrors, either in this life, or in death or judgment, will seize on thy soul, and shake thy heart, and overthrow all thy carnal supports, dash out all the sparks of worldly mirth. When thou wilt find what we speak of the fearfulness of an unconverted state are not words of course, thou wilt then find need of those spiritual comforts and supports which thou now neglectest. But whither wilt thou go for them? If thou fliest to mercy for comfort, being unconverted, mercy will say, It is not

in me. If thou go to Christ, he will say, It is not in me; no comfort in me but for those that turn to me, for none but converted sinners. If thou goest to the word, it will say, It is not in me; I have no drop of comfort for any that turns not, for any that continues in impenitency and unbelief. Oh, sure that day which is making haste towards thee, however thou forget it, that day will be unto thee a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, a day of dread and terror, and like thy unconverted condition, most fearful. Darkness is fearful; that is the third misery of it.

Quest. But who are those that are in darkness? How shall we know whether we be in this unconverted state? Those that have any regard of their souls, hearing the misery of this condition, will be apt to make this inquiry. Those that are so wretchedly careless, as not to question it, not trouble themselves with inquiries about their conversion, may put it out of question they are not yet converted, they have neither part nor lot in this matter, they are not so much as in the way to it. As for those who are not thus desperate, but are doubtful of it, and desirous to search into the condition of their souls, it will be requisite in some few particulars to shew how it may be known who are in darkness, who are not; who are converted, who are not. And this will be useful, both for the conviction of those that are not, and the comfort of those that are; they are not converted, but in darkness;—

1. Who walk in the ways of darkness. The children of light do not walk in the paths of darkness. You may know your state by your way; ways of wickedness are ways of darkness: so Solomon, Proverbs 4:19, ‘The way of the wicked is darkness.’

He that walks in any way of known wickedness, be it drunkenness, &c., neglect of ordinances, &c., he is in darkness. ‘By their fruits ye may know them.’ It is a sure rule, Christ himself lays it down; if you bring forth the fruits of darkness, you are in the state of darkness. Hereby he proves the unbelieving Jews to belong to the prince of darkness: John 7:44, ‘his works.’ If ye do his works, you are under his jurisdiction, not yet delivered. Now, what are his works? Why, all wickedness, every sin. He that acts any sin wilfully, customarily, delightfully, makes it his practice, continues so, allows him so to continue. The apostle advises the converted Ephesians, as being both their property and duty, to ‘have no fellowship,’ &c., Ephesians 5:11. A convert may be surprised, overtaken with sin; but he has no fellowship, he is not familiar with sin, he delights not in it, it is not his companion, it is not his custom, nor his choice, nor his contentment, to converse with it. He looks upon every sin as a cheater, a murderer, a disgraceful, a dangerous associate, and therefore he will keep as far from it as he can; he is afraid, ashamed to have any fellowship with it. This is the temper of a convert, if you take him when he is himself.

Those, then, that are familiar with sin, in whose mouths and hands, in whose words and actions, you may ordinarily see it, who are no more afraid, ashamed of it, than of one whom they choose for a companion. Those who make any sin their interest, their delight, their practice, they have fellowship with it. You may know them by their companion, that with which they have fellowship. When oaths, profane, unclean discourse is familiar in their mouths; when they can lie, dissemble, revile, curse familiarly; when accustom themselves to any other way of wickedness, alas! darkness is here palpable. There is no conversion where no turning from sin. He is in darkness who allows himself to walk in any path of darkness, 1 John 3:20.

2. Those that want spiritual discerning. He that has eyes and sees not, it is plain he is in darkness; what else should hinder his sight? So they that have the same understanding, the same faculty of

inward sight with others, and yet perceive not that in spiritual things, that those discern who are savingly enlightened, it is evident that spiritual darkness overshadows their souls.

He that sees not that beauty, that excellency in Christ, that necessity of him, as to be willing to part with all for him; to count that loss which he has taken for his greatest gain; to renounce his own righteousness, that he may be found in him; to renounce his own lusts, that he may be conformed to him; his own interests, that he may advance him; his own humours, that he may comply with him:

He that sees not that necessity of conversion, the new birth, as to trouble himself about it, to count himself miserable without it:

He that sees not such beauty in holiness as to prefer it before the choicest things on earth; to be in love with it, thirst after it; diligent in the use of all means to get it, increase it, strengthen, act it:

He that sees not that deformity, danger in sin, as to hate it above all things, to bewail it in himself and others, careful to avoid it, maintain a constant war with it, use all his strength to subdue it, rejoice in the crucifying of his dearest lusts, Ephesians 5:13 :

He that has not this discerning of these and other spiritual things, it is evident he has eyes, but sees not; and what can be given as the reason hereof, but because he is in darkness? Such are in Egypt's condition; when converts, as the Israelites, have light in their dwellings.

3. Those that act not for God. The Egyptians, under the plague of darkness, are described by their unactiveness: Exodus 10:23, 'Neither arose any man from his place;' John 9:4. A man in darkness may be in action about himself, but not in things at a distance; he sees not how to move towards them. The things of God are at a distance from every unconverted man; he sees not, he knows not how to go about it.

He is a stranger to acts of self-denial and mortification; a stranger to the life of faith, the exercise of grace, the vigorous acts of holiness, strict walking, constant dependence on Christ, a spiritual frame of heart in worldly business.

He cannot pray with enlargement, affection, fervency. He cannot meditate on Christ, and heaven, and spiritual things with delight; he cannot hear the word, so as to mix it with faith, to be affected with it, to run into the mould of it. Though he be employed sometimes in religious duties, though he be active in the things of God, yet he acts not at all for God. To act for God is to act out of love to him, with intentions to honour him, with respect to his glory. When men perform religious services out of custom, or to gain and keep their credit, or to stop the mouth of conscience, or to satisfy and make amends for some sin, he that acts for such ends, out of such principles, let him do as much as he will, even in a way of religion, yet he does nothing for God. And this is the condition of one not converted, he acts not out of love to God with respect to his glory, and therefore what he does is as though he did nothing He acts not for God who acts not from right principles, for sincere ends; and this bewrays an unconverted state. If the Lord incline you to be faithful to your souls, these things may be helpful to discover your condition, whether ye be light or darkness, whether converted or unconverted.

Use. 3. Exhortation, to those that are converted, brought out of the woful state of darkness; let this stir you up to joy and thankfulness for your deliverance. 'You were sometimes darkness;' that is

the state of every man by nature. Now, as it aggravates misery to have been once unhappy,* so the consideration of former miseries adds contentment to a happy condition. ‘You were sometimes darkness.’

You have been formerly under the guilt of sin, enslaved to the tyranny of base lusts; you have been formerly vassals unto Satan, led captive by him at his will; you were ‘by nature the children of wrath as well as others;’ you were once in a condition as there was but a step between you and hell. Now, has the Lord delivered you out of this sad and woful condition? Can you say, we were ‘sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord’? Oh, love the Lord, praise him, rejoice in him, speak great things of his name.

Oh love that Redeemer, who sweat, and bled, and died to work this your redemption. Oh pity those, pray for them, mourn for them who are yet in darkness. Let your hearts be affected as David’s, Psalms 116:1, Psalms 116:3-5, Psalms 116:7-8; Psalms 93:4. But now are ye light. For explication. Light denotes several things in Scripture.

1. Spiritual knowledge. Light and knowledge are terms of the same import, 2 Corinthians 4:6. Light to discover God in Christ savingly, and to discern the things of God spiritually.

2. Purity and holiness. Sin and corruption is expressed by darkness, holiness and purity by light. In this sense the most holy God is called light, 1 John 1:5, spotless and perfect holiness, in whom there is not the least impurity. And in reference to us, 1 John 1:7, such a light as is life, spiritual life, which consists in the principles of holiness and purity.

3. The favour of God, and the consequent of it, joy and comfort. The favour of God, the manifesting of his loving-kindness, is frequently expressed by the light of his countenance, Psalms 4:6, the issue of which is joy and gladness, Psalms 4:7. Light and joy explain one another, Psalms 97:11. That which is light in the first clause is joy in the latter.

4. Glory and happiness. Heaven, the seat of it, is described by light, 1 Timothy 6:16. It is called the inheritance, Colossians 1:12.

Light here may comprise all these. So that when we say, those that are converted are light, the meaning may be, (1.) They are enlightened with saving knowledge.

(2.) They are enriched with the principles of holiness; the lustre thereof shines in their souls, and should appear in their lives; by virtue of this they should shine as lights.

(3.) They are in the state of favour and reconciliation with God. Though they have not always the sense of his loving-kindness, yet they are always the objects of his love. Though his face do not always actually shine on them, yet the sun is up, it is always day with them; joy is sown for them though they be not still reaping it, and every season be not harvest time.

(4.) They have title to glory. Heirs apparent to heaven, heirs of the inheritance, &c. Their title is certain, that they are said to sit with him in heavenly places.

Use. 1. If those that are converted be light, &c., then those that are not converted are not light in the Lord. This necessarily follows by the rule of contraries. They may be light in appearance, or in respect of natural endowments, or moral accomplishments, or in the account of others, or in their

own conceit and apprehensions, but they are not light in the Lord; and this shews the misery of an unconverted state, and it is useful to take notice of it more particularly. If they are not light in the Lord,—

1. They are not in the Lord. The phrase implies union; but such are without union to, without communion with, without participation of, without special relation to him; without his special protection, without his special favour, without his gracious covenant. It may be propounded to them that they have no actual interest in, or right to, the blessings, the mercies of the covenant. The tenor of it is, I will be thy God; they cannot apply nor challenge this: they may say, he is my Creator, he is my Judge; but not he is my God in Christ, my God by covenant; without God in their hearts, in their enjoyments, in their conversations. Thus the apostle describes the unconverted state of these Ephesians, Ephesians 2:12, at that time, viz., when unconverted; without Christ, not united to him, not partakers of the benefits of his great undertakings; not pardoned by his blood, not acted by his Spirit, not crucified with him, not risen with him, not sitting with him in heavenly places, either in right hope, or first fruits of that blessed state, aliens from the church. An unconverted man, whatever he profess, or others account of him, is no more in God's sight a member of the church than a corpse is a man.

Strangers from the covenant. No more to do with the sure mercies of the covenants, the sweet contents of the great and precious promises, than a foreigner has to do with the privileges of one of our corporations, or a slave with the privileges of a child, or the legacies of his father's testament.

Without hope. So far from enjoying these, as he is, during that state, without hope of them, till he be enfranchised, till adopted, and no adoption till conversion.

Without God in the world. This is the saddest expression of all. If he had said without riches, or friends, or liberty, or health, or food, you would think it sad. Ay, but to be without God, that is infinitely more miserable than to be without all these; yet this is the state of every unconverted sinner, not born again; he is not light in the Lord, and so not in the Lord, and so without God in the world.

If a converted soul want riches, the Lord can supply that want. 'The earth is the Lord's,' &c.; or friends, the Lord can supply, 'when father and mother forsake.' 'All men forsake me,' 2 Timothy 4:16. 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Hebrews 13:5; or liberty, Psalms 18:19; or food, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,' Psalms 23:1. Ay, but if a man want the Lord, if he be without God in the world, what can make up that want? Let him have all the world, and want God in the world, and all that he enjoys will but add to his miseries. Without God, without all that is truly comfortable and desirable. Yet this is the state of an unconverted sinner.

2. They want the saving knowledge of God in Christ, they are not light in this respect. The darkness of ignorance and misapprehensions is upon the face of their souls; the prince of darkness, the god of this world, has blinded their minds, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. Though they may be knowing men in other respects, yet as to spiritual, saving, experimental, effectual knowledge of Christ, and the things of Christ, they are in darkness. They may have much knowledge of the Scripture and divine things, as to the letter, clear, notional, and speculative apprehensions of gospel truths; but as to spiritual discerning of any of these, they are in darkness, 1 Corinthians

2:14. The things of the Spirit of God he may apprehend literally, notionally, speculatively; but not spiritually, experimentally, practically. They hear, and read, and apprehend much of Christ, but not effectually, not so as to renounce all for him. They know him not, so as to find the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings; not so as to be made conformable to his death; not with such a knowledge as the apostle there describes, Php 3:8-10. They read, hear of holiness, but are so far from knowing what it is by experience, as they are apt to think no such thing now to be attained in this world, as the holiness which the Scripture describes; and finding no such thing in themselves, judge those who pretend to it hypocrites and dissemblers; know not how to worship God in spirit, how to subdue a lust, how to resist a temptation, how to improve an affliction, how to escape a snare, how to avoid a stumbling-block, how to improve ordinances for growth in grace, how to improve Christ for spiritual strength, life, influence, so as by his strength to do all things; know not what the state of their soul is, where they are, whither they are going, darkness having blinded them, as the Assyrians, 2 Kings 6:20, thought they were in Dothan, whenas they found themselves in the midst of Samaria, in the midst of their enemies; think themselves in the way to heaven all their life, till in the end, alas! they find themselves in hell.

Tell them of the new birth, sanctification, self-denial, the power of godliness; produce Scriptures, which expressly shew that without these there is no salvation; bring characters by which these may be discerned: yet they see them not, they believe not; for they know not these effectually, they are in darkness. They are no more apprehensive of these things, than if you were discoursing to a blind man of colours, or if you were describing the sun to a man that never saw the light. And why? They are not light in the Lord.

3. They want the favour of God. They are not under the beams of divine love, the light of God's countenance does not shine on them, and so they are not light in the Lord. They may conclude this from success, prosperity, plenty, and outward comforts; but this is but a fallacy, a delusion. The Lord's greatest enemies may abound with corn, and wine, and oil, &c., but the light of God's countenance is not lift up but upon converted souls. There is a veil of darkness before the Lord's face: this is never rent, removed, till conversion. Those that are unconverted, want that which is the life and joy of the converted soul; that which sweetens all his afflictions, and makes all his enjoyments comfortable. This is it which is better than life; those on whom it shines not may well be said to sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death. This dismal shadow never vanishes till the Lord's face shine, and this never clears up till conversion. You may discern the state of a returning and an unconverted sinner, expressed in the state of the church and the rest of the world, Isaiah 60:2. Behold darkness covers impenitent souls, and gross darkness unconverted sinners; but if thou be converted, the Lord shall rise upon thee. Alas! They know not what it is to walk in the light of God's countenance all the day; not one glimpse of that light of life appears unto them; for they are not light in the Lord.

4. They want the lustre of holiness. This is one thing which concurs to make converts light in the Lord. This light shines nowhere on earth but in the hearts and lives of such; those that are unconverted shew themselves either strangers or enemies to it. They are carnal, sold under sin, know not what belongs to an holy frame of heart; think heaven may be attained without strictness, holiness, as the Scripture requires, and the lives of the saints there recorded hold forth; jeer, deride, abuse it, under odious names; place all their holiness in some outward performances or observances; holy discourse and employments are wearisomeness to them.

Here is a misery indeed; want that, without which no man can see God; and this they want, because not light in the Lord.

5. They want discoveries of future glory, they are not light in the Lord; they have not so much light as will discover it at a distance; there is no dawnings, no approaches, no appearances of that blessed light. It is midnight with a sinner while unconverted. No crevice to let in the least light, the least hope of glory, while he continues in that dismal state. The morning star, that ushers in that happy day, first appears in conversion, Acts 26:18. Till a sinner be turned from darkness to light, till he be converted, there is no hopes of obtaining an inheritance among those that are sanctified; no appearance of this till then, because till then not light in the Lord.

Put all these together, and then view the sad and lamentable condition of every unconverted sinner. If not born again, thou art without God, Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the saving knowledge of Christ, the least glimpse of God's love, the least sparkle of holiness, the least hope of glory; and all this, because not light in the Lord. But how shall we know, who are in this state, whether or no we be light in the Lord? To direct you herein, let us come to a

Use. 2, by way of examination. Hereby ye may know whether ye be converted. Every convert is light in the Lord; those, therefore, that are not light in the Lord are not converted; these are so conjoined, as he that knows the one may conclude the other. Examine, then, whether ye be light in the Lord, if ye would know whether ye be converted. In order hereto observe these particulars:

1. Light is delightful. Totus mundus luce nihil habet jucundius, a greater and wiser than he, Ecclesiastes 11:7. The light of the word is delightful to one that is light in the Lord. There is a great affinity between these lights, both proceeding from the same Father, 'the Father of lights' Hence the discoveries of the word are sweet, acceptable, delightful, to one that is savingly enlightened. Not only the discoveries of Christ and mercy, privileges and promises, pardon and glory, but that light of the word which discovers to him the corruption of his heart, the sinfulness of any practice, the danger of sin; that word which searches his conscience, and discovers the condition of his soul, detects his failings and sinful miscarriages, not only a word of promise and consolation, but a word of reproof and conviction. This is sweet and acceptable to one that is light; he can bless God for, and rejoice in, that word that condemns and discovers his secret sin.

He therefore that cannot endure the word that discovers his misery and sinfulness, that searches his conscience and reproves his sin, cannot endure searching sermons nor those that preach them, such as tend to awaken his conscience, and rouse him out of security, and condemn his sinful practices, cries out that he hears nothing from such but hell and damnation, and that which may make him despair; he hereby shews clearly he is so far from being light in the Lord, as this is a plain evidence he hates the light. I speak not this for nor of myself; it is the word of Christ; if you will take Christ's word, such a man hates the light, John 3:19-20. He that is so in love with his sin, be it what it will, as he would not have it reproved, condemned, hell and wrath denounced against it, Christ pronounces, he hates the light, loves darkness, &c. It is plain darkness is his element, he is not yet converted, nor yet turned from darkness to light; he that is light in the Lord is of another temper, as you may see, ver. 21. He is so far from declining, being impatient of a searching, discovering truth, as he comes to it of his own accord.

2. While there is light there is heat. ■■■ a ■■ et ■■.* Heat, as philosophers tell us, is an inseparable property of celestial light. We see a concurrence of these in fire; indeed, there may be an appearance of light where there is no heat, as in glow-worms, but where there is any real light, there is some degree of heat more or less.

Answerably, they that are light in the Lord are zealous for the Lord, eager in following him, ardent in love to him and desires after him, fervent in spirit in serving him. They will not content themselves to offer up lukewarm, heartless services unto God. When they find the danger of such a temper, they bewail it, judge themselves for it, it is their affliction; there is a spiritual heat for the Lord in those that are light.

Therefore, where there is a customary indifferency, and carelessness in religious duties, those that ordinarily serve him, as though they served him not, give him but the lip, or knee, or outward man, not heated and enlivened with the vigorous motions of the soul towards God. Where there wants ardency of affection in spiritual duties, eagerness of soul after growth in grace, communion with God, and enjoyment of Christ in the use of ordinances, no such longing, thirsting, panting, breathing after Christ, conformity to him, participation of him, fellowship with him, serviceableness to him, ability to please, honour, advance him, as after those things that men's hearts are set upon, and hotly pursue in the world; this argues clearly an absence of spiritual heat, and if thou wantest this heat, thou art not light in the Lord.

3. Light is progressive. We see, after the day-break, the light grows clearer and clearer, till it come to its full brightness; Scripture expressions lead us to this observation, as well as experience; in the morning light is in its youth. Hence ■■■■■, the word which the Hebrews express the morning, is used for youth, Ecclesiastes 11:10. At noon the light is in its manhood, its full strength; we have that expression, Judges 5:31. The light from its birth grows and increases, till it comes to its full strength, when the sun is in the meridian.

Thus it is with those that are light in the Lord, as Solomon expresses it, Proverbs 4:18. This light is but a spark at first, and often accompanied with much smoke, but by degrees it breaks forth into a flame.

Such grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; they go from strength to strength, and from one degree of holiness and spiritual knowledge to another; this light daily prevailing against the darkness of ignorance and corruption, till at last it be brought forth to victory.

There is a growth of knowledge in the extent of it; it discovers one truth after another, unlocks one mystery after another, and daily scatters the clouds of misapprehensions. In the clearness of it, sees gospel truths with more and more evidence, as that blind man's sight was restored by degrees, Matthew 8:23-24. At first he saw men, as trees walking; after, Matthew 8:25, he saw every man clearly. Those truths of Christ, those gospel mysteries, which at first he sees but confusedly and obscurely, he by degrees discerns evidently and distinctly, in their proper complexions, proportions, connections, so as to discern betwixt things that differ, so as not to take one thing for another, nor to be easily imposed on, deluded or mistaken with shows and appearances, to take a show for a reality, to exchange a real truth for one in appearance. In the firmness of it. At first the light makes but a weak impression; he has not fast hold of it, not firmly grounded in it, is but a child in understanding, apt to be tossed to and fro; but by degrees he

comes to be established in the truth to a full assurance, carried with full sail into the embracement of truths revealed in the gospel, he is ‘rooted and grounded.’ Those winds of doctrine and error which overthrow others, and toss them out of all sound principles, though they shake him, do but root him faster by shaking of him, as well grown trees are by a tempest.

There is a growth in the spiritualness, the efficacy, the experimentalness, the practicalness of his knowledge. This light has daily a more spiritual and powerful influence upon his heart, to spiritualize it in his motions, intentions, inclinations; upon his conscience, to make it tender; upon his affections, to kindle them to God, and dead them to the world; upon his conversation, to reform and beautify it with more holy and exemplary actings.

There is a growth in grace, too, in every one that is light in the Lord. This light of holiness shines more and more, prevails against inward distempers and outward miscarriages, bears down the interest of darkness, i. e. of the flesh and of the world. He that is light in the Lord, when he is himself not under the darker clouds of temptation, desertion, grows daily more holy, humble, self-denying, heavenly, zealous, out of love with sin, estranged from the world, more in the exercise of faith and the actings of love, more jealous over his own heart and watchful over his ways. This light, where it is in truth and reality, will shine more and more, and such as these fore-mentioned are the beams of it. That light which puffs up and defiles, makes men proud or loose in their principles or practice, it is not from the Father of lights, nor does it evidence that thou art light in the Lord; nay, rather it is from him who transforms himself into an angel of light, and argues that thou art yet darkness, under the jurisdiction of the prince of darkness.

If thy growth be in the principles of darkness, and thy improvement no other than in the works of darkness, knowest not by experience what it is to grow in holiness, heavenliness, &c.; art a stranger to ardent desires, serious endeavours after it; thou dost but delude thy soul against clear evidence of Scripture if thou conclude thyself light in the Lord. Or suppose there be some improvement of light, if this make thee decline from the strict and holy ways of Christ, more loose in thy walking, more negligent of spiritual duties, more careless of thy heart, more indifferent as to the truths, ways, worship of Christ, this light, how much soever it be imagined, is not light in the Lord, but rather in Satan. Light in the Lord would not lead thee from the Lord, but nearer to him, in more holy walking, and a more humble, spiritual, heavenly frame of heart, for light in the Lord is an increasing light, it shines more and more, &c. It daily brings thee nearer to him, and the nearer to the sun, to the fountain of light, the more lightsome; as in joy and hopes of glory, so in the lustre of spiritual knowledge and holiness.

Oh that the Lord would make you faithful in examining the state of your souls hereby, that you may be able to pass a right judgment of it, whether you be converted or no, whether you be darkness or light!

Use. 3. Consolation to those that are converted. If thou art a convert, thou art light in the Lord, and this light discovers thy condition to be safe, comfortable, glorious, durable.

1. Safe. If thou canst conclude by Scripture evidence, I was sometimes darkness, &c. The Lord has brought thee into a safe condition; thou art freed from those fears and dangers that thy former darkness exposed thee to. Neither the horror nor the dangers of darkness need disquiet thee; the Lord has ‘delivered thy soul from death, thine eyes from tears, and thy feet from falling.’ Before

conversion, whilst thou walked in darkness, thou wast every foot in danger of the snares of death, every step in danger of falling into hell, and thy condition more fearful, because thou hadst not light to discover thy danger. But now the darkness is past, the Lord has shined on thee, and thou mayest walk cheerfully, confidently, safely before the Lord in the land of the living.

O happy change! before in the shadow of death, of eternal death, but now in the land of the living; before in the most dismal darkness, next to hell, but now in the light of the Lord; before on the brink of destruction, without a light, without a guide, but now in the path of life. He has set thy feet upon a rock, and the Lord himself is thy light and safety. Thou mayest triumph with David, Psalms 27:1; the reason, he shall set me upon a rock, ver. 5.

Thou seest multitudes playing upon the very brink of hell, but a step between them and eternal death, and no light to guide a step, and so they are every moment in danger to tumble into the bottomless pit; and yet in such darkness as they will neither see their danger, nor believe those that shew it them. This was thy condition once, thou wast darkness as well as others; but now thou art light, &c. The Lord has by conversion set thy feet upon a rock; there thou art safe, whilst thou seest multitudes wrecked in the gulf of destruction, sinking into utter darkness, round about thee. Oh the wonder of distinguishing mercy! thou mayest now say, ‘Return to thy rest,’ &c.

2. Comfortable. Light and joy in Scripture are put one for the other; and Solomon tells us, Proverbs 13:9, ‘The light of the righteous rejoiceth.’ What cause have they to rejoice who are light in the Lord; who are in him, united to him, in covenant with him, under the beams of his love, under the sweet influences of his loving-kindness! This is the state of the converted. Those who have been under the sad apprehensions of God’s wrath, under the anguish of a wounded conscience, encompassed with the terrors of the Almighty, when they see nothing in his face but clouds and frowns, hear nothing from his mouth but threatenings, see nothing in his hand but revenging justice,—and this often is the condition of those that walk in darkness,—such will need no arguments to prove that it is a comfortable condition to be light in the Lord, to see his frowns turned into smiles, his threatenings into promises; to see mercy take place of justice, and instead of the bitterness of death, to taste the ‘loving-kindness which is better than life.’

It is true, the days of darkness are not always so dreadful to every unconverted sinner; we see them spend their days in mirth and jollity, but this is because they are past feeling. This is one sad effect of this darkness, it hinders a sinner from seeing his misery; if he did apprehend it, his life would be as death unto him. There is always cause of dread and horror, though in the dark it is not seen. What can be comfortable to him who spends his days in darkness? This was once thy condition; but if thou beest light in the Lord, let me speak to thee in the apostle’s words: ‘Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.’ The horror of darkness is past, the shadow of death is vanished, the darkness of an unconverted state, the sad emblem of hell, is scattered; the light of life now shines round about thee, and oh what sweet discoveries does it make! Look where thou wilt, the beams of joy and light break in upon thee. Look upward, there is light in God’s countenance shines on thee; look inwards, there the day-spring from on high has visited thee, the fountain of light and joy is seated in thy soul; look backward, the night is far spent, the day is at hand, thou art not of night nor of darkness; look forwards, thou art not far from possession of the inheritance of the saints in light; look any way, light is sown for thee, and joy, &c. Oh that is precious seed, and will be more and more fruitful, till thou reap the full harvest in eternal light!

‘Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord;’ or, which comes all to one, who are ‘light in the Lord.’

3. Durable. Not safe, comfortable, happy for a moment, but for ever; for it is light in the Lord. If thy light were in thyself, death, or other calamities, might extinguish it; if thy light were in the world, and outward enjoyments, it might go out of itself, for the light hereof is but as the crackling of thorns; if thy light were in wickedness, it would certainly be put out, Job 18:5-6. But what can put out that light that is in the Lord? Light in other things is like them, vain and fading; but light in the Lord is as he is, everlasting. Everlasting knowledge, joy, holiness, happiness is the portion of converted souls; because they have all these in the Lord. It is the honour and security of Christ’s ministers that he styles them stars, there is their light and stars in his right hand, so they are light in the Lord, held in his right hand, and so held for ever; for what can pluck them thence? Revelation 1:16, Revelation 1:20. The security of Christ’s people, lesser lights, is no less; they are in his hand, and in his Father’s hand, and shall shine there for ever, John 10:28-29. Here is the happiness of thy condition. If once thou be light in the Lord, thou shalt never be darkness; for thou art light in him in whom is no darkness, nor can there be any. He is in himself everlasting light, and will be so to them that are in him, Isaiah 60:19-20. Once light in the Lord, and so for ever. It may be clouded and obscured, but this light can never be put out. This is not the least happiness of this condition, that whatever happiness is essential to it is everlasting.

4. Glorious. Nothing visible on earth more glorious than light; and these are put one for the other in Scripture, 1 Corinthians 15:41. What is their glory but their light? Those who are converted have hereby a double glory, one as they are light, the other as they are light in the Lord, light in the Lord of glory. He is a glory to them, even as a robe of light would be to our body; such, and much more, is the Lord to a converted soul, Isaiah 60:19.

Though their outside may be vile and contemptible in the eyes of men, yet they are ‘glorious within,’ Psalms 45:13. Every soul espoused to Christ is styled the daughter of a King, the daughter of the King of glory. A garment of wrought gold seems glorious, but there is a garment which far exceeds this in glory. What would you think of one clothed with the sun? Would not this seem a glorious object? Why, so is the church described; and that upon earth, though the vision was in heaven, Revelation 12:1. This woman is the spouse of Christ, the church; she is clothed with the sun, the Sun of righteousness: a glorious garment indeed; and being a garment, must reach every member. Here is thy glory if converted: though thou be hated, despised, reviled, vilified; though thou be in a forsaken, a persecuted condition, as the woman was now in the wilderness, ver. 6; yet thou art light in the Lord, light indeed, being clothed with the Sun. Christ himself is thy glory.

Thus you see how sweet and happy their condition is who are converted, who are light in the Lord.

Here is support against fears and dangers. Men and devils, death and hell, cannot prevail against thee; thou art safe.

Here is support under crosses and afflictions, pain and sickness. No condition can befall thee but here is enough to make it comfortable. Thou art light in the Lord; whatever thou mayest meet with in the world, thou mayest find light and joy in him.

Here is comfort against temptations, against backslidings, apostasy in these apostatizing times, thy condition is durable, it is founded, in the Lord.

Here is comfort against the contempt, the scorn, the reproaches, the slanders, the dirt which the profane world casts on thee. Whatever they say or think of thee, thy condition is glorious, thy glory is from and in the Lord; thou art light in the Lord. In the Lord. This phrase may denote that he is the author of this light, and all included in it, and that it is effected by union with himself; they have it all by being in him. ■ν in the New Testament often is of the same import with δι■, light in him, i.e. by him, 2 Corinthians 5:19. It is he that gives the light of this knowledge, 2 Corinthians 4:1-18; it is the Lord that sanctifies us throughout, 1 Thessalonians 5:23; it is he that is the God of all consolation, Romans 15:5, 2 Thessalonians 2:16; and causeth comfort to spring in the heart, by causing his own face to shine. It is he that gives us title to glory, making us partakers of the adoption. The converted are heirs of God; and all this they have by being in him, united and made one with him; by being joined to him who is the fountain of knowledge, and holiness, and comfort, and glory.

Walk as children of light. Here he shews what they should do after conversion: walk answerable to their state; being light in the Lord, should walk as children of light.

Obs. Those that are converted should walk as children of light. Before they walked as children of darkness, for they were darkness; now as children of light, for they are light in the Lord.

Two things must be explained: 1, what it is to be children of light; 2, what it is to walk as children of light. These expressions being opened, the truth will be clear. For the first, it is a Hebrew phrase, and the apostle being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, though he writ in Greek, yet mixes therewith some phrases of his mother tongue, as is usual with the rest of the apostles. So that the knowledge of the Hebrew (the original of the Old Testament) tends much to the understanding of the New Testament, though writ in another language. And they have the best advantage of interpreting this, who have some skill in that. Now, that we may understand this phrase, which is very pregnant, let us observe how it is used in other places. It denotes several things.

1. Descent. That is the natural and proper signification of it, a child is from his father; so they are called children of light, who are of the Father of lights. Children of darkness are of their father the prince of darkness; but children of light are born of God; they owe, they derive their second, their new birth from him. Christ, the light of the world, is formed in them, they take this name from their Father; he is light, and those that are born of him are children of light.

2. Propriety. So Matthew 8:12, ■ιο■ τ■ς βασιλε■ας; those that challenge a title to the kingdom, a propriety in it as their inheritance. Those did but groundlessly challenge the kingdom, but these have a full title to all those blessed things that the Scripture expresses by light, these belong to them only peculiarly. They only have spiritual knowledge, holiness is their peculiar. The joys of the Spirit, the light of God's countenance shines on them, and a stranger does not enter into their joy; they are heirs of the promise, the only heirs of the inheritance of the saints.

3. Destination. 1 Samuel 20:31, ■■ ■■■, one who is near to, worthy of, destined to death; so children of light, because they are ordained to it. They are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ in knowledge and holiness; chosen vessels, whom the Lord has set apart in his eternal counsel, to be filled with joy and glory. Whatever their portion seem to be on earth, in this vale of misery, it is but a valley they are to pass, and they will be in eternal light; there is but a valley, a step between them and glory.

4. Residence. Isaiah 21:10, corn is ■■ ■■■■, ‘the son of my floor,’ because that is the place where it is laid up and abides. Children of light, because they abide in the light. Those that are unconverted, their element is darkness, sin, wrath, misery; here they walk, here they abide. But when a sinner is converted, his element is light. Such are not of the night, nor of darkness; the Day-spring from on high has visited them; the Sun of righteousness is risen upon them, and in his light they see light. In this they walk, in this they abide, and shall never see darkness, spiritual darkness, hell, wrath, misery; they are translated from thence into another kingdom, a region of light. The light may be clouded, but never quite extinguished.

5. Constitution. The Hebrew doctors call the name Jehovah, ■■■■■■ ■■ ■■■■, ‘the son of four letters,’ because it is made up of four letters. So those that are converted may be called the children of light, because spiritual light is the constitution of their souls. Their minds, hearts, affections, are of a lightsome, i. e. a spiritual and heavenly temper; spiritual light in their minds, holiness in their wills, joy, delight, hopes of glory in their hearts.

6. Obligation, 2 Kings 14:14, ■■■ ■■■■■■■. It is rendered hostages, but it is the ‘sons of the contracts’ or covenants; those that were given to insure the engagement whereby Amariah had bound himself to the king of Israel. Those that are converted are in this sense children of light, because they are obliged to walk as those that are enlightened from above; to walk holily, to be followers of God as dear children. There are strong engagements laid upon them, they are bound by covenant thus to walk. This leads to the

Second question, What is it to walk as children of light? It is in this we shall have the substance of the text, and the scope which the apostle aims at in this chapter, indeed in the whole epistle, yea, in all his epistles; and therefore it calls for special enquiry and attention. Take it in this.

1. To walk at a distance from darkness, ver. 11; from sin, which is the work, which is the cause of all those woful things which the Holy Ghost expresses by darkness. ‘What communion has light with darkness?’ 2 Corinthians 6:14. He speaks of it as a most absurd incongruous thing, that those that are light should mingle with darkness. This is it which the Lord expects, this is it which this relation calls for. Those that are children of light, should have nothing to do with sin, with any sin whatsoever. Every degree of darkness is contrary to light; so every sin, small or great, open or secret, is opposite, contrary, altogether unbeseeming the blessed relation of a child of light. They may be ashamed to challenge this title who dare make bold with any sin, much more with gross sins.

Light is beautiful; a child of light is a pleasant child in the Lord’s eye, as he calls Ephraim. Oh, but sin is the loathsomest defilement, the most odious deformity in that pure eye that cannot behold iniquity! Those that labour not to avoid every sin, wallow in it, besmear, pollute themselves with it, are they children of light? Are they not rather bastards, unworthy pretenders to this relation?

It is the very nature, the new nature of a child of light to avoid sin; as it is the nature of every man and woman to shun that which will make him ugly, loathsome, and deformed. A child of light should avoid ‘the very appearance of evil,’ 1 Thessalonians 5:22; not only gross, open, scandalous evils, nor only secret, refined sins, which he knows to be evil and sinful, but even that which has the appearance of it; at such a distance should he walk from spiritual darkness, as not to come near the appearance of it. He hates the garments spotted with the flesh, Jude 1:23; not only sinful

filthiness itself, but the appearance of it, though it be but in a garment. How charily will one keep a costly robe, a rich garment, from spots and stains! Children of light are covered with a robe of light; it behoves them to be fearful of it; this is that alone which spots and stains it. And these spots are not easily got out, it will cost more than the garment is worth to cleanse it from the stain of sin; nothing will do it but the precious blood of him who is God blessed for ever.

Light is comfortable. Oh but sin is the saddest, the most uncomfortable evil in earth, nay, in hell; children of light had need walk at a distance from this.

Light is glorious; so is the state of a child of light. Oh, but sin is the most shameful thing that ever appeared in the world: it turned the glory of the fallen angels into shame; it turned the glory of innocent man into shame. It is as shameful spewing upon the glory of a child of light; shameful spewing indeed, even as if a dog should vomit in thy face (it is the Holy Ghost's expression), this could not be such a shame to thee as every sin is in the eye of God. Oh what reason to avoid it!

If you would walk as children of light, you must be afraid of sin, hate it, grieve for it, labour to expel it. Be afraid of it. Fear sin as hell; fear the darkness of sin as that utter darkness; indeed, it is more to be feared, for it is sin that made hell a place of darkness, quod efficit tale, est magis tale. If it made hell to be so, it is more so itself. Fear it as death, as the king of terrors; for it alone makes death terrible, it is the sting of it.

Hate it as thou wouldst hate for ever to live in darkness; as a poor freed prisoner hates his dungeon, as he hates to return to those fetters and vermin that were formerly his misery.

Grieve for it; for the remainders of it in thyself, for its over-spreading others. Grieve at it as thou wouldst do to see a gross, noisome, unwholesome fog deprive thee of the sight of sun and heaven. Such is the sad issue and woful nature of sin.

Labour to expel it; to expel the remainders of darkness out of thy soul. It is not enough for children of light to escape gross darkness, the pollutions of the world; nor is it enough to avoid the outward acts of sin. But this is the great work of a child of light, to maintain a constant combat with the remaining powers of darkness in his soul; make it his business to mortify those lusts and corruptions which, it may be, no eye sees, to stop up the fountain of darkness. As Christ is the fountain of spiritual light, so the heart is the fountain of spiritual darkness. 'Out of the heart,' &c., Matthew 15:18-19. The great work of a child of light is about his heart. He is careful of his life, too, but he finds it an easier matter to avoid the outward acts of sin, to cut off the branches, than to kill it in the root; to subdue and mortify it in his heart, this is to stop up the fountain.

He should look upon it as a great part of the work he has to do in the world, not only to free his conversation from darkness, but to scatter it where it is most firmly seated, to scatter the remainders of it in his mind, will, affections. He fasts, mourns, prays, believes, and is diligent in the use of all means, that his inward and secret corruptions may be crucified, this soul-darkness more and more expelled. Thus must they walk, who walk as children of light.

2. To walk boldly; to be herein followers of God as dear children. How followers of God? The apostle tells us, 1 Peter 1:15-16, the light of holiness should shine in the lives of those that are Christ's; holiness both exercised and diffused.

Children of light must live in the exercise of holiness. It is not enough to be habitually sanctified, to have the habits and principles of spiritual life and holiness. Walking denotes motion and activeness. Holiness is spiritual light, wherever it be; but if it lie in the heart inactive, unexercised, it is but as a candle under a bushel. It should shine forth in the exercises of holiness. This precious talent is not given to be buried, or hid in a napkin; it should be improved and drawn forth in lively and vigorous actings. There should be the exercise of patience, humility, self-denial, heavenliness; the actings of faith, love, fear, hope; the motions of zeal, desire, delight. The armour of God, the whole armour of light must be put on, so as to be in readiness to act for God upon all occasions, Romans 13:12. Grace unexercised is like armour laid aside; the apostle likes not this posture, he bids put it on. We must be always on our guard. We must be always ready for action.

Holiness diffused. Holiness must be extended to the whole conversation of a child of light. It is not enough to manifest a holy temper now and then by fits, under afflictions, or in good company, or in religious duties. A hypocrite may make a show of this upon such occasions; but he must walk holily, his whole course must be holy; he must be heavenly in worldly employments; holy in common affairs, even his recreations and earthly business. This is to walk as children of light.

3. Exemplarily. Children of light must walk so as to be light unto others, and this in divers particulars.

(1.) Unblameably. So as to give no cause of offence to the weak, nor no cause of reproach to the wicked. Carnal and perverse men will seek and take occasion to reproach those that belong to God, nor can the best many times avoid this; but though they will be apt to take occasion, yet should they be careful to give none, that they may be blameless in the sight of God, however carnal men censure them; and so the Lord will justify them, however the world charge and accuse them. Christ himself could not walk so, but those that bore ill will to him would take occasion to charge and reproach him; but though they took occasion, he gave none. ‘The disciple is not better than his Master, nor the servant than his Lord,’ John 15:20. If our dear Lord could not escape the censures of wicked men, his servants must not expect it. If they run not with others to the same excess of riot, they will be charged with pride, singularity, covetousness, hypocrisy. This cannot be avoided so long as the evil spirit, the accuser of the brethren, rules in the children of disobedience. But this must be with all care avoided, that though they will take occasion, yet no just occasion may be given to these charges and censures. The children of light must use all diligence to walk in all good conscience towards men. Or if men will be so perverse as to mistake, and misconstrue their carriage, yet must they so walk as they may approve their hearts and ways to God, and so they may appeal to him in the midst of all censures and reproaches, 1 Peter 3:16.

Labour to walk, as Zacharias and Elizabeth, ‘in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,’ Luke 1:6; that if the wicked will have a quarrel, they must pick one, no just occasion may be offered. To this the apostle exhorts, upon the same ground which is in the Php 2:15. If you give just cause to others to blame and censure, this is a cloud to the light, this becomes not those that are light in the Lord. They should walk so as they may be ‘found of him in peace, without spot and blameless,’ 2 Peter 3:14.

(2.) Their walking should be convictive. It should discover and manifest the sinfulness of those who walk in the ways of darkness. One contrary sets off another. It is the property of light to discover the hidden things of darkness; the conversion* of a child of light should be a real reproof to the

men of the world. It is true, this is the way to incur their hatred; for those that walk in darkness hate the light, because thereby their deeds are reproved. But, however, this is it which your relation calls for; your strictness should reprove their looseness, your zeal their indifferency, your faith their unbelief, your conscientiousness in holy duties, their negligence of them. Though it sometimes incur their hatred, yet it may, it has, through the blessing of God, occasioned their conviction, their conversion. The light of your holy, heavenly walking should discover their darkness; this may leave a prick in the conscience of an unconverted man, and thy life may prove a real sermon, to bring him to God, 1 Peter 3:1. There wants not experiments of this kind. Thy walking should be convictive, if thou walkest as a child of light.

(3.) Their walking should be imitable, i.e. worthy of imitation; so order their ways, as they may be a pattern unto others; so shine, as others may follow the light, not in affectation of pre-eminence, or singularity, in unwarranted opinions or practices; but in close following of Christ, and walking exactly according to the rule of holiness. Follow me as I follow Christ. Walk so as to be examples, so as to provoke others to love and good works, so as to shame the lukewarmness, formality, carnalness of others.

(4.) Their walking should be an ornament to their profession. There should be such a light in it as to beautify their profession, adorn the gospel, and make the ways of Christ lovely in the eyes of others; such a light as should not only put wickedness out of countenance, but gain credit to the professors and profession of Christ; such a lustre in your conversation as may reflect glory upon God. Let your light so shine, Matthew 5:16, so as to render the power of grace, and the excellency of religion, conspicuous, admired.

4. Cheerfully. Being children of light, they are children of joy. That is their portion, they are all Barnabases, sons of consolation, and should walk accordingly.

Walk cheerfully, as in the light of God’s countenance, as in that light that discovers to them the fountain of joy, the true grounds of all solid comfort, the great and precious promises, the high and glorious privileges, the sweet and honourable relations they have interest in.

Whatever tribulation they have in the world, in Christ they have peace. None in the world have true cause of joy but children of light. It is true they should be shy of carnal mirth; this is below them, the spring-head of their joys is higher, and the streams purer, and the taste sweeter, and more durable.

It is a disparagement to them and their relation, to be dejected with those things which sink the spirits of worldly men. In the greatest outward calamities, though they are not to put off natural affections, yet they are never so to mourn, but as those that have hope, as those that have cause to rejoice in the Lord. When they hear and see such things as may occasion trembling, yet they may rejoice in trembling, as the prophet sweetly, Habakkuk 3:16-18. When the children of darkness have fear in their greatest joy, these may have joy in their greatest fear. Though they be sometimes called to mourning, yet is there a blessed seed of joy in their mourning, Matthew 5:4, John 16:20. They are called to humiliation, and brokenness of heart; and as it consisteth in humble, self-denying, and mean thoughts of themselves, it should be their constant frame; but as it consisteth in anguish of mind, and dejection of heart, and disquietment of spirit, it becomes not their condition: their life should be a life of heavenly delights; they should get above doubtings,

fears, soul-disquietments. Thanks, praise, joyful obedience, delight in God, cheerfulness in his presence, in his service, in doing, in suffering, is that which this relation calls for; and those who would walk like children of light must thus walk.

If it be inquired how we may walk as children of light? Besides what is said already in the explication, which may serve for this purpose, I shall lay down some rules which may help you both as directions to guide you in this way of walking, and as characters whereby you may thus discern whether you thus walk or no.

1. Walk not according to opinion. Groundless and false opinions, that is the rule by which most walk; not only the men of the world, but professors, seduced by their example, or by the darkness and corruption of their own minds and hearts. They judge of things, not as they are in truth and reality, nor as the Scripture or right reason represents them, but as others think of them, though groundlessly and erroneously, and regulate their walking by such a judgment. This is in Seneca's style, secundum opinionem vivere, to live according to vulgar opinion, and is a rule below those, who would live in the use of common reason, much more below those who are the disciples of Christ, and 'have learned of him, and been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus;' the children of light should be far above this, and leave it to such as are in darkness. With them, omnia ex opinione suspensa sunt, the worth or value, the good or evil, of things is measured by false opinion, not by true measures. For instance, how came riches, great estates, abundance of superfluities, to be so highly valued, above all by many, and too much by those who profess themselves crucified to the world, and the things of it? How came we by this great esteem of that which is much and great in the world? We are no led to it by the Spirit of God; the Scripture hath scarce a good word for riches, Hebrews 2:6, Matthew 13:1-58, 1 Timothy 6:1-21. And reason and experience tell us that so much of the world hath more of care, and trouble, and vexation, and more danger of temptation, cumber, and hazard to ourselves than a competency. Whence is it, then, but from vain opinion, without Scripture, without reason? These things are of high esteem in the opinion of the world; this carries it against all, even those that are redeemed from the earth are swayed down by it. They are seduced by the common opinion, though it be a vulgar error. Men commonly think exceeding highly of these things, though no good reason can be given why they do so. Persons are valued for what they have, not for what they are. And he is a singular, a rare person, that does not more or less follow the common opinion. So for curious fare, and fine apparel, and sumptuous accommodations, what is it that sets a value on them but vain opinion, when in reality that which is less, or meaner, would be as much or more for health, and strength, and comeliness, and all the ends for which these things are afforded us? All these it would satisfy, only it will not satisfy common repute, and the vain conceit of the generality concerning these things.

Now the children of light should be far from following this rule, else they walk not like themselves. It is for those that are blind, or in the dark, to judge of things, or value them by their vain opinion, and order themselves accordingly. This should not sway your judgments, nor order your designs, nor regulate your practices as to these outward things. It is a blind guide, and leads those that follow it fully into the ditch, and those that follow it but in part into by-paths, and such wherein the children of light should be afraid and ashamed to be found. Let not this guide you in your particular callings, nor measure your estates, or order your fare or habit, or accommodations; you have another rule, the Scripture and enlightened reason. The light of the word is the rule for the children

of light. Observe what this discovers concerning these things, not what the world vainly thinks. There you have the judgment of the Spirit, the mind of Christ; this you should follow, not the opinion of the world, which lies in wickedness and in darkness, Romans 12:2. The children of light are ‘transformed by the renewing of their mind,’ so as they may discern ‘what is that good, that acceptable, that perfect will of God,’ to which the will and opinion of the world is opposite, and therefore they must not be conformed to it.

I might give you other instances as concerning sin. How is it that some sins pass for small, which the word of God declares to be great and dreadful; and some things which the Scripture represents as sins are counted no sins; and sin in general, which the Lord pronounces to be the greatest evil, is counted a less, a more tolerable evil than many outward grievances? Why, vain and common opinion carries it in these cases against the verdict of the Holy Ghost. So for holiness. How comes it to be so little valued and regarded, when the Lord hath said so much concerning the absolute necessity and transcendent excellency of it? How is it, that a show of it will serve some, a little of it (so much as will barely be sufficient to bring one to heaven) will serve others? How is it, that many things are more esteemed, more passionately affected, more eagerly pursued? Why, vain opinion prevails here also, to the disparagement of that which is most valuable, and to the advancement of that which is but loss and dung in comparison. To add no more. How is it that a low, afflicted, suffering condition is feared and shunned, as if it were the greatest evil on earth, whenas, being sanctified and improved, it may be more for the honour of Christ, and more for the advantage and prosperity of the soul, than the prosperous and flourishing condition in the world, and may more promote the main design and interest, both of Christ and his people? This can have no better ground than vain opinion, which Moses followed not, when he ‘chose rather to suffer,’ &c., and ‘accounted the reproach of Christ,’ &c., Hebrews 11:25-26. He had not respect to common opinion, but to something else; nor did the apostle regard it, but something of another nature, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

2. Follow the light of the word fully. Make use of it to discover the whole will of God, concerning the duty of his children, that you may comply with it, and order heart and life by it. Study not only the promises and privileges which belong to your state (though this must be part of your study and inquiry); but also your duty in the full latitude of it (for it is of large extent, Psalms 119:96); what you owe to God, to yourselves, families, relations, brethren, enemies, all men, and inquire with a design to conform your souls and conversations to the whole will of God. Decline no part of it, whatever it be. Those that are in darkness may stumble upon some duties, but they are partial in the law, Malachi 2:9. They accept faces (as in the Hebrew). Some duties please, some disquiet them; they pick and choose, some are taken, others are left, as their humour, interest, inclination serves them; some parts of their conversation is lightsome, but darkness is upon other parts thereof.

It must not be thus with those who would walk as children of light. The light of holiness must shine in every part of their souls, in every part of their lives; so as to be ‘holy in all manner of conversation,’ in an impartial, universal observance of the will of God, Psalms 119:6. Then may they be confident that they walk answerable to their state and relation, when they respect all; then need they not be ashamed, as those that live in contradiction. They walk not as children of light, who walk not in all, as Luke 1:6. All must be regarded and observed, but there is occasion to mind you more especially of some, of which you should have a particular care.

(1.) Those that are too much neglected by professors. Those to whom God hath made known his will have been subject, in several ages, to some neglects, which, prevailing, have proved fatal to them in the issue. You may see what neglects the Israelites of old were guilty of; their not worshipping God after his appointment, did principally bring the captivity. Afterwards, in Christ's time, there were some great pretenders to a more than ordinary holiness, were strict and severe in many duties, but declined others, of which they are admonished by Christ: 'These things ye ought to have done, but' &c. They were much for outward holiness, but neglected inward purity; very punctual in divers rites and observances, but overlooked the βαρ■τερα το■ ν■μου; seemed strict in the duties of the first table, which respect the worship of God, but omitted those of the second, little regarding righteousness and mercy. In the ancient church after Christ, the fatal neglect seems to have been their not keeping close to the rule of the word, in administration of worship, ordinances, and discipline, taking liberty to add or diminish, or vary herein, as they pleased. The consequence whereof was the letting in an inundation of corruption, which in fine settled in popery in the west, and a woful degeneracy in other parts of the world. In other places which have been reforming and cleansing themselves from these corruptions, there has been much care about doctrinals, and zeal and industry about the points controverted in religion, but too much. In general, I fear there is much guilt upon professors for not bringing forth fruits worthy of the gospel; those fruits of the Spirit, for which the Spirit of Christ was many years striving with us in the ministry of the gospel, not being filled with those fruits of righteousness; also for not improving those means and advantages we sometimes had for the carrying on of Christ's work amongst us, and the promoting of his interest in our own hearts and lives, and in others; and since the Lord's hand hath been stretched out against us for not learning righteousness by his judgments, not inquiring duly what design he had upon us in thus judging and chastening us, not complying with his design. So that it is a common complaint, that generally we are no better for our sufferings, still as proud, and vain, and selfish, and worldly; still as unmortified, as little refined as if we had not been in the furnace.

Children of light should better discern what God aims at in afflicting, and more readily follow him whither his correcting hand leads them.

Particularly, while we advance faith, let us not depress good works, but be careful to maintain them, Titus 3:14, and to walk in them, Ephesians 2:10.

While we profess and magnify love to God, let not brotherly love be lost amongst us; that impartial universal love, which is called for everywhere in the New Testament; let not our love be confined to parties.

While we would have forbearance from others, let us not refuse to forbear one another in tolerable differences.

While we lay great stress upon hearing the word, let not other duties and ordinances be slighted or slightly attended.

While we oppose religious rites and ceremonies of human invention, let us neglect nothing which the Scripture shews to be of the substance of religion.

While we are for spiritual worship, let us not tolerate in ourselves an unspiritual, a carnal temper of heart in worshipping God.

While we are zealous for pure ordinances, let us not neglect the end and due improvement of them.

While we like not the gaudy and pompous dress of worship under the gospel, let us not be proud, and vain, and gaudy, in our own dress and garb.

While we seem tender and scrupulous in worshipping God, and what worship we offer to him, let us not overlook love and peace, righteousness, and mercy towards men: of which more anon. Not to be tedious: let me commend some scriptures to your serious consideration, wherein some of the duties of Christ's disciples are laid down; and observe if divers of them be not too much neglected by those who profess subjection to Christ: Matthew 5:39, ad fin., and Matthew 6:19-20; Matthew 7:12; Romans 12:9, ad fin.; Galatians 5:22, ad fin.; Ephesians 4:25, &c.; Php 2:1-5; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-16; 1 Timothy 6:17-18; James 1:22-27; 1 Peter 3:8, &c. To explain these passages is not my business, and many of them are plain. They are part of the rule by which a child of light should walk; and some of the duties herein specified have their observance amongst us; but whether many of them be not too much neglected and overlooked by those who profess an universal subjection to Christ, as their Lord and lawgiver, when you have duly perused, and seriously considered them, and compared the lives and deportment of professors therewith, you may be able to judge. If you would walk as children of light, be careful, especially, of those duties, those acts of holiness, the exercise of those graces, those parts of gospel obedience, which you see professors too apt to neglect; your great concernment in this may excuse me for staying so long upon it. Too much neglect of practical godliness, and the power of it; and we in these nations have our neglects too; the Lord hath not been scourging us all this while for nothing. These have had some hand at least in preparing the furnace, and heating of it.

(2.) Those for the neglect of which we are reproached. The Lord sometimes instructs his people by the mouths of enemies, and minds them of their duty, by such as little regard their own. We are charged at this day with the neglect of moral virtues, and the duties of the second table; ministers for not pressing of them, and hearers for not making conscience to practise them: such as these, meekness, lowliness, peaceableness, mercifulness, liberty, charity, truth, faithfulness, candour, righteousness, temperance, patience, &c. Now this is a heavy charge, and great guilt is upon us if we deserve it, for those are things of great necessity and excellency. When they are from a right principle, and directed to a right end, they are not moral virtues only, but Christian graces, part of the divine nature and of the image of God; half of our religion consists in the exercise thereof, and those that are to seek here are but almost Christians. These are so far from being the children of light, that they who are destitute of them are below some of them who are in darkness. You find them even in the New Testament frequently and importunately called for: 2 Peter 1:5-6, 'Add to faith, virtue,' i.e. all moral virtues, say some; however, divers of them are here specified, 2 Peter 1:8. Much of the fruitfulness of a Christian lies in these things, and he that lacketh them, whatever he have, whatever attainment he pretends to besides, is barren, 2 Peter 1:9. He is blind, he is in darkness, he doth not, he cannot walk as a child. Godliness is not in its power, where it commands not the exercise of these. Those who take themselves to be in a higher form, and slight these things as below them, and pretend to be wholly taken tip with spiritualness, heavenliness, living by faith and intimate communion with God, so as to neglect what should order their conversation towards men, are less absurd and preposterous than one who will needs be in his grammar when he hath not learned his primer, and thinks he can read well enough when he is not able to spell, or

does not know his letters.

(3.) Such as the providence of God, and your present condition more particularly calls you to. Children of light should make use of the light, to discern in all circumstances that part of God's will, wherein they are more especially concerned, and apply themselves to special observance of that which is most seasonable, as ex. gr. When you are under affliction, and the hand of God is upon you, if you walk under the cross as children of light, you should see (though such as are in darkness cannot, or will not) when his hand is stretched out, and humble yourselves under it, 1 Peter 5:6. You should observe what his hand points at, and take notice what he is correcting in you; what he would have you to reform, to leave, to do, to suffer; what his design is in thus exercising you with sad dispensations, and how you may serve it, and fully comply with it. When your outward condition is prosperous and successful, you should be thankful, you may rejoice; but rejoice with trembling, as considering that outward prosperity is usually more hazardous to your souls than afflictions and sufferings; and a fair gleam often ushers in a storm, Psalms 30:6. When you have abundance of this world, and outward comforts are still flowing in, use what you have faithfully for God, and employ, lay it out for those ends for which he hath entrusted you, as becomes those who are but stewards, and expect shortly to give an account of their stewardship; and as those who make account at present, that the tide may turn, as you see it daily doth, and that it may be low water with you ere long. Employ what you have, so as you will wish it had been employed when it is gone (for shortly it will be gone from you, or you from it), and then the comfort and advantage (which is more valuable than the things themselves) will remain, whatever be lost.

If you be cut short in these enjoyments already, learn now to count the all-sufficiency of God your riches, to value more, and be more diligent for that treasure which is above the reach of danger, and so may grow truly rich, rich unto God with a little, when others are poor, very poor in abundance. When you have provisions for your souls, be careful that your souls thrive. If your souls be lean in a year of plenty, what will they be in a famine? If they be like the heath in the wilderness, when they have been watered with the first and latter rain; take heed lest the Lord command the heavens, &c. Learn of the ant, who provides her meat in summer, Proverbs 6:6-8; she knows by instinct winter will come; we have had some touches of a winter already, and sharper weather may come. When you are abridged of soul advantages, you have special warnings from heaven to be faithful in a little, lest the Lord take from you even that which you have. Children of light should above others be wise in their generation, to know their seasons and the duties of them, their light otherwise may add to their guilt, and make it greater, more conspicuous, and lead the Lord to more severity. You are upon trial, upon your good behaviour, one year more you are forborne after apparent hazards of being cut down; if more fruitfulness appear not, you know what follows, 'cut it down.'

(4.) Those that have a special tendency to endear religion and the ways of Christ to others, to acquaint those who are strangers to it with the excellency thereof; to convince those who are prejudiced against it, to win those and conquer them who are enemies to it.

There are many acts required of us which are of this nature and quality, and might through the blessing of God produce these happy effects. And the children of light are greatly concerned to make these their constant walk, to be very much in them if they will walk like themselves. But these acts are not those wherein secret converse and walking with God consists; not the inward

actings and motions of their hearts towards God; not the more retired exercise of their graces betwixt God and their souls, for these others are not acquainted with, nor will they believe or regard them, unless there be some visible demonstration thereof. That which has this effect upon them must be something that they may see or be sensible of; something which they or the world may have advantage by; something which is lovely and commendable amongst the sons of men, for which they commonly have some reverence and esteem; in which there is some light and lustre which strikes their senses, and through them reaches their minds and consciences. And this is it which Christ calls for in general from all the children of light, Matthew 5:16. We must do nothing to be seen of men, that we may have praise and applause, but many things we are bound to do which men must see, so as to be thereby provoked, obliged to glorify God in speaking and thinking well of his laws and ways. There is a light shines in good works, those works whereby we do good in the world, or do good to the place where we live, and to the persons with whom we deal and converse, which reflects glory upon God, when it makes them believe there is a singular goodness and excellency in that religion which produces so good effects. When they find by experience in those that profess it, such uprightness and candour, such bounty and mercy, such tenderness over others in all their concernments, such readiness to supply them, to relieve them, to be helpful to them every way, both for heaven and for the world, the children of light should not spare purse nor pains to effect this. And that is wretched and miserable sparing indeed, which opens the mouths of sinners against professors, and hardens their hearts against Christ's ways. Oh, let none that pretend to be light in the Lord, bring such a cloud of darkness upon their profession; 'better a millstone,' &c., and they and their estates sunk in the sea than give scandal. The apostle Peter seconds the advice of Christ in words to the same effect, 1 Peter 2:12. Such good works should be visible in the walking of children of light, that their persecutors (for the day of visitation there is probably a day of persecution), beholding them, may not only be silenced, and speak no more of them as evil-doers when they see and hear of so much good done by them, but may be won to a good opinion of their way (rendered by their good works so lovely), and so persuaded to embrace it and enter into it as the best way in the world. Oh that professors would fill their conversation with such acts and works, that those without may have a real convincing demonstration that their way is the best way in the world.

See how importunately the apostle Paul calls the children of light to the practice of those things which might commend and endear their profession to others, Php 4:8. Whatsoever things are σεμν■, venerable, high in their esteem; whatever are προσφιλ■, amiable, obliging to their affections; whatever are ε■φημα, commended in their discourse; if you have any regard of virtue, or to anything that is praiseworthy, make these your designs, propose these to yourselves as principally to be aimed at in your practice. There is no way so advantageous for the children of light to shine as lights in their stations, and to appear in the world like themselves, as this.

(5.) Those to which you have most averseness, to which your inclinations do least lead you; as there are some evils to which we are naturally more inclined than to others, so are there some parts of our duty, some acts of holiness to which we are more backward than to others. And as we are in most danger to fall into that evil to which we are naturally most addicted, so are we most subject to decline those acts and duties to which we have the least inclination; and as we are concerned to observe most what sin our corrupt nature is most prone to, and [to be] most watchful against it, so we are obliged to take notice especially what part of our duty we are most apt to

decline, and to strive most with our own hearts to bring them to a compliance with the will of God in that particular. And herein the children of light will approve themselves to be children indeed, most obedient, and most dutiful, and most affectionate children, when they cross their own inclinations to comply with his will. Hereby you will have the comfort and evidence that you follow the Father of lights fully, when you follow him in those steps which you are naturally most averse to tread in, and most prone to skip over them, or turn aside from them. And the same may be said of those parts of the divine will which cross our interest, the interest of self, of the world, or of the flesh, those which are inconsistent with our ease, our pleasure, our gain, and worldly advantage, or our safety, or our credit. Those who would walk as children of light, must follow their Father and observe his will, in those acts and duties that are unpleasing to the flesh, in those that are most difficult, in those that are very chargeable and expensive, in those that are reproached and disgraced; in those that are hazardous, and expose them to danger in their estates, or liberty, or lives, in all that is dear to them in the world. No fear, no hazard, no difficulty must stop them in their course, in the race set before them by their heavenly Father, nor turn them aside from it, who would walk and have the comfort of walking as children of light; and thus walking they will be indeed followers of God as dear children.

(6.) Those which you are under temptation to neglect. Many times we are more tempted to neglect some than others, and in more danger to neglect them then when under temptation. The children of light should walk so as to see their danger and avoid it. Those whose necks are under oppression or persecution, when the yoke is heavy and pinches sore, are in danger to neglect that special duty of the gospel, to love their enemies, and pray for them, and do good to them, which yet is the proper character of Christians, and their excellency above all others, amicos diligere omnium est, &c. So brethren, when they are of different ways and persuasions, those differences are apt to alienate their affections, and they are in danger to lose brotherly love, and to neglect the acts and offices of it one to another, which yet is a duty on which the gospel, nest to faith, lays the greatest stress, and calls for most frequently, and with greatest importunity. They walk not as children of light, who walk not in love with one another. The apostle tells us they are in darkness, and walk in it, and are blinded by it, 1 John 2:8-11. So those that engage themselves much in the world, are in danger to neglect their families, and the duties they owe to God, and the souls of their relations, if they neglect not their own too.

Children of light should be wary where they are in most danger, and that is where they are under temptation. If you would walk as children of light, you must follow the light of the world fully, especially in the particulars specified.

3. Walk above the world and earthly things. Children of light are clothed with the sun; the moon, the world is under their feet, Revelation 12:1. It has no high place in their minds or hearts; riches, pleasures, honours, and respect are thrown down in their thoughts, and cast out of their affections, they are not the design of their lives; the world is their footstool everywhere, and serves, does not command them.

They have no high esteem of the world, nor of those things that are of most value in dark minds; condemn riches and greatness, which others adore or admire. The light hath discovered to them something of another world, which outshines and disparages all that this world can tempt them with. They are ranked amongst the worst of children of darkness, who ‘mind earthly things,’ Php

3:18-19. Their hearts and affections are estranged. They are to the world's breasts, which promise pleasure and plenty, as a weaned child; the world is crucified to them. It is now (whatever it was while they were darkness) as a lifeless untempting object, has no more beauty nor comeliness to draw out their affections to it, than a dead carcase, a crucified thing. They are in gross darkness that are in love with the world; 'the love of the Father is not in them;' it would not be so if the true light had shined in them. The apostle is positive, 1 John 2:15; and more sharply, James 4:4.

They seek it not. It is not pursued as their design; they follow it not to embrace it, but to crucify it; they seek it otherwise as though they sought it not, with some indifferency whether they have it or not, so they may have those better things. Other seekers of it are in palpable darkness, Matthew 6:31-32. They would be loath to leave no difference betwixt the children of light and the children of this world, betwixt the disciples of Christ and the Gentiles. Let the Gentiles that are in darkness, and see nothing better, seek these things; children of light 'seek those things that are above.' If a way be opened for them by the providence of God, to get more of the world, they proceed therein moderately, and very cautiously, lest the world should encroach upon their heavenly interest, lest the world should steal away those thoughts and affections, that care and time, and those endeavours which are due to God and to their souls; and lest, having more in trust they should not be faithful. They seek not the world for worldly ends, that they may rise higher and fare better, more deliciously, or that they may have more esteem and reputation (these are the low unworthy ends of sensualists and worldlings for themselves and their posterity); but that they may do more good, and be more serviceable, and more honour their profession, and shew the sincerity of their aims by really and freely employing what they get for those noble and generous purposes. But I have formerly spoken to you more of this on another subject; and the Lord has since spoken to you concerning this in another language. Your guilt will be great, your condition very lamentable, if nothing prevail with you to walk as children of light in this particular; when the Lord has thundered from heaven, by one dreadful judgment after another, which seem directly levelled against worldliness.

4. Walk in the sight of heaven. Children of the light are the 'children of the kingdom,' heirs of heaven and glory, begotten again to an inheritance, &c. And that is one reason why they are called children of light, because they are heirs of the inheritance of the saints in light. If they walk like themselves, they walk as travelling towards their own country, and going to take possession of their inheritance and portion in another land, another world, and to look upon this world as a strange country, and upon themselves in it as strangers and pilgrims; upon their habitations, as inns and lodgings in a journey; upon their enjoyments, as the accommodations of an inn, in which they are to rest as it were but for a night, and to leave all as it were the next morning; and upon what they meet with in their way, whether pleasing or displeasing, as things wherein they are little concerned, being in a journey, passing from them, and hastening homewards: all the occurrences of this life being but as the passages of one day, compared with that eternity which is in their eye.

Under such apprehensions should children of light continually walk in the world, while their minds and hearts are at home, their conversation in heaven; their eye not upon the trifles of this life, but upon their portion and inheritance, their longings for possession of that happiness, those riches, those joys, that glory which shall be revealed. The view of this at a distance, their thoughts of it, does quicken, comfort, encourage them, put spirits and life into them, in all their actings for God, and motions towards him, or sufferings for his name's sake. This fortifies them against all the

terrors and all the allurements of the world. They should make use of this to disgrace all that the world can tempt them with, to brush down, as a cobweb, whatever is a snare to a worldly heart.

What are the riches and treasures of the world but loss and dung, compared with those riches of glory, the treasures of our Father's kingdom?

What are the delights of sense, and pleasures of the world, but drops of mud? Drops, compared with those rivers of pleasures which are at God's right hand; and mud, compared with the pure river of the water of life, those pure, sinless, satisfying, enhappying, everlasting delights.

What is all the honour and splendour of the world, but as the glittering of a glow-worm to the glory of the sun in its full brightness, when compared with the glorious inheritance of the saints above?

What are the things on earth, which earthly hearts most affect and admire, but as trifles and children's playthings, compared with things above? A sight of that country which they seek, that place they are walking to, will help them to look upon all the glory of the world with contempt and disregard; and when they walk as children of light, they walk in such a sight of it.

Such a sight of it, as will also encourage them against all the sad things they may meet with in their walk. What though there be darkness here, days of blackness and thick darkness; there is everlasting light, without approach of night or spark* of darkness. What though there be troubles and afflictions, sufferings and tribulation, yet there is peace that shall never be disturbed, rest that can never be disquieted. After all that this world can do to disturb and disquiet us here below, there remains a rest for the people of God, an eternal rest.

What though we be tossed to and fro here, without any certain dwelling-place, and must think of removing as soon as one would think we were settled; yet there is a city that has foundations, where shortly we shall be settled to full contentment, so as no malice of men or devils shall ever remove us.

What though we be poor and mean, have little, and are in no way to compass more on earth; yet 'God has chosen the poor of the world, rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom,' of such a kingdom, as all the kingdoms of earth are but toys and baubles to it.

What though all our earthly enjoyments be utterly uncertain, they may be consumed, or lost, or forced from us on a sudden, we can no way secure them a year, a week, a day to an end. Oh, but we have an inheritance; we have enjoyments and treasures above, which lie at no such uncertainties. They are reserved for us in the heavens, above the reach of rust, and moth, and water, and fire, and injustice, and violence. We look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken, 'though the earth be removed, and the mountains,' &c., which cannot be consumed, though the earth should be turned to ashes, and elements melt with fervent heat.

We are passing through a valley of tears to the joy of our Lord; through the malice and rage of men, to the enjoyment of that God who is love itself; through menaces and threatenings, to inherit the promises; through men's reproaches and hard measures, to the blessed welcomes of Christ, and his everlasting embraces. The sight, the thoughts of this, arms the children of light against all temptations, encourages them against all hardships and sufferings. So it did the apostles and primitive Christians, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. This is to walk as children of light, 'not looking at things that are seen,' &c.

Motives. 1. Otherwise you live undutifully, as disobedient children. It is your Father, the Father of lights, that enjoins you to walk as children of light; if you walk otherwise, you are unlike your Father, you cannot please him, you disobey him, you are so far children of disobedience.

2. You cross God's design in honouring you with this title and relation; for this end you are begotten again, born of God; for this end he 'called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,' and made you 'light in the Lord.' If you walk not as children of light, you walk cross to God, and will be found a resister of him in a high degree, as those that would frustrate his design, and make him fall short of his end in thus honouring you.

3. You walk in a contradiction to your state and relation. So far as you walk not as children of light, you walk as children of darkness; and that is as if one that is advanced to be a prince should live as a shark or a beggar; or as if one that has the soul of a man should live like the beasts of the field.

4. You undermine your hopes, and weaken your title to the inheritance of the saints in light; you cannot plead your title to that inheritance further than you live like heirs of it; you live not like heirs if you walk not as children of light. OF CHRIST SEEKING FRUIT, AND FINDING NONE He came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.—Luke 13:6.

These words are part of a parable, the occasion of which we may find in the former verses. Some there present told Jesus what had befallen those Galileans, whom Pilate had slain at the altar, and sacrificed them while they were sacrificing; and so mingled their blood with the blood of the beasts that they were killing for sacrifice.

He, willing they should make good use hereof, would have them to apprehend the danger themselves were in, and thereupon to break off their sins by repentance, lest some such sudden stroke falling upon them, they should perish in impenitency. And because he foresaw they might evade this, by imagining they were in no such danger, upon a supposition they were in no such guilt as those Galileans, he shews them the vanity of these imaginations, and tells them plainly, they had guilt enough upon them to ruin them, unless they did repent, Luke 13:2-3. And, that he might make the deeper impression on them, he repeats it under another instance of like nature, Luke 13:4-5, as if he had said, Do not think yourselves secure, upon a conceit that your sins are less than theirs, who were thus surprised by death and judgment; you have sin enough to destroy you, unless you prevent it by repentance. And having told them that, unless they repented, they should also perish, it might be inquired, how they should perish? To which he seems to answer by this parable: they would perish, as this fig-tree did, which being planted in a commodious place (a vineyard), and having all advantages to render it fruitful, yet continued barren; whereupon the owner of it, after all means used to improve it, and the exercise of patience year after year, in expectation of some fruit, meeting with nothing but disappointments, resolves it shall cumber the ground no longer, but gives order to have it cut down. This is the sum of the parable; and the ■π■δοσ■ς, the meaning of it, is this: those persons who are planted under the means of grace, and have all helps and advantages requisite to make them spiritually fruitful, they ought to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. The Lord, who has so planted and privileged them, expects it of them; and if they answer not his expectation, he may bear with them for some years, while his servants, those who labour in his vineyard, the ministers of the gospel, are taking pains with them, and using all means proper for their improvement; but if, after all this, they continue still barren, he will have

them cut down; they shall have a standing no longer in his vineyard; no more care and pains shall be lost upon them; they shall not encumber the ground any longer, nor possess the place, on which others being planted, would bring forth fruit; in fine, they shall be destroyed. The words I have pitched on are the beginning of the parable, which affords us this

Observation; Those who enjoy the means of fruitfulness should bring forth fruit; those who are planted in the Lord's vineyard, and have a standing under the means of grace, should be fruitful. This is clear in the words, and indeed in every part of this parable.

1. They are planted in the vineyard for this purpose. That is the proper place for fruit-trees; another place than the vineyard would serve them, if they were not set there for fruit.

2. The Lord, who gives them place here, expects it. He is said to come and seek fruit, Luke 13:6-7. It is that which he has just cause to look for.

3. He heinously resents it when he finds no fruit, and expresses his resentment to the dresser of his vineyard. It is an abuse of his patience; the longer he bears with such barrenness, the more it is abused. It is a provocation that he will not bear long with. After three years' forbearance, he passes that severe sentence, cut it down.

4. It is an injury to the place where they stand. They cumber the ground, that is the reason of the sentence, Luke 13:7. It takes up that room which might be better employed; it sucks away that moisture which would make others fruitful; it overdrops the plants that are under it, hinders the spreading and fruitfulness of others. A better improvement might be made of the ground; it is a loss to the owner of the vineyard, when such a plant is suffered, καταργε■; which may signify the spending the heart of the ground to no purpose, Luke 13:7.

5. Those who have most tenderness for such, can have no ground to seek a long forbearance of this barrenness. The dresser of the vineyard will venture to beg no more forbearance than one year, after that he yields it up to excision, Luke 13:8-9.

6. All labour and pains, all care and culture, in digging about and dunging it, is lost upon it. Those whom the Lord employs to use all means for their improvement, have nothing left them in the issue, but occasion of sad complaint, that they have laboured in vain, spent their strength for nought, Isaiah 49:4.

7. Such will certainly be ruined. Where fruit is not found, nothing can be expected but cutting down. The lord of the vineyard will not spare them, and the dressers of the vineyard will not longer intercede for them. All in a little while agree in that fatal conclusion, cut it down.

All these, and each of them, make it evident, that those who are planted under the means of grace, are highly concerned to bring forth fruit. The most pertinent and profitable inquiry, for further clearing of this truth, will be, what fruits it is they should bring forth? What we are to understand by fruit, and that fruitfulness which is so much our duty? And of this I shall give you an account by the quality, quantity, and continuance of it. To these heads we may reduce those severals, whereby the Scriptures express to us what this fruit is.

I. For quality. It must be good fruit. Grapes, not 'wild grapes' (as the prophet expresseth in a parable very like to this, Isaiah 5:2, Isaiah 5:4). Wild grapes are for the wilderness, not for the

Lord's vineyard, Matthew 3:10, and Matthew 7:19. Good fruits are acts of goodness; taking acts largely, as comprising words, thoughts, actions, motions inward and outward. Acts of goodness opposed to sinful acts; as Basil, ■ργα δικαιοσ■νης ■ντικε■μενα τ■ ■μαρτ■■: good acts, opposite to what is evil and sinful. Now bonum est ex integris causis, that acts may be good, there must be a concurrence of all the causes requisite to make them good, and constitute their goodness. And these causes we have specified in Scripture, which I shall briefly touch.

1. As to the efficient. Good fruits are called 'fruits of the Spirit,' Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:9; such fruits as the Spirit of grace helps us to bring forth, by sanctifying the heart, which else is no soil fit to bring forth good fruit, and influencing, moving in it, and acting it when it is sanctified. The fruits of the flesh, the fruits of our own spirit, as they are carnal, selfish, and earthly, are no good fruits. The fruits of the Spirit are good fruits, and those only.

2. As to their matter and form. Good fruits are such as are called 'fruits of holiness and righteousness.' They are acts of holiness, Romans 6:22, taken in that latitude, as comprising godliness, sobriety, and righteousness, according to the apostle's distribution, Titus 2:12. Then we bring forth good fruits, when we 'live soberly, righteously, and godly.' Acts of piety towards God, and acts of justice towards men, and acts of sobriety towards ourselves, are the good fruits we should bring forth.

These are called 'fruits of righteousness;' that word being also taken largely, as containing all that we owe to God, to others, to ourselves, 2 Corinthians 9:10, Hebrews 12:11, James 3:18. And as to the form. Then they are good fruits, when produced in a way and manner conformable to the rule of holiness; when thoughts, and inclinations, and designs, and affections, and words, and actions, are ordered by that rule, then we bring forth 'fruit unto holiness.' When we think, and intend, and affect, and speak, and act in such a manner as the rule of righteousness requires, then we bring forth the fruits of righteousness, the good fruits which we ought to bring forth.

3. As to the end. Good fruit is such as is brought forth unto God, Romans 7:4; then we bring forth fruit to God, when what we think, and speak, and act, is in reference to him, out of obedience to his will, with an intent to serve him, out of a desire to please him, with a design to honour him. When the serving, and pleasing, and glorifying, and enjoying of God is the end of all; a special goodness is hereby derived upon all our fruit, it is then brought forth unto God. When we bring forth fruit unto sin, unto the flesh, unto the world, that is cursed fruit. When we bring forth fruit to ourselves, that is no fruit in God's account. Accordingly Israel is called an empty vine, because she brought forth fruit to herself, Hosea 10:1. They are empty trees that have no other fruit; it is none, or as good as none, no good fruit that is brought forth to ourselves; that is only good which is brought forth to God.

More particularly, that it may be good fruit, it must be.

(1.) Real. A show, an appearance of fruit will not suffice. If it be not real, it has not a metaphysical goodness, much less a moral or spiritual. The fig-tree in the gospel made some show of fruit; but Christ finding none upon it really, he cursed it, and it withered, Matthew 21:19. It must not be like the apples of Sodom, which has nothing to commend it, but only a fair outside. Fair appearances may delude men, and pass for better fruit with them than that which is good indeed. But God is not, cannot be mocked; it is he that comes to seek fruit, and it is not the fairest shows will satisfy

him, it must be real.

(2.) It must be such as imports a change of the soul, that brings it forth, Matthew 3:8; ■ξιον τ■ς μετανο■ας, fruit worthy of another mind, another soul than he had before. Athanasius explains the word by μετατ■θεσθαι τ■ν νο■ν ■π■ το■ κακο■ πρ■ς τ■ ■γαθ■ν, a change of the mind from evil to good, Matthew 7:17-18, Luke 6:43. The tree, i.e. the heart, must be good before it can bring forth good fruit; but naturally it is an evil and corrupt tree, and grows wild, it must be transplanted into another soil, or engraffed into another stock, that the nature and quality of it may be changed, that its fruit may be good, else that which it brings forth will be wild grapes, corrupt fruits, not such as the lord of the vineyard comes to look for. Your natures must be changed, your hearts must be renewed, your souls must be taken off from the old stock wherein ye were born, and have continued, and engraffed into Christ ere your fruit can be good, John 15:4-5. The old soil of nature brings forth nothing but briars and thorns, such as is near unto cursing, 'whose end will be burning' (as the apostle, Hebrews 6:1-20); or at best, it brings forth nothing but fine weeds. The best thoughts and actions of an unregenerate person, how goodly or specious soever they may seem to himself or others, are but splendida peccata, gilded evils, or sins of a better gloss. The soil of your natures must be quite altered by renewing grace, before it can produce anything good in the account of God. Regeneration is as necessary before good fruit indeed, as natural life is before action. You must be born again before you can bear good fruit.

(3.) It must be distinguishing fruit; such as no trees can bring forth but those that are good, and such as will make their goodness apparent, Matthew 7:16, Matthew 7:20; such as may approve ye to God and your own consciences, to be trees of righteousness, the planted of the Lord, and such as may make this known to men too, so far as by visible acts it may be known; such as may carry a conviction with them to the consciences of others, that you are indeed what you profess yourselves to be, such as will leave them no just exception against it, 1 Peter 3:16.

Such fruits as no formalist, no hypocrite, no mere moralist can shew; something singular, that you may not be nonplussed with that question, What singular thing do ye?

Something more, something above and beyond, not only what the men of the world do, but what common professors can reach.

Such, by which you may be known to be not only new creatures, but of some proficiency in the knowledge of Christ, and the course of practical godliness, according to your standing. Such as will demonstrate to the world, that you are holy, humble, mortified, self-denying, public-spirited, heavenly-minded, truly crucified to the world; and have not only a form, but the power of godliness, that you do not only profess this, but are thus.

(4.) Seasonable. That it may be good fruit, it must be brought forth 'in due season,' Psalms 1:1-6, Matthew 21:41. The lord of the vineyard looks for fruit in his season, Mark 12:2, Luke 20:10. There is a season for everything, Ecclesiastes 3:1, and then, if ever, it is good; good words are good fruit, when in season, Isaiah 50:4, Proverbs 25:11. But there is a time when they are not good fruit, and that is the time the apostle speaks of, James 2:15-16. Good words alone are not at this time good fruits; in such a case they are not in season, for this is the season for good works. So good thoughts are good fruit, when in season, when we are called to meditation, but not when we are called to prayer; then they are not good, because that is not their season. That is most acceptable

fruit, which is in due season, Numbers 28:2. The best offerings, if unseasonable, would be unacceptable. Even the actings and exercise of grace, if it be not in season, will not be good fruit. Patience, when we are provoked, is good; but not when we hear God blasphemed. Spiritual rejoicing is excellent fruit, but not while we are called to mourning. The actings of grace have a more particular goodness in their proper seasons. Faith in hard trials, patience in tribulation, meekness in provocations, contentment in wants, courage in dangers, humility in the midst of applause, crucifiedness to the world, in abundance of it, in a confluence of riches and delights: here they are excellent fruit; this is their season.

(5.) Sound. A fair skin is not enough to commend fruit for good, if it be rotten within. And so is our fruit, if the inward temper and motions of the heart be not correspondent to the outward actions and expressions. If we use the words of a prayer, but the heart prays not, the soul is not in motion towards God, the affections go not along with our confessions or petitions. Or if we praise God, but make not melody in our hearts, the soul exalts him not, the mind has no high apprehensions of him, no inward motions of love and delight, while our lips speak his praise. This is to ‘draw near unto God with our mouths only,’ Isaiah 29:13. The fruit is not sound, if the heart be not in it. You offer to God but the parings or the picture of fruit, without this; which is to mock God, not to offer the fruit he desires. So when we speak of heavenly or spiritual things, without a spiritual sense of what we speak; when we relieve our brethren, but without inward affection or compassions to them; when we put the outward conversation in some handsome order, but neglect the temper and posture of the inward man: this is but such fruit as the Pharisees did bear, Matthew 23:25-28. Whatsoever appear in your words and actions, if the heart tolerate unruly passions, or harbour unmortified lusts, or give free way to selfish, carnal, earthly inclinations, your fruit cannot be sound at heart; you may please yourselves or others with it, but God will never count it good; if it have the outward shape of fruit, yet there is worms and vermin in it, which make it good for nought.

II. For the quantity. It ought to be much, John 15:5, John 15:8. There should be,

1. A fulness of fruit. Those that enjoy the means, must not only bring forth fruit, but be fruitful; should bear abundance. Heart and life should be filled with it, Php 1:11. You count not that a fruitful tree, when one or two branches only bear fruit, and the rest have nothing but leaves, or when each branch has a fig or two; but when all the boughs are full. It is not fruitfulness when there are ‘two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, or four or five in the outmost branches,’ as the expression is, Isaiah 17:6. Every branch should have fruit, and should bear some plenty of it. Both heart and life should bear fruit, and every branch of both; every power of the soul, and every part of the life, must bring forth plenty, abundance of it: Php 4:17, ‘fruit that may abound.’ The mind should be filled with knowledge, and taken up with good thoughts. The heart should bring forth good inclinations, holy intentions, spiritual affections, all the graces of the Spirit, and should abound therein. Love, upon which the other affections depend, should abound, Php 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 3:12. And we must abound in every grace, if we would be fruitful, 2 Peter 1:5–8. Unless we will be barren and unfruitful, these graces, all of them, must not only be in us, but abound. And there must be fruit in the outmost branches too, in the conversation; this should be full of fruits, ready to bring forth every good word and work, James 3:17.

Scriptural knowledge and good thoughts are but some fruit in the uppermost branch. If the other boughs be bare, the tree is far from being fruitful. Good inclinations, purposes, desires, are but as

some berries in the middle boughs. A tree may be barren for all these. And good words or works are but fruit in the outmost branches. A tree is not full of fruit, and so not fruitful, if all the main branches do not bear and bring forth plenty. Mind, and heart, and life, must bring forth fruit in some abundance. Knowledge should abound in the mind; holy affections and spiritual graces should abound in the heart; and ‘out of the abundance of the heart’ should ‘the mouth speak,’ and all other parts act for God, so as to be ‘always abounding in the work of the Lord.’

2. A proportionableness to the means of fruitfulness, to the plenty and power of them. So much as will answer the care and pains is taken with them. If a man take more pains, and be at more charge in opening the roots of a tree, and dunging it, and pruning it, in fencing and watering it, and it bring forth less or no more fruit than another that has no such care and pains taken with it, it will scarce pass for a good, a fruitful tree. That is barren ground, which brings forth less, after all care and culture, than that which has less tillage.

Those who enjoy the gospel in great light, power; who have the mysteries of it clearly discovered, practically enforced, and brought home to mind, conscience, will, affections, so as the light, force, and influence of it may reach the whole man, the whole life, and have this continued many years; if they bring not forth more fruit than such as have the gospel, but not with such advantages, under a less powerful and advantageous ministry of it, they are wofully defective in fruit-bearing; for we are told, Luke 12:48, ‘men expect more from those to whom they have committed much.’ And so does the Lord; and those that answer not his expectation, in a case where reason and equity amongst men do justify it, are sinfully defective in the quantity of what they bring forth.

It cannot be well resented, if the Lord reap sparingly where he sows bountifully. When the Jews sowed much, and brought in little, Haggai 1:6, there was a judgment, a curse in it, and so some guilt and provocation. So may the Lord’s husbandmen judge, those that labour in his vineyard; when they improve all their skin, run all hazards, take all pains, spare no cost, are ready to spend and be spent for the improvement of souls, and yet it comes to little, here is some curse upon the ground, or such barrenness as deserves a curse. If he who (as I have told you on another occasion) received five talents, had but gained three, or made no more improvement thereof than he that received but one, he would scarce have been counted a profitable servant. The improvement should be answerable to what is received.

It is true, all that are good ground bring not forth fruit alike, some thirty fold, some sixty, some an hundred. If thirty be answerable to the means of fruitfulness, it may be an argument of good ground; but if sixty be but brought forth, where means are used sufficient to improve it for bearing an hundredfold, the ground may be under the censure of barren.

3. An increase. Those who enjoy the means of fruitfulness, must grow more and more fruitful. The longer they stand in the vineyard, and continue under the means of grace, the more fruit they should bear. You expect not much of a tree the first year; but after it is of standing to bear, you expect it should every year increase in fruitfulness, and bring forth more and more. So the Lord expects from us. Our proficiency and fruitfulness should be according to our standing. The longer we continue under the means of grace, the more fruitful should we be; there should be an advance and increase of fruit every year, John 15:2.

There must be a growth in knowledge, in grace, 2 Peter 3:18; a growth in faith, in charity, 2 Thessalonians 1:3. There must be more acts of grace; it should be more in exercise; and the actings of it should be more and more strong and vigorous.

There must be a growth in good works too, a walking on therein, Ephesians 2:1-22. The longer standing, the more good we should do; we should do good to more, and do them more good; the branches should spread, and the fruits extend to the refreshing of more. That which is little at first, must grow much; and that which is now much will not be enough, unless it grow more. It will not be sufficient, that we abound in knowledge, in holiness, in good works, or any fruits of righteousness, unless we abound more and more, 1 Thessalonians 4:1. We must abound more and more in all things wherein we ought to walk, and whereby we may please God, i. e. in all pleasing fruit. A tree that bears no more in after years than it did the first, you will not esteem a good or a fruitful tree, Psalms 92:13-14, still ■■■, yet more.

4. Variety. Their fruit must not only be much of some sort, but of every sort. They must not only abound in some kind of fruit, but must bring forth fruits of all kinds. It is enough to make another tree fruitful, that it bears much fruit of one sort, but a tree of righteousness is not fruitful unless it bring forth all the fruits of righteousness, of what sort and kind soever. It must be so far like that tree of life, Revelation 22:2, which bears twelve manner of fruits. It must bring forth all manner of fruits which become the gospel; not light and knowledge only, but heat and affection; not some only, but all holy affections; not some acts of holiness only, but the exercise of every grace in all its variety of actings, so that all grace may abound; not inward thoughts and motions only, but outward acts of goodness, and all sorts thereof; not some good works, but ‘every good work,’ Colossians 1:10-11. He that is fruitful indeed is fruitful in every good thought, in every holy affection, every heavenly grace, and in every good work, and labours to abound therein, 2 Corinthians 9:8. Not only in every good work, but every good thing, 2 Corinthians 8:7.

III. For continuance. It must be lasting fruit. Of which in three particulars.

1. The fruit they bear must continue. It must not wither and come to nothing before the Lord of the vineyard come to reap it. The apostle Jude speaks of some trees ‘whose fruit withereth,’ and in the next words says, they are ‘trees without fruit,’ Jude, Jude 1:12. So that withering fruit is no fruit in the language and account of the Spirit of God; and trees that bear no other fruit are barren, i. e. trees without fruit. Such was that fruit brought forth in the thorny ground, Matthew 13:7, and that in the stony ground, Matthew 13:5-6. Such fruit are good thoughts when they are not realised upon the heart or in the life. Thoughts of good things that never come to good, and convictions that vanish too soon, fall short of conversion in the unregenerate, and of reformation in others. Such are good inclinations, purposes, desires, that are not pursued into action; and good affections and resolutions, that never come into execution. As when a person has some thoughts and intentions of leaving an evil way, a course of worldliness, or lukewarmness, or slothfulness, or intemperance, or Sabbath breaking, but the pleasure, ease, or advantage which Satan or his own deceitful heart promises him in such a way, stifles them in the birth, so that they never see the light; or when one inclines or purposes to betake himself to that strict way of godliness which the gospel calls him to, but persecution, or fear of sufferings, nips those resolutions in the bud; or when some good motions and affections are raised by the word, but when the sermon is ended, the cares of the world, riches, pleasures, Luke 8:1-56, of this life, or some such quench-coal, extinguishes them; or

when sickness, affliction, or apprehensions of death and judgment, brings them to serious reflections upon the evil of former ways, and some intentions to abandon them and take a new course, but upon recovery of health, and the removal of God's hand, fear vanishes, and those impressions wear off, and all good motions prove but agri somnia, as a dream, which he forgets when he awakes, and minds no more, however it affected him when it was working in his fancy.

Whatsoever it is that thus springs up, but continues not till it be ripened, how good soever it seem, what hopes soever it gives, it is not such fruit as the Lord expects. Thus vanishing, it leaves those who bear it unfruitful, Matthew 13:22. They are not fruitful who bring not fruit to perfection, Luke 8:14, τελεσφορε■ν, a word used of women that go their full time, do not miscarry nor bring forth abortives. She that still miscarries, and brings not forth live children, will be a childless woman, how often soever she conceive. And so will he that brings not forth lasting fruit be a barren and fruitless person, how fair soever he bud.

2. They must continue bearing fruit. The good ground did approve itself to be good, because it brought forth fruit 'with patience,' Luke 8:15; ■ν ■πομον■, which may as well be rendered according to the import of the word, and more congruously as to the sense of the expression, 'with perseverance.' They only are good and fruitful ground, who persevere and hold out in bearing fruit. A tree that bears the first year, but afterwards brings forth little or nothing, may be cut down amongst those that do but cumber the ground. The Galatians, who made a fair show of fruit at first, but afterwards intermitted, are bewailed by the apostle as barren, and such on whom he had lost his labour, Galatians 4:11.

3. They must be bearing it always; not only semper, as a tree that fails not of fruit once a year, but ad semper, as if a tree should bear fruit all the year long. Some tell us of a fig-tree in Palestine that never was without leaves or without fruit on it, and that it was such a tree which is mentioned, Mark 11:13, though that degenerated, and was then fruitless. Those of the Lord's planting should be like the best of those fig-trees, on whom fruit might be found all the year round. Their season for fruit is not only autumn or summer, but every quarter, every month, every day, every hour; whenever they are found without fruit they are culpably barren. All time whatsoever, every moment, is their season for fruit-bearing; and the Lord looks for it not only once a year, but every part of the year, and may proceed against them whenever he finds it not, though he come and look for it every hour. Every part of a Christian's life, when he is in a capacity to think, or speak, or act, is a fruit season; and every thought, word, and action should be fruit unto God in one respect or other, else he cannot answer it, 1 Corinthians 10:31. It is good fruit that glorifies God, and nothing else. Whatsoever we do, not only in religious, but civil and natural actions, it should glorify God; and therefore whatever we do should be good fruit. God is most glorified when we bring forth much fruit, John 15:1-27. And when whatever we do is fruit unto God, then we bring forth much fruit, and bring it forth always.

Use. 1. This leads us to take up a lamentation for the barrenness of the place, the unfruitfulness of the people of this land. No people under heaven that have the gospel, and the means of fruitfulness, with more advantages than we; no people from whom the Lord might expect more and better fruits than from us. But when he comes year after year seeking fruit, what does he find amongst us? How few are there in comparison that brings forth good fruit; how much fewer that bring forth much fruit; how many that bring forth little or nothing but leaves! Nay, well were it with

us if the generality of this people did not, instead of good fruit, bring forth cursed fruit; instead of that which should please the Lord, bear that which is a high provocation to him.

How may the Lord take up that complaint against us which he did of old by the prophet, Isaiah 5:1-30, he ‘planted us in a very fruitful hill,’ and we have turned into a Sodom. He ‘fenced’ us to keep out cattle and wild beasts; and those that are fenced in are turned wild beasts, beasts of prey. He gathered out the stones thereof;’ and yet it is almost all become stony ground. He ‘planted it with the choicest vine;’ and it is become a degenerate plant, and brings forth grapes of gall. He ‘built a tower in the midst thereof,’ a place for the keepers of it, most convenient for oversight; and it is turned into a Babel. He ‘made a wine-press therein,’ sent priests and prophets to press the people to obedience; and instead of pressing out that pleasant liquor, grateful to God and man, it is made use of to press the souls and consciences of those that are obedient. He ‘looked for grapes, and behold, wild grapes.’ He looked for good, for choice fruit, and behold, corrupt, rotten, and poisonous fruit. He looked for such fruit as the choicest plants bring forth; but ‘our vine is the vine of Sodom,’ &c. Deuteronomy 32:32-33, he ‘looked for judgment,’ as Deuteronomy 32:7. He looked for the fruits of holiness, and behold, the most horrid profaneness, contempt of God, rejecting of his gospel, perverting of his ordinances, corrupting of his worship, profaning of his name, of his day; superstition, atheism, infidelity, blasphemy, and overflowing perjury.

He looked for the fruits of righteousness, and behold, injustice, violence, blood-guiltiness, outrageous intemperance, brutish, impudent uncleanness. Behold, all those abominations, and more, and worse than all those for which the Lord had a controversy with degenerate Israel of old: Hosea 4:1-3, ‘Therefore does the land mourn,’ because the people of it do not mourn for these rebellions; therefore do those that dwell therein languish, and complain of a general consumption.

We declare our sin as Sodom; and we that should have been the best people in the world have made ourselves worse generally, and more vile than many of the heathen. Some dim, weak principles of morality prevailed more with many of them than the gospel in all its evidence and power has prevailed with thousands and thousands amongst us.

We justify those nations whom God has destroyed, those churches which he has laid desolate for their provocation. We seem to out-vie them all in wickedness. And is there not something that aggravates our rebellions against God, and heightens the provocation of them above what can be found amongst others? Clearer light, and greater mercies, and mighty strivings with us in the ministry of the gospel. And besides this, the impudence, incorrigibleness, and universalness—of our unfruitfulness, shall I say? that is too mild a word—of our gross, abhorred wickedness, does testify against us.

We have got a whore’s forehead; we despise shame, we glory in our shame; we boast of that at which the sun may blush; we harden our faces as a rock; and he that would bring us to shame shall but dash himself against it. It is a shame not to bring forth good fruit, and he that speaks but of the fruits of the Spirit will be derided.

We are incorrigible. The Lord has been pruning us to prevent the bearing of this cursed fruit, and he has done it with a severe hand, has made us bleed again and again; and after all we grow wilder and wilder, and our luxuriances sprout out in greater length and number. He has ‘laid the

axe to the root of the tree,' year after year; yea, given some terrible strokes, and threatened that he will not suffer us still to be a growing reproach to him and to his gospel; but all to no purpose; nay, he has cast many thousand fruitless branches into the fire before our eyes, and hereby shewed what the rest may expect. But what effect has all this had upon us? We seem not only past shame, but past fear. We out-dare heaven, and sin in the face of God, when he appears most terrible, when he is revealing his wrath from heaven against our sin; we set at nought his dreadfullest judgments, but rush through plague, and sword, and fire in our course of rebellion; and say, in effect, Tush! we regard not what the Almighty has done or can do to us. And this is growing universal. All flesh, all sorts corrupting themselves. Wickedness is mounted aloft, and is subduing the nation, and having all advantages, finds little resistance; it goes on in triumph; it has been too hard for that which should make the greatest opposition; the sword of justice is turned another way; the sword of the Spirit is hid too much in corners. What can stop it? What weapon is there formed against it?. Who can check its successful progress? It comes in like a mighty flood, has borne down all its banks; its roarings are as the noise of many waters; it is a deluge, and as to these nations like to prove universal. And what will be the issue of this, what heart does not tremble that considers it? If we brought forth no fruit, none that is good, that is enough to provoke God to cut us down, as you see in this parable. But when we bring forth gall and wormwood, Deuteronomy 29:18; when, instead of good fruit, our branches are full of caterpillars and vermin; when we are so far from bringing forth pleasant fruits, as we bear in abundance that which God abhors: how shall we escape? How dreadfully shall we fall! By what a terrible stroke may we expect to be cut down; and what shall secure us from it? Who shall intercede for us? The vine-dresser did plead and prevail here with the lord of the vineyard for some forbearance of the fruitless fig-tree; but our vine-dressers, where are they? Are not thousands driven out of the vineyard? They may not dig about it, not dung it; they must* use the means to prevent its ruin; and those that remain, too many of them mind something else, and content themselves with other fruits than the Lord looks for.

Oh, what, how much have we done to render our condition hopeless, and past remedy! What need is there of mourning and great lamentation! What necessity of strong cries, and great wrestlings, to prevent the woful consequences of our unfruitfulness in all that is good and desirable; our fruitfulness in all that is provoking, and in that which is most so. How highly are they concerned who bear any good fruit to bring forth still more and better, that so when the tree, the nation, is an eye-sore to God, and the very sight of it provokes him to cut it down by some astonishing strokes, yet seeing some branches well replenished with fruit that he takes pleasure in, he may yet spare the whole a little longer.

Use. 2. For exhortation. If those that enjoy the means of fruitfulness ought to bring forth, then are you highly concerned to take notice of it as your duty, to be fruitful, and to comply with the Lord herein. The Lord has vouchsafed you the gospel, and the means of grace; he has planted you by the rivers of waters, in a very fruitful place; he has been a dew unto you, and has watered you with the first and latter rain; he has sent his labourers amongst you, one after another, and has employed them to dig about you, and dung and water you; to take all pains, use all means; to spend their time, their parts, their strength, themselves for this purpose; he has been pruning you by judgments and afflictions, and thereby been lopping off whatever might hinder you from being fruitful; he has warned you, by what has befallen others for their barrenness; he calls upon you by

his word, by his providence; he has declared it to be your duty, indeed the sum of all that he requires of you, that upon which hang all the law and the prophets. The whole duty of man, the whole duty of Christ's disciples, is fruitfulness. And indeed, if he had never commanded it, never required it in the Scripture, never spoke one word for it, yet what he has done to you has made it your duty, a duty of greatest moment, and indispensably so. The means of fruitfulness you have enjoyed obliges you strongly to bring forth fruit, and to bring forth good fruit; the plenty of them engages you to bring forth much fruit; the continuance of them calls upon you to continue fruitful. If you answer not this call, and these engagements, you will be inexcusable; for there is nothing more equal than this which the Lord requires of you. You will involve yourselves in dreadful guilt; for there is nothing more sinful than barrenness in these circumstances. You expose yourselves, and all that is dear to you, to the greatest hazards; for there is nothing more dangerous than unfruitfulness in this case. You bereave yourselves of the blessed advantages which attend fruitfulness, or are the happy consequences of it. Let me enforce this duty on you a little more largely by these considerations now pointed at.

(1.) Consider the equity of it. It is a duty grounded upon the greatest equity, that those who enjoy the means of fruitfulness should be fruitful. It is so equal, that the Lord appeals to the judgment of those from whom he requires it; the case being so clear that their own consciences cannot but give sentence in favour of it, Isaiah 5:8, Isaiah 5:4. And these inhabitants of Jerusalem to whom he refers it were parties, Isaiah 5:7. When the Lord has done all that is requisite to render a people fruitful, there needs no other judge, no other witnesses against them but their own consciences, if they be found barren. The case is so plain, a party may be trusted to give sentence in it. And is not this your case? May not the Lord say of you as he did of his vineyard of old, 'What could have been done more to make you fruitful, that I have not done?' If after this you bring not forth such fruit as he expects, you will be self-condemned; there will need no more evidence to cast you than what your own consciences will bring in against you; if there were no other judge to pass sentence against you, your own consciences will do it. It may be now conscience is asleep, or you are too busy to attend to its sentence; but affliction, or death, or judgment will awake it, and force you to hearken to it. And these are not far off, though you may dream so. The time is at hand, when your consciences will justify the Lord in his severest proceedings against you for barrenness. Set thyself before the judgment-seat of Christ, where thou must shortly stand; and suppose he should demand of thee, Where could I expect fruit, if not in the place where thou wast planted? Where should I look for fruit, but in my vineyard? Should I look for it in the wilderness? From whom should I expect more and better fruit than from thee, to whom I vouchsafed the means of fruitfulness with greatest advantages? 'Wherefore, then, when I looked for grapes, didst thou bring forth wild grapes?' Wherefore, when I expected fruit, did I find nothing but leaves? a specious and barren profession, instead of heart and life full of the fruits of the Spirit? What wilt thou answer in this case? Thou wilt either be speechless, or else speak nothing but the sentence of thy own condemnation. A heathen, a wild Indian, a rude Mahomedan, a blindfold papist, or any that wanted the means, may have something to plead for himself in this case; but thy conscience will stop thy mouth, and leave thee self-confounded; the iniquity of thy barrenness will be so great, so evident, as thou wilt find nothing to cover it. An unfruitful soul will not have so much to say as the unprofitable servant, though what he said signified nothing: Matthew 25:24, thou canst not say, 'Lord, I know thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.' The Lord has been no such hard master to thee, if he be so to any.

When he calls for fruit, after all means of improvement afforded, he looks but to gather where he has strawed, and reap where he has sown. And, ‘Who plants a vineyard,’ says the apostle, arguing from equity, ‘and eats not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?’ 1 Corinthians 9:7. The common sense of mankind declares the equity of God’s expecting fruit, where he vouchsafes means for that end; and that barrenness in that case is so unequal and unreasonable, that all who are guilty of it must needs be inexcusable.

(2.) Consider the sinfulness of being barren: how much, how great guilt it involves you in; how heinously guilty unfruitfulness will make you.

[1.] It is a complex sin. It is many sins; it is in a manner all sins in one. Its name is legion; it has whole troops of sins under its conduct. It is not a breach of one commandment only, not a transgression of one precept or part of law or gospel, but a violation of all. It is good fruit that every command of the law, every precept of the gospel, calls for; and he that brings not forth good fruit, makes nothing of law or gospel, tramples upon both, lives in disobedience to all. He not only disobeys the whole ‘word spoken by angels,’ ‘every transgression and disobedience whereof receives a just recompence of reward,’ Hebrews 2:2, but the word spoken by the Lord of angels. He disobeys the gospel in every part of it, and the doom of that see 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8.

[2.] If you bring not forth fruit, you bring forth weeds. If you bear not good fruit, you will be fertile in that which is naught. The ground will be covered with something; if it produce not corn, or grass, or useful herbs, it will bring forth briars, or thorns, or weeds. You will be always bringing forth something; if it be not fruit unto God, it will be fruit to the flesh, or the world, or yourselves.

If God reap nothing of you, the devil will. The soul is a most active being, and will be still in motion one way or other, upward or downward. If it move not towards heaven, it moves towards hell; if it be not in motion after God, it will be moving towards the world or sin; if it act not for God, it will be in action against him; if your thoughts, designs, affections, be not employed upon good objects, they will employ themselves upon those that are vain, or worse. It is against their nature to stay long unemployed; or if they should stand idle, even idleness is bad fruit, if that which is sinful be so; it is worse than an useless weed.

If you be not fruitful in good works, you will be fruitful in works that are naught, unless when you do nothing; and that is naught too, as he found it, who hid his talent, though he employed it not to any wicked use, as you may see by his doom, Matthew 25:30.

Simple barrenness is not all you are guilty of, when you are unfruitful (though there is heinous guilt in that alone), but the necessary and unavoidable consequent of it, is something else which is as bad or worse. There are, and will be, cursed fruits, of one kind or other, where there is not good fruit.

[3.] Unfruitfulness renders you burdens of the earth. A fruitless soul is good for nothing; like the vine, which, as the prophet describes it, Ezekiel 15:1-8, is not of use for timber or work, no, not so much as to make a pin of, fit for nothing but the fire, and of little use there. When it is not good for fruit, it is good for nothing, it only ‘cumbers the ground,’ is but an injury, an incumbrance to the place where it grows, spends the heart of the earth to no purpose, and takes up a place unprofitably, where others being planted might bring forth fruit. If some heathens or Americans had enjoyed the means of grace and the powerful ministry of the gospel, that many souls amongst us

have continued fruitless under, in all probability they would have made a better improvement thereof, and brought forth more and better fruit. Upon this account does the Lord Jesus upbraid those cities in his time, with whom the gospel prevailed not to repentance and unfruitfulness, Matthew 11:20-21, Matthew 11:23.

[4.] It is a reproach to the gospel of Christ, and the religion there taught us; disparages its power and efficacy, when it prevails not with those who profess it, for the effects and fruits which are pleasant and acceptable to God and men, when yet it is professed to be most effectual for this purpose. It is the glory of the gospel, that it is a doctrine far transcending all that the sons of men have been acquainted with; that it is most powerful to heal the corrupt and degenerate soul of man, and advance it to the highest improvement; to make it partaker of a divine nature, and engender in it holy and divine qualities; to lead men to a divine life, in all acts of holiness and righteousness, which may render them conformable to God, useful and serviceable to others, and happy in themselves. But now in those who enjoy the gospel, profess the knowledge, belief, and embracement of it, and yet continue unfruitful, none of all this appears. The world may make use of such barren souls, as arguments that the gospel is no such excellent doctrine, has no such divine power or efficacy, produces no such desirable effects. For why? No such thing is visible in the temper or deportment of multitudes who profess that they believe and embrace it. They are but like other men, and exceed not many who were never acquainted with the gospel; no more humble, no more holy, no more self-denying, no more public-spirited, no more heavenly-minded, no more mortified, as to many lusts and passions, no more crucified to the world, as to the riches, delights, and splendour of it, no more candid and sincere in dealings, no more merciful, no more serviceable, no more active to do good in the world, no more fruitful in good works; and where is then the singular excellency and power of the gospel? The light of nature has been effectual in some, to restrain them from those enormities, from which many that enjoy the gospel abstain not. The doctrine of the heathen philosophers has led many to the practice of moral virtues, whenas many professors of the gospel are lamentably defective in points of morality. Oh, what dishonourable reflections does this cast upon the glorious gospel of Christ! How does this tend to lay its honour in the dust, and turn its glory into shame; and what disparages the gospel, reflects upon Christ himself, the author of it, and the divine Spirit by which it was inspired, and on whom its efficacy depends. It is well the gospel has better evidences of its power and excellency, than unfruitful professors, otherwise the divine original of it might be questioned, and the transcendent virtue and efficacy of it would be decried. However, this is the tendency of your barrenness, to make Christ and his gospel be blasphemed. If you would not be accessory to so horrid a crime as such blasphemy, you must bring forth good fruit, and much of it, and continue to bear it, that when either God or man comes to seek fruit on you, it may not be to seek, there may be no disappointments.

[5.] It is a grievous affliction to those whom the Lord employs as his labourers, and makes them sad, whom the Lord, of all others, would not have made sad. Those whom the Lord has sent into his vineyard, and fitted for that great work, they cannot be satisfied with their wages; no, not that great ‘recompence of reward’ which he has promised them, unless they see the success of their labours. If their hearts be upright before God, and of a temper answerable to their calling, they value nothing like the fruits of their ministry, how much approbation, how much love soever they have, how free and liberal encouragements and supports soever they meet with. They have not

the desire of their hearts, unless they see the fruits and effects of their labours upon the souls and lives of their people, unless they be brought to a fruitful profession of Christ, and grow up therein, Php 4:16-17. They were careful to supply his necessities; but this, though he took it well, was not that which he desired in comparison; nor was it acceptable, but upon that account, as it was fruit, and signified that his ministry had such effect upon them as would be abundant joy to them at the great account. He had a great, a passionate, love for souls, and an exceeding joy when he perceived they prospered, 2 Corinthians 7:3-5. He took all pains, run all hazards, to make them fruitful; he could freely spend and be spent for this, 2 Corinthians 12:15. Nor was his life dear to him in comparison of it, Acts 20:22-24, Php 2:17. Those that are faithful and duly qualified for the great work of the ministry, are in some measure like-minded, though not in the same degree. They have a great love for souls, an earnest desire to make and to see them fruitful; they travail in birth with them till Christ be formed in them, till they be born again, and till they bear fruit answerable to their new birth. And when they are disappointed, it is grievous to them as miscarrying is to a woman that passionately desires children; the frustration has in it some pain and anguish, like that of a miscarriage. Have they prayed, and wept, and studied so long, so much, to so little purpose? Have they sacrificed their worldly interest in his service, and deprived themselves of all advantages of thriving in the world, and left their dear relatives and posterity to want and contempt after them? Have they spent their time, their strength, their parts, their spirits, consumed themselves in wasting studies, and all their labours in the issue in a manner fruitless? Shall little or nothing be left them at the last but that sad complaint, ‘I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought;’ I have lost so much, hazarded so much, done so much, and all in vain; this people will not be gathered, or those that seem to be gathered will not be fruitful; only ‘two or three berries in the upmost branches, or four or five in the outmost boughs.’ Oh, where are the children that I hoped would have been given me, and that I have been so long in travail for? Alas! is the curse of a barren or of a miscarrying womb upon me? Have I been in pain, and cried out in my pangs, and brought forth nothing but wind? Shall those who for all holy fruitfulness should have been my joy and my crown, be my shame and reproach; leave themselves and me under the reproach of barrenness; barren souls, and a barren ministry? Oh how does these thoughts cut and sting those who have occasion to entertain them! Oh what tears do they wring out in secret! Oh if you were conscious to the inward wounds and heart-bleedings hereby occasioned; to the fears and jealousy, lest they have not been upright with God, lest they have run before they were sent, because they seem to have run in vain; lest they have been unfaithful, because to unsuccessful in the work of God! It is true those that are fearful and jealous this way have ordinarily least cause to be so, but that frees them not from the trouble and afflictions of such fears; nor does it excuse those whose barrenness occasions it. And though they have this ground of comfort, that ‘though Israel be not gathered,’ yet their ‘judgment is with the Lord, and their work,’ their reward, ‘with their God,’ Isaiah 49:14; notwithstanding, all this will fall heavy somewhere; those who continue unfruitful must answer for all this; their lost labour, their fruitless hazards, the consumption of strength and spirits, their torturing fears and jealousies, their grievous disappointments and afflicting miscarriages, will all be charged on your account if you continue barren. All these will the Lord require at your hands, if you will not believe the report of Christ, or not believe it effectually and fruitfully; all these, and more than I can reckon, will add to the burden of your guilt, and make your condemnation more intolerable; all these will rise up in judgment and bear witness against you. But even the thought of this is grievous to ministers tender of the souls of sinners; that when

they expected joy in their fruitfulness here and happiness hereafter, instead thereof they must be produced as witnesses against them at the great day, and make heavier the condemnation of such whose salvation they had been so great a part of their days labouring for and thirsting after. Oh, if you would not cause so grievous an affliction to those whose joy and crown you should be, if you would not be involved in so great guilt, and so dreadful condemnation, bring forth such fruits now as may prevent it!

[6.] It is a disappointment to the Lord. He looks for fruit; he comes, he sends to you for it. So in the text, and verse 7, and Isaiah 5:2, Isaiah 5:4; he sends, Matthew 21:34, Mark 12:2, Luke 20:9-10. Wherever the Lord vouchsafes means of fruitfulness, he expects fruit; and it is an expectation which the common sense of mankind declares to be highly just and reasonable, and so a disappointment herein will be more intolerable. If a husbandman bestow so much cost and pains upon a piece of ground, as is sufficient to make a part of the wilderness fruitful; and when harvest comes, and he expects a rich crop, he finds no more on it than if he had done nothing to it, or nothing answerable to the tillage, how will it trouble him! Such ground will undo the tenant, and make a landlord repent that ever he purchased it. So it is here, such frustrations will afflict men. But how can the great God endure it in those that are so much below him, and are more concerned, in reference to their own advantage, to bear fruit than the Lord to reap it? He has but the honour of it; you have the comfort, the profit, the happiness. Will you frustrate his expectation, when your own interest obliges you to answer it? A disappointment here is such a provocation as the Lord will not long endure. What an iniquity this is, and how the Lord resents it, is evident by what he expresseth, Jeremiah 2:21-22. The Lord had taken as much care in planting this people, viz. under his ordinances, as a man could have of the most choice plant, and expected fruit answerable; but they, as if they had been degenerate plants or wild slips, bare not such fruit as he looked for; and the blur of this iniquity was such, as all the ways or means they could devise should never either cleanse or cover it, never free them from the guilt or pollution of it; but the Lord would always have it in his sight, as a provocation of special remark. Oh if you would not be guilty of such a sin as the Lord will mark out, so as never to overlook it, never to pardon or cleanse you from it, beware of unfruitfulness! The Lord has branded this for such a sin.

[7.] It hardens the world. It tends to root religion out of the earth, at least out of the place we dwell in, and to plant atheism and infidelity in the room of it. Those amonst us upon whom the power of religion has not yet seized, they easily discern the vanity and imposture of other religions professed in the world. If there be any worthy to be embraced, it must be the religion of Christ. Oh, but what can commend this to them, or to any, but the fruits of it? And where should they expect the fruits of it, but in those who profess they believe, embrace, and find the power of it? If such as these bring not forth more and better fruits than others, they will be ready to conclude, that their religion (even that of Christ) is no better than others, and so no religion at all worthy of entertainment. And is it not much from hence that multitudes amongst us, to comply with the custom of the country, outwardly profess the religion of it, but inwardly are atheists, and have no religion at all in their hearts? Does it not strengthen and encourage this atheism and irreligion which so lamentably abounds amongst us, when they see so little of the fruits thereof in those that profess it? Who will trouble himself much about that which is useless and worthless? And what is religion better, of what worth or use is it, if it be fruitless? If it take not them who profess it off from the world; if it mortify not their lusts and passions; if it raise not their souls above earth and self; if it

ennoble not their spirits, and make them not public and active to do good, abounding in good works; if it be not full of mercy and good fruits; if it make them not better in their families, towards their relations, to all with whom they converse; it will be concluded good for little or nothing. Nothing will appear in it to attract their affections, to command reverence or esteem, or to persuade them to entertain it in their souls; nay, they will be apt to think that professors who are not fruitful are but atheists like themselves, and that they do not really believe what they profess; and so that there is nothing indeed of religion but in pretence and profession, and so they need not trouble themselves about more. Oh, 'Woe be to those by whom offences come! It were better a mill-stone were tied about their necks, and they cast into the sea.' But such offences will come, and such you will give; they will not only be offences taken, but given, if you continue barren and unfruitful in the knowledge and profession of Christ. Your unfruitfulness is an engine to exclude or banish religion out of the hearts of men, and to leave atheism and infidelity in full possession. And will you do such disservice to Christ, and to the souls of men? What can you do worse to either; or, what is there that you should more tremble at that this, which is of such a horrid and dreadful tendency?

[8.] It is a sin most highly aggravated. It has two ingredients, to instance in no more, that make a sin exceedingly sinful. It is against clear, much light, and distinguishing mercy.

First, It is a sin against all light. The light of nature discovers much of that wherein our fruitfulness consists to be our duty. The light of the law clears up that of nature, wherein it is obscured by corruption, and adds more evidence and force to it. The whole light of the gospel does still more illustrate and enforce it. The common reason of mankind shews fruitfulness to be a duty, where there are means of fruitfulness vouchsafed. There is no conscience but must come under the power of this evidence, and acknowledge it not only just, but equal. So that to continue unfruitful is to live in disobedience to all light, to run counter to nature, law, gospel, reason, equity, and conscience. It is to offer violence to the light and dictates of all. It is forcibly to hold a truth in confinement, and violently to imprison it, when all these struggle and contend for its liberty. And what a high provocation it is to detain a truth in unrighteousness against the dictates but of one of these, against natural light, you may see, Romans 1:18. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against those who unjustly smother a truth which natural light would have to act freely. What wrath will be revealed against those who fetter and enslave a truth, that it cannot move and act freely in heart and life, when all light requires and strives for its liberty! The severity wherewith it is threatened shews its heinousness, Luke 12:47.

Sins against knowledge are voluntary. There is more of the will in them, and wilful sins are presumptions, and these are 'the great transgressions,' Psalms 19:13; such a sin is unfruitfulness. When a man knows fruitfulness to be his duty, and has means sufficient to make him fruitful, why is he barren but because he will be so? You cannot say, you know it not to be your duty; you cannot say, though you know it, ye have not means to enable you to bring forth fruit; why, then, are you not more fruitful but because you will not? Oh, take heed of sinning wilfully after ye have received the knowledge of the truth; there was no sacrifice for such sins under the law, Numbers 15:30-31.

Secondly, It is against distinguishing mercy; it is against the gospel and the means of grace; against the end for which they are vouchsafed and continued; and these are favours which he

vouchsafes not to many others, Psalms 147:19-20. To sin against common favours is a great provocation; it argues an intolerable perverseness and disingenuousness in him that will do it. And you will better digest an injury from a stranger, or any to whom you never shewed kindness, than one whom you have continually obliged, Psalms 55:12. But there is a peculiar provocation in sins against peculiar mercies; these give an accent to the sin, and make it remarkably sinful. The Lord hereby frequently aggravates the sin of his people, as being thus rendered more heinous and provoking than the sins of others, Isaiah 1:2. This is it that may astonish heaven and earth, that when I have treated them, and them alone, as children, yet their demeanour should be so unanswerable to such kindness, care, and tenderness. The creatures without sense may have some resentment of such a provocation, Jeremiah 2:31. If the Lord had been a wilderness to us, it had been more tolerable to have found us barren; but when he has been a Sharon, a Sorek to us, our unfruitfulness has no pretence to cover its shame. Christ may say to us, as he said to his disciples, Luke 10:24, ‘Many prophets and kings have desired,’ &c. And we have seen and heard such things as others had not the happiness to see nor hear; shall they be to us as vain things? Vain things they will be, and unprofitable, if they produce no fruits in us. Do we thus requite the Lord? Shall we make such unworthy returns for peculiar favours, and such as the rest of the world are strangers to? When he has made such a gracious distinction betwixt us and others, shall we bring forth no better fruits than the common? If we go not beyond all others in fruitfulness, after peculiar means afforded us for that purpose, our sin will exceed that of all others in sinfulness. You see by these particulars how heinous a crime barrenness is in those who have means sufficient to make them fruitful. And by this you may discern how dangerous it is, how much severity it will meet with, what wrath it kindles, what judgments will follow it, for these will be answerable to the greatness and heinousness of the provocation. But to move you the more effectually to a duty of so great consequence, let me set before you the dreadful danger of neglecting it in some particulars,

(1.) Barrenness exposes to the curse of God. It is a cursed evil, Hebrews 6:8. It is so ‘nigh unto cursing’ as there is no escaping it without better fruit. Christ warned not only his disciples, or the Jews, but us, when he cursed the fig-tree on which he found no fruit. That barrenness must expect nothing but a curse, even from him ‘in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed, Mark 11:13-14, Mark 11:20-21. It seems strange that Christ should curse it for want of figs, when it was not the season for that fruit. The meaning may be, it was not a seasonable or a good year for figs. Fig-trees did not bear well that year (for yet in the translation is not in the original). But even so it shews severity, and teaches us that in such places where persons are generally and ordinarily unfruitful, and good fruits are rare, much out of request, yet this will be no plea to secure any from the curse, if they be found without fruit. Christ himself, from and through whom alone we expect blessings, will curse barren souls, whatever show they make, whatever excuse they have. He works a miracle to warn us of this, and impress it the deeper on those whom it concerns. Immediately the curse takes effect, and the tree withers, and is dried up from the roots, Mark 11:20, and Matthew 21:19. And how dreadful is it to be under the curse of God, that will cause all to dry up by the roots, estate, relations, body and soul to wither! When man curses, God may bless; or when God curses, Christ may turn it into a blessing; but when Christ curses, who then may bless? And even Christ will curse those that are unfruitful. The king of Moab thought that if Israel were but under Balaam’s curse, he should smite them or drive them out, Numbers 22:6. But what shall become of those whom God, whom Christ curses? For assuredly those whom he

blesses are blessed, and those whom he curses are cursed.

Oh, if the curse of God be dreadful to you, let unfruitfulness be so too, for the curse of God is entailed upon unfruitfulness, a curse that will certainly take effect, and may do it suddenly, and can never be turned into a blessing but upon your turning from this sin.

(2.) This will put you out of God's protection, and provoke him to pull down the fences by which he secures you from the rage of Satan and his instruments, and the fury of those who would devour you or lay you waste. So much is expressly threatened for this sin, Isaiah 5:4-6. And this was executed upon that people afterwards, as the psalmist expresses it, either by way of prediction, as a misery approaching, or of lamentation, as of a calamity already inflicted, Psalms 80:12-13. The psalmist's question is answered by the prophet, 'Why hast thou broken down our hedge?' &c. It was because 'instead of grapes, they brought,' &c. This will provoke the Lord to withdraw his protection, which is your only defence, and then you lie open to all miseries, and are exposed to the will of those that hate you; then they may have their will of you, upon your estates, liberties, soul-concernments, upon all your pleasant things; then may you be eaten up and trodden down, and laid quite open to spoil and ruin. What man will be at the charge and trouble to keep up a fence about a piece of ground, of which he reaps no more than of the common, and that which lies unfenced? You may judge by what yourselves would do, that it cannot be expected that the Lord should continue to fence those in as his vineyard, who, when he looks for fruit, prove but like the heath in the wilderness.

(3.) Barrenness will deprive you of the gospel and the means of grace, Isaiah 5:6. The Lord will deny the means of improvement when he finds they are afforded in vain; he will have no more labour and pains lost upon them; he will not always employ and spend his labourers to no purpose; he will either send no more labourers into such a fruitless vineyard, or call them away whom he has sent, or suffer them to be thrust out, in judgment to those who are not improved by them, and leave them like the heath in the desert, which knows not when good comes, Jeremiah 17:6, shall have no benefit by that which is the greatest advantage to others, Matthew 21:43. Those who bring not forth the fruits of the kingdom, such as beseem it, such as are required by it, the kingdom shall be taken from them, and given to those who will bring forth such fruit. The kingdom of God, i. e. of the Messiah, that blessed state and administration brought into the world by Christ, and begun at his coming; that which was of old promised as the greatest happiness that the world should ever see; that which was so ardently desired by kings, prophets, and righteous men, and for the discovery of which the angels longed; that fulness of Spirit, of light, of grace, of hope, of comfort, of happiness, of redemption, of salvation, which the kingdom of Christ holds forth, and accompanies the happy administration of it by the gospel then preached and published, and the ordinances and officers by his regal power instituted, and his Spirit in both then more largely poured out and more powerfully working: those that bring not forth good fruits are in danger to be deprived of all this, as though they were left out of this gracious administration. They shall be cut off from all the blessings, all the privileges, all the advantages of the kingdom of Messiah. They shall be left in such a state as though Christ had never come, nor had erected a kingdom in the world; as though the acceptable year of the Lord had never been published; as though the day of salvation, the day of greatest joy to all nations, had never dawned.

Oh dreadful condition! Christ shall profit them nothing; nor shall his kingdom and government anything avail them.

‘The kingdom,’ i. e. the gospel of the kingdom, ‘shall be taken from those who bring not forth the fruits of it,’ (that is in effect the same.) The unfruitful shall be deprived of all the privileges and advantages of a gospel-state; this sin will bereave a people of the gospel, upon which their glory, life, peace, comfort, and hopes depend. So that unfruitfulness will deprive a people, [1.] Of their glory. When the gospel is gone, the glory is departed, the crown is fallen from their heads.

[2.] It hazards the life of the barren, the life of their souls; for the gospel is the word of life; for it conveys life, and preserves it. By this they are ‘quickened, who are dead in sins and trespasses;’ it is the immortal seed by which they are begotten, and born again, 1 Peter 1:23, and it is that by which those who are born again are nourished, 1 Peter 2:2. It is the bread of life; and when it is taken away, the staff of bread is broken, that which upholds and keeps the soul in life; the loss, the want of it is a famine, Amos 8:11, Amos 8:13, not a famine which starves the body, but which destroys the soul. No such evil arrows of famine, as those that stick in the soul; none so dreadfully destructive: and unfruitfulness prepares such arrows, and sharpens them, and provokes God to shoot them.

[3.] It cuts you off from peace with God. The gospel is styled the ‘gospel of peace,’ Romans 10:15. It is ‘the word of reconciliation,’ 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. Herein he offers terms of peace, upon which accepted he will be reconciled to sinners. And while the gospel is continued, he is treating with them about this happy peace; his ministers are ambassadors for this purpose. But when the gospel is gone, the treaty is broke off; his agents that managed the treaty are recalled; the Lord will no more offer peace to such; they shall no more hear of it, nor of any inclinations in the Lord to it. God of hosts hereby declares that be is an enemy, and will be so. This is like to be the dreadful issue of this sin.

[4.] It robs them of all true comfort. The gospel is the ground of all our comforts; the sum of it is ‘comfortable words,’ Zechariah 1:13. It contains that which alone can make every relation, every enjoyment, every condition comfortable. Without this, the pleasantest place or state in the world is but as a dry and thirsty wilderness, wherein there is no water; the best enjoyments of this world are but miserable comforters. Take away the gospel, and the sun is, as it were, turned into darkness, and the moon into blood; and all the lower springs, from whence you fetch your comforts, send forth nothing but waters of Marah, waters of bitterness, or, which is worse, and more dangerous, streams of sweetened poison. Such are sensual delights, such are worldly comforts, when not healed and corrected by the sovereign virtue of the gospel. You may bid adieu to all that is truly comfortable when the gospel leaves you, for all the sparks which you can strike out of the world, or its enjoyments, you will lie down in sorrow and darkness—in such a dismal and comfortless condition will this sin leave you. This is the woful tendency of it, since it tends to deprive you of the gospel.

[5.] It blasts all hopes. It is through the grace of the gospel that we have, as everlasting consolation, so good hope, 2 Thessalonians 2:16. There is the foundation of all our hopes; and when the gospel is removed, their foundation is gone, they all fall and vanish. ‘If in this life only we have hope in Christ’ (says the apostle, 1 Corinthians 15:19), ‘we are of all men most miserable.’ And where have we any ground for hopes beyond this life, but in the gospel? What but this can let

in any glimmerings of hope for life everlasting? Nay, even for this life we have no hopes in Christ, but through the gospel. Take away the gospel, and you take away from sinners all hopes, both for this life and for the life to come. When left without this, they are left without Christ, without God in the world, and without hope either for this world or the world to come. There remains nothing for them, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation. Into such a hopeless and desperate condition does unfruitfulness plunge barren souls; it provokes God to take away the gospel, and he has threatened he will for this cause do it. They are in apparent danger to have the gospel of the kingdom taken from them, and therewith their glory, life, peace, comfort, and hopes. If this do not make unfruitfulness dreadful to you, what will, what can do it?

(4.) This will suspend heavenly influences, without which the gospel itself can do you no good. This the Lord threatens for the unfruitfulness of his vineyard, Isaiah 5:6. The rain and other influences of the heavenly bodies are not more necessary to the plants below, for their life and growth, than the concurrence, and operation, and influences of the Spirit are necessary for the life and growth of our souls. The gospel and ordinances cannot be effectual upon us without these, but these may be, and are, in some cases, effectual without them; let the ground be never so well planted, or tilled, or manured, yet without rain, and heavenly influx, nothing will grow, or thrive, or come to maturity; all will languish and wither away. So will our souls consume and pine away, whatever ordinances we enjoy, if the Spirit of Christ concur not, if we be not influenced from above. The ministry of the apostles, of the greatest of them, of persons extraordinarily qualified and assisted, will not take effect, will prevail for no increase without this, 1 Corinthians 3:5-7. Their planting and watering had come to nothing, if God had not concurred, if it had not been for the divine influence; it was this that gave the increase. And if there had been no Paul nor Apollos to plant or water, no such instruments, or none at all, this could have given an increase, as we see in Cornelius.

Now these influences, without which the gospel and ordinances, in what power and plenty soever you enjoy them, will not be effectual; which are so necessary, that without them, what means soever you have, what pains soever be taken with you, your souls will certainly wither and pine away; your unfruitfulness provokes God to withhold them; he threatens it, and his truth and justice requires the execution; his Spirit will not always strive, when his strivings are still resisted; he will not always move when he finds his motions still stifled and smothered; he will not always suffer his influences to be lost upon you. The Spirit will withdraw, and then spiritual judgments (the first-born of his wrath) do follow. Then has the word and ordinances such a woful operation upon them, as hinders them from being converted and healed; quite opposite to those gracious ends for which they were first appointed, Isaiah 6:9-10. And this befell the Jews afterwards, for their unfruitfulness, and non-improvement of what they enjoyed, as is evident by the application made thereof by our Lord Jesus, Matthew 13:12-15.

(5.) Unfruitfulness brings temporal judgments and calamities. It brings them suddenly, and in a short time; and such as are desolating, laying them waste; and such as are transcendent, and speak greater severity than those which befall such as enjoy not the means of unfruitfulness.

[1.] It exposes to sudden calamities. They come swiftly upon such as are barren under the means of fruitfulness. The Lord is not wont to forbear them so long as others; he has not so much patience, no such long-suffering for them. It is such a provocation as he will not bear long with.

This is plain in this parable: three years the fruitless fig-tree is suffered to stand in the vineyard; it might have grown many years longer, if its barrenness had not exposed it to a violent stroke, and brought it to an untimely end; but within that time, such trees usually bear, if they be good for aught. So long he bears with it, but after three years he passes the sentence of excision, and orders it to be cut down. And though the importunity of the vine-dresser prevails for one year's longer forbearance, yet that is all that could be obtained. No longer reprieve than for one year; if that year produce nothing, the vine-dresser also will have it cut down. A tree in the forest or the highway, though it bear no fruit, will be suffered to stand longer than in an orchard, a place of choice plants and fruit-trees; it is a greater eye-sore there. A man will bear with weeds in the highway, or a common, well and long enough, but he cannot so long endure them in his garden. The Lord can bear with the heathen, or any that enjoy not the means of grace, their barrenness is not so great a provocation; but those who have a standing in his orchard, and are planted under the means of fruitfulness, he cannot so well forbear, he will not so long endure, Acts 17:30. While they had not the light of the gospel and his ordinances, ■περ■δων, he overlooked them, took no severe notice of them; their unfruitfulness was passed by: 'But now he commands,' &c. He resolves to take another course; he will be quicker with them, unless they repent, and 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance,' π■σι παντακο■, 'all, everywhere.' And, Acts 14:16, he suffered that in the wilderness which he will not suffer in his vineyard; he will not suffer so long now as he did then; he will cut down those speedily now under the means of grace, who might have stood long, though barren, without them. Those whom the heat and influences of the gospel does not ripen for fruit, it makes them sooner ripe for wrath and judgment.

[2.] It brings desolating judgments, such as lay a place and people utterly waste: this is threatened for this sin, Isaiah 5:6. In the original it is wasteness, the Hebrew using the abstract to express a superlative. As Isaiah 1:7, desolation, i. e. most desolate, so here, the fruitless vineyard shall be made wasteness, i. e. utterly, extremely waste; so that it shall not differ at all from the common; nothing shall be left in it, to signify that it was before a vineyard, that it was ever planted or enclosed, or any cost bestowed on it, or any special care taken of it. This is a desolating sin; it will turn Sharon into a desert, and make that place which was like the garden of God to become a wilderness. It will ruin a valley of vision, and turn it into the valley of the shadow of death. It will make such a place as mount Zion like to ruined Babylon, as it is described Revelation 18:2, 'when it was become,' &c., or as by the prophet, Isaiah 13:21-22, and Isaiah 34:13-14. And it is utter ruin that is denoted here in this parable, by cutting down. It is not stripping off the leaves, or cutting off all the branches, or cleaving the body of the tree, that unfruitfulness exposes to; but a greater severity, such as will quite ruin it, a hewing it down by the roots, Matthew 3:1-17. It is to be hewn down where the axe is laid, and that is, by the root, so as to leave no hope that ever it shall grow again. If you would not be utterly ruined; if you would not bring desolation upon the place of your abode, nor have a hand in bringing the axe to the very root of it, oh take heed of continuing unfruitful!

[3.] Judgment shall be more terribly executed upon such, who, having the means of fruitfulness, do not improve them, than upon those who never had them. They shall be ruined in a more dreadful manner than any other. This sin fills more vials of wrath, and fills them fuller; and they will be poured upon those who are guilty of it, and continue so, with more fury. The Lord will empty all his vials upon them; even the dregs thereof will be their portion. There is abundant evidence for this,

in his proceedings against his ancient people. Israel had the privilege of enjoying the means of fruitfulness above others, Psalms 147:1-20, and they not improving them, are threatened more severely: Amos 3:2, I have done more for you than for others, ‘therefore I will punish you more than any.’ The execution of the threatening was answerable, Daniel 9:10; there is their unfruitfulness, Daniel 9:11; there is the threatening executed, Daniel 9:12; there is the exceeding terribleness of the execution. Under the whole heavens none had enjoyed such means of grace; and under the whole heavens none met with such wrath. Tribulation and anguish will seize upon every people, ‘every soul,’ that brings not forth fruit; but most of all, upon those who enjoy most means: Romans 2:9, ‘to the Jew first.’ On them shall it seize most terribly, because they first, and most, enjoyed the gospel and means of grace. No other that are barren shall escape the wrath of God; but upon them the wrath came ‘to the uttermost,’ 1 Thessalonians 2:16, ε■ς τ■λος, to the uttermost, both for extremity and continuance: wrath in the highest degree, in its perfection; and wrath of largest extent, for its duration. It drew tears from Christ, to consider the dreadful issue of their unfruitfulness, though they were his enemies, Luke 19:41-44. All this, because they did not fruitfully improve the day of grace. This brought upon them so great tribulation, as never was known in the world before that time, nor should be ever after, Matthew 24:21. The world never saw such instances of dreadful severity in any people, as in those who have been barren under the means of fruitfulness. The day of a gracious visitation, the time wherein the means of grace are vouchsafed, when it is not improved, will make way for such a visitation, as will make the ears of all that hear thereof to tingle; a ‘day of blackness, and thick darkness;’ but blacker and darker upon those to whom the day of grace has been most lightsome. The Lord has visited you more graciously than others. But if you bring not forth fruit answerable hereto, if you ‘neglect this great salvation, how shall ye escape?’ How? Why, any people in the world shall escape better than you, when another day of visitation comes. ‘It shall be more tolerable’ for heathens, for Turks, for papists, for the darker parts of the Protestant world, for any people on earth, than for those that are barren in this nation; nay, for many people in this nation, ‘than for you.’ There is more wrath treasured up, there will be more indignation poured out on you, than any, if you continue unfruitful. You have had more means; the Lord expects more fruits of you. If you bear not more, you must certainly bear more wrath. The Lord has rods for others, but he has scorpions for you. His little finger will be heavier upon you, in the day when he judges unfruitfulness, than his loins upon others.

[6.] This brings eternal wrath; the fire that never goes out was kindled for unfruitful trees. They are good for nothing else but the fire, John 15:2. He takes it away; he cuts it off. But that is not all; it is cut off, in order to burning, John 15:6. Fruitless branches shall not be endured on the tree; such trees shall have no standing in the vineyard, they shall be cut down. To be cut down in God’s wrath is dreadful. But that is not all which unfruitfulness will bring upon you; there is something more terrible follows: cutting down is in order to casting into the fire, Matthew 3:10; so John Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees; so our Lord Jesus tells us all, Matthew 7:19. Mercy itself has no more favour for the fruitless. Jesus, who alone ‘delivers from the wrath to come,’ will deliver none who continue unfruitful from this wrath. He it is that passes this doom upon them, ‘the lake that burns with fire and brimstone’ is the place for barren souls. That fire which ‘the wrath of God, like a river of brimstone, kindles’ and keeps flaming everlastingly, that which will burn and torment for ever and ever, is the portion of the unfruitful. Nothing less; nothing more tolerable than exquisite tortures, such as fire is to our bodies; nothing short of everlasting burnings. This will be

the issue of your unfruitfulness. If you continue therein, it will be so certainly. Delude not yourselves with vain hopes; Think not the leaves of a specious profession will secure you. This will but provoke the flame, and make it rage the more.

Think not to escape, because you bring not forth so bad fruits as some others, because you wallow not in gross wickedness and open profaneness. Nothing will secure you but good fruits, such as I have before described. Those whom our Lord Jesus, at the last day, will send into everlasting fire, are not described to be gross sinners, but barren professors, Matthew 25:41-4. Those on his left hand are pronounced by the Judge of heaven and earth accursed, and turned into hell; not for outrageous wickedness, but for want of good fruits. Neglects, omissions, and mere want of fruit, though you abound not with vermin, is enough to damn you, and to send you from Christ's presence with a curse, amongst the devil and his angels. This shall not only be the doom of those who know not God, and are not acquainted with the gospel, but of those especially who are the 'children of the kingdom,' in respect of profession and privileges, and bring not forth the fruits of it, Matthew 8:12. Those that know not God shall not escape. No more shall those that obey not the gospel; though they profess it, though they know it, though they believe it, yet if they obey it not, i. e. if they bring not forth the fruits which it enjoins and requires them to bear, if they deny not ungodliness and worldly lusts, Christ himself will be revealed from heaven, to take vengeance on them in a most terrible manner, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

They that are barren under the means of fruitfulness, shall not only be turned into hell, but they shall suffer more in hell than others; their torment shall be more grievous than of those who never had the means of fruitfulness. The righteous Judge will double their sufferings in the place of torment. It will be more tolerable for the worst of sinners, who perished without the means of grace, than for such, Matthew 25:20-22. The ancient inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon were some of those cursed Canaanites, against whom the Lord will have greater severity used in this world than any other, give charge they should be utterly rooted out, and not suffered to breathe upon the face of the earth; yet the condition of these cursed Canaanites should be more tolerable in hell, their torments more easy than those of Chorazin and Bethsaida, who enjoyed the gospel and means of grace in power and plenty, but made no fruitful improvement thereof, Matthew 25:23-24. Capernaum, the city where Christ much resided and preached, was exalted above others in respect of gospel enjoyments, and as it were lifted up to heaven; but by her unfruitfulness was cast down lower into hell, and sunk under a heavier burden of wrath. The inhabitants of that city, for the wretched non-improvement of the means of fruitfulness vouchsafed them, were to suffer more in hell than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, the most abominable of sinners, upon whom God rained a hell upon earth. Oh then, if ye will be forewarned to flee from the wrath to come; if you would escape the damnation of hell; if you would not sink lower, and suffer more than others; if you would not have that dreadful furnace made hotter, more tormenting, more intolerable to you than to those of Sodom: bring forth fruits worthy of the gospel; there is no other way to escape so great damnation.

(7.) This has actually ruined and laid desolate the first and ancient churches. This has buried in ruins the most famous and flourishing churches that ever were in the world; it has brought desolation upon a world of them, so many for number as it may astonish us. This has rooted out the Christian name from a great part of that vast empire which is called the world in the New Testament, and has left little but the name in other parts where the gospel first and most prevailed.

Come see what desolation this sin has made in the earth, and tremble at the sight thereof, and learn to look on it as a sin which is followed with ruin and destruction, wherever it prevails. Its name may be Abaddon and Apollyon, Revelation 9:11, the destroyer. It is the ‘abomination that makes desolate.’

There were multitudes of churches and Christians in Africa, for the space of two thousand miles, such as were eminent for their profession and sufferings too, where now there is not one to be found that professes Christ.

There were once many hundred thousand Christians in Egypt, many flourishing churches in the provinces of it, which are now vanished, and almost come to nothing.

There was a glorious church at Jerusalem, very many churches in Judea and Palestine, the foundation thereof laid by Christ himself, the structure raised by the apostles. But now where are they? The structure laid in the dust, and the foundation razed. This sin has plucked up, even by the roots, that which was planted by Christ himself, and extraordinary officers divinely inspired, and miraculously empowered; and what then can stand before it?

There was a church at Antioch in which the Christian name first began; many churches in Syria, Mesopotamia, and the regions round about. But where are they now? The eye that saw them can see them no more.

There were most flourishing churches in the lesser Asia, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and other regions of that once happy country, where the gospel rode in triumph in the ministry of Paul and other apostolical men. But now they are subdued by a barbarous hand, the seven golden candlesticks quite overturned, and more than seventy times seven besides them laid in the dust.

There were multitudes of churches in Thrace, Macedonia, in Greece and Achaia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and others in great numbers, and through all those countries. But what small, what woful relics of churches or Christians can there now be found!

Then for Italy, and other parts nearer us, where the gospel was once effectual, and religion in its power and purity in former times flourished, are now over-run with popery. It was this sin that broke down the banks, and made way for that deluge of Mahomedanism which has drowned the primitive churches, and overwhelmed the eastern and southern parts of the once Christian world, and let in that inundation of popery, which has prevailed so far and so long in the west. The apostle speaks of ‘all the world,’ which then brought forth fruit through the gospel, the word of truth, Colossians 1:6. And it spread further, and prevailed more and more in that world, after the apostles’ time. But how little of all that world has that sin left in Christ’s possession! This has divided it almost all betwixt Turk and pope; it is but a little, in comparison, that is left to Christ’s share. It was once a vine, to which that the psalmist speaks of could not be compared, Psalms 80:1-19. The Lord prepared room before it, and did cause it to take deep root, and it filled not only a land but a world: ‘the hills were covered,’ &c., vers. 10, 11. But for unfruitfulness were ‘her hedges broken down, so that all they that passed by the way did pluck her. The boar out of the wood has wasted it, and the wild beast of the field has devoured it.’ This is the foundation of that apostasy under which the world, which once owned Christ, now groans. God gave so many churches a bill of divorce; God ‘gave them over to strong delusions,’ because they ‘received not the truth in love,’ i. e. because of their unfruitfulness, according to the apostle’s prophecy, 2

Thessalonians 2:10-11. If they had received the love of the truth, they would have obeyed it; if they had obeyed it, they had been fruitful. (For what is fruitfulness, but obedience to the gospel?) Because they were unfruitful, God gave them up to those delusions and impostures which now prevail in the world, and have done for many ages, supplanting and smothering the doctrine of Christ, which once triumphed everywhere. So that it is unfruitfulness that has ruined all, and has given Satan possession of those large countries and many kingdoms which were once the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ. This sin has ruin and desolation following it, wherever it comes. What people, what church, can be secured against such a destructive engine, which has ruined a world, and amongst the rest, laid desolate those churches which were once the glory of Christ, and the joy and crown of the apostles! This has wasted, this has consumed them. Look upon the ghastly face of them everywhere, and learn to fear, learn to abhor unfruitfulness, which has made such fearful havoc in the world, and has turned the most glorious and flourishing churches that ever the world had into ruinous heaps.

(8.) This is the main ground of the Lord's controversy with us at this day. That the Lord has a controversy with us in this nation, is so evident, as scarce any amongst us can question it. The Lord has declared it from heaven with a loud voice, the voice of terrible judgments, and such as one way or other have reached every one amongst us. He has pleaded it so, as we have not only heard, but felt it.

All will agree in this, that God is and has been contending with us; and also, that it is our great concernment to inquire after the ground of it. And when we descend to particulars in this inquiry, there may be some difference; men's apprehensions may be various, according as their interests, their principles, their prejudices are various; yet must all agree in this, that nothing can be pitched on with more certainty, than our unfruitfulness. Herein we cannot be mistaken, we may resolve on this, upon such grounds as cannot deceive us. For this we may observe all along in Scripture, that unfruitfulness (the means being vouchsafed), wherever it be found, is always a ground of God's controversy. And the Scripture, that is the rule by which we must now judge and discern. And so sufficient it is for this purpose, that we have no need of a discovery by special revelation.

If we have been barren under the means of fruitfulness, there needs be no doubt to any who will be directed by the Scripture, but that the Lord contends with us for this. And it is too apparent that we have not brought forth fruit worthy of the gospel; we have been far from fruitfulness, answerable to the means of grace we have enjoyed. Now if the Lord have always contended with a people, when he has found them barren, under the means sufficient to make them fruitful, and this be our case, this our guilt, we need not be to seek why the Lord has been and is contending with us. If this be the cursed thing which has always troubled those with whom it was found, and it be found in our tents, we may conclude this is the Achan, this is it which has troubled us. And indeed, whatever particular can be justly fixed on, as the cause of the Lord's displeasure, it is comprised in this, either we have not brought forth grapes, or we have brought forth wild grapes. So that all, in the issue, may be resolved into unfruitfulness; and therefore, if you would not have the Lord to contend with us still, if you would have the Lord's controversy cease, with a people that are as stubble before him, take away the ground of it; bring forth more and better fruit; cast out this Jonah, if you would have the storm laid that threatens to wreck us. This will lay it, and nothing else. Take what course you will, if you continue unfruitful, the Lord's anger will not be turned away, but his hand will be stretched out still.

(9.) This is it which has bereaved us of all we have lost. To instance only in the concernments of our souls, which should be, of all other things, most precious to us. This is it which has restrained the liberty of the gospel, and retrenched us as to that plenty of the means of grace we might have enjoyed. For we find not, in all the Scripture, that ever the Lord straitened a people in these respects, but because they did not fruitfully improve them. It is our unfruitfulness that has cut us short, and brought our souls to ‘a morsel of bread.’ This is it which has broken our assemblies, and removed our teachers into corners. This is it that has smitten the shepherds, and scattered the flocks, and laid the heritage of God almost desolate. To this we owe our breaches, our dispersions, our fears, our hazards. There had been no laws of any such tendency, if our unfruitfulness had not concurred to make them; no instruments to attempt any such thing, if our barrenness had not raised them.

We should overlook other things, and cast our eye upon that which has set them a-work, and without which they had never moved. That which has disturbed us, that which has abridged us, is not so far off as we are apt to look. It is in our own hearts and lives; it is the unfruitfulness of both. We need look no further upon any cause or instrument, but as that may help us to a more severe reflection upon our barrenness. Let us never be so unjust as to accuse others; let us blame ourselves as most blameworthy, and turn our anger upon that which most deserves it, our non-improvement of what we enjoyed; and if the condition of others be more lamentable than ours, and their hazards greater; if any be in danger to have their souls poisoned or starved for want of spiritual food, or want of that which is wholesome, let this engage us to bewail unfruitfulness, and to fear it, and to abhor it. No souls amongst us had ever known want, or suffered by spiritual famine, had it not been for their barrenness under plenty; and if we would have our wants supplied, our breaches repaired, and the stroke of our wound healed, the way is plain before us; let us bring forth more and better fruit, and it will quickly be done.

(10.) This endangers the loss of what is left us. All that is come upon us will not excuse us, if we continue under this guilt: Matthew 25:29, [From] ‘him that hath not,’ i. e. who fruitfully improves not what he is entrusted with, ‘shall be taken that which he hath,’ though he have but a little. Whatever we have lost, which our souls once enjoyed, we have something left. The Lord, notwithstanding all forfeitures, does still entrust us with a little; he is trying us somewhile longer how we will improve it. We are now upon our good behaviour in this respect: if we improve it not to more fruitfulness, what can we expect but that he should take from us ‘even that which we have’? The sun is now clouded and somewhat darkened; but then it will set, though it seem noon-day. The staff of bread (that by which our souls live) is cracked now, but this will quite break it; we are cut off from a full harvest, but this will not leave us so much as the gleanings; our teachers are removed into corners, but this will pluck them thence, so that our eyes may not so much as see them there. The scarcity will end in a famine, and that famine may not only reach us, but our posterity, and hazard the souls of this generation, and that which is coming. Our candlestick may be quite removed, and we left like those dismal places which were once eminent churches, but are now synagogues of Satan, or ruinous heaps. If this sin have done that in the green tree, what shall be done to the dry? And if those ancient churches escaped not, where shall we appear? Oh, there are horrid and prodigious miseries and devastations in the bowels of this sin. If it should but bring forth what we have feared, we may think it bad enough. Oh, but it may be delivered of miseries and calamities greater than ever entered into our hearts to fear. When I consider what this sin has done in the southern and

eastern parts of the world; how it has stripped them of gospel enjoyments; stripped them naked, as in the day when they were born, and made them as a wilderness, which were once like the paradise of God; I cannot keep my heart from trembling at what may befall these western parts for the same sin. I know no way, I see no hopes we have to fare better than those who groan under Turkish slavery, or perish in popish darkness, if we bring not forth better fruit. Our barrenness is our danger; we are afraid of other things, but then we fear, where no fear is, in comparison. We fear the malice and violence of those who bear ill-will to us, and grudge us what liberty is left us; we fear their counsels, designs, suggestions, practices; but none of these can prosper or succeed, unless our barrenness make them prosperous: none of these can move us, can prejudice us, unless our unfruitfulness arm God against us. The foot of pride cannot come near us, the hand of the wicked cannot remove us, if this do not open their way; but if we continue barren, we can neither expect the return of what is gone, nor the continuance of what is left. We shall be so far from being entrusted with more, as even that which we have shall be taken from us.

Thus I have shewed you the equity of this duty. There is, there can be nothing, more reasonable, more equal, than that you should be fruitful; you will be utterly inexcusable, self-condemned, if you are not. How heinously sinful barrenness is! it will involve you in the greatest guilt. How extremely dangerous it is! it will expose you to all that is dreadful.

Let me, as a further inducement to fruitfulness, touch some of the great and blessed advantages which attend and follow it.

1. Hereby you glorify God. This is the best, the only way you have to give him glory, John 15:8, Php 1:11. We glorify God, not by adding anything to his essential glory, for that is infinite, not capable of any addition; but declaratively, by declaring that he is glorious, by giving a testimony to his glorious perfections, by making it appear that he is glorious. And there is a voice in good fruits that declares this; a light in them that discovers it, makes it apparent to others; and so engages them to acknowledge it, and thereby to glorify him, Matthew 5:16. By bearing good fruits, and bringing them forth to God, we declare and acknowledge his greatness and goodness, to which his other glorious excellencies are reduced. His greatness; for good fruits are acts of obedience to him, and thereby his sovereignty, dominion, and authority over us, is really acknowledged. His goodness too: for, by bringing forth fruit to God, and not ourselves, we seek him, and not ourselves; we please him, we serve him, we aim at him; we live to him, and not to ourselves, and so shew we have resigned up ourselves to him as our last end; and so declare him to be our chief good, and that which we count absolutely best of all. And this gives God the glory that is due to him as God, as the greatest and best, Maximus Optimus. And we have no other way to glorify God but by bearing good fruits. No fruit disparages him: bad fruits are an affront to him. There is in both a contempt of his greatness; an abuse, a denial of his goodness. If you be unfruitful, God has no honour by you; you do nothing but dishonour him; you deny him to be glorious, or worthy to be so acknowledged; you live in opposition to that great end of God, which he aimed at in all that he has done for you, or for the whole creation. You do your part to leave God without honour in the world; for from whom on earth should the Lord expect glory, if not from you? The inferior creatures will rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you; for they all honour God, by bringing forth such fruits as they are capable of. You, from whom most fruits are expected, are only barren, and most a dishonour to God, from whom, in all reason, he might look for most glory. But then, bringing forth fruit being the way, the best way, to glorify God, it is your greatest perfection, your highest

excellency. The angels themselves can do nothing better, nothing higher; they do, it is true, glorify him more; but they cannot do more than glorify him. There is nothing higher, nothing more excellent than this, for it is the highest end of the great God himself; you pursue the same design, which the Lord himself has been pursuing, from the foundation of the world to this day, and will be for ever; you act in a conformity to the great God, and in a subserviency to his chief end, than which there is nothing more noble and excellent, nothing more desirable to God, or men, or angels; you can do nothing that will more please God, or will more advance him, or will render you more like him. On this account he will glory in you, Isaiah 61:3.

2. This is the way to have much of God's presence, much communion with him. It is the presence of God that makes heaven glorious, and it is communion with him that is the happiness of heaven. The more fruit you bring forth, the more of heaven will you have upon earth; the more of that presence and communion which makes heaven a place of glory and happiness. The Lord will be much with those in whom he delights and takes pleasure; and he takes pleasure in those who bear good fruit, for that is pleasant to him; he calls it 'pleasant fruit,' Song of Solomon 4:13; hereupon the spouse sues for Christ's presence, Song of Solomon 4:16. And he needs not much entreaty where there are such attractives: he comes immediately, Song of Solomon 5:1. Christ comes, and entertains himself with this fruit, which is so pleasant to him, as he expresses it by what is most delicious to us.

We cannot entertain Christ with anything so acceptable to him as the fruits of the Spirit, and he will not be a stranger where his welcome and entertainment so pleases him. If your souls be as gardens, as orchards replenished with pleasant fruit, Christ himself will frequently be with you, he will delight to walk there. It is the way to have your daily course a walking with God. None can expect such clear discoveries of Christ, such gracious visits, such blessed interviews, so constant intercourse with him, as those that are fruitful. If you have little of Christ's presence, if he be seldom with you, if you have cause to complain of distance and strangeness, examine whether he find not little in you that he likes, little good fruit. He is not wont to deal so with those whose fruits please him, Isaiah 64:5, 'worketh righteousness;' i. e. who brings forth the fruits of righteousness. If you would have the Lord to meet you in your worldly affairs, so that you may converse with God while you are conversing with men, if this be desirable to you, see that you be then working righteousness. If you would have the Lord meet you in his ordinances, make fruitfulness your end and design in the use of them, then will your assemblies be, as the tabernacle is called, Leviticus 1:1, 'a place of meeting;' not of meeting one another, but of meeting with God. There will you see his face, and hear his voice, and spy his goings, and feel his workings, and taste the refreshments which attend his presence, and flow from communion with him.

3. This is the way to have more of the means of grace, to have them in more plenty, power, liberty: Matthew 13:12, 'To him that hath,' i.e. who fruitfully improves what he hath. If he have little, he shall have more; if he have much, he shall have abundance. This we are further assured of by the Lord's proceeding with those who faithfully improved their talents, Matthew 25:21-23. Would you have more advantages for your souls than former unfruitfulness has left you? Would you have the gospel and ordinances without restraint? Would you have his worship in public without sinful or suspected mixtures? Would you be brought out of corners, set in a large place, to praise the Lord in the great congregation? Would you have your lights no longer under a bushel, but set upon their candlesticks, and made burning and shining lights indeed? Do ye long, mourn, pray for this, that

the gospel might have a free passage, that it may run and be glorified, none might obstruct or obscure it? Why, here is a plain and open way for the procuring of all this: be faithful in the little you now have, make a more fruitful improvement of it, and the Lord, in due time, will entrust you with more. This is the way to have more means for your soul's improvement, and more of those heavenly influences which are necessary to make them effectual. Isaiah 27:2-3, 'Red wine' was the best, the most generous wine that country afforded. The vineyard which produced this, which brought forth the best fruit, the Lord undertakes to water it every moment. Endeavour to bring forth better fruit, satisfy yourselves with no other than the best, and the Lord will take special care of you; he himself will water you, and do it every moment. You shall never want any assistance, any refreshment, which may make your souls grow and flourish.

4. This will be your safety, whatever your dangers be; your security against all attempts, whether subtle or violent. Whoever threaten or design upon you, whoever would bereave you of what is precious to you, this is the way to defeat all their attempts, to turn all their counsels into foolishness. Take this course, and it will confute all your own fears, and establish you when all things totter and shake about you. The 'vineyard of red wine,' that which brings forth good fruit, the Lord undertakes for its security, Isaiah 27:2-3. If they prevail, it must be against God; for he it is that keeps it. If they find it without defence, it must be some time that can neither be referred to night nor day; for by night or day none shall hurt it, every moment of both the Lord himself will keep it. They may attempt, but at their peril, as Isaiah 27:4; it will be with no other success than if briars and thorns should make an attempt upon a consuming fire. Those that will be like pricking briars and thorns to the people under God's protection, instead of burning them, shall burn themselves; for the Lord will keep and secure those that are fruitful as with a 'wall of fire,' that which will not only fence them, but destroy their opposers, Zechariah 2:5. When the Lord has 'purged his people,' Isaiah 4:4, and made them fruitful, so that their fruit shall be excellent, Isaiah 4:2, and every one in Jerusalem shall be called holy, Isaiah 4:3, then does the Lord undertake to secure them and their assemblies, so that they might meet together for the worship of God without fear of danger or disturbance, Isaiah 4:5. The Lord himself will be unto them, both at home and in the places where they meet to serve him, what the pillar of fire and cloud was to the Israelites in their way to Canaan, both their conduct and a wonderful protection. As that interposed betwixt them and the Egyptians, Exodus 14:19-20, Exodus 14:24, so will the Lord interpose betwixt his people and those that endanger them, and will as effectually secure them and their soul-concernments as if that miraculous pillar were again commanded to attend them; and upon all their glory there shall be a defence. He will cover them when assembled for his service as that cloud covered the tabernacle when it was within filled with his glory, Exodus 40:34, &c. Neither heat when it is fair, nor storm when it rains, shall annoy them. You see the way to be secured from the dangers of every season; the way to have what you think in danger, and for which your hearts sometimes tremble, kept safe and secret, as though you were overshadowed by the Almighty; the way to be kept from disturbance, and fear of it.

5. Thus you may preserve others also, and save them from ruin, who are in great danger of it. A whole tree may be spared for some fruitful branches when it is very near cutting down, Isaiah 65:8. As a man offended with a vine that is not fruitful, according to what he expects, gives order to have it stubbed up, yet before the order is executed, spying some grapes or clusters on it which may afford good wine, is moved thereby to spare the whole tree; so may the Lord, when he is ready to

execute judgment, forbear a multitude for his servants' sake, for some few amongst them who are fruitful. When a family, a town, a country, is too generally barren, and the Lord thereby provoked to cut it down by some destroying judgment, yet if he find some branches (though not comparable in number to the whole) replenished with such fruits as he delights in, the whole may fare better for those few, and be spared for their sakes. The holy seed, those that bring forth the fruits of holiness, may be the support of a place when it is falling into ruins, according to that, Isaiah 6:13. The Lord would proceed in a way tending to the utter desolation of city and country, Isaiah 6:11-12, yet there being a remnant, a small part of them, like a tenth, which were a holy seed, holy in heart and life, these should be such a security to those who had escaped, as trees are planted on the sides of a bank, which keep it from mouldering away. The holy seed, those few which were fruitful in holiness, should be the substance, i. e. the support of the rest, so that all should not run to ruin. You see this is the way, not only to be safe yourselves in a day of judgment and common calamity, but to preserve others from perishing, whose barrenness is bringing swift destruction upon them; you may hereby secure your families, though there be too many fruitless branches therein; you may preserve the places where you live, though under the sentence of excision, and in great danger to be cut down; you may be common saviours, so far as this title is communicable to men; yea, who knows but if the people of God would improve the means of grace, and the prunings by judgments and afflictions, to more fruitfulness, this land, under the curse of barrenness, and in danger to be cut down by desolating judgments, and whose cursed fruits provoke the Lord to make its plagues wonderful, might yet be spared and preserved from utter desolation, yea, and entrusted further with more means of improvement. The tree is not quite dead while there is fruit seen in any of the branches; and if after the danger of cutting down more fruit appear, there would be hopes that by some more improvements it might be made yet more fruitful; and so more encouragement, not only to give it time, but to bestow more cost and labour on it. So it is amongst men, and the Lord declares himself willing to proceed accordingly. If the old branches did but bring forth more and better fruit, and there were some hopes of new buds also, the condition of this people, though extreme dangerous, would not be utterly desperate. You see upon what the hopes of it depend. Oh, do not blast them! Bring not all into a hopeless state by continuing fruitless.

6. This is the most safe and certain way to get assurance. Good fruits will be an evidence that you are in a good state, that you are engraffed into Christ, John 15:15. If you be fruitful, it will signify that Christ abideth in you, and you in him, Romans 6:22. Those who bring forth the fruits of holiness may conclude that they are the servants of God, and that they shall receive the reward of faithful servants, everlasting life: Matthew 7:16-18, we may conclude what the tree is by the fruit it bears; we may conclude this probably of others, but more certainly of ourselves; we may see what others act, and are obliged in charity to think it good when it seems so; but we cannot discern from what principle, or for what ends they act, and so cannot be sure that what seems good in others is really so, 1 Corinthians 2:11. But we may discern our own principles and ends, and so may pass a judgment upon our own acts with more certainty, and consequently upon our state.

If we bring forth good fruits, this will be a surer evidence to us that our spiritual condition is good; and the better our fruit is, i. e. the more free from carnal, worldly, or selfish mixtures, the clearer will our evidence be; the character wherein it is writ will not be so blotted and blurred; we shall not be so puzzled to read it, and to discern the sense and signification of it. And the more our fruit is,

the fuller will our evidence be; the characters will be larger, and more legible; we may discern them better, even in an hour of temptation, when others, who have them writ in a smaller hand, will be at a loss.

Fruits of the Spirit will be an argument to prove the Spirit is in us; and fruits of holiness will signify that we are sanctified; and fruits of righteousness that we are in the state of the righteous. But the better, the more these fruits are, the better, the firmer grounds of assurance will they be to us. A fulness of fruit will beget a plerophory, a fulness of assurance. The richer we are in the fruits of holiness and good works, the more riches of assurance may we expect.

Those that complain for want of assurance, and are afflicted with fears and doubts as to their spiritual state, can take no more effectual course for their relief than by bringing forth more and better fruit. The less fruit, the less and dimmer light you will have for the discovery of a saving state; more and better fruit will be as the setting up of greater and clearer lights for the discerning of it.

Whether assurance is ordinarily had, by the immediate testimony of the Spirit, is a question with some. But this is unquestionable, the Spirit never testifies the state is good, but where there are good fruits. So that where they are not, it is a foolish and vain presumption to expect any such testimony of the Spirit. And to believe we have such a testimony, without such fruits, is to delude ourselves, and belie the Spirit of God. And this is unquestionable, that the Spirit helps us to discern the sincerity and goodness of the fruit we bear, 1 Corinthians 2:12; and so testifying to our spirits that the fruits we bring forth are good, and such as are proper and peculiar to the children of God. Hereby ‘the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God,’ Romans 8:16. So that if assurance be by the immediate testimony of the Spirit, it never testifies a good condition where good fruits are not. If it be by the immediate testimony of the Spirit, good fruits are the medium by which it helps us to conclude it. Therefore no assurance can be had, no testimony of the Spirit will be given of a saving state, where there are not good fruits. All persuasions of a good condition, without good fruit, are but vain, groundless presumptions; all hopes of heaven are but dangerous delusions. These will be grounds of hope, and nothing without them; and the more, the better they are, the firmer and clearer will the grounds of your hopes be, and the more will they advance towards confidence and full assurance.

7. This is the way to comfort, when it is most needful, and when it will be most comfortable. In reproaches, temptations, afflictions, yea, in death, and at judgment, when the vain comforts of fruitless souls will vanish, and end in remorse and terrors, and be as the giving up of the ghost, Job 11:20. In reproaches. When men speak against you as evil-doers, and your conscience bears you witness that your lives have been and are full of good fruits, either you may convince them that they wrong you and their own souls, and have the comfort of bringing them to glorify God by an acknowledgment thereof, 1 Peter 2:12. Or if they be hardened in their prejudice, and resolute not to be convinced by any evidence sufficient for that purpose, you may appeal to God, and comfort yourselves with that blessedness which Christ makes the portion of those who have all manner of evil spoken against them falsely, Matthew 5:11. And reproach will not leave any such sting in your conscience, as in theirs who are conscious that their unfruitfulness, and not walking worthy of the gospel, has opened the mouth of reproachers. In temptation. Satan will not so easily fix any fiery dart on you as on others, if you have been fruitful indeed; you have a better shield to

secure you from the wounding impressions of them. You will have more to confute the false accusations wherewith he would disturb you, and call in question your integrity; you will have more to allege for yourselves, and that which will be harder for him to answer or gainsay; you may repel him with more confidence, and more advantage when there is little or nothing in your conscience to take part with him. In afflictions. It is a great comfort to know that we are not afflicted for our barrenness; and who can know that but those that are fruitful? Good fruits yield the most sweetness in pressures, and such as are able to sweeten the bitterest afflictions, and to cause the bitterness of them to pass away: Hebrews 12:11, the ‘fruits of righteousness’ are ‘peaceable,’ because they bring peace and joy, instead of that grief which the chastenings are accompanied with. This turns the storm and tempest wherewith an afflicted soul is tossed, disturbed, discomposed, into a sweet calm and serenity. This brings that ‘peace of God, which’ not only surpasses all that is afflictive, and is sufficient to drown the sense thereof, but ‘passes all understanding, and keeps the heart and mind’ in a quiet, composed, comfortable posture, when all is stormy and ruffled round about. The apostle had experience of it, when, having given an account of his great troubles and hazards, 2 Corinthians 1:8-10, he adds, 2 Corinthians 1:12, he could rejoice, notwithstanding these troubles that threatened him with present death, when his conscience bore him witness, that his conversation had abounded with good fruit (that which was sincerely good) in the world, and towards those to whom he was more particularly related. And at death, when there is most need of comfort, and when all outward enjoyments will give out, and prove miserable comforters, what joy will it be to reflect upon the days of lives past as fruitful seasons, which have brought forth fruits pleasant to God, and advantageous to the world; to look upon our time, parts, and enjoyments as employed for Christ, in ways of fruitfulness and serviceableness to God and men; to have the testimony from our consciences, that it has been the design and business of our lives to live to God, and bring forth fruit to him, and not to ourselves; to please him, and not to gratify our own, or the humours of others; to advance him, though it laid us under reproach; to lay out what we had for him, though we and ours have suffered by it; to be able to say, as he, Acts 23:1, and Acts 24:16. But their life will look upon them with as pale, and ghastly, and frightful face, as death itself, who can spy little in their days past but cyphers, and must reflect on them as unfruitful, unserviceable, insignificant days: days rather consumed than lived and fruitfully employed; days spent in the pursuit of the world, for the profits or pleasures of it, or the external advantages of themselves or their posterity; days wasted in the service of their lusts, or the service of their great idol mammon, or in the service of themselves; melted away either in idleness, or in that which God had not made their works; days so consumed, not improved for God in ways of fruitfulness. When death is approaching, what comfort can there be in such review! This is the way to make the day of death a day of blackness and thick darkness indeed. Oh, if you would have comfort in death, lay up a good foundation for the time to come; abound in the acts of holiness, and the fruits of righteousness: that is the way to do it, if you will believe the apostle, 1 Timothy 6:18-19. And then at judgment, if you, in the sense of the worthlessness of what fruits you have brought forth, should not venture to fetch any comfort from thence, Christ himself will bring it you, and thence derive it, as he has plainly declared beforehand, Matthew 25:34-36. Good fruits are not the cause of the reward; they do not deserve it, they did not purchase it; that is the honour of Christ, of Christ alone. But he alleges them as the reason of this comfortable sentence. And Christ himself will be no ground of comfort to you without these There is no true comfort, either in life, or in death, or at judgment, without good fruits; and the more, the

better they are, the greater, the sweeter comforts both now and then, both here and hereafter.

8. This is your beauty, your ornament, your glory, in the sight of God and men. What is the excellency of a fruit-tree but fruitfulness? What leaves soever it have, what blossoms soever it shew, yet if in the season it bear no fruit, all its flourishes are blasted, and he that owns it will make no account of it. The excellency of the trees of righteousness, the planted of the Lord, is to abound in the fruits of righteousness; and as these are a glory to God, of which before, so they are an honour to the gospel, an ornament to your profession, that which renders it lovely and beautiful in the eyes of all men, and a special glory to the fruitful themselves. God himself does seem to glory in such, Isaiah 61:3. Those of the same profession may glory in them, and those that hate and malign them will either be convinced, or silenced, or condemned, in the judgment and conscience of the world, for condemning them. ‘There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, another glory of the stars, one star differing from another star in glory;’ for all the difference in degrees, all are glorious, for all are luminaries. And such is the glory of the fruitful, they are all luminaries, though some greater and some less. By holding forth the word of life in a conversation full of the fruits thereof, they shine as lights in the world, Php 2:15-16, Proverbs 4:18. ‘The path of the just,’ of him that bears fruits of righteousness, ‘is as the shining light,’ and the more fruits he bears, the more and more does he shine. Clouds of reproaches are hereby scattered; such a light will break through them, it cannot be hid; the splendour of it will be apparent and conspicuous to the world, in despite of malice and detraction, Matthew 5:16. There is a light in good fruits, which attracts the eyes of the world to it, and stays not there, but reflects glory upon the Most High.

9. Christ will own the fruitful here and hereafter, John 15:8; so shall ye declare yourselves to be ‘my disciples indeed, if ye bring forth much fruit.’ Upon this account Christ will own you for his disciples, as those that have so learned Christ as he would have them, as those that have ‘heard him and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus,’ Ephesians 4:16, &c.; as those that imitate him, as disciples should their master; as those that follow him, and tread in his steps, and would be conformed to that great pattern. When they make it their business in the world to do good, as he ‘went about doing good,’ Acts 10:38; when they strive to ‘be holy, as he was holy, in all manner of conversation,’ 1 Peter 1:14-15; when it is their design to ‘fulfil all righteousness,’ and their ‘meat and drink [is] to do his will’: he will not be ashamed to own such for his disciples. But barren professors he will be ashamed of, as being a real shame and reproach to him; and he will declare it, he will disown them, and thrust them from him, as we do that which is shameful to us, Matthew 7:20-23. The most specious profession, the fairest pretences, the most splendid performances, such as prophesying, and casting out devils, and working miracles in the name of Christ, without real fruits in universal obedience, will be no plea that Christ will regard. Whatever they profess, whatever they do, though what they have done amount to wonderful works, if they have not done the will of the Father in bringing forth good fruits, Christ will disown them; they must depart from him, as those he is ashamed of, pretenders, not true disciples. But the fruitful he will own, as here, so in the last day, and expresses it in terms so transcendently affectionate and comfortable as will leave no sense of any trouble, loss, hazard, or suffering that they have met with in the way of fruitfulness, Matthew 25:34. Compare this peerless sentence with the dreadful doom of the unfruitful, Matthew 25:41. The fruitful must ‘come,’ the barren ‘depart;’ those pronounced ‘blessed,’ these ‘accursed;’ those called to a ‘kingdom,’ these sent into ‘everlasting fire;’ those to inherit and reign with the Father and Christ for ever, these to remain with the devil and his angels. Oh, what

words can be invented by men or angels apt to make so deep an impression upon the mind and heart of man as these words of Christ? If you have any sense, any regard or belief of Christ when he speaks words, each of which have the joys or terrors of an eternal state in them, there needs no more be said to engage you to fruitfulness, or to render barrenness dreadful to you. I will only add this,

10. Good fruits, good seed; whatever you do or suffer for God, you sow, and shall assuredly reap what you sow with abundant advantage. This is frequently expressed in Scripture, Hosea 10:12. The saddest act of seedtime has assurance of a joyful harvest, Psalms 126:5. And the harvest shall not fail to answer the seed, 2 Corinthians 9:6, and Galatians 6:7-9. And he makes use of this as a motive to fruitfulness, Galatians 6:10. It is seed that cannot possibly miscarry; it is under the Lord's husbandry: not the least grain of it shall be lost, no, not that which seems to be quite thrown away, Ecclesiastes 11:1. That which seems as utterly cast away, as what seed is thrown into the water, shall return with plentiful increase. It is the Lord that looks after it; he is engaged to take care that it grow, and it is he that gives the increase. It depends not upon the temper of the soil, nor the seasonableness of a year, nor the heavenly influence, which may occasion a miscarriage in other husbandmen's seed after all care and pains. Your expectation will not be frustrated; yea, it will spring up beyond, above all you can expect or imagine, when your expectation is most enlarged, and your apprehensions raised to the highest. It will bring forth not only thirty or sixtyfold, but what Israel's seed produced, an hundredfold, Genesis 26:12. You have the best assurance for it that heaven can give, the word of Christ, Matthew 19:29, 'an hundred fold here in this life' (as it is expressed by the other evangelist, Mark 10:29-30), the largest increase that any seed ever yields on earth; but hereafter it will produce so many hundred, so many thousand fold, as is past all account; it will nonplus all art, all artists to cast it up, for 'eye hath not seen,' &c.

It is expressed in a gross sum, 'life everlasting.' But how much that comprises no man nor angel can understand; so much joy, glory, happiness, as passes all understanding.

Oh, if a husbandman were ascertained of this, that how much soever be sowed, it would all yield him at last an hundredfold, he would sow all the ground he had, and labour to get more, and spare no pains, no cost; the hope of so rich a crop would let him think nothing too much. Oh, if we did believe God, and what he so clearly expresses, that all good fruit is seed, and that it will yield so much, 'the increase of God,' an exceeding great increase, we should think it our concernment not to sow sparingly, we should think we were highly injurious to ourselves not to 'abound more and more in all fruitfulness.' And thus, if you will be moved by reason or equity, by fear or hope, I have offered something that may put you upon motion toward more fruitfulness. If this have made any impression on you, it will be seasonable to give you some directions for the promoting of your fruitfulness, and to discover what it is that keeps many so barren, notwithstanding all the means of improvement they enjoy. And to begin with this latter;—

1. Unmortifiedness is one main impediment of fruitfulness. The less mortified we are, the less fruit we shall bear; and that little will be the worse for it, it will neither suffer it to be much nor good. And so we may observe that the method wherein the Holy Ghost in Scripture leads us to fruitfulness is answerable: there we are directed, first, to 'put off the old man, with its deceitful lusts,' and then the new man will act in holiness and righteousness, bringing forth the fruits of both. So the apostle Paul, Ephesians 4:22-24. And the same apostle first describes 'the works of the flesh,' and will

have them destroyed, and then proceeds to the ‘fruits of the Spirit,’ insinuating that these cannot grow unless the other be first rooted out, Galatians 5:19-20, &c.

Unmortified lusts and affections render all the means of fruitfulness ineffectual. The word, which is the seed that produces good fruit, cannot take root, cannot be fruitful, till these be stubbed up, and therefore the Spirit of God leads us first to this, James 1:21-22. You will be hearers only, and not doers of the word; the word will not be an engrafted word, bringing forth saving fruit, unless these be laid aside. So, 1 Peter 2:12, if those evils be not mortified, thrown away with indignation, purged out as bad humours, that both take away the stomach and hinder digestion, and turn what is received into the same noxious quality, you will not grow strong nor fruitful by the word; it will not be λ■γος καρποφορο■μενος, Colossians 1:6, a ‘fruitful word.’ So, Jeremiah 4:3-4, rid your hearts of inordinate lusts and affections, or else nothing will thrive or grow that can be accounted good fruit; all means of improvement will be as seed cast upon ground which is overgrown with thorns and weeds, it will come to little or nothing. Carnal, selfish, worldly lusts, while they are tolerated or not subdued, they are as weeds or vermin to the seed or to the fruit; they hinder it from being either much or good; either they hinder it from springing up, as brambles or thorns do; when these grow thick, the crop will be thin; or they spoil or destroy it after it appears. Either as locusts or caterpillars, they destroy it in the blossom; or as worms and other vermin, they eat into it and corrupt it when it should come to maturity.

Begin with the work of mortification if you would be fruitful; make use of all means afforded you for this purpose; be diligent and unwearied in the use of them. Improve judgments and afflictions for this purpose, as I have lately directed you. There is no expectation your fruit should be much or good, unless you pluck up these weeds and brambles which pester your hearts and lives, and leave little or no room for good fruit; unless you destroy these vermin which devour the seed, so that little comes up, or corrupt the fruit when it is come up, so that it is become good for little or nothing. Unmortified lusts will let little take root or grow, and afterwards they corrupt or rot that little, hinder it from being pleasant fruit to God, as that is not pleasant to you which is rotted or worm-eaten. An unmortified Christian cannot be fruitful; his lusts take up much of the ground where good fruit should grow; his time, his parts, his enjoyments, yea, his soul, is otherwise employed than to bring forth good fruits, so far as it is under the power and command of these lusts; and that little which he bears is full of vermin, the tolerated corruption of his heart corrupts and spoils it. It cannot be so much nor so good as in those who have ‘crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.’

2. Worldliness. That is a principal impediment to fruitfulness. Carefulness either to get or keep much of the world, eagerness either after the plenty or the pleasures of this life, is assigned by Christ himself as the main cause of unfruitfulness: Matthew 13:20-22, ‘The cares of the world, and deceitfulness of riches,’ συμπν■γει τον λ■γον, do as it were take it by the throat and strangle it; or as thorns and brambles, with rank roots, suck away the fatness of the earth which should nourish the corn, and so destroys it. Thus does the world engross the strength and vigour of the soul, which should be put forth in good fruits, and converts it to its own use; it stifles good motions, inclinations, affections, resolutions raised by the word, and never suffers them to come to maturity. The other evangelist is more particular in the account he gives of the world’s mischievousness this way, Luke 8:14. Here are three engines, by which the world does this mischief in worldly hearts: The cares of the world; when men are too careful, too busy about it. The riches; when they too

highly value them, and too much affect them, and too forwardly pursue them; when the deceitfulness of riches seduces them to a high opinion of riches, a great affection to them, an eager following after them; when they believe what they deceitfully promise, and expect great advantage and great pleasure in outward abundance. The pleasures of this life; when they please themselves too much in the getting or enjoying much of the things of this life. This chokes the word, makes the best means of improvement ineffectual; all good conceptions hereby prove abortive. Whatsoever the word does towards fruitfulness, the world undoes it. Even when the soul is big with good motions begotten by the word, the world makes it miscarry; they become like the untimely birth of a woman, that never sees the sun, Psalms 58:8; such do not τελεσφορε■ν. When the heart of the ground is eaten out, and the moisture and fatness of it sucked away by thorns and brambles, sow what you will in it, you will find it barren. When the world takes up the thoughts, the heart, the affections, the time, the strength, the endeavours which is necessary for the producing and nourishing of good fruit, what can be expected, even under the best means for improvement, but barrenness? Indeed, if the design in seeking riches were to be 'rich in good works,' and they were accordingly so employed, the world might be helpful to us. But it is a rare thing to have it so sought, and so used, for God, and not for ourselves and relatives only or principally. And while this is so rare, worldliness, so much branded in Scripture, is common, and barrenness general. A worldly spirit, whatever it profess or pretend, what zeal soever it shew in some little things, is and will be unfruitful. 'You cannot serve God and Mammon:' you cannot bring forth fruit to God, and fruit to the world. What the world will spare for God, will neither be much nor very good. There is little time for it, there is little heart for it; the world takes it up. God must have none but the world's leavings, some crumbs that fall from its table; this will not amount to much. Nor can it be very good; it will have a tang of the world, an earthish taste; it will savour of the temper from whence it proceeds, and have some worldly mixtures that will taint it. And though others, or yourselves, do not discern it, the Lord can and will; and less like it, the more it tastes of a worldly spirit.

If ever you would be fruitful indeed, get the world crucified, get it laid low in your thoughts, get it cast out of your hearts. Demean yourselves towards it, in your daily course, as a weaned child. Get your hearts, which have been set upon the world, set upon your work, that which the Lord has sent you to do. Let it not engross your time, which is necessary for your souls, for your families, or for others whom you ought to improve and help on towards fruitfulness; that time which is necessary for prayer, for examining your spiritual state, for meditation, and working the word which you hear or read upon your hearts.

You must be more indifferent towards the world, if you would be 'zealous of good works,' of good fruits; as Christ's peculiar people should be, those whom he has purchased and redeemed from the earth; and you will not be fruitful unless there be some zeal and fervour for more and better fruits.

3. Privateness of spirit. When a person is confined to himself, himself single or multiplied, he and his relatives, thinks himself little concerned to look farther; shuts up himself, in a manner, wholly in the narrow circle of his own concernments or that of his family and relations; seldom draws any lines beyond it, rarely acts further; or what he does of larger extent, is little and extraordinary: such a one cannot bring forth much fruit, for the sphere of fruitfulness is very large, and reaches far beyond ourselves and ours; and the Lord expects we should walk and act to the full extent and latitude of it, or else he has little fruit of us. Several graces which respect others will be

unexercised, several talents will be hid and buried. Such as would be advantageous to others at a greater distance will not be employed, the improvement of which the Lord calls for. Much of that we are entrusted with, and must give an account of, will lie waste, which would yield fruit desirable to God and men. And so far we shall be accounted barren, as we do not bear fruit where we might and ought, by the employment of our graces, gifts, accomplishments, estates, and outward enjoyments. He that brings but forth fruit to himself, how much soever it be for bulk and quantity, is barren, and no better than an empty tree in the Lord's account, Hosea 10:1. He that will be fruitful indeed, must have fruits reaching as far as the apostle will have them extended, Galatians 6:10. The household of faith is far larger than our own household and relations; but the all he mentions is far larger than the household of faith. Now, he that would bring forth fruits worthy of the gospel, such as it requires, must extend them beyond himself and relatives, to the household of faith; and further much than that also (though that be of large extent), even to all. He must do good to all, to some more especially, but to all in some measure. Without any limitation, but that of opportunity; nothing but want of this will excuse our neglect of any of these all from barrenness. Get public spirits, get larger souls; privateness and littleness of spirit, narrow and contracted souls shrunk up into themselves, seldom moving, like the snail, out of its own shell, will leave you under the guilt of much barrenness. A selfish person will be an unfruitful tree, though planted in the Lord's vineyard.

4. Indulgence to carnal ease and slothfulness. The calling of the husbandman is laborious; he that will improve his land in fruitfulness, especially if it be naturally barren, must be no sluggard. We must 'give all diligence' if we would not be 'barren and unfruitful in the knowledge,' &c., 2 Peter 1:1-21; otherwise heart and life will be overrun with weeds instead of good fruit, Proverbs 24:30-32. It is 'the diligent hand that makes rich,' Proverbs 10:4. Men are easily convinced that they must be diligent in their particular callings if they will thrive; but either they think it no duty to be rich unto God, rich in good fruits, or else they think there needs not such diligence for this; both which are pernicious delusions. 'The men of this world are wiser in their generation than' those who profess themselves to be 'children of light;' they rise early, &c., to improve their estates, whereas these use little or no diligence to improve the means of grace for fruitfulness. Where is that diligence which the Scripture calls for, under the notions of striving, running, wrestling? phrases which import the putting forth of all our strength, and continuance therein.

5. Mistaking that for good fruit which is not so. Now, because it is necessary, and very useful for all sorts to have this mistake more fully discovered, I shall be a little more large and particular herein, and endeavour to shew how many ways we are apt to be mistaken about the goodness of our fruits; and to be satisfied with that as good which is not so in the account of God.

(1.) Some take that to be good, which is indeed bad fruit; and to be pleasing to God, when, indeed, it is a provocation to him; think they do him service, when they are serving themselves, gratifying their own corruption, and sacrificing to their own lusts. Christ tells his disciples of some who would think they did God service when they were persecuting his faithfullest servants, John 16:2; and this was the fruit of error and ignorance, John 16:3. Through such ignorance and error, persons and things may be so disguised and misrepresented, as that may be taken for a crime which is a duty, and that for heresy which is a necessary truth; and those for flagitious persons who are not only innocent, not guilty, but eminently holy; and so these may be persecuted with a heat, which is taken for holy or heroical zeal, when it is devilish enmity against God, his truths, servants, and ways. And herewith may they be transported, who are in the common account the most knowing

and the most holy; for such were the scribes and pharisees in Christ's time, such was their esteem amongst the vulgar. They persecuted the apostles, yea, Christ himself, to the death, and thought they did therein good service to God; and it passed for good fruit, when it was the poison of asps and the cruel venom of dragons. Herein they are followed by the papists, and by those who disclaim this name, but walk in their steps; who, out of a zeal to a church which their own interest has framed, and against schism, contempt, and disobedience, which have as little ground as their other chimera, are all in thunder and lightning. And some of their judgments and consciences may be so deluded and infatuated, as to think it good service to God, and good fruit in the church, to ruin those who conform not to them; and having no hopes of fire from heaven, to gratify their blind, selfish zeal, make wildfire of their own to do it. Yea, those who are neither papists nor formalists, being under the power of error or ignorance, in particulars which they suspect not, are in the like danger. To censure those things as sins, which are innocent; and to make conscience of those as duties, which are crimes forbidden, or at least things not commanded; and to embrace those as lovely truths, which are foul mistakes: and the more zealously they act in reference to such things, the better fruit they may think it; whereas, quite contrary, the more it acts, and the higher it rises, it is still worse and worse. You have lamentable instances hereof, both concerning a mistaken church and a mistaken kingdom, and also in other less observed particulars, which I cannot insist on. So you may see the zeal of some run out against the opinions and practices of others, under pretence they are dangerous and of bad consequence, when the bottom of all is envy or revenge speciously dignified; and the design is, the disparaging or depressing of those who are thought to outshine them. Ill-will to those whom they affect not, is the root; and evil-speaking, or detraction, the fruit of it. And yet it passes for good fruit, because it is supposed to be a good cause that is so managed, and that supposed evil to which it is opposed; but God will not account this good fruit, whatever men do.

(2.) Some take that to be good fruit which is only negatively good, in comparison of what is stark naught: conclude it good, because it is not the worst of all, or not so bad as that which some others bring forth. Such was the fruit of the pharisee, which he thought to be very good, when he is represented as boasting of it, Luke 18:11. The pharisee is not alone in his mistake, or his confidence; others amongst us are ready to presume their fruit is good, and they not much concerned to look after that which is better; because it is not quite so bad as is visible in many, or the most about them; they are not so profane, or so superstitious; they neither blaspheme nor persecute; they swear not, nor forswear; they neither scorn nor hate that which is good; they are neither drunkards, adulterers, or oppressors, nor sordidly covetous; they wallow in no such ungodliness and wickedness as they see others do; they bring forth better fruit than many, and so conclude it is good enough, they need not trouble themselves further. But what a deceit is this! as though it were enough to prove a tree fruitful, because it has no vermin or caterpillars on it. There is no more fruit in mere negatives, than a tree has in winter, when it has not so much as leaves to cover it. This is but one half of what the pharisee had to allege for himself; and the end of your fruit will never be acceptance with God here, nor eternal life hereafter, unless it be more and better than that of the pharisees, Matthew 5:20.

(3.) Some take that to be good, which, though it be not bad in itself, yet has no goodness in it. Such are they who are great zealots for things which they count indifferent (i. e. such as are neither good nor bad in themselves), yet urge them with more eagerness, and are more severe in

exacting that which they acknowledge to have no goodness in it, than any of the fruits of holiness or righteousness; these are neglected, and the neglect of them excused, if those be but observed. There needs no other mouth to condemn such than their own. God calls for good fruit; that which they most mind is what they declare to be not good. The best they can say of such fruit is, that it is neither bad nor good. But it will be bad enough in consequence, when it hinders them, and makes them hinder others, from bringing forth better.

Let us be warned by the follies and excesses of others not to be much taken with anything whose goodness is not manifest. This will dangerously divert us from that which is good fruit indeed. The life, and heart, and strength, and vigour of religion, which should put forth itself in fruits of holiness and righteousness, will be sacrificed to trifles and shadows, or will run out in some worthless grain or fruitless excrescency. Be sure that person or church will not be fruitful in God's account, whose excellency is the bringing forth of that which is not confessedly good.

(4.) Others think their fruit is good, when the goodness of it is but imaginary and fancy: such as those whose religion is notional, who are most pleased with their notions, when they are most thin and airy, and spun into a fineness which makes them of no use; admire them most, when they are least intelligible; and think them the highest attainments when they are out of the common road, above ordinary capacities, if not without common sense; make most of them, and hug them with most passion, when they do them least good, and neither heart nor life is better for them. Sure, whatever excellency persons may fancy in such notions, they are plainly flourishes, not fruits. Those that love to spin religion into such cobwebs, take the course to starve their souls, and keep themselves fruitless; cobwebs will neither keep them warm, nor nourish. These are not good fruit in themselves; but that is not the worst; they will hinder those who doat on them from being otherwise fruitful. Those that are troubled with the rickets are not thriving children, though their heads be bigger than others. When religion is run up into the head in notions, heart and life being left destitute of the virtue and power of it, must needs be barren: a notional professor will have little fruit but in fancy; and the like danger there is when religion is turned into matter of quarrel and controversy. This turns the soul, which should be as the fruitful vine, into a thorn or a briar, where you may find many prickles, but little desirable fruit. The contentious ages of the church were barren, in comparison of the more ancient and primitive, when religion was a plain and easy thing, and not so perplexed with contentions and controversies: ut magnæ cujusdam artis fuerit orthodoxum esse; that it was a matter of great art to be orthodox (as Erasmus speaks of the fourth age). Godliness as practical, was then declining; but it was even expiring, grown decrepit, and past fruit-bearing, when the chief supports of it were the schoolmen, who, instead of practical truths, and what would have nourished souls unto fruitfulness, threw amongst them some bare bones to pick; hard, abstruse, intricate questions, which exercised the brain, but drew up the heat and spirits from the heart, and left that languishing: to which that may be applied, Hebrews 13:9. When divines and other Christians affect to be controversial, they grow less practical; and it is in practice that fruitfulness appears. Satan would bring all religion into question, and employ all in controversy. He knows what advantage he has thereby, to divert them from that which is most fruitful and edifying. Quarrelsome and contentious spirits are no soil for the peaceable fruits of righteousness. There may be some fruit of controversy, which the corruption and perversion of degenerate minds has made necessary; but as it is ordinarily managed, it is sour and crabbed fruit, and such as will need many correctives to render it good and wholesome.

(5.) Others think they bear good fruit, because they have something that makes a goodly show, a fair appearance. They make a great profession, they are furnished with excellent guests; their parts and accomplishments are not contemptible; they have a form of knowledge, a sound judgment in matters of religion, some understanding of the Scripture, abilities to pray, and to discourse of the things of God, and are apprehensive of the mysteries of the gospel. Some such fruits they had whom the apostle describes, Romans 2:17-20. If these had been good fruit, it had been a good foundation for the time to come; whereas the apostle tells us, they ‘treasured up wrath,’ Romans 2:5. Indeed, these are not fruit, but leaves; and though the fair show they make may give hopes of fruit at a distance, as the fig-tree did to our Saviour, yet you know the issue of that goodly appearance, when he found no fruit thereon, according to expectation, nothing better than leaves, he cursed it, and it withered, and was suddenly dried up by the roots. If you think such shows, such leaves, fruit good enough, and this conceit hinder you from care to bring forth something better, they will not shelter you from the curse of Christ, and the execution of it, nor keep the axe from the very root. If ‘every tree which brings not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down,’ &c., how can they escape who bring forth nothing but leaves?

(6.) Others think their fruit is good enough when it is but partially good; they do things that are good, but they do them not well; the matter of what they do is good, but they neglect the manner, or the end, or the proportion, something integral or essential to its goodness, without which, if it be good at all, or may be so accounted, yet it is far from being completely good. It is hereby utterly maimed and crippled, or no better than a dead work. So some, they will hear the word, and hear it frequently and attentively, but not effectually, so as to obey it; or, if they will obey, as Herod did in many things, Mark 6:20, yet they obey it but where it pleases them, and suits their humours and tempers, but not where it crosses their inclinations or interests. And through this defect their hearing is no good fruit, nor their obeying neither; and if they think otherwise, they deceive themselves, in the apostle’s judgment, James 1:22.

They will yield to Christ in many things, but not in all. They are but almost persuaded to be fully his disciples; they stick at some of the terms on which he offers himself; though they can digest many, there is something too much, themselves to be denied, something too valuable to be forsaken and relinquished, some part of the cross too heavy to take up; and being but ‘almost persuaded’ to be his, the fruit they bear, how much soever it be, is but almost good.

They will leave many sins, but not all; or if they abstain from the outward acts, yet they do not mortify them; or if they be in some course of mortification, they halt, and make stands in it, and will not go through.

They will be charitable, and relieve those that are in want and distress; but then, either this must excuse them from other good works; or else they are defective in this, not rich in distributing, though this be the end why they are entrusted with riches, and the best improvement they can make thereof. They do it not proportionably to others’ necessities, no, nor to their own superfluities. They can expend more upon their own unnecessary excesses than upon the pressing wants of the members or messengers of Christ; can spare it more freely when it ministers but to pride and vanity, and the excesses of their garb, furniture, or entertainment, than for the feeding, clothing, and refreshing of Christ mystical.

(7.) Others take that which is but questionably good, to be best of all, and accordingly mind it and pursue it as though there were not only some unquestionable, but some eminent goodness in it, and, consequently, overlook, or too much neglect, those things which are really and undoubtedly better. And this we may observe, both in matters of opinion and practice; both in positive duties, and opposition of sin. So you may see some persons grown fond of an opinion to such a degree as to lay the greatest stress on it; to lay out themselves almost wholly for the advancing and propagating of it; to contend for it as for life and death; to disparage all that are not, as they think, friends enough to it, and blast those that oppose it; to shew more heat and passion for it than those truths that are vital and fundamental, and have the most sovereign influence upon heart and life for fruitfulness; and yet, when it is duly and impartially examined, it may prove a question whether it be truth or no; and a matter of great difficulty to clear it from error, if it can be vindicated at all from such a censure.

You may see others, to whom some particular practice is very much endeared; they look upon it as a duty of greatest moment; they are ready to censure all that concur not with them in it. Those duties that are evidently and indispensably so must give way to it, and be neglected or little regarded in comparison; and yet, after all, to those who are without passions and pre-engagements, it may be a question whether it be indeed a duty.

You may see others have a great zeal against some things which they count unlawlul; they fly out against them, as though there were no other, or no greater wickedness; they judge those who do not avoid them unfit for society with Christians; they are ready to censure those who cannot see reason to be so rigid and severe against them as themselves. And those things which are plainly and unquestionably evil in themselves or others are overlooked by this means, or little taken notice of in comparison. And yet, when those who are fearful of sin, and think themselves highly concerned to suffer none to lie under guilt, whom they can convince of it, do examine the things so condemned without prejudice, they find it questionable whether they be so sinful, or else exceeding difficult, if feasible, to find good grounds for the conviction of others, and not at all advisable to condemn so peremptorily, without good ground, and such as they may hope will be convincing.

Satan, the enemy of our souls, and of their fruitfulness, makes use of diversion as one of his main stratagems. If he can but make us neglect truths or duties that are unquestionable, he cares not how much we doat upon those that are questionable. If he can but make us indulgent to ourselves in real evils, he will allow us to be as severe as we will against others for things doubtful. He can make use of our zeal when it is misguided; of our heat let out groundlessly; to the rendering of it ineffectual, contemned and disregarded, when it is duly employed. He can set up a blind, and if we spend all our shot upon that which should be directed against real enemies, he has his design; he hereby makes that run waste which would otherwise render us fruitful. As if the heart of the ground should be spent in nourishing such plants and herbs that are of uncertain use, and of whose virtue, what it is, and whether it be any or none, we are doubtful; it must needs be to the prejudice of those fruits which are unquestionably good and useful.

(8.) Others take those for good fruits which are only artificial, and of their own devising, and commend to us a fiction of mortification, and holiness, and divine worship, not of God’s prescribing, but of man’s invention. Such are they who place mortification in some outward

severities, and harsh usages of the body, chastening, afflicting, and pinching it, as though this were the crucifying of the flesh, which the Scripture calls for; as though they could mortify the body of sin, by curbing the outward man with a ‘touch not, taste not, handle not;’ and by neglecting the body, not shewing it respect due to it, in gratifying it with what is needful, according to that of the apostle, Colossians 2:23, where you may discern of what account it is with God. Being after the commandments and doctrines of men, it may have a show of wisdom, humility, and mortification, but is no such thing really. And such is their sanctity, who, neglecting holiness of heart and life, will have a holiness in garments, utensils, and the very walls. Real holiness was at a low ebb when this counterfeit came in request; it is a weed that throve most when the church was growing a wilderness, and is but a slip of a degenerate plant where it grows rankest. And such is that worship which the art and fancy of man devises for God; this can be no good fruit, with what colours soever it be set off; this is so far from pleasing God, as it highly provokes him. How can it do less, when it is a preferring of human contrivances before the divine wisdom? And what the fruit of it will be, we may learn by the threatenings denounced against it, Isaiah 27:1-13, and by the censure of it: Matthew 15:7, ‘In vain they worship me,’ when the doctrine by which their worship is regulated and ordered is the traditions of men; in places and times devised of their own heart, 1 Kings 12:33. It is vain worship at the best, and that which is vain is fruitless. It supplants that which would yield most fruit, and draws with it a neglect of the commands and institutions of God, as the other evangelist shews, Mark 7:7-9. That which is of this nature and tendency is cursed fruit, whoever bless themselves with it.

(9.) Others take that for good fruit which is no more than buds, the mere embryos and rudiments of it. Such are good motions, raised by the word or by afflictions, or apprehensions of death or judgment, but vanishing before they have taken effect. Some good inclinations, some purposes and resolutions to be better, but not pursued to execution; the heart starting from them like a deceitful bow, which returns to its unbent posture before it have delivered the arrow. Some transient impressions, which promise well, but pass away like the morning cloud; some stirring affections, which melt away as snow before the sun, and influence not the life with any lasting efficacy; some joy in the word, such as was in those hearers represented by the bad ground, Matthew 13:20; some delight in the ordinances, such as was in Ezekiel’s hearers, Ezekiel 33:32; some remorse and sorrow for sin, such as was in Ahab, 1 Kings 21:1-29, and the Israelites, Psalms 78:47; some desires of spiritual things, as in the Jews, John 6:34, who yet believed not, John 6:36; some wishes for heavenly enjoyments, as in Balaam, Numbers 23:10; some convictions also of sin and misery, and desires of freedom, but being not followed with sincere endeavours, prove abortive, and reach not the new birth. These are hopeful in their first appearance, but resting in them is the way to fall short of fruitfulness; for they are but blossoms, not fruit, and being nipped or blasted by the world, or prevailing corruption, or the powers of darkness, and not suffered to knit, or at least to come to consistence and maturity, they prove no good fruit. Those only are fruitful indeed which bring forth fruit to perfection; when the blossoms miscarry not, but knit and come to some ripeness; when there is a patient continuance under such good impressions, and under the means appointed for the ripening of them, Romans 2:7; but though there be no such continuance therein, yet these, making a specious show, are apt to be taken for good fruit, and so take men off from endeavouring after that which is good indeed.

(10.) Others take that for good fruit which is good only morally, not spiritually. They are prudent, and modest, and sober, chaste and temperate, meek and patient, candid and ingenuous, true and faithful in their words, just and righteous in their dealings, and have their conversation honest in the world. Now these would be good fruits indeed (and none can be justly counted fruitful without them), if they proceeded from a right principle, and were acted for a due end; if they sprung from a new nature, and were brought forth unto God, out of obedience to him, and with an intent to please and honour him; if the Spirit of grace were the author of them, and the end why they are exercised were answerable, they would be fruits of the Spirit, good fruits indeed. But when they are the issues only of a better natural temper, of moral principles, and selfish considerations, when they have no other rise than nature somewhat refined, but not thoroughly changed, and rise no higher in their design than self, and have no other end but what is common or sinister, they are not fruits proper to the garden of God; they may be found in the wilderness, even amongst the heathen. There is a fineness, a loveliness in them; they are but finer weeds, and such as may grow in the common of the world. When they are destitute of a spiritual principle and end, they make up but an ethnical and natural, not a Christian and spiritual, morality. It is a pity that things so amiable and desirable should do any hurt; but they are apt, when rested on as fruits good enough, to hinder the growth of what is truly and spiritually good, yea, and to take them off from so much as looking after that which is better. It will be harder to convince such than others that they are unfruitful, and, till such conviction, they are not so much as in the way towards fruitfulness.

(11.) Others take that for good fruit which is good only externally. Such are they who are much in the external exercises of religion, perform the outward acts of godliness and holiness in public and private, attend the ordinances of worship, and submit to those of discipline, and would have holy administrations according to divine prescription; like them best when visibly conformed to the pattern in the mount, the rule of the word; spend the Sabbath in these holy employments, attend the word diligently, repeat it to others, employ some thoughts in meditating on it; read and search the Scriptures, as hoping therein for eternal life; express a firm belief of the whole as truly divine and infallibly true; reverence the name of God, so as not to endure any gross open profanation of it in themselves, or it may be in others; pray everywhere, in public, in their families, and in secret too; discourse of heavenly and spiritual things currently, as occasion is offered; sing the praises of God, to outward appearance, devoutly; seek the knowledge of God and of their soul-concernments themselves, and take some pains, have some care to instruct others. And are not these good fruits? Indeed they make such a goodly show, that those who bear them may be apt to think they are not obliged to bring forth any better. Here are the external lineaments of holiness well drawn, and to the life, so as the piece may be taken for that very thing, of which it is but a picture, and a mere artificial representation. But, you know, the draught of the best artist is not indeed the fruit of the womb, though it may be exactly like a child; there wants a soul to inform and enliven it. There is the colour and proportion of the several parts, but they are not living members. And so it is here. If the soul concur not in these exercises of religion, if that do not enliven them, and be stirring and active therein; if the heart be not in motion towards God, while the outward man is employed in holy duties; if the heart pray not, while the lips pronounce the words of a prayer, or the ear attends them; if the affections keep not time with the expressions in praises, or petitions, or confessions; if the soul comply not with the word, and run not into the mould of it, so as to admit the impressions of it intimately and effectually; if God be not worshipped in the spirit, and the heart kneel not, or lie not prostrate before him when there are outward

postures of reverence; if the soul outmove not the lips in our addresses to him, and the inward man, the powers of the soul, be not thoroughly engaged in these holy services; why, then, all these religious employments are but bodily exercise, which profits nothing, is altogether fruitless. Here is but in all this a form of godliness, without the power and life of it. This makes but the picture, the mere skeleton of a fruitful Christian; the proportions and bare resemblance of him, but without life and soul. Here is the colour and the figure of good fruit, and such as may deceive the eye, but all is only the effect of art, which can represent that to the life that has no life in it, and can make that seem good fruit which is really no such thing. Yet because these are so like good fruit, they are taken to be the same, and those that bear them presume they are good enough, and are thereby hindered from minding or endeavouring to bring forth better.

This, and the other mistakes mentioned, are dangerous impediments to the fruitfulness the Lord expects from those that enjoy the means; and therefore I have the longer stayed in the discovery and removal of them.

6. Let me add another, but more briefly; and that is, looking more at comfort than at duty, studying the privileges to which we are advanced more than the service to which we are called, labouring more to get assurance than to do our work. All excesses in some things occasion defects in others. While we are too much in any one thing, we shall be too little in others, and it may be, such as are more necessary. Assurance and comforts are desirable, but fruitfulness is absolutely necessary. If we do not diligently and faithfully mind our duty in the latitude of it, and apply not ourselves wholly to the work the Lord has set us to do, we shall be found unfruitful. And then what place, what ground will there be for comfort or assurance? What claim can we lay to the privileges we are so much taken with? The end why the Lord offers us comfort and assurance of his love, is to make us cheerful in his service, and to encourage us in his work, and engage our hearts in it thoroughly. Now, if we mind the means more than the end, we act irregularly and irrationally.

What will you think of a servant who minds his refreshments more than his work? who takes more care, and spends more time about his meals than in his labour and employment? Will you think him a profitable servant, or expect much fruit of his labour? You are too like such servants when you are eager for comforts and spiritual refreshments, but less active for God in a way of serviceableness, and more backward to do or suffer what he calls you to. This is to be more for yourselves than for him; and while you are so disposed, he is not like to find much fruit on you. It is no commendation of Ephraim when he is compared to a ‘heifer that loves to tread out the corn,’ Hosea 10:11. It was the way of thrashing in those times to tread out the full sheaves with the feet of their cattle; and while they were so treading, their mouths were not to be muzzled, Deuteronomy 25:4, so that they were eating while they were at this work, therefore they liked this work, but were averse to the toil of the yoke and the labour of the plough, where they had not such liberty and encouragement. Ephraim was like one of these heifers; he loved the service that was sweetened with a present reward, and would pay itself while it was a-doing, but declined that which was laborious, and was not attended with such refreshments. Those of this temper will be less serviceable, and so less fruitful. The way to get comfort and assurance, and the sweet sense and improvement of your relations to God, and the privileges wherewith he honours and enhappies his servants, is to be ‘constant and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for then your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.’ The issue of it will be, the testimonies of his love and acceptance. But to be earnest for joy and comfort, and remiss in the Lord’s work, is the way to fall

short both of assurance and fruitfulness. Be not then so solicitous about receiving good, as in doing good. It is a more blessed thing to do than to receive. It is a directer way to abound in those fruits which the Lord will crown with rich blessings. Be not more careful to know that the Lord is your God than to shew yourselves to be his servants, by faithfulness, diligence, and activeness in the work of God. He that will mind his duty, and make it his business to be every way serviceable, and proceed in that way, though he walk in darkness, and see no light in God's countenance, is in the most probable way to comfort, but in a most certain way to fruitfulness.

7. Beware you be not much taken up with little things. These will take you off from the greater, wherein your chief and most valuable fruits consist. Let truths and duties have that proportion of your thoughts and endeavours which their weight and moment require. The 'tithing of mint, anise, and cummin,' will occasion the neglect of things which are βαρ■τερα το■ ν■μου, 'the weightier things of the law.' There are some matters of opinion and practice that are but in the skirts of religion and godliness, far from the heart of it, e. g. the less considerable questions about rites, order, discipline, &c. If these take us up as much or more than the vitals of godliness, we are like but to make an inconsiderable improvement in the main. And then whatever our proficiency be in minute things, and such as are not material, it will turn to no great account when God comes to seek for fruit. If we be more busy about the fringe and the lace than the body and soul of religion, or if that which is but as the hair be of more regard with us than the head of it, we may be fruitful in trifles, but barren in what is of greatest value and consequence. This is as if a gardener should take much pains in watering and pruning one small branch or sprig, but should do nothing at all to the main arms, or the body, or the root of the tree. That is not the way to make it bear well.

Having discovered the impediments which hinder your fruitfulness, and therewith shewed you the necessity of removing of them, and the way to do it, I proceed to some positive directions, such as, being duly observed, may promote your fruitfulness more directly.

1. Labour to be sensible of your barrenness. The sense of an evil is the first step towards its removal. He that observes not his distemper, and has no sense of it, will not look after cure, nor so much as think of it; it is like to grow upon him, and continue so till it prove mortal and incurable. He that is past sense is often past cure, and he that is without sense is so far without hope of relief that he is not in the way to it, nor will so much as seek it. Ephraim's condition was dangerous indeed, when there was cause to complain of him, as Hosea 7:9. If you would be fruitful, get true and effectual apprehensions of your unfruitfulness, such as may impress a lively and stirring sense of it upon your souls and consciences; endeavour to understand what the nature of it is, how much, how far it prevails, wherein it consists, and in what particulars you are chargeable, what are the causes of it, and what the danger; labour to see these severals, so as your eye may affect your heart, and so affect it, as it may set all in motion towards cure and redress.

(1.) Labour to know what is the nature and extent of your unfruitfulness, whether it be total or partial only; whether you be wholly barren, and bear no good fruit at all, or only bring not forth so much and so good as the Lord may expect from you. Get acquainted with the state of your souls; if there be not an universal change wrought therein, if the fallow-ground of your hearts be not ploughed up, no good fruit at all can grow there. If this be your condition, and you are not sensible of it, you will never look after that great change, without which you cannot be in any capacity for fruitfulness.

(2.) If you be not wholly fruitless, but only defective in part, labour to understand where the defect is, in quantity or quality. Be apprehensive of both, and how far it reaches, and the severals wherein it appears. Get a particular sense hereof; that is the best way to an universal redress. While you have only confused apprehensions of your unfruitfulness in general, and are not sensible of the particulars wherein distinctly you are guilty, you will do little or nothing towards a cure, or nothing to purpose; neither can others do it for you. A person that complains he is ill, but minds not where or how, nor gives any account of it so as the particular distemper may be discerned, is not in the way either to help himself or to have help from a physician. Resting in confused apprehensions and general complaints of barrenness, without searching in what parts of heart and life it lies, is the way to continue still unfruitful. Neither yourselves, nor others for you, can apply themselves particularly, and so not effectually, to remove it.

Search then every part of your souls, and every part of your conversations where fruit should appear, and observe what branch of either is too bare; how far your fruit is too little, how far it is not good; where it grows not thick enough, or where it is spoiled and corrupted.

Look into your minds. What is the good fruit that should grow there? High apprehensions of God; frequent meditation of his attributes, word, works, holy thoughts, minding of heaven and things above, and minding other things in a subserviency thereto; making use of the world, the objects and occurrences therein, to make it self-pregnant with spiritual thoughts and motions heavenward. Take notice how fruitless your minds are herein, how little they are so employed, how seldom such thoughts have admission, how short their stay is, how cold their welcome, how inconsiderable their efficacy, how easily they are diverted, how often stifled, how much your minds and thoughts run waste; what vanity, impertinency, curiosity or carnalness corrupts them, so that the fruits of your minds are neither much nor good. How near, how like you are to those who delight not to retain God in their thoughts, and the things of God. Get such a sense of this as the nature and consequence of it calls for.

Look into your hearts. The good fruits which these should bring forth are the acts and exercise of graces and holy affections to God and others. Observe if the exercise of some be not almost wholly neglected, if others be not seldom acted, though there be frequent occasions for it. If, when they do act, it be not very weakly, feebly, with much mixtures of corruption; and so, if your best fruits be not, as it were, very much worm-eaten, if not half rotten; take such notice hereof, as may strike your hearts with a due sense of it, and of the consequence of it.

Look into your lives. Observe what fruits these should bring forth unto God, yourselves, your families, those to whom you are specially related, what and how much unto the household of faith, unto strangers, unto enemies, what their several conditions and circumstances call for, what your several talents oblige you to, what variety of occasions and opportunities require, what you owe to their souls, what to their other concernments, what acts of godliness, of sobriety, of righteousness, of mercy, of charity, you should abound in. Observe how many of these are omitted, how many slightly performed, how many sorely corrupted in respect of their principle, or their matter, or their manner, or their end. These diligently observed, if either multitude or weight would make you sensible, will help you to a great and a particular sense of your unfruitfulness.

(3.) Be sensible of the causes of your barrenness. Make diligent inquiry after them, and engage yourselves to a careful observance of them. It is here, as in other cases, to know the cause is half

the cure.

Take notice what weeds they are which choke the seed, what vermin it is that corrupts the fruit. You will not take pains to pluck up those or destroy these, unless you be sensible what mischief they do you. Search out those inward distempers which hinder your souls from thriving and growing fruitful. Be sensible of them, as of such a judgment as locusts, and canker-worms, and caterpillars, and palmer-worms were counted of old, when they destroyed the fruits of the earth, and made the land barren and desolate, as it is expressed, Joel 2:1-32; such desolation will tolerated lusts make in your souls. Observe whether it be spiritual sloth or too much business; whether negligence of your souls, or too much eagerness after earthly things, or little things in religion; whether it be mistakes or prejudice. The former account given you of the impediments of fruitfulness, may be helpful to you herein. If you discover the true cause of your barrenness, and be sensible how pernicious it is, that will make you resolute against it, and so contribute much towards more fruitfulness.

(4.) Be sensible of the sinfulness and danger of barrenness, how much guilt it will involve you in, what dreadful calamities of all sorts it will expose you to. Those many particulars which I made use of as motives before, will serve also as means for this purpose. And let them be remembered and so improved to make you more and more apprehensive how exceeding sinful, how extremely dangerous it is to continue barren under the means of fruitfulness. The more sensible you are of this, the more careful, the more active will you be to produce more and better fruits; and that is the next way to more improvement. It is want of sense that hinders action, and it is through want of activeness that nothing goes forward in our spiritual course. A barren womb was counted a shame, a reproach, a curse. How impatient was Rachel of it! Genesis 30:1. And what an affliction was it to Hannah! 1 Samuel 1:8, 1 Samuel 1:10-11.

Spiritual barrenness is a greater grievance in itself, and should be so to us, and no less resented by us. And if we were duly convinced of our unfruitfulness in the severals wherein we are guilty, and truly sensible of it as our sin, our shame, our reproach, our burden, one of our greatest afflictions; if we had such a sense of it as would make it fearful, and shameful, and grievous, and afflictive, and burdensome to us: this would lead us (as it did them of old) to take such courses as would not suffer us to continue long unfruitful. But we are so, and we continue so, because we make little or nothing of it, we go lightly under it, we are too well content it should be so. There is no such longing for deliverance from this affliction, as from outward petty grievances; none of Hannah's sore weeping for this barrenness; we are in no such bitterness of soul on this account. And why is it thus, but either because we are not apprehensive that we are unfruitful, nor how far, nor wherefore, nor wherein; or else because we have no such sense of the evil of it as our souls should be possessed with. A due sense of it, as of a dangerous and burdensome grievance, would bid fair for an effectual redress; this would set all in a quick motion towards it; this would beget such longings, such wrestlings, such diligence and activeness for it, as would not fall short of abundant fruitfulness.

2. Get new natures. There must be that great and universal change made in your souls, by renewing grace and the Spirit of regeneration, before you can bring forth good fruit. You must be born again before you can bear much, nay, before you can bring forth any fruit at all that is truly good. Nothing more evident in Scripture than this. You must be 'renewed in the spirit of your

minds,' and 'put on the new man,' Ephesians 4:23-24. That new man, that new nature, must be created in you, which consists in holiness and true righteousness, before you can bring forth the fruits of holiness and righteousness. Holiness and righteousness planted in the soul at our new birth is the root of all good fruit. You may as well expect that herbs or corn will grow without a root, as that any good fruit should grow where holiness and righteousness is not first rooted in the heart.

Therefore that is the method of the Spirit of God in Scripture; when he calls for good fruit, he first advises to look to the root, Colossians 3:10. 'After the image of God,' which consists in holiness and righteousness, there is the root; and these being planted, he proceeds to call for good fruit, Colossians 3:12-14, and afterwards requires relative duties, which are the fruits proper to wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, masters, in the rest of the chapter and the beginning of the next. These fruits will not be brought forth till the new man be put on, i. e. till renewing grace be planted in the soul. So the Lord requiring better fruit of the Jews, that his fury might not consume them, in order thereto calls upon them to get their hearts circumcised, Jeremiah 4:8. That which is called circumcision of the heart in the Old Testament, is renewing and quickening by the Spirit of regeneration in the New Testament, Colossians 2:11, Colossians 2:13. The soil must be good, that the fruit may be good. The old soil of nature unrenewed bears but such fruit as that Hebrews 6:8. The fruit cannot be good unless the tree be good, Matthew 7:16–18. So Luke 6:43-45. He that brings forth good fruit must be first a good tree; and ho is a good tree, as the metaphor is explained, who is good at heart, i. e. in whose heart there is a treasury of grace. No good thing, no good fruit, can be expected where there is not such a treasure within. You may as reasonably look for figs of thorns, or grapes of brambles, as good fruits from those whose hearts are not sincerely good, whose souls are not enriched with this heavenly treasure, the treasure of grace and holiness. Nay, those who are not born again and quickened by regenerating grace, are not only bad trees, in Scripture phrase, but such as are dead. That is the state of every unregenerate soul, he is 'dead in trespasses and sins,' and some 'twice dead, and plucked up by the roots,' Jude 1:12. And what fruit can you expect from a dead tree? Till you be 'quickened by the Spirit' of Christ, and made 'alive unto God,' all the fruits you bear will be no better than 'dead works.'

Oh then, if ever you would bear any fruit that is good, any fruits that God can take pleasure in, if you would 'flee from the wrath to come,' that dreadful wrath which is coming upon all who are barren, mind the new birth, make sure that you are born again; mind this as that 'one thing needful,' that one thing upon which all fruitfulness, and consequently all happiness, depends. Beg this of God, above all things in the world, that he would give you new hearts and make you new creatures; that he would raze out the image and superscription of Satan, which naturally every soul bears, and impress on you his own image, created in holiness and righteousness. Give no rest to your souls till you have some evidence that you are renewed in the spirit of your minds, and in the frame and temper of your hearts; till you can say upon some good ground, 'Old things are passed away, and all things become new.'

Till then the best of your fruits will but have a show of goodness, such as may delude you and deceive others, but will never procure you comfort here or reward hereafter. 'Be not deceived, God will not be mocked,' Galatians 6:7-9. 'He that is in the flesh' can do no other than 'sow to the flesh;' and he is in the flesh who is acquainted with no other birth but his first, his carnal and natural birth, who never knew what it was to be born of the Spirit, John 3:5-6. 'Marvel not that I say unto you, Ye must be born again;' I say no more than Christ, than the apostle says; till then, you will never bear

fruit of which you can reap anything but corruption, i. e. the temporal and eternal ruin of body and soul. If you expect anything better, you will find yourselves miserably deceived. And take heed you be not deluded by others. There are some teachers admirably wise in their own conceit, who, having no experience of the new birth in themselves, or following Pelagius, who flattered nature and denied the necessity of renewing grace, they waive the doctrine of regeneration, and call upon their hearers for morality, as though that were all in all: wherein they proceed as wisely, and are [as] like to prove successful, as if they were pruning a dead tree to make it fruitful, or taking pains with a bramble to make it bear grapes, or looking for fruits where there is no root. That no fruit truly good can be expected where the new birth is not the foundation, and renewing grace the root of it, is a truth so clear in Scripture, that if an angel from heaven should preach any other doctrine, we might upon good ground count him a deluder.

3. Get the inward principles of holiness strengthened and enlarged if you would be fruitful. The first thing you are to mind is to get grace planted in the heart; without this, as I now told you, there can be no good fruit at all. The next thing is to get it fortified and increased; without this there cannot be much fruit, and without much you cannot be fruitful. The Lord expects not only some good fruit, but much of it, proportionably to the means of improvement vouchsafed. He looks for much, of those to whom much is committed. And indeed it is not good enough, though it may have some goodness in it, unless it answer his expectation. And on this account it will not be good unless it be much, and much it cannot be when the principle it produces is weak and little. For good fruits are the acts of holiness in heart and life, and everything acts as it is; operari sequitur esse. That which is but small and feeble cannot ordinarily do much nor do it so well. Where grace is weak, it will but act feebly; the acts of it will neither be so many nor so vigorous, and so our fruit will neither be so much nor so good as when grace in the heart is much and strong. When it is such, the virtue of it will reach farther, and be able to fill a larger sphere of fruitfulness, and there will not be such mixtures of corruption to vitiate or rot it. When a tree is well and firmly rooted, it will grow higher, the body of it stronger and more bulky, and the branches more and also more spreading, and so it will be capable of bearing much more fruit than another. Holiness in the heart is the root of all good fruits (as I shewed before). That the trees of righteousness may be strong and spreading, and so very fruitful, you must look well to the root; you must dig about it, and open it, and water it; I mean you must be diligent, by all means, to have holiness thrive in your hearts, to make it strong and keep it active, to remove whatever may hinder its spreading, or obstruct the diffusing of its virtue into the several branches of your souls and lives. ‘Give all diligence,’ that every grace may increase and abound, 2 Peter 1:5-8. ‘If these be in you and abound, you will not be barren,’ &c. To be rich in inward holiness is the way to be full of good fruits, rich in good works, for out of the good treasury of the heart those good things proceed; and when this treasure abounds there, out of the abundance of the heart will they flow freely and plentifully. It is not enough that the soil be good, unless it be kept in heart; it is not enough that your souls are sanctified, unless they be kept up in a gracious temper, always ready and disposed to exercise grace upon all occasions. That is the way to be ready to every good work, Titus 3:1. And so whenever the Lord comes seeking fruit he may find some.

4. Be much in the use of ordinances. They are the means appointed by God for the improvement of his people’s souls to fruitfulness; and being duly used, they will not fail to attain their end, they will certainly produce good fruits. You may be as confident of it as that meat and drink will nourish

you, or that rain in season will make the earth fruitful. For the means of grace are, by the Lord's appointment, that to your souls which meat is to your bodies, or rain is to the ground. That of the prophet seems spoken of a promise for deliverance, but it holds true of the word in general, and we may conclude the same in proportion of the other ordinances, Isaiah 55:10-11. And it follows, Isaiah 55:13, those who were before unfruitful as the briar and thorn, shall be like fair and goodly trees, they shall abound in graces and good fruits. The Lord would never have appointed those means for this end, but that they are apt to effect it, and it would be a disparagement to him who so appointed them if they should not attain it. But then they must be duly used; let me tell you how, briefly, in three or four particulars.

(1.) Your hearts must be employed in them. The soul should be thoroughly engaged therein, Jeremiah 30:21. We should strongly oblige our hearts, and make a covenant with our souls to approach unto God, when we go about holy duties, otherwise we shall but do the work of the Lord negligently; and so, when the blessing of the ordinances is to make us fruitful, they may leave us under the curse of barrenness; for, Jeremiah 48:10, negligence in worship is less tolerable than in the work there spoken of. You must hear, as for life, Deuteronomy 32:46-47. You should pray, as if you were in a conflict; put out the strength of your souls, as if you were wrestling; συναγων■σαθαι, is the apostle's word, Romans 15:30. So use the ordinances, and they will not fall short of their end; the blessing of them will come down upon your souls, like rain upon the mown grass, to refresh and make you fruitful.

(2.) Come with an appetite, longing for the blessings of them; come with souls pinched with their spiritual wants, sensible that you need them; as your bodies, when faint or hungry, are sensible that they need refreshment, 1 Peter 2:2. If you would grow strong and fruitful by the word, come to it as the hungry infant comes to the breast, so as nothing else will satisfy it. If you come as you do to a meal with a full stomach, no wonder if you be 'sent empty away,' Luke 1:53. He will fill with the good things of his ordinances those that come hungering after them, but the full he sends empty away, full of nothing but the soul-distempers they came clogged with. Why do so many continue unfruitful under the means of grace, but because they come out of custom, are too well content to go as they come, are too indifferent whether they reap any spiritual advantage thereby or no? Alas! when so exceeding much might be gained hereby, we get no more, because we no more desire it. 'The Lord's hand is not shortened,' &c., but we are 'straitened in our own bowels;' our desires are contracted, and shrunk up into nothing; our mouths are shut, when the Lord's hand is open. Nothing can get into our souls till desires open them; these would make us drink in those heavenly showers, as the dry chapped earth drinks in the rain, and fruitfulness would be the issue of it in our souls, as it is in the ground, Hebrews 6:1-20. If we came to the ordinances with earnest and sincere desires after the blessings thereof, a blessed fruitfulness would be our portion, we should then be under the influence of that sweet promise, Matthew 5:1-48.

(3.) Content not yourselves with the ordinances without the presence of God in them. He is present everywhere, by common acts of providence, but more in some places than others, according as he more or less appears and shews himself in his power and glory. He is said to be most in heaven, because he is there most gloriously manifested; but next to heaven, most in his ordinances: there he gives us ground to expect a more special presence than elsewhere ordinarily on earth. And then is he so present when he concurs with his ordinances, makes them powerful and effectual; when he shews his goings, discovers his glory, exerts his power, distils his

influences. Then is he present with them, when in the use of them he shines into the mind, stirs in the conscience, opens the heart, moves the will, excites the affections. So that there is no fructifying virtue in the ordinances unless the Lord be present there. So that to be contented with the use of ordinances, without the divine presence, is to be satisfied with an empty dish, instead of that which should nourish and refresh you. Heaven would not be heaven without that glorious presence; and the means of grace will not be the means of grace, cannot be the means of fruitfulness, without this special presence. There is no healing virtue in these waters, nothing to heal those distempers which keep you barren, unless the angel of his presence descend and trouble them, or move upon them. And therefore, whatever other circumstances commend or endear the ordinances to you, be satisfied with nothing without this special and efficacious presence. Beg this importunately before you go, as Moses, Exodus 33:13-15. The Lord had assured him, Exodus 33:2, that he would send an angel before him; but the conduct of an angel, without the presence of God, would not avail them, nor satisfy him. If the ordinances were administered to you by angels, yet would not they be effectual, nor you fruitful, without the Lord's presence. If Paul should preach to you, if Apollos were your minister, yet would not the word be fruitful, unless God gave the increase; that so depends upon his presence and concurrence, as nothing, no act, that which is extraordinary and miraculous, can yield an increase without it, 1 Corinthians 3:6, and so he applies himself to God for it, 2 Corinthians 9:10. Be importunate for this presence of God before you come, and come with such longings for it as David expresses, Psalms 63:1-2; whatsoever he saw in the sanctuary (and there were glorious things to be seen), nothing would satisfy his longings and thirstings, but the sight of the glory and power of God there; nothing but that presence which he was wont to have: 'As I have seen thee,' &c. And when you find the Lord withdraws, when at any time you enjoy not his presence; when your hearts are hard and dead under the ordinances, not touched from above, not warmed, not affected, not in motion; when, by the ineffectualness of your attendance on them, you find reason to conclude that he is absent, that you see not his goings, feel not his working, find no footsteps nor impress of the divine presence on your hearts: let the Lord know that you count this a grievous affliction, that you cannot tell how to live without his presence; that the ordinances, however otherwise the special solace of your souls, are no joy to you without him. Give him no rest till he return, and impregnate the ordinances with his influences, and make them fruitful, and you by them, with his presence, Song of Solomon 4:16. By refreshing gales, and fruitful inspirations of his presence and Spirit, graces are quickened, strengthened, increased, acted; they flow forth, and abound in pleasant fruits.

(4.) Use not the ordinances for themselves. Account them not your end, but the means to attain it. Look not upon your use of them as the fruit which God expects, but as the way to that fruitfulness. Do not think your fruitfulness consists in hearing, reading, praying, meditating, conference, or communicating; this is as if the husbandman should think his harvest lay in tilling, and ploughing, and sowing his ground: if he mind nothing more, and look no further, his barn will be empty at the year's end, and he undone in the conclusion. These are not the fruits of the earth, but the way and means to make the earth yield them. So are the ordinances; if you use them, and look at no other fruit, you will reap little but your labour for your pains. Their end is something further than their use; if you rest in the use of them as the end, you will fall short of fruitfulness, which is their end indeed, and continue barren.

God will not count you fruitful, because you are much and often in the use of ordinances, no more than a vine-dresser will count a vine fruitful, because it is much dunged, and often watered; if he have no other fruit of it, his labour is lost, and the tree in danger to be cut down as fruitless. That is your case, that is your danger, if your fruit be but your being employed in holy duties. This perishes in the using, and you may perish for all this, as those that are barren. He that useth the means, as though it were his end, both abuseth the means and loseth the end. Rest not in your performance of holy duties, how much, how well soever you seem to perform them, unless you find some good effect thereof upon your hearts and in your lives. For all your diligence and exactness herein, if nothing more, nothing better come of it, let it be as grievous to you as it would be to a gardener, if, after much pains in digging, and planting, and watering, he should see nothing spring up, or grow, he would look upon himself as in danger to be undone. And so may you; nor will the use of ordinances help or secure you, unless they help you to be fruitful; and if you would have them helpful to you this way, you must use them for this end, and not as if they were the end of their own use.

(5.) Make fruitfulness your business. Look upon it as your greatest concernment in this world, and accordingly mind and pursue it. Let it not be a πρεργον, something that you mind on the by, when other things you are more taken up with will give you leave; but make it the main work, and great design of your lives, to be fruitful and live fruitfully. It is for want of this usually that we remain barren. There is such a concurrence of all other things requisite to make us fruitful, that our great defectiveness herein cannot rationally be charged upon anything so much as this, that we do not make it our business to abound with good fruits. The Lord has declared himself willing, yea, desirous, that we should be filled with the fruits of the Spirit. He calls for this importunately, by his word, by his providences, by our own consciences; he threatens and afflicts us for want of them; he affords us means abundantly sufficient for this purpose; he promises his concurrence and assistance, to make them effectual; he furnishes us with abilities, opportunities, and advantages for the improvement of them. We have much more to secure our success herein than in other affairs, wherein we ordinarily succeed well enough, using but common prudence and industry. What, then, can be the reason that we are not more successful in this, that so many who are planted in the Lord's vineyard bear so little fruit? So far as I can discern, in ordinary cases, the true cause of this is, because we do not make fruitfulness our business. When we have pursued this in our thoughts so far as we can, it must at last be resolved into this as the main reason of it, we make it not our chief work and design to be full of good fruits; something else is more our business, more minded, more designed, more pursued. We have something else more in chase which diverts us; our hearts are more upon some other business; the main streams which should carry us to this run some other way. We mind this as though we did not mind, and seek it as though we sought it not. We seem to seek this, but we strive not for it; we move towards it, but we run not; we offer at it, but we wrestle not; and it is running, striving, wrestling by which effectual endeavours for fruitfulness are expressed in Scripture. We act not [at] such a rate as becomes those who make it their grand design, nor as we see others act for that which they make their business. We follow not this as a man whose heart is on the world pursues some promising worldly design; and manage not this affair as careful, industrious men manage their business. We do not take such care and pains about it. This seems to me to be the principal cause why many, who, in respect of the means they enjoy, might be filled with the fruits of righteousness and holiness, are very much to seek in many of them.

Since, then, there is a concurrence of all other things, all that is requisite on God's part, to render you fruitful, and this is the chief remora that stops it on your parts, resolve for the future to be no more wanting to yourselves in that which infinitely concerns you. Make it but your business, bestow but on it that care and pains which you allow to that which you make your business in the world, and you may be certain of more success than any can insure to you in earthly undertakings. It is a sure way to be fruitful, to be rich in all good fruits.

(6.) Make use of afflictions to promote fruitfulness. Pruning is a means to make a tree fruitful, Leviticus 25:3. So the Lord, when provoked to deny the means of fruitfulness, because they were not improved, threatens the barren vineyard shall be no more pruned, Isaiah 5:6. Afflictions are that to the soul which pruning is to a fruit-tree; as necessary, as advantageous, to render it fruitful. Hence those plants which the Lord will have improved he will purge or prune them, John 15:2. Those branches he has no hopes of, αἴρει, he cuts them off for the fire; but those which he intends to make more fruitful, καθαίρει, he purges, he prunes them. As a vine-dresser cuts off the suckers, lops off the twigs and superfluous branches, which are good for nothing, but spend the sap which should make the better boughs fruitful, so does the Lord, as by other means, so by afflictions, cut off those luxuriances which suck away the strength of the heart that should run out into good fruits. If, then, you would be more and more fruitful, make use of afflictions and outward calamities, which the Lord exercises you with for this end. Submit to pruning, and see that it be improved for this purpose. But how may afflictions be so improved, for the rendering of us more fruitful? Briefly,

[1.] Observe what excesses you are apt to run into; what useless excrescences or luxuriances sprout out anywhere in your souls or lives; what suckers there are which spend the strength of your hearts, in any degree unprofitably. Take notice what it is that takes up more of your thoughts, affections, endeavours than is due to it; what relation, what enjoyment, what design or business, what recreation or refreshment, is wont to hurry you into excesses, and to take up more of your hearts, or time, or talents that it ought to have. Make use of afflictions, to wean you from these, and to keep you within your bounds, which they tempt you to transgress. Apply them as wormwood and gall, as offered on purpose by the Lord to embitter those things, the lusciousness of which has endangered and ensnared your souls, and drawn you into too great neglects of God and your heavenly interests, upon the due minding of which depends your fruitfulness. Those excesses and inordinacies spend the sap, and strength, and vigour of your souls unprofitably, which, if it ran the right way, would turn into good fruits. Make use of afflictions to lop these off, though it go to the quick to do it; sharper chastenings must do it if others will not serve the turn, unless the Lord will leave you under barrenness. When afflictions are sharp and bitter, say, These are the issue of my excesses and inordinacies, and I am like to suffer more by them if they continue. And so make use of sufferings in any kind, to dead the heart to them; then they are lopped off and wither when the heart dies to them. And these suckers being cut off, the other branches will better thrive, and be more fruitful.

[2.] Exercise faith for this purpose. Depend on God for such an issue and effect of afflictions, that he will so order and manage them that they shall tend to make you more fruitful, that he will help you to such an improvement of them. Dependence on the Lord for it doth engage him to do it. Those that trust him 'shall not be ashamed;' i.e. shall not be disappointed, Romans 10:11. It is disappointment that makes ashamed, when he falls short of what he confidently expected. Those

that in faith expect this of the Lord, shall not find their expectation frustrated, shall not meet with any disappointment that will make them ashamed of their confidence, Psalms 9:18. The expectation of the afflicted shall not come to nothing; the Lord will not forget to answer his expectation. Do but trust God, and he will not herein fail you. And there are two strong supports of faith, great encouragements to believe that he will sanctify afflictions, so as to make you fruitful: his design, and his promise.

First, It is his end and design in afflicting his children. It is not to satisfy his justice, nor to give vent to his anger, when he is full of it, nor to please himself in the smart of those who have provoked him; but, as he graciously expresses it, Hebrews 12:10, that is his end in chastening his children, to make them more ‘partakers of his holiness’ than they were before, and without chastening, and so more capable of bringing forth the fruits of holiness. So John 15:2, when the vine-dresser makes use of the pruning hook, and cuts the vine, and makes it bleed, his design is not to kill it, but to make it more fruitful. And such is the Lord’s end in pruning his people by afflictions; and this being his design, we may be sure he is not willing to lose it or to fall short of his end; that would be a dishonour to him, such a one as the sons of men cannot digest. And upon this ground faith may raise itself into confidence, that he will promote fruitfulness by afflictions, since that is the end he proposes to himself in afflicting, and these are the means he uses for the effecting of that end. And it is not for his honour to lose his end, or to use means which are not effectual for the accomplishing of it.

Secondly, You have his promise for it. He has passed his word, and engaged his truth and faithfulness, that afflictions shall have this effect, Hebrews 12:11; it will bring forth these fruits. This, when God’s method is observed, is so certainly future, that he expresses it as present: ‘It bringeth forth.’ It is confirmed by experience too: Solidissima pars est corporis, quam frequens usus agitavit (Seneca). Romans 5:3-5, affliction puts these graces upon trial and exercise, and exercise strengthens and increases them; and hence the fruit of affliction is more ‘precious than gold,’ 1 Peter 1:7. It is hereby tried, and often trials put upon frequent exercise; and the more it is acted, the more it is strengthened, and consequently the fruit of it is more and better; more both in quantity and value, precious fruit.

Now, the Lord having promised, and given experiments too, of his faithfulness in performing his promise, what can be more desired for the encouragement of our faith? Act it accordingly, believe the Lord, so shall your souls prosper. It will not only purify the heart itself, and purge out those distempers that keep you barren, but engage the Lord to make afflictions effectual to promote your fruitfulness.

[3.] Seek him for this purpose. He intends this by afflictions, and has promised it; but for this he will be sought unto. After the Lord had declared his intention, and given his word that he would plant what was desolate, yet he adds, Ezekiel 36:37, Be importunate with the Lord, that he would make you fruitful by afflictions; pray, and that your prayers may be prevalent, pray in faith; and that faith may be strong, let the design and promise of God be its support. This is the way to put life and spirits both into your faith and prayer. The apostle James, having given an account of the fruits which afflictions are apt to produce, James 1:2-3, adds, James 1:5, ‘If any want wisdom,’ to make such a fruitful improvement of afflictions, ‘let him pray for it.’ But how must he pray? Every mode of praying will not serve the turn. He tells you, James 1:6, this is the way, in brief, to make use of

afflictions for fruitfulness; I have given a large account of it.

(7.) Labour to make all things subservient unto fruitfulness. Improve all that you are entrusted with, all that you can make any such advantage of, for this purpose. Make use of parts, and gifts, and other enjoyments, for this end; manage them all so as the product of them may be good fruits. It is true, holiness in the heart is the root and stock upon which, and upon nothing else without it, that which is truly and spiritually good doth grow. But other scions, though otherwise incapable of bearing good fruit, being grafted into this stock, may bring forth excellent fruit; the sap and juice of grace conveyed into them, changes their nature and quality; and instead of that which is wild and degenerate (which is their natural issue), makes them capable of bearing fruit pleasant to God and man. And as by the influence of grace they may be improved for such fruitfulness, so the Lord expects we should actually so improve them. They are talents which are committed to us for this end; and the Lord, that has entrusted us with them, and made us stewards of them, looks that such advantage should be made thereof, and will call us to an account for it. We must shortly give an account of our stewardship; and if we cannot shew good fruit, as to the improvement of these talents, we shall be found unfaithful stewards, unprofitable servants, and in danger to have a process formed against us accordingly.

Those who have more advantages than others, should be careful to bring forth more and better fruits than others; or else they will not be able, when the great day of reckoning comes, to give a good account of it.

[1.] Those that have a better natural temper, have this way an advantage thereby above others. Grace in such a temper is like apples of gold in pictures of silver; it is as a diamond better set, the lustre and beauty of it more appears; but then, if we would improve it for fruitfulness, the use of it must not be to please others, or to set off ourselves, or to gain love and reputation to ourselves, but to insinuate ourselves the more advantageously into others, to do them good, to sweeten spiritual advice and reproofs, which, though for the health and recovery of their souls, yet, as bitter pills, and unpleasant receipts, would not otherwise go down; to commend the grace of Christ to those that are without, which appears more commendable thus set off, than in a crabbed, and sour, and severe temper; to render the ways of Christ more pleasant and lovely, so as to overcome prejudice, and melt obstinacy into a compliance. You know the sun is more powerful when it shines in a clear heaven, than when it was clouded, and the weather stormy; and so has grace the more advantage for a fruitful efficacy upon others, when it is not encumbered with a cloudy or stormy temper. And when it is not so improved, the advantage is so far lost, and the fruits not brought forth, to which they are hereby more than others obliged.

[2.] Natural parts should be improved to fruitfulness. Any clearness of judgment, or quickness of apprehension, or strength of memory, when it is receptive or retentive; any degree of these should be made use of for our Lord’s advantage, and the benefit of others, else we let ground, which is improveable, lie fallow, and so far we shall be found barren. Those that have least of these owe something on this account; those that have more, ought herewith to be more serviceable, and so more fruitful. They are accountable according to the proportion of what is committed to them. Our faculties are not given us for nothing, or for our own use only, or to exercise them as we please; the end even of these is fruitfulness, the producing of that whereby we may please and honour God, and do good to others. Our Master gives us not tools for no purpose; he expects work, and

that we should use them in his service; and the better the tools are, the better work does he look for. When we have more than others, we should be helpful thereby not only to ourselves, but also to those who have less. A good understanding should be a guide to others in the ways of God, so far as there is a call and opportunity to give them light. A quick apprehension should be a relief to the slowness and dulness of others in spiritual things; as it grasps more and more easily, so it should communicate more freely, and offer it more clearly, according as several capacities require. A good memory should be a good treasury, for the enriching both of himself and others with the precious things laid up there. Both things new and old, things taken in for daily use or laid up for constant store, as an householder, in a free entertainment, brings forth, according to that, Matthew 13:51, 52; and so a good man, Matthew 12:35. The more good to ourselves and others is the issue of natural accomplishments, the more fruitful we are.

[3.] So spiritual gifts, though but common, should be improved for the bearing of good fruit; and those who would be fruitful indeed, must so use them. A gift of prayer and utterance; a faculty of expressing ourselves to God or to man, as occasion requires; ability to discourse of the things of God, or to make use of other common things in subserviency thereto: the chief fruit of such gifts is edifying; and the apostle directs to this as that which was principally to be aimed at in the use of gifts, when they were extraordinary, 1 Corinthians 14:12. The gift of prayer should be improved in praying for and with others, as our place requires. Those that restrain it are enemies to the fruit of it, whatever is pretended or offered instead of it. You may carve the bark of a tree, and cut it into forms and figures of grapes, or other fruit; but that is the effect of art, it is forced upon the tree; it is not genuine fruit, nor that which is expected of a fruit-tree. The gift of discourse should be improved, as there is occasion, for reproof, admonition, instruction, comfort, exhortation; for provoking one another to love and good works. This is good fruit, and tends to make others fruitful.

[4.] So power and interest may be improved for fruitfulness. Interest in the esteem or affections of others, should be made use of to draw them into ways wherein they may bring forth fruit unto God, and to lead them on to more and more fruitful walking. Interest in those that are great, to engage them to be a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat; such storms and heats are as injurious to good fruits, or those who bear them. So power or authority over others should be improved by superiors of all sorts, for the weeding out of sin, which chokes good fruit, for the bringing of those under them into fruitful ways, under fruitful influences, and for the keeping of them there; which was the Lord's confidence of Abraham, Genesis 18:19, and the endeavour of Moses and Joshua, in reference to their people.

[5.] Outward enjoyments, they afford advantages for fruitfulnes. And the apostle calls for their improvement this way, and shews withal what fruits they may be helpful to bring forth, 1 Timothy 6:17-18. That is the best that can be said of riches, they give those who have them a capacity to do good; they give them the advantage to be rich in good works, which are more precious and valuable riches by far than outward abundance; and they are richest this way who are most 'ready to distribute,' most 'willing to communicate;' as ready to use for God what he gives them as to receive more; as forward to be rich in good works as to be rich in the world. It is a great degeneracy, and most unworthy a Christian, to be otherwise disposed; to be eager after much, but backward to employ much in ways of fruitfulness. Then only are we faithful stewards; then only do we employ plenty for the ends for which it is given; then only is it a complete blessing, when it runs out freely in good fruits for the advantage of God's interest in the world, for the promoting of

knowledge, holiness, and righteousness, and the means that tend to promote them; for maintaining the gospel and ministry of Christ, and upholding his worship and institutions; for the repressing of his enemies, for the relief of his members; and, in the apostle's words, for doing good to all. When they help you to rich expressions both of love to Christ, brotherly love and charity to all, then do they make you rich indeed, rich and full of good fruits. And so must you endeavour to use them, if ever you would have true comfort in them, or ever expect to give a tolerable account of them. He will never be found a faithful steward who improves them not for such fruitfulness.

[6.] The world, not only as it is an enjoyment, but as it is an object, may help you to good fruits. You may see that in the creatures, in the occurrences, in the course and administration of the world, which may acquaint you with God, and bring him to your thoughts, and raise your apprehensions of him, and engage your affections to him, your love, delight, fear, desire. You may see that in it that is sufficient to embitter sin; a world of motives to set your hearts against it. You may see many things in it which may help you to the exercise of holiness; much to encourage faith, to teach you wisdom, to engage you to thankfulness, to lead you to self-denial, and make you humble and vile in your own eyes; much to wean you from things below, endear heaven to you, and make ye in love with the appearing of Christ. These are good fruits; yet even this world will help us to them, if it were duly improved for this purpose. And if you would be fruitful indeed, the world, and all you have and are, must be made use of to promote your fruitfulness.

(8.) Aim at universal fruitfulness. Make it your design and endeavour to be fruitful in all things which the Lord requires of you, or commends to you as good fruit, and towards all objects and persons who ought to taste the goodness of it, and should reap any fruit of you. Be fruitful in all things which the Holy Ghost calls good fruit. Satisfy not yourselves with some small things; a little shrivelled fruit will not answer the Lord's expectation. Content not yourselves with some great things so as to neglect others, though small in your account. The want of that which you count small may be a great neglect, and things little in themselves are often great in their consequence, and the want of them may render things great in project little or nothing in the issue. And so it is certainly when nothing will be effectual or acceptable, unless all be designed and endeavoured, which is the case here, Psalms 119:6. Let him do what he will, he that minds not the doing of all that is required, of bearing all the fruit that is expected, will be ashamed in the issue, can have no confidence that he will fare better. Be not contented with a few things, whatever they be, small or great, no, nor with many things neither. When all is a duty, neither few nor many will be a discharge. Where all is expected, even in many things (while short of all) there will be a disappointment, and that is the case here; not a few, not many fruits only, but all is our duty and our Lord's expectation. The apostle's prayer for the Hebrews shews it, Hebrews 13:20-21. He prays the Lord would accomplish in them whatever is wanting, so καταρτ■σαι signifies. And something is wanting where there is not every good work, every good act, wherein mind, or heart, or life should be fruitful. For if we endeavour not to do all and every good work, inward or outward, we do not his will nor that which is ε■■ρεστον, well-pleasing in his sight. He is not well pleased unless we design to do all that pleases him, to bear all pleasant fruit. Labour then to be fruitful in all. In holy thoughts. Let them be frequent, Psalms 139:17-18. Let them be pleasing and delightful, else they will not be frequent, and so the mind not fruitful, Psalms 104:34, and Psalms 119:97. Let them be fixed, else they will not be effectual; let them have good entertainment till they have done

their business, till they have left some impression upon the soul, whose influence may reach the life. If they vanish before, they prove untimely fruit. Be fruitful in good inclinations, that the tendency of your souls may be upwards, and the constant bent of it towards God; that you may be still in motion either towards him or for him; towards him even through the crowd of earthly business, and for him in those things wherein others are for themselves. In good designs and intentions, that all of them, in all undertakings, may be the pleasing, and honouring, and enjoying of God, that none may be tolerated that cross these, none entertained or pursued but in a subserviency unto these. And a due observance of, and inquiry into them, whether they be of this nature and tendency, that according as you find them, so or otherwise they may be suppressed or promoted. In good purposes and resolutions, for God, and all that pleases him; against sin, and the world, and self, and all that offends him. And look that they be firm and effectual, followed into execution, that they may not prove, as they do in too many, only buds and blossoms, blasted and perishing without any effect, but a short flourish; so they will not be complete fruit, but only vain shows of it. Let them be like those of David, Psalms 119:116, as firm as what is ratified by an oath, and such as will not fall short of performance; so they will not fail to prove good fruit. In heavenly graces. In the acts and exercise of faith, hope, repentance, self-denial, contempt of the world, heavenliness, mortification, &c. The acts of these are the fruits of the Spirit. And that you may be herein fruitful indeed, the exercise hereof should be so frequent as that such acts may make up your life. That the life which you live may be a life of faith, of repentance, of self-denial, a life above the world, a living in heaven while you are on earth, a walking with God while you converse with men, and advance above the things of time and sense while you are in the midst of them, and a dying to self and the world while you live in it. Such fruits reach heaven itself, while their root is here below, and they will distinguish you from every degenerate plant, yea, and from such as are the planted of the Lord, but prove shrubs, and thrive not. In holy affections. In love to God, his image, his people, his truths, his ways, all that he commends as lovely; delight in him, and all that pleases him; desires of him, and all that he declares to be desirable; zeal for him, his whole interest, and all his concernments; fear of sin, and hatred of every evil way and motion, above all things that are dreadful; rejoicing in God more than all things which you are apt to make your joy; and mourning for that which dishonours and displeases him as the greatest grievance; jealousy of whatever may tempt you from him, or render you disloyal to him, less regardful to him, or less affectionate to him. The acts of these affections are choice fruits, and the more you abound therein, the more will you abound in fruits which the Lord himself takes special delight in; these signify the heart is set upon God, and that is a posture which not only pleases him, but yields an advantage to derive virtue from him, which will make you more and more fruitful, even to the utmost extent of what you can desire, Psalms 37:4. In spiritual discourse. Such as is the fruit of a gracious heart, and may produce the like fruit in others, Ephesians 4:29; such as is good, ε■ς ο■κοδομ■ν τ■ς χρε■ας, for the edifying of others in things that are useful, and may promote grace, or minister spiritual advantage to them. Such fruit the same apostle calls for, Colossians 4:6; let it be such as ought to proceed from a gracious soul; let it be savoury and wholesome to the souls that bear* it, seasoned with such prudence as may accommodate it to every one's capacity, condition, and necessity, that so they may relish its gust, and turn it into spiritual nourishment. In all good actions, Colossians 1:10. Not in some few, or some small, or some eminent works that are good, but in 'every good work;' and to persist stedfast and constant in every of them, 2 Thessalonians 2:17; prepared for all, 2 Timothy 2:21; furnished for all, 2 Timothy 3:17; ready for

every one, Titus 3:1; following them, and not staying for occasions, but seeking occasions, 1 Timothy 5:10, and following them zealously, Titus 2:14, as those that would be patterns unto others, Titus 2:7; and all to be well reported of on that account, 1 Timothy 5:10; and as careful to maintain them as themselves or families, Titus 3:8; so as to account abundance of them their riches, 1 Timothy 6:18. Not confining yourselves either to some acts of religion, or some acts of charity, as though these were all, or these were enough; not satisfying yourselves with those of the first table, as the pharisee, or those of the second, as the moralists; but 'walking in all the commandments,' Luke 1:6; making good works your daily course, your constant walk, as God has made it, Ephesians 2:10; not baulking a step, but passing quite through it, going constantly from one end to the other of the whole walk. Let this be the design and business of your lives, to be fruitful.

2. In all things. And fruitful also towards all who should reap any fruit of you, or to whom you are obliged to bring forth good fruits.

(1.) Towards God. All good fruit must respect him one way or other, as the end and motive, though others be the object of it, else it cannot be good. But the fruit I here intend must respect him more directly and immediately; God must be the object of it, and not the end only. And that you may bear fruit, get more and more acquainted with God. A clear, and full, and effectual knowledge of God, is not only good fruit itself, but also the seed of all other good fruits, towards God, or ourselves, or others. Without some degree of it none that is truly good can either spring or grow; and the clearer, and fuller, and more efficacious it is, the more will it contribute to make all your fruit both better and more abundant. The want of it, or defect in it, is an error in the first concoction, which, according to the degrees of it, is of dangerous consequence, and hardly to be prevented; and being not redressed (as it cannot be easily if neglected at first), will run into spiritual distempers instead of good fruits.

Oh then, whatever you are ignorant of, get acquainted with God! Study his perfections and excellencies, order all other studies and inquiries, so as they may serve and promote this. You may move towards other knowledge as the way, but this you must follow as the end, and then you will not fail of it, Hosea 6:3. Let his majesty, and greatness, and power, and presence, and wisdom, and goodness, and transcendent glory and excellency every way, be often in your thoughts, always in your eye, as that which you must mind, and are most taken with. That is the way to have his greatness and his goodness pass before you; to see him, as far as mortal eye can see him, so far as he can be seen on earth. The more you desire and endeavour this, the more full and clear sight you will have of him; and the more fully and clearly you discern him, the more effectual will your sight of God be; and the more effectual it is, the more fruitful will it be in those fruits which respect God more particularly, which we may reduce to acts of admiration, submission, and complacency.

[1.] Acts of admiration. Get high adoring apprehensions of God, and by the sight and contemplation of his glorious excellencies, endeavour still to raise and advance them more and more. When they are highest, they are infinitely below him; that is the unavoidable weakness of our natures and capacities. We can never give him the glory that is due to his majesty, that is better fruit than human nature can bear; but something we are capable of, and the least that can look for acceptance is to advance him in our esteem above anything, above all things that are

counted worthy of esteem, so that he may have the highest place in our minds. Nothing may take place of him, nothing may come near him; all that finds entertainment in our minds and thoughts must stoop and lower to him, and be made his footstool, while he alone has the throne in our judgments, and is exalted above every other object, even those we count of greatest value. He ought to be adored and admired, so as other things must be contemptible to us in comparison. The higher our apprehensions of him are raised, with the more force they will fall upon the lower faculties, and put them into more vigorous motions towards more and better fruit.

[2.] Acts of subjection. Get your wills into a posture submissive to God, and observant of him in all things. Keep it in a readiness to submit to him, and every signification of his will and pleasure, without opposition or resistance, without exceptions or reservation, without any backwardness or lingering, that this may always be the voice and language of it, 'Behold, I come,' Psalms 40:8, and Psalms 37:31. 'Thy law is within my heart,' transcribed and drawn upon it, so that the act and motions of it within answer the severals of the law without, as a fair copy answers the original; so that the will of God may be found and discerned in the heart, as it may be seen and read in the word; as if the words and characters of it were impressed on the soul in a lively manner, begetting real motions within, in a conformity to the word without. Urge the promise and covenant for this, 2 Corinthians 3:3, Jeremiah 31:33, Hebrews 8:10, that the Lord would make the bent, temper, dispositions, motions, and acts of the heart and will, conformable to the divine will, as it is expressed in his law, so that there may be no clashing, no differing, no varying betwixt his law in the heart and his law in the word, but a likeness, an answerableness, an agreement, a compliance, a readiness to do whatsoever he requires, to forsake and abandon whatsoever he forbids, to lose and part with whatsoever he would not have you keep and possess, to suffer and undergo whatsoever he will inflict, or may be inflicted for his sake. Such a submission of the heart to God is excellent fruit; it is the heart of godliness, and fills all the veins and arteries, all the other parts with good blood, with that good fruit wherein godliness consists. When the will is subdued to the will of God, this being the commanding faculty, all the rest depending on it, submit with it. And the power of godliness, though it may seem a paradox, consists much in submission; and then it is most powerful when it prevails most with the will, to a lowly and entire submission unto the divine will. The bearing of this fruit brings with it all the fruits of godliness. The attendant of it is an observance of God, expressed in all acts of worship, inward and outward; in the acts and exercise of graces and affections, which are the soul of worship; and in performance of those duties, and waiting on him in those ordinances of his appointing, which are, as it were, the body of worship. When soul and body are united, and we offer them up together frequently, sincerely, conscientiously, worshipping him both outwardly and in the spirit, adoring him with the whole man, honouring him both with soul and body, then we offer unto him holocausts, sacrifices acceptable to him, and not corrupt or curtailed offerings; then we bring forth the fruits of godliness, fruits unto God, such as respect him directly and immediately, and such as he expects to reap of us.

[3.] Acts of complacency. The glory, and power, and goodness of God are the heads to which our weakness reduces all his perfections and attributes, the fruits which we bring forth unto God, should answer all these, and be a real and honourable acknowledgment of them. Acts of admiration acknowledge his glory and excellency, acts of subjection do acknowledge his power and sovereignty, and acts of complacency acknowledge his goodness and graciousness. The acts whereby we testify that we believe he is infinitely, transcendently good and gracious, that we have

tasted him to be so, are some of the chief of those good fruits which we should bring forth unto God. And so we act, and such fruit we bear, when we move towards him as the object most desirable, and can truly say, as Psalms 73:25; when our hearts embrace him, cling to him, clasp about him, as that which is most amiable and lovely; when the heart can sincerely say, 'I love the Lord,' Psalms 116:1; I love him more than all the persons and objects that ever I had affection for, above all that ever I saw, or enjoyed, or counted lovely. When we rest in him as that which is most delightful; are more taken with him, and satisfied with him, than that which has most pleased us. When he terminates the motion of the soul, and the heart, restless and unsatisfied with all other things, stays here, and desires to go no farther, as having found that in God which contents and satisfies it, that with which it is so pleased as it is at rest, Psalms 116:7, and says of the Lord as the Lord doth of Zion, Psalms 132:14, and as David, Psalms 16:5-9; when God is as to him, ■■■ ■■■■■, Psalms 137:6, the head, the top of his joy, the crown of his rejoicing, and that which he can really prefer before his chief joy on earth. such acts as these are sweet fruits indeed, most pleasant to God himself. It is not sorrow, and mourning, and heart-trouble, and inward dejection, and soul-affliction, that the Lord is so much pleased with; these are fruits good in their place and season, but of an inferior quality, and not desirable, but as lower steps to help us up to this higher pitch of complacency in God. A life of delights in God is a life fruitful of that which most pleases him, which most honours him. It is nearest and likest the life of heaven, and the fruit of it is very much like that which grows there; only that is fully ripe, here it is but growing. If you would be fruitful indeed, aim at all fruitfulness towards God, you see partly hereby in what acts it consists. Let it be your design and endeavour to abound more and more therein, and most in those which he counts best.

(2.) There are fruits which respect yourselves which you must mind if you would be universally fruitful. The apostle gives us all these in one word, Titus 2:11-12. To 'live soberly' comprises many things; it is to live temperately, and chastely, and humbly, and modestly, and contentedly. The fruits which respect our personal and private capacities are the acts and exercise of temperance, chastity, &c.

Temperance as to meat and drink. Affecting neither too much, nor that which is delicate; avoiding all excess in quantity or quality. A moderate use of these refreshments, so as may best consist with health, and render the body most serviceable to the soul, Luke 21:34.

Chastity. Keeping body and soul pure in every state, married or unmarried, 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5.

Humility. A lowliness of mind, esteeming others better than themselves, as the apostle defines it, Php 2:3. A peculiar excellency of the religion of Christ, in the neglect of which the wisdom of the world befooled itself, their wise men not teaching it. But Christ made himself a pattern of it, his whole life being a continued example of humility, John 13:15.

Modesty. Repressing curiosity, boldness, uncomeliness.

Contentedness in all estates and occurrences, Php 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 6:8, Hebrews 13:5. These are fruits (however overlooked by any) of great value and consequence. And though something like them may be found amongst those that are strangers to God, yet those who neglect them are certainly strangers to God. And being graffed upon a new nature, and ordered by spiritual motives, and directed to spiritual ends, they are not mere moral qualities, but supernatural graces, and

special fruits of the Spirit. The more we abound in them and exercise them, the more fruitful we shall be in the account of God. And if we be careless and negligent of the acts thereof, we shall be barren and destitute of good fruits even towards ourselves. And what fruits can be looked for, towards God or others, from such who are barren towards themselves?

(3.) Be fruitful towards others. There are many branches of heart and life that must be full of fruit to others. For direction herein take these three rules:

[1.] Be much in relative duties. Very much of our fruitfulness does consist in the duties we owe to our relations. And they are the most fruitful souls who bear most of these fruits; and whatever show they make, they are barren who neglect these. Where the Spirit of Christ is operative and efficacious for the bringing forth good fruit in any, he not only makes the persons good in themselves, but makes them good towards all their relatives, good parents and good children, good husbands and good wives, good masters and good servants; makes them endeavour to be good one to another in all their concernments, but especially good to their souls, careful of their spiritual interest, that these miscarry not, that this may be promoted. They are scarce good absolutely who are not good relatively. If there be any good fruit on such it is but little, and many branches must needs be bare. And this relative fruit is of so great consequence, that the apostle insists largely thereon, even in short epistles. That is the subject of a great part of Ephesians, chapter 5, and of many verses of the 6th chapter. It is almost half of the 3d chapter to the Colossians, and part of the 4th. He counted such fruit of great importance, else, when he designed to be brief, he would not have stayed so long in pressing these.

[2.] Accommodate yourselves to the several conditions, capacities, and necessities of others. That is the way to do them most good, and so they will reap the best fruit of you. The apostle gives particular direction herein, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-16. We find elsewhere what fruit we owe to the household of faith, viz. brotherly love, φιλαδ■λφια, a particular affection, and special expressions of it. And what to others, viz., charity, and readiness to do them good, 2 Peter 1:7, Galatians 6:10. To those that fall, Galatians 6:1-2; to the scandalous, 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; to those that are weak, Romans 14:1, and Romans 15:1-2; to those that prosper, Romans 12:15; to the afflicted, ibid., and Hebrews 13:3; to strangers, Hebrews 13:2; to enemies, Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27, Luke 6:35. Romans 12:20, ‘Heap coals,’ not to consume them, that is revengeful, and condemned by Christ, but to melt them, and dissolve their enmity and obstinacy; as refiners heap more coals upon those metals that are hard to be dissolved, not to waste them, but melt them, and make them more useful. And the apostle not only enforceth this way of fruitfulness by precepts, but commends it by his own example, 1 Corinthians 9:20-22. That which is thus suited to the several circumstances of others is fruit in season, and that is the best; and what is not so is scarce good.

[3.] Labour to make all acts of converse and intercourse with men acts of grace and virtue, and so even your common affairs and dealings in the world may yield good fruit. When you make use of your word to others, use none but words of candour, and Christian simplicity, such as may plainly signify your meaning, that your mind may be understood by your words, and nothing concealed, or reserved, or formed so ambiguously and subtilely, as to delude, or prejudice, or any way abuse those you deal with. Also to be strict and severe with yourselves as to truth and faithfulness, that your word may carry with it the security of a bond or an oath; that you may give no occasion to that scandalous rule, which those who are a shame and reproach to the Christian profession, have

given occasion for, that every one must be dealt with as though he were a knave or a cheat. Oh what have we been fruitful in, while such a maxim is any way necessary amongst those that profess the religion of Christ? Be just and righteous in all, and towards all, whatever you may lose or suffer by it. Whatever you may gain by swerving in the least from the rules of justice and righteousness, overreach not those who seek to overreach you. And when you have to deal with such whose weakness offers you some advantage, use equity; and when you might gain by the necessities of others, be merciful and compassionate; be meek and patient to those who provoke you, humble to those who despise you, and ready to forgive those that wrong you, Colossians 3:12-13. You will have still occasion, in your common affairs, for the exercise of some or other of these gracious qualities; and if you would act them as you have occasion, you might make the acts of your ordinary converse gracious acts; and so your whole life would be full of good fruits, such as would be pleasant to God and man, and sweet and comfortable to your own souls. Order but your intercourse with men, according to that admirable rule of Christ in all those instances which give occasion for its observance, Matthew 7:12, and your whole conversation in the world would be made up of gracious acts, and consequently would abound with good fruits. And thus I have shewed you how you may be fruitful in all things, and towards all persons, and so how you may arrive at that which should be your chief aim, universal fruitfulness.

9. Though universal fruitfulness should be our aim, and the increase of all good fruit should be carefully promoted, no part of our souls or conversation should be unimproved, no branch of either should be bare or not well replenished with fruits of holiness or righteousness; yet there are some of these fruits that we are to regard more especially, and bestow more care and pains, that they may be multiplied, and grow, and ripen. The want or neglect of any good fruit is not to be tolerated, but there are some which require more care and industry, and we are obliged to concern ourselves more about them, lest they be wanting, or dwindle and thrive not, or rise not to their due proportions, or come not on, as the seasons of grace require, towards ripeness and maturity. Let me instance in some particulars, of which you should be more careful that they be not wanting.

(1.) Those to which you are more averse, and find or should observe yourselves less inclined. Such fruits you will be in most danger to neglect; and where there is most danger, there should be most care and industry to avoid it. There are some good fruits we are less disposed to, either because of the unhappiness of our temper, or because they are more out of our way, or because they consist not so well with the employments we are most taken with, or because they comply not with our worldly interest, or because opposite to some corruption not subdued, or some evils that we are more addicted to than others; or from some other cause which may be discovered by observance of, or inquiry into, your hearts and ways, or the use of other means proper for this purpose. So there are some more averse to meditation, a frequent and due entertainment of holy thoughts, find it hard to employ their minds upon God, and heaven, and their spiritual state; upon the word, or works, or attributes of God; though such thoughts be both good fruits themselves, and much tend to the nourishing of other good fruits, so that many cannot thrive without them.

Others who, it may be, can more easily employ their thoughts to good purpose, are more barren in good discourse; find it harder to raise it, or continue it, through slowness of speech, or too much modesty; or fear, it may be, to express themselves much in that with which their hearts are not much affected, as thinking it some kind of hypocrisy; or because the spring in the heart is low as to spiritual things, and it is ‘out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.’

Others, it may be, are swift and forward enough to speak of good things, but too slow to do them; backward to act for God, or may be active for themselves, but not active for the good of others.

Some may be well inclined to acts of worship, and will not omit them, but too much decline acts of charity and mercy; or will relieve the outward wants of others, but shew little compassion to their souls, in such acts as should minister to the relief of their spiritual condition.

Others may be much in holy duties, and in outward acts of righteousness and mercy too, but too little in the inward exercise of grace and holy affections, wherein the spiritual worship of God, and communion with him, consists.

Now, it is your great concernment to observe what you are backward to; what fruits of mind, or heart, or life, which respect God, yourselves, or others, you are most apt to neglect or be defective in; to take care that it may be discovered, and to be willing to be convinced of it, and to be apprehensive of the sinfulness and danger of it; and to apply yourselves more to that which you are more subject to neglect; to be most careful and watchful where you are most in danger; to take more pains to bend the bough the other way, when you see it growing crooked. Your neglects of defectiveness, wherever it lies, may be of greater consequence to you than you are aware of. It may be this is the ground of God's controversy with you, though you have not taken notice of it. It may be this is the rise of your afflictions, and you may expect harder measures if this be not reformed. It may be this which you overlook is the way wherein you might be most serviceable, and the Lord lets you not succeed in other ways because you will not walk in this. It may be, this hinders the prosperity of your souls, and keeps you from being so fruitful as otherwise you might be in other respects. It may be, this encourages others to continue barren when they see you so, and thus diffuse the guilt of it farther than yourselves. And no doubt you gratify Satan in this, and serve him in promoting that particular design which he has herein upon you, and grieve the Spirit of Christ, striving against him within you for it. If you would be delivered from the consequences of this evil, so sinful and so dangerous, yield not to your temper, or inclination, or whatsoever makes you backward and indisposed to that fruitfulness, in any kind or degree, which the Lord calls you to and expects from you. Set yourselves against that averseness and the causes of it, so far as you can discover them, and strive to overcome it; seek strength from above to prevail against it.

(2.) Those fruits which are too much out of fashion, such as are too much neglected by the generality of professors, in which the country or age wherein we live is too barren. It has been the unhappiness of every age to run itself into some great neglects, and to continue therein, and when an evil grows common, and those that are of reputation for wisdom and holiness are tainted with it, it gains credit, or at least connivance, it loses its name, and passes for a better and more tolerable thing than it is; it is not accounted a sin, how sinful soever it be; it will hardly be discovered when it has the countenance of many that are good, and some of the best; there is little hopes of conviction in such circumstances, and so little or no probability of reformation. But where there is the greatest difficulty, there should be the most vigorous endeavours to master it; and where the tide runs strongest, we are concerned to take the most pains to stem it. We should not suffer ourselves lazily to be carried down with the stream, but the stronger it is, strive more against it. We must not make custom, nor common opinion or practice, no, not of professors otherwise strict and conscientious, our rule to judge of all the fruits we should bring forth, or what fruitfulness we should labour for, but go to the law and to the testimony, and what fruits Christ, and those infallibly

directed by him, call for from the disciples of Christ, and in what degree and extent they require them, and order yourselves according to that rule, and follow none but as they follow Christ, and walk according to what he prescribes. And after the light of the word, other means may be useful for the discovery of barrenness, in any particulars where the sight of it is too much lost in common practice. And particularly we may make use of the charges and reproaches of enemies for this purpose. Fas est et ab hoste doceri. An enemy may sometimes teach us that which a friend may suffer us to be ignorant of. It is known that the papists charge us to be Solifidians, all for faith and nothing for the fruits of it, not minding good works. We are here concerned to give the world a real confutation of this charge, and to shew that the genuine principles of the gospel which we profess, our faith in Christ and love to him, is more effectual, and makes us more fruitful in all good works, than their corrupt principles of justification or salvation by the merit of works is or can be in them. Others charge us with the neglect of moral righteousness, greediness of riches, and the want of those fruits which the contempt of the world brings forth. Our course in this case is not to recriminate, though we may have ground enough, but impartially to examine how far the charge is just, and to reform whatever less or more we are guilty of, and to roll away the reproach by endeavouring to remove all occasion and suspicion of guilt in the severals of the charge, and to make it appear that a new nature and regenerating grace is more powerful to produce all fruits of righteousness than their moral principles, and that we are crucified to the world, and desire not much of it, but to enable us to do more good, and to be more serviceable to God and men. And while others accuse us, we have too much cause to accuse ourselves for want of brotherly love, and the many and precious fruits of it; which divisions and difference in way or opinion has involved almost the whole generation of good men in the guilt of, which has been so common, and so the due sense of it so far lost, that it is well if the hand of God, stretched out against us for it, will make us effectually sensible of it. Let us examine whether we be not much to seek in those fruits of the Spirit which the apostle commends to us, Galatians 5:22, the first and principal whereof is love, and the rest dependents on it. Are not these fruits too much out of fashion? And since it has been a day of judgment with us, a long day, even for several years, let us observe whether we be not to seek in those fruits which the righteous judgments of God should have produced; and particularly, since they seem to have been directed so as to strike most at our worldly interest, have we learnt hereby more fruitfully to improve the world? neither to hug it too close, and confine the fruits and advantages of what we have to ourselves and ours, nor to let it run out in pride, and vanity, and excess in habit, accommodations, entertainments, or otherwise? Are not the bad fruits which the world is apt to bring forth more in request than the good? Let us take care that we be not involved in the guilt of common barrenness; our danger is the greater here, and therefore we should have a more particular regard we be not wanting in those fruits which are too commonly neglected.

(3.) Those which you are more engaged to bring forth, either by inward abilities or outward enjoyments, or particular convictions. Great care should be taken to answer great and special engagements, especially when they are laid on us by the great God. Now these, amongst others, are the ways whereby the Lord does oblige us to some special fruitfulness, when he enables particularly for it, or gives means and encouragements to that end more than others have, or has convinced any that he expects of them, and that their neglects, in this or that particular, is sinful, and such as he will visit for and proceed against.

Those that are furnished with grace, and gifts, and accomplishments, which enable them to instruct, convince, quicken, encourage others in the way to heaven, must be careful to abound herein more than such who are not so well qualified for such purposes. Those that have much of the world are highly concerned to do more good with it than those that have less. It is the special charge of those who are rich in this world to be ‘rich in good works,’ 1 Timothy 6:18. It will be a shame to such if those that have less do more, and a sin, too, which those that are faithful in a little will rise up in judgment and condemn. For those who are rich in the world to be poor in good works is intolerable barrenness. And those that have convictions, drawing them to such and such ways of fruitfulness, should be exceeding careful to walk in such ways more especially, otherwise their own consciences will be their torturer and executioner, if they should escape other sufferings. The unprofitable servant knew what his Lord expected; this made his sin the greater, and his sentence the more severe, Matthew 25:24, Matthew 25:26. He knew and was convinced what would be required of him, and therefore should have been more careful to improve what he had fruitfully; and because he was not, ver. 30, he was cast into outer darkness.

(4.) Those fruits, whose goodness and advantage is most extensive. There is a special excellency in such fruits, which calls for a special care, that they may be cherished and increased. Bonum, quo communius, eo melius. That is the best fruit which does most good, which does good to most, whose goodness reaches farthest. The apostle gives those extraordinary gifts the pre-eminence whose advantage was most common and communicative, and would have preferred an ordinary gift which tended to the promoting of common and general fruitfulness before those extraordinary and miraculous gifts which were but for personal or more private advantage, as appears by his discourse, 1 Corinthians 14:1-4. He prefers prophesying before the gift of tongues, because in the use of this he that had it did but edify himself, but the use of the other edified many, 1 Corinthians 14:12. This is the way to excel in fruitfulness, when our fruits become a common harvest, where all that come may reap. Such fruits we should take more care and pains for, which may reach not only ourselves but others; not only their bodies, but their souls too; not only few of them, but many; and do good, not only to this or that person, but to a community. A particular person this way fruitful becomes a common good, a general blessing, and is so much more rich and valuable as a common treasury is more than a private purse.

(5.) Those which you may be tempted to neglect, either because they are difficult, or reproached, or costly, or hazardous. Your ease, your credit, your safety, your worldly interest, will be ready to interpose here, and endanger your barrenness herein, unless you be careful and resolute for them.

[1.] Those that are difficult and cannot be brought forth without pains and industry. It is enough to sweeten all, and make it easy, to consider it is for God. For whom will you take pains if not for him? Should not what you bring forth for him be the fruit of some labour? That which can be done with ease you may do for any one, and shall the Lord have no more from you than any may challenge? None ever repented of any pains they took for God, but that ease which makes you decline such fruits must be repented of, or else it will have a dreadful issue.

[2.] Those that are reproached. Such as may expose you to scorn or derision, or hazard the reputation of your wisdom or moderation. Be sure they be good fruits, and then resolve, with David, ‘I will yet be more vile than thus,’ 2 Samuel 6:22. To sacrifice our reputation with men in

bringing forth fruit to God is the way to greatest honour with him, before whom the noblest and greatest reproachers are vile persons.

[3.] Those that are costly. You may be tempted to think (though nothing but a worldly unbelieving heart will think it) that it impairs your estates, or lessens the provisions you intend for posterity. Check such temptations with that of David, 2 Samuel 24:4. Those that cost you most will prove best cheap; you have the Lord engaged to make it prove so. And it is for the Lord, whose stewards you are but in all you have, and should you grudge to serve him with his own? And the Lord in such cases is trying you, whether the world be dearer to you than himself. And remember how the Lord resented such offerings as were cheap, and mean, and little worth, Malachi 1:8. The blind, and the lame, and the sick, cost them little or nothing, and such they could offer freely. But what is the issue of such thriftiness? ver. 14. They are deceivers in God's account, and cursed by him, who, when they should offer to him that which is best and of most value, put him off with something that is worthless and costs them little. You see what need there is to be careful you decline not those fruits that are costly.

[4.] Those that are hazardous, and expose you to sufferings. Flesh and blood will be apt to decline these. Corrupt self, and carnal reason, and worldly spirit will call upon you, when called hereto, to spare yourselves. But such fruits most glorify God, and will most honour those who bear them. They evidence the greatest love to Christ, and will yield the most comfort, and will be crowned with the greatest reward. And therefore, as there is necessity to be careful that they be not declined, so greatest encouragement to be fruitful herein.

THE LORD RULES OVER ALL His kingdom ruleth over all.—Psalms 103:19. This is a psalm of praise, wherein the Lord is magnified for his mercy especially. This mercy is the more to be praised and admired, because the object of it is so unworthy and contemptible, man, who is so sinful, Psalms 103:3, Psalms 103:10; so weak, Psalms 103:14; so frail, Psalms 103:15-16. Man, in his greatest flourish, is but like the grass, which is soon cut down, or withereth; or like a flower, which fades of itself, or is blasted with a puff of wind. Oh, but the Lord's mercy is more durable than life. The shortness of our lives would be a sad consideration indeed, if the mercy of God did end with our life. Oh, but this follows us when we leave the world, beyond death and the grave; and can reach those that we leave behind us too: Psalms 103:17, 'His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, and his righteousness to children's children.' Here mercy that will survive us, that will never die; that we may meet with in another world, when our place in this shall know us no more; and faithfulness, that will continue from generation to generation, and will be mindful of children's children when we are dead and gone. And the comfort of this, Psalms 103:18, belongs to those that believe in him, and shew the truth of their faith by sincere obedience, by care and mindfulness to do his will. To shew everlasting mercy to such is part of his covenant; and if we deal not unfaithfully with him, as to our part, we need not doubt but he is willing to perform his part. And as he is willing, so he is able too; for he has all power in heaven and earth; he has all things under his dominion, and rules over all, Psalms 103:19. His throne is in heaven; he rules and reigns there. But though the glory of his kingdom do most appear in heaven, yet is not his kingdom and dominion confined to heaven, it reaches every where, thing, place; it rules over all. The whole world is his kingdom; his dominion extends over all. The words need not more explaining, but what we shall offer afterwards.

Obs. The Lord rules over all. All things belong to his kingdom, and are under his dominion. He reigns everywhere, and rules all and everything.

Nothing is more plain and express in Scripture than both his reign and the extent of it. For the first, Psalms 93:1-2, Psalms 97:1-2, where we have his royalty, and his throne, and the basis of it; so ■■■■ signifies; and Psalms 99:1. His throne is not only in heaven, but between the cherubims, amongst his people, Psalms 99:2; and not only in Zion, but above all people. For the extent of it, add but 1 Chronicles 29:11-12, 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all,' &c. For the explication of the universal dominion of God, so necessary, so useful to be understood, and that we may lay a groundwork for the application, which may be exceeding profitable and comfortable to us at all times, especially in the worst, I shall endeavour to give you a clear and particular account of the act, the object, and the mode of it. For the first, to Rule, includes these three things:

1. Authority. Rule, without authority, is but usurpation. God is the fountain of all just authority: Romans 13:1, 'There is no power but of God.' All such authority, whether economical in a family, or civil in the state, or ecclesiastical in the church, is from God; and he, from whom all is derived, has incomparably more himself. His authority is sovereign; all else in the world (how sovereign soever called and accounted), it is subordinate to his; under it, subject to it, depending on it; and so far as it is not subject, it is usurpation and rebellion. He is the 'King of kings,' &c., Revelation 1:5; and the authority of the greatest monarch is not so much, compared with his, as that of a constable, or the meanest officer, compared with that of a prince.

2. Power. To keep those who are to be ruled in subjection; to make them yield and submit to the authority of the ruler. Without this he will be but a ruler at courtesy, and rather have the name than the reality of a governor. Now the Lord has all power; he is παντοκρ■τωρ, the Almighty ruler; he can make the powers of earth or hell to stoop to him, or crush them; and usually in Scripture, where his rule and government is mentioned, his power is annexed: Psalms 66:7, 'He ruleth by his power for ever,' ■■■■ ■■■. He ruleth by his power over the world: Revelation 19:6, 'The Lord God omnipotent reigneth;' Revelation 11:17, 'Thou hast taken thy great power, and hast reigned.'

3. The actual ordering and disposing of what is under him, for the ends of government—the actual exercise of power and authority for this purpose. And so, when the Lord is said to rule, the meaning is, he shews his authority, and uses his power, in the ordering and disposing of all things as seems good to him. He makes them all serve his end and design; he works all things according to the counsel of his will; he orders all things in a subserviency to those purposes he had from eternity; he actually so disposes of all things so as to serve the ends for which they were appointed. And in this respect it is said, John 5:17, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' He is still at work, still ordering all by his providence. He is not like an artificer, who, when he has made a clock, and set it in order, and hanged weights upon it, leaves it to go of itself; but (as one says) more like a musician, who, knowing his instrument will make no music of itself, does not only tune it, but actually touch the strings, for the making of that harmony which pleases him.

This, for the first, what it is to rule; and what we are to understand thereby, when God is said to rule. Let us now see what he rules—what is the object or subject of his government; and that is no less than all things, 'He ruleth over all.' Now, that we may more distinctly view this, let us look upon

it in the several parcels which make up this all.

1. He rules both heaven and earth: Isaiah 66:1, ‘The heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool.’ Both heaven and earth are under him, both are subject to him. The glory of his kingdom appears most in heaven, but the power of it reaches the earth, yea, and hell too. That is the proper place of rebels indeed; but he has them in chains; they will not yield obedience, but he keeps them in subjection, and shews that he is their ruler by executing justice upon them, and making them feel the power of his wrath. They would not obey the laws of his government, and therefore the penalty is inflicted on them; and this is an act of government, as well as enacting laws and propounding or giving rewards.

2. He rules not only heaven and earth, but all the parts thereof; the whole world, and every part of it, Psalms 113:5. In heaven, the angels, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, Colossians 1:16, are subject to him, and ordered by him as he pleases; for he has put them in subjection unto Christ also, as he is Mediator, 1 Peter 3:22. And he orders them as his servants, as ‘ministering Spirits,’ Hebrews 1:14; he says to one, Go, and he goeth, Matthew 8:9. As a servant stands in the presence of his lord, waiting for his orders, ready to receive his commands, and to do his pleasure, in such an humble and observant posture do the angels stand in the presence of their sovereign. And as the thrones and principalities in heaven are under his rule, so are the kingdoms of the earth, 2 Chronicles 20:6. Nebuchadnezzar, one of the proudest and mightiest tyrants on earth, was forced by the hand of God (to whom the greatest kings on earth are less than worms) to acknowledge this, Daniel 5:20-21, and Daniel 4:32, Daniel 4:34-35. He acted as one who had none above him, none to control him; but the Lord made him know he was a subject, and that whoever possess the kingdoms of the earth, yet the Lord is indeed the ruler of them.

Yea, his dominion reaches unto the sea, Job 28:8-11. The sea, in his greatest rage, submits and obeys as under his rule and government, Psalms 89:8-9, and Psalms 93:2-4. He can as easily still the rage of the furious, when it is like the swelling waves in a stormy sea; or if they will storm against their great sovereign, can make them know subjection as he did Pharaoh, Psalms 89:19; Behemoth and Leviathan, the king over all the children of pride, are ruled by him, and he will rule over those that are prouder than he, and make them stoop or break them.

3. He rules not only great things, but small. The least things in the world are ruled and ordered by him as well as the greatest. Dii magna curant, parva negligunt; that God regards great things, but concerns not himself with small matters, was the speech of those that knew not God; nothing at all is exempted from his government, the least things are under his disposal. The conception of Laban’s cattle may seem a small thing; yet the Lord concerned himself in this, and admonished Jacob in a dream how he disposed thereof, Genesis 31:11-12. He takes care of the meanest creature, Psalms 147:9, Matthew 6:26; the lilies, the grass of the field are under the influence of his government, vers. 28–30; he clothes them, they are his subjects, wear his livery; nay, there is not the least sparrow falls without his order, Matthew 10:29; there is not so much as a hair, but is under his notice and disposal, ver. 30; he orders and overrules the very least things as well as the greater. Things so mean and inconsiderable as we mind them not, judge them not worthy of our thoughts, care, or regard, they are all under the government of God, and he actually orders and disposes of them.

4. He rules not only all beings, but all motions, Acts 17:28. As those things that live, have their life from him, and those things that have not life, have their being from him; so both have their motion from him, he gives it, and he orders it. All the motions in the world are governed and overruled by him; all the wheels of this great engine, as they are of his framing, so, whether they be greater or less they move not without him; he sets them on motion, he quickens it, he stops it when he will; he directs it how and whither he pleases. If a sparrow move not without him (as before), what motion can we imagine exempted from his government and disposal? How could Paul be so confident of the safety of his company, that not a hair should fall from the head of any of them, Acts 27:34, but that God who has the ordering of all things and motions, even to that of a hair, had assured him of it! Acts 27:23-24. When a man, in the battle mentioned 1 Kings 22:1-53, drew a bow at a venture, who was it that guided the motion of the arrow, so as to smite the king of Israel rather than any about him? who was it that directed it, so as to enter between the joints of his harness, rather than to hit some other part of his armour, 1 Kings 22:34, but that God who had designed and foretold his death? 1 Kings 22:17.

5. He rules not only actions, but events, so that acts and undertakings have not such an issue as they promise or threaten, but such as the Lord pleases to order. That which is unlikely to succeed has the desired issue, and that which is likely to prosper, succeeds not at all; because all events are in God's hands, and he disposes of them, not as we think probable or improbable, but as he thinks fit: 1 Kings 20:11, 'Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.' Why so? Because the event is in the hands of God, and he can dispose of it against those that are most confident, and for those who see little cause to expect it, Ecclesiastes 9:11. 'Time and chance happeneth to them all,' i. e. their endeavours have such success as the hand of God will guide them to; yet this, though it order all things, being invisible, things seem many times to fall out rather at adventure, than according to the regular endeavours that have been used in order to them. Herein the people of God, whatever advantages they have had for the carrying on of their affairs to a good issue, yet still ascribe it unto God, and owe him so much as though they had done nothing, being sensible that whatever they did, it would have come to nothing, if he had not given a good event, Psalms 18:39-40, and Psalms 44:1-26, from Psalms 44:3-8. And he is their king, their ruler upon this account, because their deliverances and successes were from him; he overruled all to issue in good events.

6. He rules and orders not only the substance, but the circumstances of things and actions. To instance in time and place. How was it that Abigail came to meet David just at that time, which if she had slipped, he had massacred Nabal's family? Why, God sent her, which is the account David gives of it, 1 Samuel 25:32, 1 Samuel 25:34. How was it that the decree of Augustus, for taxing of the world, came forth just at the time when Mary was ready to be delivered? Why, the Lord so ordered it, that what he had so decreed and foretold concerning the birth of Christ in Bethlehem might be fulfilled, Matthew 2:5. When Nebuchadnezzar went to war, and was in doubt whether to fall upon Rabbah of the Ammonites or upon Jerusalem, Ezekiel 21:20-21, how came he to a determination? Why, the Lord over-ruled all the means he used for his direction, so that he resolves to bend his force against Jerusalem, because God had determined to have it destroyed.

7. He rules and disposes both end and means. God had an intention to make his people, who were before Jezreel, the scattered of the Lord, to become Jezreel, the seed of the Lord, to bless them with plenty; and hereupon so orders the means, as they might see his hand herein bringing

about this end, Hosea 2:21-22. Here is the Lord, in the first place—I will hear—influencing all the means, from first to last, so as Jezreel has the end of all the blessing promised. The Lord stands in no need of means to accomplish the end he aims at. But when he will make use of means, he shews his all-governing and overruling power, not only in blessing means that are good, and proper, and usual, but in making any kind of means to serve his turn; so he can dispose of bad instruments to promote a good end. Thus he made use of the Assyrian to accomplish his whole work upon mount Zion, Isaiah 10:12, though he had no such thought nor intention, but a quite other design, Isaiah 10:7. And he can make strange and unusual means accomplish his pleasure, as well as usual and ordinary. So he orders the ravens to feed one prophet, 1 Kings 17:1-24, and two bears to destroy those who mocked another, 2 Kings 2:24.

8. He rules and disposes not only things orderly, but such as seem most confused. Not only such affairs as are so well ordered that we may easily be persuaded some divine influence does dispose of them; but those that have such a face of confusion and disorder, that it will be hard to believe that the Lord has any hand therein; even such does he rule and order, though we see him not acting therein, till the darkness and disturbance be over. What horrid disorder was there in the actings of Jacob's sons, conspiring against their brother, throwing him into a pit, selling him to the Ishmaelites, Genesis 37:1-36. Who could suspect that the Lord had a hand in any of this? Yet his hand was in it all. The confusion and disorder of it was indeed from the visible actors; but the Lord was all this while working this chaos into a beautiful form, and when he had done, then it appears with a lovely face, and is so represented by Joseph himself, Genesis 50:20, and Genesis 45:4-5, Genesis 45:7-8. Who could have expected that such a dismal cloud would have thus cleared up? But this is the Lord's doing, and such things he is wont to do, while he is ruling over all, and all are over-ruled by him.

If you should see such a black and dismal face of things as may tempt you to conclude that God has forsaken the earth or the place where you are, that he can never mingle with such confusions, or intermeddle in such horrid disorders, stay a little before you yield to such conclusions. The Lord once, out of chaos, brought a well-ordered world. He rules still; and can, when he pleases, out of mere confusion and darkness, bring forth a new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness may dwell.

9. He rules and orders things, both necessary and contingent or casual. Things necessary, such as proceed from necessary causes, which act in one certain uniform way, and cannot of themselves vary nor proceed otherwise; such are the course of the heavens, the eclipses of the luminaries, the seasons of the year, the ebbings and flowings of the sea. The Lord gave law to all these, and keeps them to the observance of it, yet overrules them, and gives them other orders when he pleases. The heavens declare the glory of God this way, Psalms 19:1; not only by their fabric and influences, but by their course and motion, which he instanceth in Psalms 19:4-6, Psalms 74:16-17. He has settled all the climes of the earth, and the seasons of the year, Jeremiah 31:35-36. The Lord has fixed the course of these things, they cannot vary therein of themselves; but he himself can change it when he thinks fit, and has given instances of his overruling power herein. He has changed the course of the sun, and made it stand still, as in Joshua's time; or go back, as in Hezekiah's time. And the course of the sea too, how uncontrollable the motion thereof seems to be! The Red Sea and Jordan are evidences that he who rules all can overrule anything. So things contingent and casual, which fall out uncertainly or accidentally, which those who know

not God ascribe to chance and fortune, the Lord orders them, they fall out as he pleases. He disposes of them certainly, how uncertain soever they be in respect of other causes, Proverbs 16:33. The lot is so ruled and directed by the Lord, that it falls just so as he would have it, and can do no otherwise; so when a man is slain casually, the Lord is said to ‘give him up to death,’ Exodus 21:13. There is an instance which will clear it, Deuteronomy 19:4-5; in this case, which is so every way accidental, the Lord is said to deliver the man into the hands of him that slays him.

10. He rules and orders not only that which is good, but that which is evil and sinful. God is no way the cause, no way the author, of sin. It is the work of the devil, he brought it into the world; but being there, and the Lord permitting it to be there, Acts 14:19, Psalms 118:12, he takes such order about it that it may appear he rules over all, and that there is not anything in the world but is subjected to his government and under his disposal. Accordingly,

(1.) He limits and bounds it, so that it proceeds not so far as Satan and the depraved will of man would have it; otherwise it would overwhelm the world, and no flesh would be saved. He restrains it in many by common grace, and breaks the power of it in his people by effectual grace. He withheld Abimelech from sinning when he had a mind to it, Genesis 20:6.

(2.) He overrules it to good ends, and disposes it to excellent purposes. So the horridest sin that was ever acted in the world was ordered by him, to promote the most blessed and glorious ends; and so he had disposed of it in his eternal counsel, before the actors were in motion or in being, Acts 4:27-28 and Acts 2:23. They designed therein the satisfying of their own malice and cruelty; but he disposed of it to the getting himself the greatest glory, in the redemption and salvation of lost sinners. So the wickedness of men, in afflicting and persecuting his people, is overruled by God to the destroying of wickedness, the promoting of holiness, and the preparing of greater glory for them. He orders sin, so as it tends to destroy sin; the sin of oppressors, so as to purge sin out of his people, Isaiah 27:9. Isaiah 1:25, he turns his hand upon them, in letting loose the hands of oppressors and persecutors against them. So that there is a double hand in their sufferings: the hand of wicked men, and that would destroy the oppressed; the hand of God, and that would destroy their sin. And the hand of God prevails, and thereby shews that he rules over all. He orders sin, so as it tends to promote holiness, to advance its opposite, Romans 5:3-4, Hebrews 12:1-29; he orders it so as to make way for greater glory, 2 Corinthians 4:17. Thus he brings the greatest light out of the blackness of darkness, and ‘turns the shadow of death into the morning,’ thereby making it evident that he rules over all; makes the greatest evil advance the greatest good; and that which is the worst of all, to serve the best and most glorious purposes.

11. He rules things natural and voluntary. Natural, such as have their next causes in nature, the hand of God rules therein, as in thunder and lightning, Job 37:2, 3; wind and rain, Jeremiah 10:13, Psalms 148:7. Not to stay upon other particulars, read Psalms 104:1-35 and 107, and you will see plentiful evidence hereof in these and many other instances. But more particularly, he rules things voluntary; such are intelligent and rational beings. Man in special is the subject of his government. Those amongst the sons of men that are his he disposes and takes care of, yet in a more peculiar manner. The Scripture is full and clear in expressing how man is governed by him in birth, and life, and death. He takes order about his conception, formation, and birth, Job 10:9-11, Psalms 139:14-16. He fixeth the period of his life, and determines how many his days shall be upon earth, Job 14:5. He orders what his state and condition shall be while he lives, Psalms 75:6-7, 1 Samuel

2:7-8, Psalms 113:7-8. He rules the mind and heart, Proverbs 21:2, Psalms 119:36, and Psalms 105:25. No heart so obstinate but he can bend it; none so fast closed but he can open it, Acts 16:4; none so refractory but he can turn it whithersoever he will; none so frozen and congealed but he can melt and dissolve, and make it ductile as water. He alone has the sovereignty over the hearts of men: 'he opens, and no man shuts,' &c. The will, that impious faculty that will stand out when the whole man besides is conquered, he can subdue at his pleasure, and make it run into a ready compliance with his own will. He rules the tongue and words, Proverbs 16:1. Man without him can neither prepare his heart to speak, nor speak what he has prepared; both is from him, who has the command both of heart and tongue; and he can guide the tongue to speak what shall be more effectual than what it was prepared to utter. Augustine is a remarkable instance hereof, who, beginning his sermon, was led to another subject than what he designed, and was prepared to speak of; and found afterwards that he was overruled thereto by the hand of God for the conversion of a seduced soul, which the discourse he had intended, it is like, would not have touched.

He rules and orders his feet and paths. If we were left to take our own course, whither would we run? Jeremiah 10:23. Who then shall direct him? Psalms 37:23. When we have found out a way which our own judgment thinks best, and our own inclination leads us to, the Lord often leads us out of it, and directs us better, Proverbs 16:9. He rules hands and actions, Psalms 18:34. It is he that holds and guides the hand, or else it would make nothing but blots; his guidance is the sufficiency and strength of it for every service, for any work he calls us to. And so Nehemiah seeks it: Nehemiah 6:9, 'Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.'

Thus the Lord rules over man, and over every part, and every act. Indeed, of all the creatures on earth, man only is capable of that which is properly government; he is the only subject that can be ruled by laws. Accordingly, he has enacted laws for us, and enforced them with penalties, and encouraged obedience to them, by promises of reward. And according to our observance of his laws he will judge what subjects we are, and will answerably proceed in the execution of them; by enhappying those with the reward promised who shew themselves faithful subjects, or by inflicting the penalty on those who prove refractory and disobedient. And thus doth the Lord most properly rule over men; though, in a larger sense, he rules over all things.

I might shew how he rules over his people in a more peculiar manner than over other creatures or other men, how he orders and overrules all things to secure them from evil and to do them good, how he commands all things to serve them for these purposes, Psalms 59:13. His government reaches unto the ends of the earth; but he makes it known he rules in Jacob in a more special manner, he having a particular respect to them in his whole government, Deuteronomy 11:12. But the enlargement of this I reserve to the application.

I should proceed to the third general proposed, and give an account of the mode of this government, shewing what kind of rule it is, by some properties of it, whereby its excellency and transcendency above all other will be manifest.

1. It is a supreme sovereignty. He that rules over all has none above him, none co-ordinate with him, none but such as are below him, indefinitely below him, none but what are subjected to him, and under him at an infinite distance. The powers of heaven, those that are called thrones and principalities there, are not only subjects to him, but his servants. They attend in his presence, and

while they wait on him they adore him; the splendour and lustre of his majesty is greater than they can well behold, Isaiah 6:1-2. ‘With twain they covered their faces,’ as not able to endure the infinite splendour of his glory and majesty, no more than our weak eyes are able to behold the sun shining in his full strength. ‘And with twain they covered their feet,’ as abashed in sense of their own vileness and imperfection, in comparison of the incomprehensible perfections of their glorious sovereign. ‘And with twain they did fly,’ to shew their readiness to execute his commands, their swiftness in doing him service. They do not only serve but worship him, Hebrews 1:1-14. And as to be a servant is simply something less than to be a subject, so worship denotes greater subjection than any other service. Thus are the powers of heaven subject to him. The powers of hell tremble before him, James 2:19. Though they be called the ‘rulers of the darkness of this world,’ and the chief of them the ‘god of the world,’ yet before the Supreme Majesty of heaven they have not the confidence of free subjects, but tremble as slaves. Those that have led all men captive are the Lord’s prisoners; they are in a lower and worse capacity than other of his subjects, they are rebels under punishment for their disobedience. He is ruling them, and will rule them for ever, in wrath. He has them in chains, they cannot stir without his leave; they could not so much as enter into a herd of swine till they had begged leave. Thus are the powers of hell subject to him. As for the powers on earth, the highest and greatest of them are but his under-officers, and more under him incomparably than the lowest and meanest of their subjects are under them. They have their power and commission from him; he has limited them as he saw fit; and if they will not keep their bounds, and really acknowledge their subjection to their Great Sovereign, he will ‘rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter’s vessel,’ Psalms 2:9-10. A mighty Cham, a great Mogul, a grand Signior, the highest prince and potentate, is no more to him than a worm, or a fly, or a grasshopper is to us, no more than a potter’s vessel, which is of less worth than any living creature is to us. They are but a small part of their dominion, that which is under their government, but their whole dominion is as nothing to the Great King, Daniel 4:35. So that to him they are not the thousandth part of that which seems to be nothing, so much inferior are they to the Supreme Majesty of the world, and so much should they be subject to him; and if they will not, he will be ‘terrible to the kings of the earth,’ Psalms 76:12. He will cut off the proud, and cruel, and presumptuous spirits of oppressing Nimrods, and that in a terrible manner. He will make them know (though they be apt to forget it) that they are subjects, and that the Lord reigns and is their Sovereign, and that the kingdom is his alone who rules over all; that he is ‘the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,’ 1 Timothy 6:15, the only Supreme and Sovereign ruler, and Lord of all.

2. He rules absolutely; his government is unlimited, for who can bound him who rules over all? Other rulers are limited by laws or contracts, but none give law to God, nor lay obligation on him but himself; he has no other bounds but his own wise and holy will, and his will is law to heaven and earth, and all creatures therein, Daniel 4:35, Psalms 115:3, and Psalms 135:16. It is too great a power for any mortal man to be trusted with, to make his will a law and rule to others. The Lord has subjected all to his laws, and if others will entrust their rulers with a freedom to do whatever they will, they do it at their peril. The corrupt and depraved will of man may prove a pernicious law; but as it is the prerogative of God, so it is the advantage of the world that the will of God should be its law, and that all things should be ordered according to his pleasure, because his will is infinitely and perfectly wise, and holy, and good.

3. He rules irresistibly. His government is uncontrollable. None can give check to his orders, nor hinder him from accomplishing his pleasure, Isaiah 46:10-11. Whatever he pleases shall be done, and woe to those that attempt to hinder him, Isaiah 45:9, Jeremiah 18:3-4, Jeremiah 18:6. No powers in the world can any more hinder the Lord from ordering all in heaven and earth as he pleases, than the clay can hinder the potter from forming it into what shape he list. So Daniel 4:35, Job 9:12-13. As none should question his proceedings, so none can stop them. Those who presume they are strong enough to help others, shall not be able to help themselves when he falls upon them; they must stoop, yea, fall irrecoverably, Job 11:10. Whatever the Lord undertakes, whether to save or destroy, whether to do good to those that please him, or hurt those that offend him, he will do it unavoidably; there is none can hinder him, Romans 11:9, 2 Chronicles 20:6. All the resistance that any created power can make to the Lord in his course of governing the world will be but like that which a snail can make to the foot that treads on it, and will crush it. All the impediment they can give him is no more than a fly can give a wheel that is whirled about with a strong hand. All attempts of the powers of hell or earth to hinder the Lord from ordering all as he pleases will be as ridiculous, Psalms 2:1-5.

4. He rules perfectly. There is not the least weakness or imperfection in his government, as there is in that of other rulers; nothing of error or mistake; nothing that the most excellent prudence would order otherwise; nothing defective, for want of judgment as to things present, or want of experience as to things past, or want of foresight as to things to come; for he has all things, past, present, and to come, clearly before his eyes, in every act of government, and in his ordering of every particular, Psalms 148:5. The Lord is great, as he is the ruler of the world; and as he rules all things with great power, so with infinite wisdom. It is an infinite understanding that governs the world, Proverbs 3:19-20. And as there is perfection of wisdom, so also of righteousness, in his government, Psalms 97:1-2, the basis of his throne (as before) Psalms 36:5-6. All these perfections, so infinitely great in all dimensions that none can give an account of their height, and depth, and length, and breadth, do shine forth in preserving man and beast, in the Lord’s disposing of all things in the world, from the highest to the lowest.

5. He rules all at once. Orders all things, in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, together. Men cannot do two things at once, but first dispose of one business and then of another; order the affairs of one place now, and when that is done, despatch the concernments of another. But the Lord orders all the affairs of all parts of the world at once; he can mind them all together, how infinitely various they seem; the multiplicity of them is no more distraction to him than if he had but one thing in hand. He has a governing hand over all things, in all their actions and motions, throughout the whole world, and his hand is in them all at once; and in those affairs which he manages by instruments, while they are acting under him they are acted by him, and he acts immediately in them all; how far soever they may be asunder, he influences them all together. And though this be hard to conceive, yet must there be no doubt of it, if we believe that God rules over all. For since there are many millions of things in being and motion at once, if the Lord did but order one or few things at once, the greatest number of them would be and move without him. Since he rules over all, and none subsist or move without him, he must be conceived to put forth millions of governing acts at once, as many together as there are things and motions in the world.

6. He rules easily. The government of the whole world, and all things in it, gives him not the least trouble. He takes care of all without any solicitousness; he orders all, without any toil; he acts all,

without any labour; he does it continually, without any weariness. Ο■ γ■ρ κ■μνει ■ Θε■ς προσ■των, ο■δ■ ■σθενει πρ■ς τ■ν π■ντων ■ργασ■αν, Athanas. contra Arian. Orat. 3. God is not weary with ordering the universe, nor is all the work of the world too much for him; he does it all with as much ease as we do that which may be done with a word, or a look, or a beck; he rules the world as easily as he made it. 'God said, Let there be light, and there was light,' Psalms 33:6, Psalms 33:9. He does not properly speak; he did not so much for the making of the world; it was enough that he willed it. Μ■νον ■θ■λησε κα■ ■ποιησε τα π■ντα, id. ibid; he only willed it, and all things started out of nothing; and with as much ease, with such a word he upholds and governs the world, Hebrews 1:3; by his word he upholds all things in their being, and order, and motion; his word is enough for all. It is sufficient that he wills it: Τ■ βο■λημα μ■νον ■καν■ν ■στιν α■το■ πρ■ς τ■ν τ■ν π■ντων δημιο■ργ■αν; his word or will was enough to make all, it is enough to govern all; it costs him no more toil or trouble, than a word of our mouth, or an act of our will costs us, Psalms 147:15-18; he rules and orders all things as easily as if he had but one thing to order; all are not so much to sovereign power and all-sufficiency, as any one, the least, the easiest is to us; he rules the world, as if an artist could make a clock go with his eye, and keep it in true and constant motion only by looking on it; the most miraculous acts of his government are done as easily as we breathe, Exodus 15:8, Exodus 15:10.

7. He ruleth continually. His government is indefectible, he is always ruling over all, without ever ceasing, without the least intermission. If the Lord should but withdraw his governing hand a moment, all the wheels of the great fabric of the world would stand still or fall to pieces. When those whom we call the rulers of the world are asleep, or idle, or worse, God is still at work; his over-seeing eye is ■φθαλμ■ς ■κο■μητος, an eye that 'neither slumbers nor sleeps,' Psalms 121:3-4, Zechariah 4:10, 2 Chronicles 16:9. They run, they are always in motion, never shut, never diverted, ever beholding the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the government of it, Exodus 15:18, Psalms 146:10. 'The Lord shall reign for ever,' for ever; not only because of the continuance of this sovereign dignity, but because of the ever continued exercise of his regal power.

Thus much for the explication of this grand truth. For the proof of it, there is little need of reasons and arguments, when there is so much evidence from Scripture, as I have already given an account of. Only take notice of these three particulars:

1. The Lord has right and title to rule over all.

2. He is able to rule all. And, 3. He is concerned, and so willing to exercise such an universal government.

Each of these alone will be a sufficient confirmation of this truth, but taken all together, they make up abundant evidence. He that has right to rule, may rule if he be able; and he that is able, will rule actually if he be concerned. But the Lord may rule over all, he has right to do it; and he can rule over all, he is able to do it; and he is willing too, being highly concerned to do it; and therefore he actually governs all.

1. The Lord has right and title to rule over all. No creature has so much right to rule over any one thing as he has to rule over all; for all things are his own, Psalms 89:11; heaven and earth, the world, and the fulness of it, i. e. whatever is in it, all things wherewith the world is replenished,

Psalms 74:16. So particularly man is his own, Psalms 100:3, and all that men enjoy are his, 1 Chronicles 29:14, 1 Chronicles 29:16; all are his own, because he made them all. And so you may observe in the texts before quoted, where the Lord is spoken of as proprietor; his making of them is mentioned, that being the foundation and ground of his propriety. Indeed, nothing can be so much our own as that is God's which is created by him; by virtue of this, everything created is his own in the fullest sense; absolutely, without any limitation; totally, without any co-partner; principally, without any subordination; primarily, without any derivation of title from others; independently, without any dependence upon any other for his title; so that what we count most our own, is not near so much ours, as everything is his.

Now, an absolute owner or proprietor has right to possess, or make use, or dispose of, or order what is his own as he sees fit, Matthew 20:15, Esther 1:22. The world is more the Lord's than any man's house is his own, and so has all right to rule it. The same word, dominus, signifies both a lord and an owner; and dominium, both rule and property; so far as any one hath property, so far he is a ruler, and may dispose of what is his own. And we have them joined together in Scripture, 1 Chronicles 29:12, where you have the kingdom or dominion, and the right or title to it (all are thine). The Lord's kingdom rules over all, because all his own.

2. He is able to rule over all; he, and he alone is in a capacity to do it. And this is evident by those infinite perfections of his, which I have given you an account of heretofore.

(1.) He is almighty. He can do all things, and therefore he can order and rule everything; he can keep all in subjection, and make them serve the ends he has appointed them, Revelation 19:6. Omnipotency is sufficient for the government of all things. An universal power is more able to rule all, than our limited particular power to govern any one thing.

(2.) He is omnipresent. Everywhere present, and so can observe and take order about everything wherever it is. He fills heaven and earth, Jeremiah 23:24; no part of the world, but he is fully in it; he more than fills it, 2 Chronicles 2:6. There is not any part of the world which is at the least distance from him; and therefore he is in a capacity to order and govern all.

(3.) He is omniscient. His knowledge is infinite, and reaches all things, and therefore he knows how to order all things, and how to extend his rule over all. He understands the nature, and temper, and power, and motions of all creatures, and accordingly discerns how they may be ruled, how they are to be ordered, Hebrews 4:13. The minds and hearts of men which are not subject to the government of any creatures, because they are not known to any, are open to the eye, and under the inspection of God, and so under his rule and government. And thus it is evident that the Lord is able to rule over all, and all-sufficient for the government of all things.

3. He is willing to rule over all. He has not only right and power, but a will to govern the world; and so nothing is left to make us doubt but that he actually rules it. That he is willing is evident, because he is highly concerned. The end for which he made all would not otherwise be attained if he did not order and dispose of all in a tendency thereto, Proverbs 16:4. He made all things for his own glory; but they cannot promote this end, they will not glorify him, unless he concur, and order, and rule, and overrule them. He made all things, ad responsum ipsius, to answer him, so some; ut obtemperent ipsi, so others to the same sense, that they may obey him. But that they may obey him he must keep them under his rule and government, otherwise his end in making them may be

lost. Now the Lord is not willing to be frustrated in his great design, and therefore willing to rule all for the promoting of it. And hence we may certainly conclude that he actually rules over all.

I will but endeavour to remove one objection out of the way, and then proceed to application.

If God rule over all, then all things would be excellently ordered. But there seems to be one thing remarkable in the government of the world, which men are apt to think would be otherwise ordered if the Lord did concern himself in the governing of all things. And it is this: in all ages good men have ordinarily fared worst, and those that are bad have fared best in the world. These have ruled, while those were under hatches; these have prospered and flourished, while those have been oppressed or afflicted; these have had power, and plenty, and successes, while those have been under wants, sufferings, persecutions. This has not only occasioned the heathen who knew not God to question his providence and universal government, δι■ το■ ■ρ■ν, ποτ■ μ■ν ■γαθους δυστυχο■ντας, when they see the misery of good men, ποτ■ δ■ κακο■ς ■ν ■αυτο■ς ε■πορο■ντας, and the prosperities of bad men; but it has been a stumbling-block to the best of God's people, which some of them could hardly get over: Psalms 73:2-5, Psalms 73:12, 'My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there is no bands in their death; but their strength is firm,' &c.; whereas he himself, and the generation of the righteous, met with other measures: Psalms 73:14, 'All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.' So Job, when himself was under so grievous afflictions, observed the wicked were in great flourish, Job 21:7; and Jeremiah expostulates with the Lord about it, as a strange dispensation, of which an account could not be easily given, Jeremiah 12:1-2. But in answer to this, 1, There would be no reason to question the universal government of God upon this account, if the nature and tendency of prosperity and afflictions were but rightly apprehended.

It is thought a disparagement to the government of the world that wicked men fare well therein. But if outward prosperity do not make them fare well, the show will vanish. Now, prosperity is so far from being good to evil men, that there is scarce anything worse in this world than to prosper in ways of wickedness. It is as if a physician should leave a wilful patient to please himself with such a diet as will heighten his distemper, and tends to make it incurable. Would you think this a favour, or that the sick person is well dealt with, how much soever his fare pleases him? No better, no more favourably does the Lord deal with wicked men when he suffers them to prosper in their evil ways. Alas! this prosperity tends to harden them in wickedness, and to fasten them irrecoverably in the ways that lead to destruction: Proverbs 1:32, 'The turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.' 'The case' (for so we may render that which we read the turning away) 'of the simple,' their freedom from afflictions, tends to ruin them, though they are so simple as not to understand it. 'And the prosperity of wicked men' (for these are fools in Solomon's language) 'will destroy them.' And is it any great favour for the Lord to give them that which will prove destructive to them? Their prosperous state is but a fattening them for the day of slaughter. And thus the prophet resolves this difficulty, Jeremiah 12:3. And so some understand that of the apostle: James 5:5, 'Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.' A beast that is intended to be killed is put into fat pasture, and seems to fare better than another that is left to shift for itself on a bare common. But a fat pasture is no sign of favour unless it be a favour to be killed sooner. Look upon prosperous sinners as fattening for slaughter, as preparing for a sudden, terrible fall, and their prosperity will

be no exception against the divine government of the world. Says Isidore, We ought not to lament those who smart when they offend, ■λλ■ το■ς ■τιμωρητ■ ποιο■ντας, but those that go on in sin unpunished. As it is not so grievous to be sick as to have no cure, those that suffer here are in the way to be healed, but those that go on unpunished, ε■ς ■ναλγησ■αν ■δε■ουσιν, lose all sense of their disease, their case is next to desperate. If their path were hedged up with thorns, or met with some rubs in the way, it is like they might take up; but when their way in wickedness is plain and pleasant, they are never like to stop till they run themselves into eternal ruin. Nothing makes the case of a sinner more dangerous and desperate than a continued prospering in sin. And as wicked men cannot be reasonably accounted to fare well for all their flourish and outward prosperity, this being so dangerous, so destructive, so much a curse, so dreadful a judgment, so on the (their hand, those that are good cannot be thought to fare ill because of their afflictions and sufferings in this life; for afflictions are necessary for them, considering the sickly complexion of the best souls in this life, even as physic is for a diseased body. If the Lord did not use this method, it would signify he cared not for them, regarded not whether they were well or ill, whether they lived or died; ■ τεμν■μενος κα■ καυ■μενος πρ■ς Θεραπε■αν ■δε■ει, when they are lanced and seared, they are under cure; ■π■ τ■ς ■λγ■δονος Θεραπε■αν καρπωσ■μενος, though it be grievous, it is the way to their recovery. This helps them to more health, and strength, and life, in the inner man, 2 Corinthians 4:16; this makes them more fit for service, more fit for communion with God, and capable of greater glory, 2 Corinthians 4:17. And does God deal ill with them in thus doing, in dispensing that which is so necessary, so highly advantageous to them? Is there anything in this dispensation thus truly represented that can impeach God's government of the world? Is there anything that does not become him, that does not speak the ordering of a divine hand?

2. If these things were of another nature; if prosperity did signify some favour to those that are bad, and afflictions did speak more severity to those that are better; yet the small continuance of them makes them inconsiderable. Their 'light afflictions are but for a moment,' no more is the prosperity of the other. Compare it with eternity, and it is nothing. Θεο■ς π■ν ■νθρωπ■νου βιο■ δι■στημα τ■ μηδ■ν ■στιν, to God, the whole space of a man's life is as nothing. What if the Lord were severe to his children for this moment, it is nothing to that everlasting kindness which they shall shortly meet with, but never be deprived of. He loves them here, but it is not fondness, or feminine tenderness, to let them have that which pleases them though it be hurtful. Illos fortius amat, it is a strong, a masculine love, which is to do them good, and keep them under sharp discipline, if nothing else will do it. But this will be needful but for a while, it is but for a moment. The wicked, on the other side, they are under the sentence of condemnation. And what if he give them a little respite, and let them take some refreshment betwixt the sentence of death passed on them and the terrible execution? Alas! in a few moments they are to die, to die eternally. And is this such a forbearance, is this so great a favour, as to make it a question whether the proceeding do become the Ruler of the world, the Judge of heaven and earth!

3. This exception will have no force, can take no place, in those who believe a future judgment. The great Ruler of the world has several acts of government, which have their appointed times, and to which he proceeds gradually and regularly. Here in this life he gives his laws, and expects what observance they will meet with. He has reserved judgment and execution in distributing rewards and punishments till this life be ended; they are principally for another world. The Lord, in

great wisdom, passes from one to another distinctly; but vain men would have these confounded and run into one another. They would see judgment before trial, and execution before the assizes; and crowns and rewards before the combat be ended, before the race be finished, before those who are to be judged have given full proof of themselves, Hebrews 9:27; Acts 17:31, ‘Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world,’ &c. If he had not appointed such a day, and given assurance of it; if all things should proceed with good and bad to eternity, as they do for a little time: then there might be some more colour for this exception. But we would have all done here, and appoint the day presently, and so leave no work for the great day of his appointing. If the Lord should proceed with all here according as they are and do, περιττος ■ν ■ τ■ς κρ■σεως λ■γος, Isid. lib. v. epist. 215, the appointment of a future judgment would be in vain.

Stay but a while till things be ripe for judgment, or do but believe what God has given assurance of, that the Judge is at the door, and will speedily reward all according to their works, and then all will be clear. The day is at hand when God will fully vindicate his government, not only to the reason of men (as he does now), but to their senses, and then there will be no occasion to complain that those that are bad fare well, and those that are good fare worse. Then you will see the righteous ruler of the world making a vast and everlasting difference betwixt good and bad; and in the mean time you have as much reason to believe it as if you saw it now.

Use. 1. For information. This serves to inform us in several things which much concern as in point of belief and practice. Particularly,

1. In reference to superiors, whether civil magistrates or church governors, or heads of families, or rulers of others in any capacity. Hereby we learn,

(1.) That all are subjects in respect of God. He rules over all, and therefore all are to acknowledge him as their sovereign, and themselves as subjected to him. The highest on earth are as much subjects to the great God as the meanest of their vassals are to them; and those, whoever they are, who consent not to this subjection, and demean not themselves accordingly, they are rebels to God, whatever they are amongst men. So he accounts them, and they may expect he will proceed answerably against them. So Saul, though a king, his not observing of God’s command, is branded as rebellion, and aggravated as a crime equal to witchcraft and idolatry, 1 Samuel 15:22-23. They are to subject themselves to the sovereign of the world with trembling, and to serve him with fear, Psalms 2:10-11.

(2.) They are but officers in subordination to him; the highest of men, no more than under-officers. For he rules over all, and therefore is above all, and so there are none but who are under him. He alone is supreme, and the greatest are below him at an infinite distance; he is higher than the kings of the earth, Psalms 89:27, Ecclesiastes 5:8. The higher powers are all under him, whose being ruler over all speaks him the Most High. It is no disparagement to the highest on earth, no, nor to the principalities and powers in heaven, to be counted his underlings.

(3.) All their authority is derived from him. If he rule over all, none have power to rule but what he gives and allows. None have any authority but whom he authorises. All subordinate officers derive their authority from the supreme magistrate; if they challenge or use any more, they usurp. He is the fountain of all authority; there is none in channel or cistern but what comes from the fountain, Romans 13:1-14. They have their commission from him; they have no more, no other power, than

is contained in the commission which they have from the supreme governor of the world; what they act beyond it, against it, is no act of authority, but of presumption and usurpation.

(4.) All authority should be exercised for him; and that has no authority, whatever it be, which is not for him. He that is the original of all power in church, state, and families, must needs be the end of all, Romans 11:36, Hebrews 2:10. All is from him, and all is for him, who rules over all. That which is not for him is so far by no authority from him, for he gives no authority but for himself. What, then, is that which is against him? Any law, or order, or command, of powers higher or lower, which is against the will and interest of God, is no act of authority, for there is no authority but what the Lord gives; and to be sure he gives no authority against himself, Deuteronomy 1:16-17, 2 Chronicles 19:5-7.

(5.) Hence we may learn how we are to obey our superiors. He that rules over all must be first obeyed, and all others as they stand in relation to him. They are under him, and subordinate to him, and so must be obeyed in subordination to him, and no otherwise; never above him, never against him. When their wills not agreeing with his come in competition, then he who rules over all must have the pre-eminence in this case. The equity of it is so clear, we may appeal to the consciences of any who acknowledge the sovereignty of God, as the apostles did: Acts 5:29, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’ The case is more clear than if we should put it so, whether it be better to obey the prince or a constable, judge ye; for he that rules over all is infinitely more above the highest on earth, than the greatest monarch is above the meanest officer. When any of the sons of men, whether magistrates, or pastors, or parents, or masters, enjoin us to neglect anything which is our duty, or do anything which is a sin; not to obey them is no disobedience to any authority, for none has the least authority to enjoin any such thing. God, who is the rise of all authority, never authorised them to require any such thing. Such injunctions, though they be the acts of such who are otherwise in authority, yet they are not authoritative acts, but private, or worse. And not to comply with them is not to disobey authority, but to disown usurpation upon and rebellion against him who rules over all; and none will question these but those that neither understand what God is nor man.

2. We may learn much hereby concerning the nature of sin; that which may lead us to hate it and fear it, and not only avoid, but mortify it; this will shew us how great a crime it is, how dangerous, how unreasonable.

(1.) How great a crime it is. It affronts the greatest authority in the world; it provokes the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth; it dishonours him who rules over all. That is a rule obvious to and acknowledged by all, the greater the person is whom we offend, the greater and more heinous is the offence: Τ■ ποι■τητι τ■ν προσ■πων τ■ ■μαρτ■ματα κρ■νονται (says Chrysostom). We judge of offences by the quality of the persons offended. It is a crime (as he goes on) to injure a private person, but more criminal to offer an injury to a ruler. And still the greater the ruler is, the more heinous is the crime. How then does that crime rise, which strikes at the sovereign Majesty of the world; which offers injury to him who rules over all, in comparison of whom the greatest potentates on earth are but as grasshoppers! The greatness and heinousness of sin is unmeasurable, even as the greatness of that God whom it offends is incomprehensible. An offence against a king (says Isidore, lib. iv. epist. 179), κ■ν μικρ■ γ■ρ, though it be small, μεγ■λα τ■ ■ξ■■ το■ πεπονθ■τος κρ■νεται, yet is judged great because of the dignity of him that suffers

by it. What sin then can be small, which is directed against the great Ruler of all things? No sin can be little, being against such a Majesty, in comparison of whom all things, the greatest of all, are as nothing.

(2.) How dangerous it is. The violation of God's law must needs deserve a greater penalty than the violation of any laws of men; for what are all other lawgivers to him who gives laws to heaven and earth? or what is their authority to his who rules over all? To neglect the charge of a constable, is nothing to the crossing the edict of a mighty prince. What, then, is it to break the law of God, betwixt whom and the greatest prince the distance is incomparably greater than between the mightiest monarch on earth and the meanest officer! And as the penalty is more grievous, so the inflicting of it is more certain and unavoidable, for he that rules all can order anything to do execution upon a sinner; and whither will ye fly from him who rules everywhere? or who can deliver you out of his hands who rules over all? Do ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are you stronger than he? What powers will you muster up to secure you from him who overpowers all? Will you 'call to the mountains and rocks to fall upon you, and hide you from the face of him that sitteth on the throne'? Oh, but he can cleave the rocks, and cause the mountains to melt like wax before him; for he rules over all, and rules irresistibly.

(3.) How unreasonable it is. He that ventures on sin, must do it without reason. Since God rules over all, there is nothing can be reasonably hoped for to draw to sin, there is nothing can rationally be feared to fright him to sin.

[1.] For fear. It is most unreasonable and absurd to fear where no fear is, and not to be afraid where there is most occasion of fear; but sin is most irrational both these ways. You are not afraid of God when you sin against him, when you do that which most provokes him; yet he is most to be feared, since he rules over all; for, upon this account,

First, He can make anything a suffering, even that which you most value, which you most affect, and that from which you have the greatest expectations, from which you look for the most comfort, the greatest security. He can order your greatest friends, your most endeared relations, your sweetest and most valued enjoyments, to be your sufferings and punishments, and can make you feel his indignation against sin, in and by any of them, or all of them. If he do but speak the word, that will be enough to turn them into quite other things than you account them; to make them your dangers, when you look they should succour you; to make them your grievances, when you look they should be the refreshments of your lives; to make them your tormentors, when you expect them to be your comforters. For everything must and will be, not what you think it is, but what he will order it to be; for he rules over all, and can overrule everything to be and do what he will, and to prove such to you as he pleases.

Secondly, As he can make anything to be a suffering, so he can make any suffering to be most grievous. He can make anything prove an affliction, and he can make any affliction, even that which you make lightest of, to be intolerable. He can put a hell into anything, and can make that which you count but a spark to give you the tortures of the most dreadful flames, and can order that which you think you can go lightly under to sink and crush you; for he rules all, and everything obeys the order that he gives it. That which seems little will prove great, a greater affliction and calamity than you imagine; and that which seems light will be too heavy to be borne, if he who rules over all will so dispose of it.

Thirdly, He can make all things to be his executioners. He can employ any of them in heaven, or earth, or hell—those that can do you most mischief, or that you are most in danger of, most obnoxious to, most afraid of—and can give any of them commission to inflict his wrath for sin; yea, or if need were, he could employ them all together to make the sinner miserable. There is not any of them would decline the employment if he laid a command upon them, they would all concur together to pour out his indignation, if he did but give them order; for he rules over all, and can overpower all to do his pleasure.

Oh, what madness is it to sin against such a God; to provoke him who rules over all! If sin did not bewitch men, if it did not deprive them even of the ordinary use of reason, they would never venture to sin upon any consideration; since there is that in sin, which, if considered, is so dreadful, as to outweigh whatever may be put in the balance against it, as if it were nothing. Particularly, how little or nothing is there in the fear of man, if weighed, to sway any to sin against this great Ruler of the world? To fear man, in this case, is to be afraid, where there is no cause to fear. For,

First, What need he fear man, or any creature, or all of them together, who is under the protection of him who rules over all? What is it to be under the protection of him, who can dispose of all things in the world for your safety, who can order anything to secure you against the rage and violence of all? What need he fear, who stands for him, who has all things that may endanger or secure him at his beck and command? While you refuse to sin, you stand for God; and while you are for him, he is for you. And what stands he for, who rules over all? If you know him, you will make account, that all other things, if they should be all set against you, stand but for cyphers. They are no more, when set against him who overrules and overpowers all. For,

Secondly, They can do nothing, more or less, against you, without him; nothing without his permission, without his power, without his concurrence. Balaam had as great a mind to do Israel a mischief as any, being under the power of such temptations to do it, as most suited his corrupt temper; but for all that, he professes he could do nothing at all, Numbers 22:17, 18, beyond the word of the Lord. What if those whom you displease, by refusing to sin against God, be as fierce as lions, yet the Lord is the keeper, he has them fast; they cannot come near you, unless he let them loose. If you provoke him to let them loose upon you, there is danger; but the danger is in offending him, not them. It is he, therefore, that is to be feared, not they. If they should break loose, he can break their teeth, or maim their paws, or disarm them of their strength, and make them as weak or as tame as you would have them; or can call them in with a word when they are running upon yon with open teeth. If he do but say, Down, sirrah! the fiercest of them cannot so much as wag, will not dare to move in the least against you. One word of the great Ruler of the world will make them crouch and lie at your feet, and fawn upon you, instead of tearing and devouring you. And is it reasonable then to offend God, who has such command over them, for fear of them, who can no way stir or move without him?

Thirdly, If they should be permitted to do all they can against you, yet that is little or nothing, in comparison of what he can do, whom you incense by sin. They can but only touch your bodies or outward concernments; but he is Ruler over all. He has dominion, not only over your bodies and estates, but over your souls; and he can order and dispose of them unto everlasting miseries or happiness as he pleases. It is but a little that you hazard, a very inconsiderable thing, for an

inconsiderable time, by offending men; but you hazard all, and all to eternity, by sinning against God; and that is so great and dreadful a hazard, so much in all reason to be feared, as should swallow up all fear and respect of the other, Luke 12:5. To sin against God to avoid any danger from men, is to fear him who can do no more than ‘kill the body,’ and not to fear him who can ‘destroy both body and soul in hell;’ which is, as if a man, to escape a shower of rain, should throw himself into the sea. Is that the way not to be wet? Or, as if one, to save the scorching of his clothes, should throw himself headlong into the fire. You would think the fear which put a man upon such a course were absurd indeed, and such as became none but a distracted person: no more reasonable, no more void of madness, is any fear that drives a man to provoke him who is Ruler over all.

[2.] Nor are the hopes more reasonable which may be made use of, to allure us to sin against this great God. In that he is ruler over all, it appears that all such hopes are vain and delusive, and such as grossly abuse the souls of men.

Particularly, first, can ye hope for secrecy? Oh, but how or where can ye be secret in respect of God? He that rules over all rules everywhere; and so, not only his presence, but his ruling power, is in every place. It is in every quarter, in every corner of the whole world. It reaches from the highest heaven to the centre of the earth, yea, to the bottom of hell, Psalms 139:7-8, &c. Nothing, no place, is out of the eye, or in the least distance from the ruling hand of God. If you will presume to be anywhere secret, or to act, or speak, or think, anything secretly in respect of God, you must find out a place where he rules not. If you dig into the bowels of the earth for a retirement, or dive into the bottom of the sea, or withdraw as far from all company as heaven is from earth, or cover yourselves with as thick darkness as any is in hell, all will be in vain: not only his over-seeing eye will be upon you, but his all-ruling hand will be with you, wherever you are, or whithersoever you go. The darkest, the closest, the remotest retirement, is no more out of his presence, no more out of the reach and stroke of his all-ruling power, than the most open or public place in heaven or earth.

Or, secondly, do ye hope for pleasure in sinning against God? Oh that word, against God, is enough to dash all hopes. Will he suffer you to have any true pleasure in displeasing him, who can and does order all things as he will? He rules over all, and so rules all the concernments of pleasure or pain, of grief and delight, and can dispose of them as he pleases. He can make that which you fancy to be the greatest pleasure in the world, to prove the bitterest thing that ever you meddled with, and can not only embitter the act or object which yon count delightful, but can so order it, as it shall turn all you have besides into bitterness, and make all your other enjoyments as gall and wormwood. No art can prepare so bitter infusions as that hand that rules all. Ask Cain what that pleasure proved which he took in satisfying his malice. It was such a delight as made his life a burden to him ever after, Genesis 4:13. Ask Amnon what that pleasure proved which he had in defiling Tamar; or Zimri, in the Moabitish woman; they would tell you the bitterness of death was in it. Ask David what pleasure his lust afforded him; he will tell you, such as a man takes in having his bones broken, Psalms 51:8. If you fancy such pleasure as this, you may have it in sin here, and that which is more intolerable hereafter; but if you look for better, you are like to be deceived, so long as God rules over all.

Or, thirdly, do you hope to gain by sin, or to get any advantage in unlawful ways? This hope is as vain and unreasonable as the other. If God rule over all, and all actions and events be ordered by him, you can get no gain without him. If he order it, it will be either in mercy or in wrath. To hope that he will order anything in mercy, which is got by dishonouring him, is a madness; and if you have it in wrath, it is such an advantage as you may wish the worst of your enemies, if you might wish them that which will prove the greatest mischief. What gained Achan, by his wedge of gold? or Judas, by his pieces of silver? or Ananias, by his sinful saving? No more will you gain really by sin, whatever show of advantage there may be. It will prove no better than the coal which the eagle stole, which though she thought a booty, yet it served only to fire her nest. If God rule over all, and order everything as he pleases, what can be the matter of your hope? To look that he should order that to answer your expectation, which lies directly cross to his will, is as unreasonable as what is most so. And thus you see how absurd and irrational an evil sin is, since it can be promoted by no fears, by no hopes, but what are without or against all reason.

Use. 2. For exhortation. If the Lord rule over all, let us give up ourselves to be ruled by him. His ruling power and dignity calls for this subjection; and let us be ruled by him, and subject to him, in all things. The extent of his dominion calls for this. He not only rules, but rules over all. Let me insist upon this a little distinctly.

1. The Lord rules, therefore we ought to be ruled by him, and to resign up ourselves to the government of God. He stands in relation to us as our ruler; this obliges us to subject ourselves to him. Let us give our consent to be his subjects, and shew our subjection by all obedience; and for the manner of it, our subjection should be answerable to his dominion. We must submit to him, not only as a ruler, but as to such a ruler as the Lord is.

(1.) We must be subject to him as supreme. The higher the authority, the greater must the subjection be. Now, God is the sovereign Lord of the world; all other governors rule but under him, and for him, in his name, and by his authority. Those whom the apostle calls ■ξουσ■αι ■περεχουσαι, transcendent powers, they are, in reference to the supreme Ruler of the world, but δι■κονοι and λε■τουργο■, Romans 13:4, Romans 13:6, ‘ministers of God,’ such as officiate under him. We are to be subject to them for his sake, but subject to him for himself, ver. 7. The greatest tribute, fear, honour, to the greatest and most supreme Ruler. The highest power should have the most submissive subjection.

(2.) We must be subject to him absolutely. For his government is absolute, and has no bounds nor limits, but his own will. Our subjection must be answerable, without reserve, without limitation; extending as far as the will of God, yielding to every part of it, not excepting any particular, great or small; whatsoever he would have us do, or suffer, or part with. We must yield to his will, whenever he signifies it, without questioning the reason or equity of it, or excepting against it for any seeming difficulty or danger, however it cross our humours, or carnal inclination, or worldly interest. It must be in all things correspondent to what they profess in one particular, Jeremiah 42:5-6. ‘Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God.’ We must not say, I will submit to his will in this or that; but as for such and such, which are so hard, or hazardous, or reproachful, or expensive, I must be excused. This is not the voice of one that is truly subject to God, but of a man that would rule himself, and be no further in subjection than he list.

(3.) We must subject ourselves to him freely and cheerfully. He that rules all irresistibly should meet with no resistance, no opposition from us. He that rules all easily should find us easily yielding to his whole will, without any backwardness or reluctancy. We should shew that we will be ruled with a word, with a beck, with a look from God; for so he rules the rest of the world. We should not put the Lord to use force, to take the rod, or bring us to it, as we do those that are stubborn, by foul means. None of his commandments should seem grievous to us, for they are not so in themselves, 1 John 5:3. We should not need to be drawn or haled to it, but run of our own accord, Psalms 119:1-176. We have a great example for it: Hebrews 10:7, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' Psalms 40:8, 'I delight to do thy will; thy law is in my heart.' It is in my heart to observe thy whole law. Thy will is not only in the written laws, but in my heart; there is that within which freely answers all thy laws without.

(4.) We must be in subjection continually. Not submit to him only by fits, and in a good mood, but live, as constantly under his government, his state and relation. As a ruler [he] abides for ever, and therefore so does our relation as subjects. We are not obliged only to some acts of obedience, but are continued in a state of subjection to him; his laws are always in force, and therefore should have observance every moment. He ever rules, and therefore we should be ever obeying. Our whole life should be an uninterrupted course of obedience, and a continued testimony of our subjection to him who reigns for ever and ever. The Lord will own no other as loyal subjects, but those whose subjection and obedience is continued, John 8:31. If you continue in subjection to my word and will, then are ye my subjects indeed, not otherwise. He will reward no other subjects, Galatians 3:10, James 1:25. So much for the first, 'He rules;' therefore we must be subject, and our subjection should be correspondent to his dominion.

2. He rules over all, therefore we should be ruled by him in all. We should resign up all to be governed by him; we should give up all that is within us, all that belongs to us, to be ordered and disposed of as he would have it. Not any faculty, not any motion, not any part, not any act, not any enjoyment, not any affair should be by us exempted from his government, but all given up to be ruled by him, whose prerogative it is to rule over all.

1. Let him rule our minds, and all the powers thereof.

(1.) Our understanding. Let them be ready to learn of him, and be taught by him, and shew their subjection by being teachable and tractable in all matters of divine revelation. Whatever he declares to be true, let the understanding yield to it, close with it, embrace it as a divine truth, though we cannot penetrate the depth of it, nor discern the mode of it, nor reach the reason of it. Let it be captivated to the authority of God, declaring his mind and truth, so as to make no question of it, nor yield to any arguings against it, but to take his word for the truth of it, without further dispute, admitting no wisdom nor understanding against the Lord.

(2.) Our judgment. Let them be ruled by his judgment. Let us judge those things to be contemptible which he has declared to be so, whoever have high esteem of them, as the things of the world, riches, pleasures, honour, greatness; let us judge those things to be excellent, and worthy of all esteem, which he has commended to us, whoever despise them, as mortifiedness, holiness in its strength, life, exercise, and the gospel and means which tend to promote it; let us rather count those dogs and swine who trample upon these than question the judgment which the Lord has passed upon them; let us judge that to be most hateful and dreadful, which he has so represented

to us: sin, more hateful, more dreadful than poverty, or slavery, or any affliction, or the greatest suffering whatsoever; and shew that our judgments are ruled by God, in demeaning ourselves towards these accordingly, as Moses did, Hebrews 11:24-25. Let us judge those things more worthy to be our design and business which the Lord has commended to us as most worthy to be so, than those to which the generality of the world do give the pre-eminence. Heaven, and the things above, and the concernments of eternity, should be our design and business, if we will submit to the judgment of God. If we will rather follow the judgment of the carnal and sensual world, in preferring the things of time and sense, and the concernments of this present life, as fittest to be made our great work and business, we shew we are not those who will be ruled by God in our judgment of things.

(3.) Our thoughts. If we will have him rule over all, we must endeavour to bring every thought into captivity and subjection to him, 2 Corinthians 10:5. Let those thoughts be stifled which the Lord will have suppressed; those rejected, which he would have excluded, Jeremiah 4:14. Let those be entertained, which he would have admitted; and those cherished, which he would have abide in us, Psalms 139:17-18. Everything, even to a thought, should be ordered as he would have it, if we will observe him as he ought to be observed, who rules over all.

2. Let him rule our wills. Here especially should the throne of God be erected and established, as rulers choose their royal seats in the places which are most advantageous for the government of the rest. If the will be in subjection to God, all will submit to his government; but if this be not subdued to him, nothing will be subjected to him to any purpose, Proverbs 23:26. This, above all, is that upon which all the rest depend. He that must have his own will is no subject of God's; they that are truly subjected to him, his will is theirs. 'Not my will, but thine be done,' said our great pattern. When the will lies prostrate before God, and wholly applies itself to his will, then does all yield to his dominion. 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' was the first act of subjection which Saul paid to the universal sovereign. It must be enough to sway you in any case whatsoever, to know that it is the will of God.

Particularly (1.) the will should be ruled by him in its inclinations. We should be careful that the heart incline to those objects, and no other; in that way, and no otherwise than the Lord would have them. What objects he has set before us, and commended to us as fit objects for our wills; to these they should incline, shewing averseness to any other; his will should be the line in which they move, and by which they are regulated. They must stop or advance at every signification of his pleasure; and beware of any bias from self, or the world, which may make them turn aside from the right way, or from their due objects.

(2.) In elections or refusals. When we are deliberating what means must be used for the accomplishing of any end before us, the will of God must still preponderate, and always cast the scale. The means must be pitched on which the Lord offers, and which have warrant from his will; not those which eagerness after the desired end, or hastiness to be eased of some present grievance, or carnal wisdom or example, or the seeming success of others, or our own commends to us.

(3.) In our ends and intentions. These must be so under his government, as no ends must be aimed at, but what the Lord propounds to us. The serving, and pleasing, and enjoying, and honouring of God must be our last and chief ends; none but in subordination to these, none but

what will serve and promote these. Not the pleasing, or advancing, or securing of ourselves or others, or anything else, must be our end; but in the second place, and in subserviency to those which the Lord has made supreme; of which we have frequent mention, Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:4, 1 John 3:22, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Peter 4:11. To aim at this as the principal, and at none at all which will not serve this, nor at any that may serve it but in a subserviency to it, is the best character of a loyal subject to the King of kings, and a clear evidence that the will is in due subjection to the great Sovereign of the world.

3. The conscience must be ruled by him. This must be subjected to him, and to him alone; for he alone is the Lord of the conscience. It is the will of God that obliges conscience; and this should suffer itself to be bound up by it, as nothing else should oblige or disoblige it but the will of him who rules over all. Though it be the freest faculty, and the most exempted from the control of any other authority, yet in all its acts and offices it must be in full subjection to God. Whether it oblige or impel, it must do it by virtue of his authority and will; whether it discern or direct, it must do it by his light and direction; whether it accuse or acquit, it must do it according to his order and sentence. It must demean itself in all as his vicegerent. Βροτ■ς ■ συνε■δησις Θε■ς. Conscience is God's deputy, and must in the exercise of this office confine itself to the orders and instructions of its sovereign Lord, he who rules all.'

4. The affections must be ruled and ordered by him, and must receive law from him, as to their objects, and degree, and order.

(1.) The affections must have no other object, but what he proposes and directs them to. We should love nothing, but what he would have us love, 1 John 2:15. We should fear nothing, but what he would have us to fear, no, not those things which we are naturally afraid of, Revelation 2:10, Matthew 10:26, Matthew 10:28, Isaiah 8:12-13. So we must desire nothing which he would have us to avoid; nor mourn for anything, but what he has made the matter of our grief; nor let anything be our hope or expectation, but what he has made so, Psalms 62:5.

(2.) For the degree. He has assigned it, and the assignment must be observed. The affections are the waves, the motions of the heart, and he has said to them, as to those of the sea, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther.' And we should labour to keep them within the prescribed bounds. The Lord himself should be loved above all, in the highest degree, Matthew 22:37. To other things he has assigned a far lower degree of affection: Matthew 10:37, 'He that loveth them more;' i. e. he that loveth them anything near so much; he that loveth them not much less. In the other evangelist it is, 'He that hateth them not,' Luke 14:26. We are to love God, in toto valde, Deuteronomy 6:5, ■■■ ■■■■ 'with all thy vehemency;' but other things must be affected with some indifferency, 1 Corinthians 7:29-30.

(3.) For the order of our affections, that must be such as the Lord has disposed it. He must be loved for himself; all other things must be no otherwise affected, but for his sake; either because they come from him, or lead to him, or are some way like him, or help us the better to serve him; always for some respect to him, so that he must be the end and the rise of our affection in all things which we affect. To love anything, or desire it, or delight in it for itself, is to advance it into the place of God; and this is quite opposite to that subjection which is due to the Lord, and an open perverting of that order which he has set for our affections, and which must be carefully observed by those that will be subject to him.

I shall but briefly touch the rest, having stayed longer on these particulars than I intended. The fancy must be ruled by him, the vanity of it corrected, and the vagaries of it restrained by the awe of his authority. The appetite must be kept under his government. It must not be indulged in anything that may prove an occasion of sin or disservice to God. A straiter hand should be kept over it, that it bring in no provisions to the flesh. Those that feed themselves without fear, Jude 1:13, are unmindful of the subjection they owe to God; nay, the appetite should not be pleased, but for the better pleasing of our sovereign Lord; not for the sensual delight itself, but to make us more cheerful in his service, and better disposed for our work, and more affected to the spring of all that pleases us. The senses also must be kept under his rule and order, who rules over all. We should not touch, nor taste, nor handle, nor look, but as he would have us. Such a covenant as Job made with his eyes, Job 3:1, should be made with all our senses, to oblige them to that subjection and observance which everything and part of us owes to the universal sovereign. The whole body should be wholly ruled by him, Romans 12:1. Service is the greatest subjection, and the body should be offered up in such service. It is λογικ■ λατρε■α, reasonable, most agreeable to reason, that it should be given up in such subjection; or it is that which the word requires, so λογικ■ may signify. It is secundum os verbi, as the Syriac renders it, according to the mouth of the word; it is (as all acceptable service and worship must be) prescribed by the word. The Lord, in his word, doesrequire, that not only the soul, but the body, should be in such subjection to him, as to be wholly at his service. The body, and every part of it. To instance only in the principal; the tongue should not move, but as he would have it, and that it may not, the like course should be taken with it, as David took. He knew ‘the tongue is an unruly member,’ so he puts it under the government of God, Psalms 141:3. He would have it so watched and guarded as nothing might issue out but what pleased the Lord. The hands, Psalms 119:48, the employment of our hands should be that which he commands.

Finally, all our ways; every step should be ordered according to that rule which he has enjoined us to walk by: Psalms 119:133, ‘Order my steps in thy word.’ In the disposing of our affairs, in the improving of our talents, in the employing of our estates, we should consult with him how he would have all ordered; and when we know his will, that should be a law to us, a law worthy in our account of so much more observance than any other, as he is superior to all. And so I have shewed you how we are to subject ourselves to God, and to give up all to be ruled by him, since he rules over all. Now, to persuade you to resign yourselves and your all to be governed by him, let me add something by way of motive.

1. Take notice of the necessity of it. He is the ruler of the world, and will be; he will not lose his right, nor can any deprive him of it, nor hinder him from exercising his universal authority; he has power enough to make it good against the opposition of ten thousand worlds; he would cease to be God, if he should cease to be the ruler of all things. And, therefore, as sure as he is God, he will rule you one way or other. If you will not consent that he should be your ruler, you shall find him rule you whether you will or no. Even those that are so much addicted to sin, as to be enemies to his government, maugre all they can do to decline it, shall feel the power of it; for he will rule even in the midst of his enemies, Psalms 110:2. If you will not stoop to his gracious sceptre, he will crush you with a rod of iron, Psalms 2:1-12, Revelation 12:5; if you will not submit to his ruling power, he will bring you under his feet, 1 Corinthians 15:15; if you will not consent to be ordered by his laws in all things, he will exercise his dominion and authority over you, by inflicting the dreadful

penalty of his disobeyed laws, Isaiah 1:19-20. You may be under such a government as to be subject to it is more desirable than the greatest dominion in the world; but if you refuse this, he will rule you in a terrible manner, and threatens it with an oath that you may be sure of it, Ezekiel 20:33.

2. Consider the equity of it. The Lord is in all right the ruler of all things; he has all right to rule over you. You are his creatures, you are the work of his hands, he made you of nothing; you are more his own than anything is yours that your hands ever made, than anything is yours that you count most your own. And shall not the Lord have the ordering and disposing of that which is his own, so much his own? When you are so absolutely, so wholly his, will you not be ordered and ruled by him? This is such iniquity to God, such injurious dealing with the Most High, as the whole frame of the world may be astonished at; and accordingly the Lord seems to appeal to heaven and earth against it, Isaiah 1:2-3. The ox knows his owner, will be ordered and ruled by him, but those over whom the Lord has much more dominion, and who are far more his own, and whom he has much more obliged, they will not be subject to him, nor ruled by him, they rebel. This is such unequal, such injurious carriage towards God, as the very lifeless and senseless creatures may well abhor it—heaven and earth may be astonished at it.

3. Consider the advantages you may be sure of by subjecting yourselves to God; they are great and many. I shall but instance in two or three.

(1.) You will be under the protection of God. And the advantage of this is answerable to the greatness of him who obliges himself to vouchsafe it. It is above all other, because the Lord rules over all. A prince owes protection to his subjects, and is obliged to secure them, both from private injustice and open violence; while they submit to his government they ought to be secured by it, he is the minister of God for that end, Romans 13:1-14. And will not the Lord protect those who submit to his government? He is infinitely more able to do it, because he rules over all, and he is no less willing; his relation to them as their ruler gives assurance of this. He is concerned in point of honour that those who will live under his government should live there safely; that those who will be ruled by him should not suffer for it. It is the glory of his kingdom that, as it rules over all, so the true subjects of it should be safe above all, Isaiah 33:15-16. Those who shew themselves the subjects of God by observing his laws in such dangers as threatened Judea, in Sennacherib's invasion, he will take care they shall be secured. Though they dwell in the plain, most exposed, they shall be as safe as if their habitation were on high, above the reach of danger. He will be to them as a munition of rocks, an impregnable fort, such as can neither be battered nor undermined, such as need neither fear forcing nor starving. Hezekiah could secure one of his subjects from the violence of another, but he knew not how to secure them against the Assyrians. Oh, but the Lord can secure his subjects against all the powers of the world, against all the powers of darkness. He who rules over all can overpower all. He has the whole posse of the universe, and can raise it when and for whatever purpose he will; the whole militia of heaven and earth is at his beck and command.

He has provided such a guard for each of his faithful subjects as will secure them not only against all the force on earth, but all the power of hell, Psalms 34:7. There is an host of angels encamp about those that fear him. All the guards that princes have are nothing to this. Any one of this host is more than a whole army, can destroy the greatest army of men in a moment, Isaiah 37:36. Such

attendance, such security will the Lord afford his subjects, wherever they are, in all their ways, Psalms 91:9-12.

(2.) He will take care of all your concernments. He that rules over all, can and will order and dispose of all your affairs for you. You need not be careful and solicitous about them. He that rules over all, if you be willing to have all ordered by him, is willing to take the care of all your concerns upon himself, Php 4:6-7. When you are apt to be perplexed about the public, or your private affairs, or those of your posterity, address yourselves to him by a petition, take but the course which he has prescribed you, and so leave all to him who rules all, who has provided that hereby you have such tranquillity and quietness of mind and heart as will free you from all anxiety and trouble.

Oh what a privilege, what an advantage is it to be a subject to such a ruler! Those that will be ruled by him may not only be freed from danger, but from all care and trouble; he will have this lie upon himself, not upon his subjects, 1 Peter 5:5, 1 Peter 5:7. Do but humble, do but submit yourselves to him, as becomes the subjects of so great a Lord, and then you need care no more, he will take all the care for you, and so takes it all off from you, Psalms 55:22. Is anything too heavy for thee? Such is the indulgence of thy sovereign Lord, he would in no wise have thee burdened, he would rather have thee cast it upon him. He who rules all with ease can as easily bear all, and he is willing to bear all, rather than any of his subjects should be burdened with anything. Who would not be subject to such a Lord? Who would not resign up himself to such a government, where the ruler is ready to bear all himself, and will lay nothing that is heavy, leave nothing that is grievous, upon any subject of his? And that you may not doubt but the Lord is willing to ease you of all care and trouble, know further, that he counts it a disparagement to his government to have you solicitous and troubled about the things which he undertakes to rule and order, for what does it signify but that the Lord either is not able or not willing to order them for the best, and as they should be ordered? And by doubting of this you impeach the excellency of his government, or entrench upon it; as if you said, if you were able you would order things otherwise, as though you knew how to govern better. Hence, when Melancthon was extremely solicitous about the affairs of the church in his days, Luther would have him admonished in these terms, Monendus est Philippus ut desinat esse rector mundi, Let not Philip make himself any longer governor of the world. When we ease ourselves of cares and fears by casting them upon God, we acknowledge his government, and acquiesce in it, rest pleased and satisfied with it; and this being much for his honour, there is no doubt but he is willing thus to ease us of our burdens, by rolling all upon him who rules over all. The government is upon his shoulders, he is sufficient for it; let him alone with it. Trouble not yourselves about either public or personal concernments; if you be his subjects indeed, you will find him disposing of all for the best; he will order them better for you than you can do for yourselves, he will order them better than you can think. When you or others have run affairs into such disorder as you cannot expect that anything but evil and mischief will be the issue thereof, yet he can retrieve all, and either prevent the evil or turn it into good. Yea, he not only can, but will, so overrule it, for those that are willing to be ruled by him: Rom, 8:28, ‘All things shall work together for good to them that love God.’ Who can make all things thus to work but he that rules over all? It is he that can set all on work, and make them work together, concur jointly (though the severals be of quite other tendencies) for the good of his subjects. And he will do it, for his government is not domination or tyranny, which respects only the interest of the ruler, without

regard of the subject's good, for that is the difference between tyrannical and regular government; ■ μ■ν τ■ραννις πρ■ς τ■ ο■κε■ον, a tyrant minds his own pleasure, profit, and greatness, (Isid. lib. iii., Ep. 194). ■ δ■ βασιλε■α πρ■ς τ■ τ■ν ■ρχομ■νων συμφ■ρον βλ■πει, but lawful government minds the good of the subject. Though the Lord be absolute, and infinitely above those whom he rules, and expects no advantage by them, yet so far he condescends as to order all things for the good of those who are truly subject to him. He has made such a connection betwixt his glory and their happiness, as whatsoever advances his honour tends to promote their happiness. And in his government of the world he disposes of all things accordingly. Do but subject yourselves to him, and give up yourselves to be wholly ruled by him, and you will find that he takes such care of all your concernments as to order them far better for you than you can or would dispose of them by your own prudence or the assistance of others, if they were left to be ordered by yourselves, or ruled as you would have them.

(3.) He makes all his subjects to be kings. Every one that will be ruled by him shall have the honour and power of a king, Exodus 19:5-6. If you will be subject to me, and shew it by obeying my voice and observing my laws, ye shall be 'a kingdom of priests,' i. e. ye shall be both 'kings and priests,' as it is expressed, Revelation 1:6. The same thing expressed in another phrase, 1 Peter 2:9, βασ■λειον ■ερ■τευμα, 'a kingly priesthood,' i. e. not only priests, but kings. Amongst all nations the greatest dignity and honour was that of kings and priests. And this honour have all that will be subjects to God; they are not only priests to offer up spiritual sacrifice to God, but kings, and kings not only hereafter in heaven, but here on earth, Revelation 5:10, 'Hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.' Kings, you may say! Alas, they seem far from any such thing on earth! Where, or how, or over what do they reign? Why, they reign over that to which the greatest kings (that will not be subject to God) are miserably enslaved. They reign over sin, over their lusts and passions, which are the rulers and commanders of the princes of the earth. While they seem to rule all, they are in bondage and slavery to the corruptions of their hearts, they reign no otherwise but as serving divers lusts; and this is a more woeful bondage and servitude than that of a galley slave. While they take upon them the government of others, they cannot so much as govern themselves, but are at the command and under the power of their own passions and lusts. But he that will be subject to God, sin shall not have dominion over him; he shall subdue it, and be above the power of it, which is a royalty which few princes can glory in. He shall have power to govern himself, and to rule his passions, and corrupt inclinations, which are too unruly for the greatest on earth.

He shall reign over the world too; he shall overcome it, 1 John 5:4; he shall he above the pleasures, and profits, and greatness, and honours of it, by which it tyranniseth over the mightiest potentates; he shall have those under his feet which rule in the very hearts of others, Revelation 12:1. This is a royal power indeed, and peculiar to those who resign up themselves to be governed by God. Here is power, and honour, and royalty in the greatest reality: Βασιλε■α, πλο■τος κα■ δ■ξα, ■νοματα μ■ν παρ■ το■ς ■ξωθεν. Kingdom, and riches, and glory are but names amongst those that are without, πρ■γματα δ■ παρ■ Χριστιανο■ς, but the realities are theirs who are subject to Christ.

Oh what a temptation is a kingdom to the heart of man! What will he not do, or hazard, or suffer? What blood will he not shed, what ruins will he not make, to get or keep an earthly kingdom? Why, here you may have one upon easier and better terms, and such an one as is the greatest reality.

Those of the world are but nominal kingdoms in comparison of it. Give but up yourselves to the government of God, and you shall reign indeed; he makes all his subjects kings; you shall reign here in the excellent way expressed, and you shall reign for ever and ever in immortal glory.

4. Consider the excellency of it in some particulars.

(1.) The excellency of the ruler derives some dignity upon the subject. The greater and more eminent a prince is, the more honour it is to be related to him, even as a subject. What honour is it then to be so related to him, whose glory is above the heavens! It is really a greater excellency for kings to be his subjects, than it is otherwise that they are kings. The angels would not exchange their subjection to God for a dominion over the world. ■γο■μενος ■ρχην ε■ναι μεγ■στην τ■ ■ρχε■ν ■αυτο■ δ■νασθαι τ■ τον λογισμ■ν τ■ θυμ■ κα■ τα■ς ■δονα■ς ■πιστ■σαι, (Isidor. Ep. 223, lib. 3). The Queen of Sheba counted it a happiness to be a servant to such a prince as Solomon, 1 Kings 10:8; what is it then to be subjected to him, in comparison of whom Solomon, in all his glory, and wisdom, and magnificence, was but as a worm? She adds, 1 Kings 10:9, 'Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king.' It is for none but those whom the Lord loves, and has a particular favour for, to be in special subjection to such a sovereign as rules over all. M■γα γ■ρ ■ντως ■ξ■ωμα (says Chrysostom), δο■λον ε■ναι το■ Χριστο■ κα■ μ■ φα■νεσθαι: it is a great dignity indeed to be a servant of Christ; a subject of God really, and not in appearance only.

(2.) This will make way for Christ's reign upon earth; so that all the kingdoms of the world might become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ. If all would consent to be his subjects, there would be nothing to hinder him from reigning. There has been a great debate whether Christ shall personally appear and reign on earth in the latter days; I will determine nothing concerning that question, pro or con, only what my subject leads me to. If Christ should appear on earth in person; yet if the inhabitants of the world would no more subject themselves unto God than they do now, it cannot be expected that they should treat him better than when he was on earth before. Holiness, we see, is persecuted everywhere, the image of Christ is generally hated and scorned. And if he be thus used in effigy, in that which is but like him; if his resemblance cannot escape scorn and violence, how would he be used in person by those who are so far from affectionate subjection to him, as they shew a high antipathy to anything that is like him? The beast that has such antipathy to man, as to fly upon his picture wherever he sees it, would much more tear the man himself. Oh, but those who hate holiness are his professed enemies. He has many that profess themselves to be his friends, and they sure would give him better entertainment; no, even from these he would have no good entertainment, further than they have before subjected themselves unto God. For some there were, when he appeared on earth formerly, who passionately longed for his appearance, professed themselves to be his people, his subjects, his own peculiarly; and yet when he came, they would not own him, John 1:11.

Nay, those who are his own indeed, and not only seem and profess to be so, and such as bear his image, and partake in some degree of his Spirit, unless they be yet further subjected unto God than now they appear to be, are in danger not to give Christ due entertainment. The most probable way that I can find, to judge how they would receive Christ, is to observe how they receive one another, Matthew 10:40. Those who agree in all essentials of Christ's doctrine, and walk by the same rules in practicals, and discern the image of Christ in one another, yet if they differ from one

another in matters of less amount, this we see is enough to take down their esteem of them, to abate their affection. This is enough to cause contention and division, to occasion distances and estrangements, and to draw them to evil surmising, and evil speaking, and ill treatments of one another. And why will not these differences have the like effect on them towards Christ, as towards one another, if he be found to differ as much or more from them, as they do amongst themselves? And it is most certain that he will differ from them all, since he is the truth, and they every of them err in some, yea, in many things. So that unless there be more subjection of mind and heart unto God than is yet effected, if Christ should appear, he is like to be no better entertained by his own people than a dissenter, than one that differs from them in such things too for which their minds and hearts are much engaged; and what entertainment such a dissenter is like to have, you may judge by what you see amongst yourselves. But some may say, Christ's appearing will be in such a way and manner as all will be ready to receive him. I answer, so did the Jews think of old concerning his first coming, and were confident of it upon the same grounds, viz., the ancient prophecies upon which others now do raise this confidence, and yet they being not duly subjected to God, that event proved quite contrary to their confident expectations; they, instead of receiving him, did oppose him to the death, and those who had the greatest expectations of him proved his greatest enemies.

Indeed, if Christ should appear in such a way as to bring all into a full and voluntary subjection to him, then he would have a due reception in the world; but the foundation of such an entertainment would be that subjection which I am calling for; this is that upon which his glorious reign so much depends. The more you subject yourselves in mind, heart, and life, to the government of God, the more you prevail with in the world to give up themselves to it, the more you promote the kingdom of Christ, and the clearer and the more open do you make the way for its coming; but without this you do nothing towards it, no, nor they who in other ways fancy they do most, without this, they rather hinder than advance it. If Christ should appear on earth, yet without this subjection to him, his kingdom would not be advanced in the world; and if he should not appear personally, yet if the inhabitants of the earth did but thus subject themselves to him, he would reign gloriously.

(3.) This tends to rectify all the disorders of the world, whereby it is become a place of affliction and calamity, of confusion and misery to the sons of men. So far as we can prevail for this subjection unto God, so far will all grievances be redressed, and all things reduced from the miserable posture wherein they now are, to that lovely order and happy constitution which at first they had. The Lord at first created all things in admirable order, and in a direct tendency to the use, and comfort, and happiness of man. How did they fall into such woful disorders, as they now rather tend to be his afflictions, and grievances, and calamities? Why, all this fell out by man's departing from his subjection to God; that was the first disorder, upon which all things else fell into these woful confusions; and so far as man returns to that subjection, so far will all be reduced towards their primitive serviceableness to his comfort and happiness. The world is now like a body, all whose parts and members are broken and out of joint; the parts which served it before being disjointed, do now afflict it, and what was helpful and comfortable before, is now painful and grievous. Now, all was broken and put out of joint, as to man, by his fall from his submission to him who rules over all; and the woful issues of this misplacing and unjointing of things will continue, uselessness and painfulness will remain till they be set in joint again; and there is no setting of them further than man is brought back to his proper place, and set in due subjection to God. If this

were once fully done, the world would have a new face, and those things in it which ensnare and endanger you would be your security; and those which trouble, and pain, and afflict you, would be helpful and comfortable to you; and those which are your vexation and misery would ease and relieve you, and tend to make you happy. Such would be the excellent effects of a due subjection to God and all the world.

5. Consider the danger of not resigning up yourselves to the government of God, so as to be ruled by him in all things.

Particularly, (1.) You can have no comfortable relation to God till you consent to be his subjects, and give up yourselves to be ruled by him, for this is the foundation of all that is honourable to him, and comfortable to you. You are not his servants, you are not his friends, you cannot be his children, till you be sincerely and voluntarily his subjects; till then he will never own you in any such relation as will afford you comfort in life or death. You are his creatures indeed, but some of the worst that ever he made, worse than the beasts that perish; none worse in the world, unless it be the devils. And why are they devils, but because they would not be ruled by the Lord? You are the work of his hand, but such a work as even a man may be ashamed of, such a work as throws itself out of the maker's hand, and will not be ordered by that wisdom and power that gives it a being.

You are not his servants, you can expect no comfort or advantage from any such relation. Indeed, you can lay no claim to it, for, saith the apostle, Romans 6:16, 'Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.'

You are not his friends, nor will he ever so account you, or so deal with you; for what prince will count those his friends, who live under his dominion, and yet will not be subject to him? If you submit not to his government, you are enemies to it; and those that are enemies to his government, how can they pretend to be in any respect his friends? Job 5:14, 'Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.' He admits none to be his friends upon other terms.

You are far from being his children, if you will not be subject to him. He who enjoins children to obey their parents, Ephesians 6:1, will own none as children who would not obey him: Malachi 1:6, 'If I be a Father, where is mine honour? If I be a Master, where is my fear?' He has neither fear nor honour from those who will not subject themselves to him; they own him neither as Lord nor Father, and he will own them neither as children nor servants.

(2.) You are rebels and traitors to the sovereign Majesty of the world, if you will not give up yourselves to be ruled by him. He that is under the obligation of a subject, and will not consent and subject himself to him who is of right his ruler, is a rebel. Now, all persons whatsoever belong to the universal kingdom of God, that kingdom which rules over all. All are under the greatest obligations to be wholly ruled by him; he has all right to govern them in all things; and therefore those who hold out, and will not submit to his government, are rebels against God. Those who are stiff-necked, and will not stoop to his yoke, will not be ruled by his laws, they are rebellious, Deuteronomy 31:27; yea, he that would not submit himself to God, would not have him to rule over him; he that would not be ruled by God in all things, would not have him rule over all; and he that would not have him rule, is a traitor to him whose throne is in the heavens. He would dethrone God, and have him deprived of his universal dominion. The language of his heart and actions is,

‘We will not have this God to rule over us;’ or that which Pharaoh spoke out, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?’ or that of those traitorous conspirators against the Lord and his Christ, Psalms 2:3, ‘Let us break his bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from us.’ Contrivances to sin are rebellious conspiracies against the universal Sovereign; and their acts of sin are acts of hostility, a bearing arms against him who rules the world; and, according to the apostle’s style, they are ‘weapons,’ Romans 6:13, ■πλ■ ■δικ■ας. You take up weapons, you bear arms against the great God, with a design to depose him, or cast off his government, while you stand out and will not submit to it. If you would not be guilty of such horrid treason and rebellion against the Most High, you must subject yourselves to him in all things.

(3.) If you will not be subject to God, you subject yourselves to the devil, for it is he that seduced men at first from their allegiance and subjection to the God of heaven. He prevailed with men to fall off from their rightful Sovereign, and he is ever since the head of that faction which he seduced; and hence he is called ‘the god of the world,’ 2 Corinthians 4:4, and their ‘prince,’ Ephesians 2:2. So far as any are ‘children of disobedience’ in respect of God, so far they are under the ‘prince of the power of the air;’ so far as you will not be subject to God, so far you are Satan’s slaves, ‘led captive by him at his will,’ 2 Timothy 2:26. And there is no hope of recovering yourselves out of the snare of the devil, no freedom from that woful slavery and captivity to that hellish tyrant, but by resigning up yourselves to be ruled by God. Christ invites you to come under his sweet and gracious government, Matthew 11:29. If you will not be persuaded, you leave yourselves irrecoverably under the tyranny of Satan, who will continually harass you in the basest drudgery, and keep you in servitude to divers lusts. The viler any person is to whom one is enslaved, the more intolerable is the slavery. What is it then to be in bondage unto the devil? nay, that which is worse, that which has made him a devil, unto sin? This will be your state; nor can it be better, till you give up yourselves to be wholly ruled by him who rules over all, Romans 6:16-17, Romans 6:19.

(4.) The Lord can arm all creatures against you. He that rules over all has every thing in the world at his beck, and under his command; and can order all, or any of them, to do what execution he pleases on any that affront his government. He could arm the angels against Sennacherib and his host; he could arm the stars against Sisera, Judges 5:20; he could arm the clouds against the old world, the winds against Jonah; he could arm the sea against Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and the fire against Sodom, Genesis 19:21; and against King Ahaziah’s soldiers, sent to apprehend the prophet, 2 Kings 1:10, 2 Kings 1:12; and the air with infection against David and his people; and the earth against Korah and his accomplices; and many creatures on earth, as the locust, the canker-worm, the palmer-worm, which he armed against Israel, Joel 2:25.

Yea, he can arm a man against himself, and make any part of him to do execution upon the whole. It is grievous to have friends and children armed against him, as they were against David. What is it, then, for a man to be armed against himself, and to be made his own tormentor? But he who rules over all can give a commission to any part of man’s soul or body to do execution upon himself. So he armed Judas’s conscience against him, and you know what execution that did. He armed Pharaoh’s will against himself, hardening his heart to his destruction; and the spirit and heart of Sihon, Deuteronomy 2:30. He armed the memories of the Jews against them, Lamentations 1:7, and 2:19, 20, and made the thoughts of himself afflictive to David, Psalms 77:3. The fancies of the Moabites, 2 Kings 3:22-23, they imagined the waters to be blood, and drew

such a conclusion from that fancy as ruined them; and that wonderful change which befell Nebuchadnezzar is ascribed to the power of fancy, the Lord so over-ruling it, that he imagined himself to be a beast, and demeaned himself accordingly for so many years, Daniel 4:33; so Asa's feet, 1 Kings 15:23; Saul's hands, 1 Samuel 31:4; and Adonijah's tongue, 1 Kings 2:23; and the Bethshemites' eyes, 1 Samuel 6:19; and the humors in the Egyptians' bodies, Exodus 9:10.

Oh how dangerous is it not to subject yourselves to him who so rules over all, that he can arm all things, or any thing, against you! even yourselves against yourselves, your bodies against your souls, your souls against your bodies, or any part of either against both!

(5.) If you will not give up yourselves in subjection unto God, all creatures in heaven and earth may rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you. Your guilt will have as many aggravations as there are or have been creatures in the whole world. And how heavy will that guilt be, which has so many, so innumerably many, to burden and aggravate it! You have no associates herein through the whole world, but only the devils; all other creatures, from the highest angel to the meanest worm, to the least particle of air or earth, are in continual and absolute subjection and obedience unto God, Psalms 148:1-6. All these, as they were made at first by his command, so have they been ordered ever since by his statute. They never have, never will, transgress it in the least; but perform a perfect, a continued obedience to his orders, doing all that he would have them do, and nothing else. Thus is the superior part of the world in subjection to him; for the lower part, see vers. 7–10. All these are ever fulfilling his word, performing his pleasure, shewing themselves wholly at his command: He says to one, Go, and he goes, &c. And shall man only, of all creatures in heaven and earth, stand out against God and refuse to be at his command? There is not a hill, nor a tree, nor a beast, nor a fowl, nor a creeping thing, not a spark of fire, nor a drop of rain, nor a puff of wind, but may bear witness against your non-subjection to God, and declare against it as intolerable, and most worthy of the fiercest wrath of the great God. We (may they say) never had such endowments, such encouragements as the children of men; we were not capable of such obligations as the Lord laid upon them; we had no fears of everlasting sufferings, nor were ever quickened with hopes of eternal rewards, and yet we never transgress his will and pleasure in the least, all our motions were conformed exactly to his orders; whenas refractory men will do what they list; let the Lord order what he pleases, they will do what is good in their own eyes, not what seems good to him. There is not any of those creatures but may bring in such a charge against you, nay, all together may form such a plea against disobedient man, and appear at God's tribunal as his accusers, and swell his charge, and burden his guilt, with the weight of the whole creation, and call for the greatest severity, and justify the heaviest sentence that can be passed against him. When you are tempted to cross the will of God in any particular, say thus to yourselves, What am I about to do? There is not any other creatures else in the world, but the devils, would do thus. The irrational, the senseless, the lifeless creatures, do all fulfil his word; and shall I, whom the Lord has infinitely more obliged, be a transgressor of it? Shall I make myself worse than the beasts that perish, when the Lord had made me but a little lower than the angels? Shall I make myself worse than fowl, or plant, or any creeping thing? Have I no pattern to follow but that of the devils? Shall I make myself so liable to the condemnation of hell, as the whole creation may pass the sentence of such a condemnation upon me, and bear witness that nothing heavy enough can be inflicted on me? Shall I run into such guilt, against which every creature in heaven and earth will be both a witness and a condemner? Oh then, what will plead for me, when all things in the world appear

against me? Who will justify what every creature condemns? What will hide me, what will secure me from the wrath of him that sits upon the throne, when the whole creation will offer me to his vengeance, and declare me most worthy of it for ever?

6. If you will not subject yourselves to him, be will ruin you. He that rules over all, will, and must have his will on you; there is no resisting, no avoiding it; all hopes of escaping, or faring better, are mere delusions: Job 9:4, ‘He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?’ If you can deal with such a God, as, Job 9:5-8, which ‘removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger; which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble; which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars,’ &c., then, though you be stiff against him, you may hope to prosper. But if this great God who rules over all, will be too hard for you, then there is no way, but either submit or perish: Psalms 2:12, ‘Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish,’ &c. Kissing hand or feet is a token of subjection and homage, 1 Samuel 10:1, Genesis 41:40, ■■■ ■■ ■■■, shall obey thee, and receive law from thee. Those who will not give up themselves in such subjection are exposed to his wrath, and so in danger to perish from the way, in danger to be trodden under foot. It is a dreadful doom which remains for those who will not have the Lord to rule over them, Luke 19:27. If you will not have the Lord to reign over you, he will have you executed as his enemies, and he will see execution done himself.

Thus much to persuade you to be ruled by God, and to give up yourselves to be ruled by him in all things. If the Lord have made it effectual to bring you to such a happy resolution, it will be seasonable to shew how you should demean yourselves as his subjects. Particularly,

1. Know your distance from the universal Sovereign, and be sensible of it. How far is he above you who rules over all! Earthly princes will have their subjects know their distance, and shew it by a reverence answerable thereto. Why, those that are upon thrones, in comparison of men, are but as it were upon the dunghill, in respect of him whose throne is in heaven; and the greatest empire on earth is but as a molehill, compared with that kingdom which rules over all. What high and awful apprehensions should we have of the great Majesty of heaven and earth! Jeremiah 10:6-7, ‘Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?’ Superiority challenges reverence, Malachi 1:6. Fear and honour is due even to masters of families, much more to the rulers of kingdoms and empires. What, then, do we owe to him, in comparison of whose dominion, such an empire as that of Ahasuerus, Esther 1:1, ‘An hundred twenty and seven provinces,’ are not so much as one family? Hebrews 12:9, ‘We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence.’ And so we have kings and governors, and we give them reverence. ‘Should we not much more be in subjection’ to the King of kings? The highest angels are but mean subjects to him who rules over all, and the most glorious amongst them are but to his glorious majesty what glow-worms are to us; and the greatest princes in the world are but to him as crowned grasshoppers; their power, and greatness, and majesty is so little or nothing, compared with his, as they deserve not the name of potentates in comparison. He who rules over all is ‘the only potentate,’ 1 Timothy 6:15. And if we should look upon ourselves as far below them, and be sensible of our distance, what sense should we have of the distance betwixt God and us! How infinitely is he above us! How inconceivably are we below him who rules over all! Let the sense hereof rest upon us, and influence heart and life, and the acts of both continually, Psalms 96:9-10.

2. Let him have the pre-eminence above all, in your thoughts, and affections, and designs. He that rules over all ought to be exalted above all, and in all, and by all. Let him have the highest place in your minds; let your thoughts advance him above that which is highest there; let him have the chief place in your hearts; let his sceptre be advanced there, and make everything stoop to it; let the Lord alone reign there; let him have the throne, and other things be made his footstool. Though his throne of glory be in heaven, yet he disdains not to own an humble heart as his throne here below, Isaiah 57:15. That is an humble heart that stoops to God, that lies low before him, and would have everything else to do so, that he who rules over all may have the pre-eminence in all things. As he is exalted above all, in respect of his kingdom and dominion, the greatness, and power, and glory of it, so should he be answerably exalted in our souls. Those that are true and faithful to the supreme ruler of the universe will be careful to have him so exalted, 2 Samuel 22:47, Nehemiah 9:5-6, Psalms 57:5, Psalms 57:11, and Psalms 97:9, Isaiah 2:10-11, and Isaiah 5:15.

3. Be tender of his honour. He is counted no good subject who maintains not the honour of a righteous ruler. He that will venture to dishonour God himself, or is not troubled when he is dishonoured by others, shews no such respect as is due from a subject to the universal sovereign, Psalms 69:9. You should resent that which dishonours God, as if yourselves were struck at. The relation betwixt God and you requires this; he that is honoured or dishonoured is your ruler, and therefore you are concerned in it, and should be affected with it as your own concern. The more glory is due to him, the more should it be laid to heart when he is dishonoured. It is a super-eminent glory, an honour above all, which is due to him who rules over all, therefore any dishonourable reflections upon him are and should be counted more intolerable. To see the King in his glory is the ardent desire of every soul that is loyal to God. It will then be the affliction of such a soul to hear him reproached, to see him disregarded, and his authority slighted, Psalms 119:136. It is necessary, in order to the end of government, that the ruler should be in honour, otherwise he will not be in a capacity to promote the common good, to which civil government is subservient. Oh, but the common good itself must be measured by the honour of God, the supreme ruler; and that must be counted best for us, and for all, which most honours him. All things must lower to this, even that which is suprema lex, and has the supremacy in other well-ordered governments. That which glorifies him must be judged our happiness, and that which dishonours him our misery.

4. Be very observant of his laws, and every part thereof, commands, promises, threatenings. What subjection can we shew to the great ruler of the world, if we will not live in an observance of his laws, which are not only most righteous in themselves, but most advantageous to his subjects? Acquaint yourselves with them; let them be your study and meditation, that you may know in all particulars, upon all occasions and emergencies, ‘what is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.’ His laws declare this to us, and we should have them always in our eye, always at hand, that they may be as light to us by day, and a lantern by night, Psalms 119:105; that these may give us light in all our ways, and may direct all our steps; that we may never be at a loss, never to seek concerning his will, and what he has enjoined us. Those that are careful to obey, will be careful to know the law, the rule of their obedience, in its true sense, and utmost extent, in its power and spirituality; not only in the body, but in the several branches of it, great and small. We are as much concerned as the Israelites, in that command, Deuteronomy 6:6-9, ‘These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shall teach them diligently unto thy children,’ &c. Joshua, the great ruler of Israel, was thus to shew himself under a higher

government: Joshua 1:8-9, ‘This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein,’ &c. And kings are this way to declare themselves subject to the sovereign of the world: Deuteronomy 17:18-20, ‘When he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, he shall write him a copy of this law in a book: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life,’ &c. And being acquainted with his laws, we must not dispute any of his commands. This is counted malapertness in other subjects, when there is no suspicion of unrighteousness in the injunctions of their superiors. How intolerable will it be in reference to the laws of God, which are the issues of infinite wisdom, goodness, and righteousness! We should pay a free, cheerful, unreserved, and present observance to all his commands, Psalms 119:60.

We should fear his threatenings too. These contain the penalties wherewith his laws are enforced. To make light of them is to slight him who rules over all. When he enjoins a thing under pain of his displeasure, that is as much as if it were enjoined under pain of death, for ‘in his favour is life;’ and therefore his displeasure should be as dreadful to us as death. It is the property of those that are his best subjects, and such in whom he most delights, to tremble at his word. Isaiah 66:1-2. His promises also should have a great influence on us in all ways of obedience, both because they are so great and wonderful. What prince would ever promise his subjects that if they should observe his laws they should reign with him. Yet this the Lord promises those that are subject to him, Matthew 13:43, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 3:21. As also because they are so free and gracious. The Lord was not in the least obliged to promise or bestow any reward for our obedience; we owe him all we do, and much more. And who will expect a reward for paying his debt, especially when he pays but a small part of what he owes? He promises all that we can desire, and all that he promises are acts of grace. He had more right to make laws, as others do, without annexing anything to them but penalties. Oh how should we value and admire the riches and freeness of his grace in those great and precious promises! What an influence should they have upon us in all acts of obedience! How free, and hearty, and affectionate, and entire should our subjection be to such a Ruler, who, when he was not in the least obliged to give us anything, hath graciously promised to give us all, and not to let the least act of subjection pass, without a recompence of reward! Matthew 10:42.

5. Promote his interest. You cannot be faithful subjects unless you be true to the interest of your sovereign Lord. This you must prefer before all particular interests of yourselves or others. This you must maintain against all, and venture all you have in the defence and for the advancement of it. He is no true friend to the government under which he lives, who will prefer his private interest before the public: this is both disloyalty and folly. As if one would let the ship sink and think to save his cabin. God’s interest is the public interest; your own, and the interest of the world, is involved in it, and must swim or sink with it. Nothing should take place of it, nothing should be admitted to come in competition with it. If you will not shew yourselves true subjects to it, you are both foolish and unfaithful. Selfishness and privateness of spirit, neglecting his interest, who rules over all, for some little things of your own, will make you guilty of both.

Now the interest of God, as he is King of nations, consists in the number and quality of his subjects. It is his interest that more should be subject to him, and that they should be more subjected to him; that his kingdom should be populous, and that the people of it should be such as may prove the strength and ornament of it. You have both, Psalms 110:3. The Psalmist gives an

account here of the kingdom of the Messiah: his throne, Psalms 110:1; his sceptre, Psalms 110:2; his subjects, Psalms 110:3; both the number and quality of them. They are numerous: ‘From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth; i. e. thy subjects shall be for number answerable to the drops of dew which the morning brings forth (as it were out of its womb) so plentifully as to cover the face of the whole earth. Then for the quality of them, they shall be ‘a willing people,’ not subdued and brought into subjection by force of arms, but resigning themselves voluntarily unto his government. ■■ ■■■■; a people of free will offering, such as freely offer up themselves, and all they have, in and for his service, and that ‘in the beauties of holiness;’ holiness shining forth in its lustre, and appearing in them in all its beauties. Herein lies the interest of God in the world; if you will be true to it, faithful to your sovereign Lord, make it your business to enlarge his kingdom by bringing more under his government, and making yourselves and others such as may be an honour to his government; growing in grace more and more, and holding forth the power and beauty of holiness in a daily course, and to that end, striving to uphold and promote the gospel, that is the sceptre, the rod of his power. That is it whereby the world must be prevailed with to come under his government. When the gospel is suppressed, his sceptre is thrown to the ground. Those that oppose it and stop its course are the greatest enemies to his interest, and those to whom the gospel in its power and liberty is not dearer than liberty or estate, or any other outward concern, they are not faithful to him who rules over all, nor true to his interest. And take heed of anything which may tempt any to fall off from this government, or may hinder any from coming into it. Those who by passionate, or selfish, or froward, or rigorous, or unrighteous carriage, beget in others an ill opinion of this government, they are not friends to it, they do great disservice to the interest of God; ‘it were better a mill-stone were hanged about their neck,’ &c., Matthew 18:6. Walk so as you may win and oblige others to come in and submit to this government; let your conversation be such as may convince the world that subjection to God in all things is that which tends to the happiness of families, of kingdoms, and of the whole earth. That is the way to make them ‘a willing people,’ to enlarge the kingdom of our great Sovereign, and so to promote his interest. If those who profess themselves subjects of God would order themselves according to the rules of his government, there would be little need of miracles to convert infidels.

6. You must have the same friends, and the same enemies. Those that are friends to God and his government, you must not count them nor treat them as your enemies for any little differences; their relation to God must drown the sense of personal feuds and particular provocations. And those that are enemies to God and his government must not be the persons of your intimacy and delight, though you may have pity and compassion for them: Psalms 139:20-22, ‘They speak evil against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies.’ Though they pretended to piety, yet when their talking of God was with a design to act wickedness, their enmity to the Lord herein was hateful and grievous to him. He resented it as if it had been enmity against, injury offered to, himself. And those who submit to the government of God, and thereby shew themselves his friends, must be embraced by them as such, though they may differ from us, and disoblige us in other particulars. We must be wary how we judge or censure them for such differences, lest we entrench upon the prerogative of him who is the Lord and Ruler of us both, Romans 14:3-4. In things that are indifferent really, and not in pretence, we are not to judge another, we have no right to do it. He is the judge of him and us, who is Lord and Ruler of both. Our common relation to our sovereign Lord, and their subjection

to him, must keep up love and friendship amongst all that are the friends of God, in the midst of such differences as may tempt us to be unfriendly.

7. Submit to God in all his dispensations. In those especially which may tempt you to impatience or discontent, in wants, in losses, in disappointments, in hard measures from men, in sufferings and afflictions of all sorts. For why? The Lord rules over all; all that befalls you is ordered and disposed by him. Others are but instruments and under-causes, whom he makes use of in the administration of worldly affairs; and rules and over-rules them as he pleases. Look upon him as the sovereign ruler, and upon these dispensations as acts of his government. I know not what can be more prevalent with you, to submit and be satisfied. Not to submit, is to rise up against him who rules over all. To murmur and repine, is to quarrel with God's ruling your affairs. Not to be quiet and contented, is to shew yourselves unsatisfied with his government. And is this to demean yourselves as becomes the subjects of such a ruler? It may be you have not so well considered the heinousness of this misdemeanour, neither against whom, nor against what it is directed. Is it not against him who rules over all? and against him as ruling, against his government? As though your affairs might have been ruled and ordered with more wisdom, or more goodness, than the Lord exercises in his administrations towards you. As though you would not have the Lord to rule over all, but had rather order your affairs yourselves, than have them ruled at such a rate, and ordered in such a manner, as the great God sees fit. How does this strike at the glorious sovereignty of God! What reflections does it cast upon the Lord of heaven and earth! Those who were subject to God indeed, have expressed another temper: the sense of God's ruling hand, in the sad things that befell them, has made them silent, patient, submissive, and well satisfied with and under severe dispensations. What more grievous things have befallen you, than Eli was threatened with, 1 Samuel 3:11-14. And what says he? How did he entertain this sad message? Ver. 18, 'It is the Lord.' It is he who has dominion over me; it is He who has all right to dispose of me and mine, as he thinks fit. And Aaron expressed as much by his silence, when his two sons were consumed by fire from God, Leviticus 10:2-3; and so did David, when he was near consumed by the stroke of God's hand, Psalms 39:9.

What can you lose more than Job, who lost estate and children at once? Yet how submissively does he demean himself upon this consideration: Job 1:21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,' &c. He is the Lord of what I had, and gave it me; and the Lord of what I have lost, and took it. I had but the use of it, he had the right, as being Lord of all, and so might well dispose of it as he thought fit; and therefore blessed be his name, adored and admired be his government and dominion, both in giving and taking away!

What more dreadful can come upon you than Hezekiah was threatened with, 2 Kings 20:17-18, yet he expresses himself not only as patient, but satisfied: ver. 19, 'Good is the word of the Lord.' It is the Lord, and it is his word, his act. He is not only maximus, the sovereign Lord, the ruler of all, but optimus, the best of governors, and therefore his acts of rule must needs be good: δ■ναται π■ντα, βο■λεται ■ριστα, Isidor. lib. ii. The Lord ruling over all makes it not only our duty to be patient under, contented with, submissive to, all his administrations, but the consideration of it is a means to help us, and a motive to oblige us thereto. He is the universal ruler; he has all right to dispose and order us and ours, and all things, as he sees good. It is his due, and shall we not allow him what is due to him? Shall we not be contented that he should use his right? Must he forbear that at our pleasure? Shall he not make use of it but when and how we think fit? Does this

become his subjects? Or rather, is not this to take upon us to rule, instead of God?

Those dispensations which we are apt to be unsatisfied with, they are acts of God's government; and what will we be satisfied with, if his governing will not please us? Is not his government most wise, and most gracious, and most righteous? Can anything be more prudently ordered than the wisdom of God does order it? or anything better disposed of than goodness itself does manage it? or anything less liable to exception than that which is most righteous? If we will not be satisfied with those acts of government, which are the issues of infallible wisdom, and infinite goodness, and most perfect righteousness, what will content us? If there be impatience under these, where will patience have its work? If we will not submit here, how can we, when, or wherein will we, ever shew ourselves subject?

8. Address yourselves unto God upon all occasions, and look to him for redress; hereby you will honour him as the universal governor. This will be an honourable acknowledgment, that he rules over all; when you have recourse to him in all, and apply yourselves to him for all, and rely upon him accordingly. Whatever you want, whatever you fear, whatever you feel that is grievous or afflictive to you, apply yourselves to him, who is able and willing to supply and relieve you, whatever your case be, and gives you assurance of it in that he rules over all.

He is able. For he who rules over all is the all-sufficient governor. He wants no wisdon, he wants no power, who is sufficient for the government of the whole world. He that can rule all can do all for you himself; or he can order anything else to do it, if he will make use of others; for he has all at his beck, and under his power and dominion. And he is ready too. He is always at hand; you need not travel many miles to make your case known, you may find him everywhere; for he that rules over all is a ruler in all places, in all things. And you may have immediate access to him; you need make no friends, or bribe any courtiers, to get you audience; you may have as free and ready access to him as to any other. Nor will it be, or will he count it any trouble to him to hear or relieve you, though millions with you should apply themselves to him at once. He that can so easily rule all can in a moment despatch the affairs of millions together, and can more easily give you and all redress, than you can seek it. Nor need you fear to meet with a repulse. It belongs to him, as he is ruler over all, to order all your affairs for you, and dispose of all your concernments. That is his prerogative, as he is the sovereign of the world; and your privilege, as you are his subjects in a special manner; and both may make you confident that he is willing you should have access to him for these purposes at any time. You can never come unseasonably, as you may do to other rulers, for he is always actually governing all and everything, and is no more hindered by his administering of all than if he had but one thing, one person, to look after; you have a general warrant, and special encouragement to come to him at any time, and so you need not fear to come before you are called. No such danger, no such penalty, as upon Ahasuerus's subjects, to whom it was death to approach him, when they were not called, except the golden sceptre was held out to them, Esther 4:11. His sceptre is continually held out to you, to every subject of his. And though he have [redacted], a throne of judgment, yet you may always find him upon [redacted], a throne of grace, as he was represented in the temple, always upon the mercy-seat, ever ready for acts of grace and mercy. He will have his throne denominated from grace. It is the special glory of his reign and government to shew himself gracious, freely merciful, to every faithful subject, how mean soever. Grace is enthroned in his government, and reigns there; and therefore we may come to him with all freedom, and the greatest confidence, that we shall obtain mercy, and find

grace, whenever we come, Hebrews 4:16. Let us come, and that μετ■ πα■■ησ■ας, ‘with all freeness,’ declare to him all our wants, and all our griefs. For the Lord our Sovereign offers himself to us upon a throne of grace, that so we may always obtain mercy, and find grace πρ■ς ε■καιρον βο■θειαν, ‘for seasonable relief,’ for supply and redress whenever we need it, when it will be best and most seasonable for us to have it. Thus to address ourselves to him is both our duty and our privilege, we honour him hereby, and acknowledge that he rules us in all things; and having such encouragement for it, let us not neglect it.

9. Commit your affairs unto him; devolve all your concernments on him; entrust him with the ordering of them; leave all to be ruled by him who rules over all: Psalms 37:5, ‘Commit thy way unto him.’ The word is, ■■■, ‘Roll thy way,’ any, every particular wherein thou art concerned, upon God; trust him with the managing of it, and set thy heart at rest. There is no fear that anything committed to him will miscarry; trust him but with it, and he will bring it to pass, he will give it a good issue. Leave events in his hands, in whose they are; he can order them best, who admirably rules and orders all things. Thy weightiest concerns are not too heavy for him, and he thinks not the least of them below him; he takes care of all, even to a hair, Matthew 10:30. Those who thought that God did προνοε■ν τ■ν ο■ραν■ων μ■νον, take care only of celestial things; or if of earthly, yet ο■ π■ντων δε, ■λλ■ τ■ν ■ξ■χων, not of all, but only the greatest, the affairs of eminent persons, and princes: those who entertained such conceits did err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the universal and unlimited dominion of God. In what potentate did he more concern himself than in Lazarus? He resents the concernments of the least and meanest of his subjects, as though they were his own, Matthew 25:1-46. Oxen and sparrows, their provisions, their motions, are ordered by his government; much more does the care of it reach his people, 1 Corinthians 9:9.

Therefore, live in a continual dependence on him, in all, and for all; in whose hands all things are, and through whose hands all things do pass. Though he rule all, yet he has not so much business on him as to neglect any, or suffer the least to miscarry; he is as sufficient for all, as if he had but one to mind. Sic gressus meos considerans, veluti me solum consideret; he so looks after me, as if he had none but me to look after, says Augustine. Trust him, therefore, with all, and quiet your hearts in believing that he who rules over all knows best how to rule and order all that is yours, Psalms 118:8, 9. If a prince should bid you trust him with some affair of yours, and assure you, on the word of a king, he would take care of it, you would think this a great security; and yet it might miscarry, and you, for all this, might be disappointed; that is too ordinary. Oh, but you have a king to trust with your concernments, and he requires you to do it, who never disappointed any that relied on him (though he have the government of the whole world upon him), to this day, nor ever will do; he that trusts in him shall not be ashamed, Romans 10:11. If a relation of yours that is rich, should bid you leave your child to him, he will take care of it, you would be apt to think it well provided for. May not your children be better provided for by committing them to God, when he assures you he will take care of them? Is he not infinitely richer, and wiser, and better, who has all under him, and rules all as he will, and will order all for the best? A rich friend may leave your child an estate; but whether it will be good or bad for him, it is not in his power to determine: an estate may prove his ruin, and he that gives it him cannot help it. But he who rules over all, as he knows what will be best for you and yours, so he can order all for the best. He can secure much from being a snare, and he can order a little to prove better than much. Therefore leave yourselves and

yours, and all, to him who rules all.

10. Observe the Lord ruling all. Take notice of his ruling hand; acknowledge it in all, and ascribe all to it. Let not second causes and instruments be so in your eye, as to overlook him who rules them, and all they do. Look through these, upon him who is all in all. They have not only their life, their being, but their motion from him. All in the world seem on wheels, and are still in motion; but who is it that moves them? If the hand of him who rules over all did not touch them, they would all stand still. What can the clay do to form itself into any shape, or to serve its owner for any use, if it were not ordered by his hand? What could the rod or the axe do, if there were not a hand to move them? Your enjoyments are but as such clay; your afflictions are but as such a rod. Why is your eye so much upon them, who move not of themselves to do you good or hurt? Why look you not at the hand which moves and orders them, and all things, as he pleases? Isaiah 10:5, 'The staff in their hand,' i. e. all the power they have to smite and afflict, 'is mine indignation,' which arms them, and sets them a-work. It is as unreasonable for us to look so much at them, as for them to ascribe so much to themselves, Isaiah 10:15. Shimei seems set a-work by his own malice, or a revengeful resentment of what the house of Saul had suffered by David; but David looks farther, 2 Samuel 16:10-12. There was in Job's losses and calamities, a concurrence of all sorts of causes and instruments, Job 1:1-22, both natural, the fire, Job 1:16, and the wind, Job 1:19; and voluntary, the Sabeans, Job 1:15, and Chaldeans, Job 1:17; yet Job overlooks them, and takes notice of God only: Job 1:21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.'

Observe the perfections which shine forth in his governing all things, and give him the glory thereof. Observe the power of his government, overruling all things to do, not what they would, but what he will; the wisdom of it, ordering all to serve his purposes, even such as seem mere casualties, and the issues of no contrivance at all: 'This is of the Lord,' Isaiah 28:29, the goodness and excellency of it, in turning evil unto good. Which Joseph was so taken with, as the evil of the instruments is not taken notice of, Genesis 45:5, Genesis 45:7-8. The universality of it is observable, not only in great, but the smallest things. The increase of the cattle, which were to fall to Jacob's share, was none of the greatest of his concernments; and he had a natural cause managed by his own prudence, to ascribe it to; but he ascribes it wholly to God, Genesis 31:7-9. Not to the white-straked rods which he laid before the cattle when they conceived, nor to the operation which those had upon their fancies, bat all to the Lord. Thus should we give the Lord the glory that is due to him, as ruling and governing all things, Psalms 96:6-9, and Psalms 29:1-2. And why so? Because his government is powerful, majestic, irresistible, universal, as from Psalms 29:3-10.

11. What you offer to the Lord, be sure it be the best; the best you have, the best you can offer him. If you be to bring a present to a great ruler, you will not (unless you despise him, and have a mind to affront him), bring him the refuse of what you have, but the best and choicest of all. All your services are presents to the great God who rules over all; will you offer that to him, which you would not dare to offer to your governor? Malachi 1:8. When you tender to God dead, heartless, unaffectionate, distracted, lukewarm prayers or praises; when you draw near him carelessly, irreverently, hear as though you heard not, or do any of his works negligently; it is as if you should pick out the blind, and the lame, and the sick, for a present to your prince and governor; it is so much worse, and more provoking, as he is above all other princes and rulers, who rules over all. You would not offer a corrupt thing to an earthly prince; and shall such a thing be tendered as a

present to the King of kings, whose greatness and majesty is dreadful to the whole world? ver. 14. So much as he is greater and more dreadful than other kings, so much the more careful should you be to offer nothing to him that is corrupt, nothing but the best of all you have or can offer, Psalms 47:7. Praise him with all your art and skill. Let his praise be the work of your souls. Let your understandings engage heart and affections therein; for so it becomes you, since he is King of all the earth. So consider him, when you draw near him; the best of all is due to him, and too mean for him who rules over all.

12. Prepare to be judged by him. Judgment is a principal part of his government of intelligent creatures. Here he gives us laws, and expects an observance of them; hereafter he will judge us according to them, else his laws were in vain, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. So observe what he commands, as those who are sure to be called to account, Romans 14:10, Romans 14:12. Here he entrusts you with many talents, gifts, parts, time, opportunities, estates, all enjoyments, encouragements, advantages; he declares how they must be employed, and will call you to an account for them. See that you improve them so, as those who expect to give an account, that you may be able to do it with joy, and not with grief. He who rules over all, is ready to judge both quick and dead, 1 Peter 4:5. See that your account be ready, Php 2:12, 1 Peter 1:17. You live not as under his government, unless you live under some effectual apprehensions of approaching judgment.

13. Rejoice in him, and in his government. Let it be your triumph that the Lord reigns. This is matter of rejoicing to the whole world, Psalms 96:10-13, but more especially to his faithful subjects, Psalms 149:2. If he reign, if he rule over all, he will avenge your wrongs, he will redress your grievances, he will ease you of your burdens, he will secure you from your fears, he will regard your necessities, he will be tender of your concernments, he will receive your petitions, he will break your oppressors, he will subdue your enemies, for they are his. He will: order all for your advantage; he will make his government your happiness, and your subjection perfect freedom. Subjection, in other cases, is some abridgment of liberty, but he is such a ruler that the more you are subject to him, the more liberty you will enjoy. Not a liberty of free subjects only, but of sons; not a common, but a glorious liberty, Romans 8:21. If you have given up yourselves to be wholly ruled by the Lord, he is your friend, your father, your husband. And oh, what honour, what happiness is it! What cause of joy and triumph, to be so nearly related to so great a king; to have such interest in him who rules over all, as these most endearing and obliging relations give you!

He is your friend. If you subject yourselves to him, he is in covenant, in a league of friendship with you; he is your ally, obliged to look upon your enemies as his. Oh, if those who bear ill-will to Zion, and to you, did but well understand who it is that is allied to you, who it is that is engaged to stand by you, what a potent friend and ally you have and are sure of; they would never venture to move a hand, or a tongue, or secretly to contrive any evil against you. He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye, strikes at his eye who rules over all.

He is your husband. Your subjection to him is the condition of the marriage-covenant. And what happiness is it to have the King of kings, and Lord of lords for your husband; one so potent, so glorious! Oh how contemptible are the most noble and honourable relations on earth to this. ■ι γαμετα■ συνεκλ■μπουσι το■ς τ■ν συνοικο■ντων ■κτ■σι (Justin. Novel. 105, c. 2), Wives shine with the beams of their husbands. The splendour and nobility of the husband is derived upon his

wife. To be married to a king is one of the greatest honours in a kingdom. Oh, what is it to be in so near a relation to him to whom the greatest kings in the world are subjects and underlings, at an infinite distance below him!

He is your father. If you honour him, by subjecting yourselves to him as children should to their parents, he will own you as children, and you may have all from him that can be expected from such a father. And what may you not expect from such a father, who has all the powers, all the riches of the earth, all the world at his will? What will become of those who hate, and wrong, and oppress the children of such a father? What need they fear, what can they want, who have the King of nations, the great Lord of heaven and earth for their father? Oh, what cause of joy is here! Oh, how stupid and senseless must we be, if all the joys, the honours, the riches, the happiness of this world be counted comparable to what this relation affords! Rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in your King always; and shout for joy, all ye upright in heart.

Use. 3. If the Lord rule over all, then here is great encouragement to his people, those who have truly subjected themselves unto him, and whom he owns as his subjects. The people of God heretofore, in the saddest circumstances wherewith they have been surrounded, have found this to be the strength of their hearts, that ‘the Lord reigneth.’ This has been a reviving cordial to them, even when both flesh and heart has been ready to fail. This has borne them up when the rage and violence of men has been ready to bear them down, This has been their support under sinking pressures. And it may be it should be so to us. Whatsoever our fears and dangers be, whatever our wants and necessities, whatever confusions we see about us, how low soever the interest of Christ and his people appear; whatever sufferings, troubles, calamities, are upon us, or threaten us; how violent and powerful soever our enemies be; yet, since the Lord reigns, since our God rules over all, hence we may take heart, this may refresh and revive us, this may support and encourage us. This is a ground of hope when all seems desperate, and may afford us strong consolations when everything seems to look upon us with a sad and dismal countenance.

Particularly, 1. In fears and dangers. When our dear concernments are in apparent hazard; when liberty, or estate, or life; when our religion, when the gospel, when our glory, and all our pleasant things are in danger; and when it seems unavoidable, by anything that we or others concerned with us can do, to prevent or remove it; yet here is our encouragement, he that rules over all is sufficient to do it, and can, if he please, make anything or all things concur with him to that purpose. He can secure us and our concerns from dangers, or in them, or by, or after them. For what cannot he do, to whom all things in heaven and earth are subject, and must and shall do whatever he pleases?

(1.) He can secure us from dangers. In this David was confident, Psalms 32:7. He who rules over all has all that endangers any, all that are endangered, absolutely at his dispose; and so can secure his servants, either by keeping and removing danger from them, or them from it.

[1.] By keeping or removing danger from them: ‘In the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh him,’ Psalms 32:6. He can either turn them back, or interpose a bank betwixt them, and those who are in danger to be overwhelmed by them. There is a gracious promise for this, grounded upon this very relation: Isaiah 33:20-22, ‘Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; nor one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken: But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place

of broad rivers and streams. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us.' A large and deep moat or ditch is a security to a city. But the Lord would be round about his people, not only as a moat, but as a large river. Horse or foot could not approach them, thus secured; nothing could endanger them but ship or galley, but neither should these do it, either with help of wind or oars; the stream of his protection should be of so stiff and strong a current, that no vessel of any force to annoy them should be able to stem it. This the people of God may be confident of, because he is their ruler, Isaiah 33:22. Thus the Lord promises to remove from Hezekiah and his people the danger which the rage of the Assyrian threatened them with, Isaiah 37:28, 29. Thus he secured the Israelites from Pharaoh and his host; he interposed betwixt them and the danger, and kept it off, Exodus 14:19-20. And in the like manner he promises to secure his people and their assemblies for worship, and to interpose as effectually between them and danger, as if they had the pillar of fire and cloud betwixt them and their enemies' violence, Isaiah 4:5. God will be the same to them, and their places of meeting for his worship, which that pillar was to the Israelites; he will be amongst them, and above, and round about them, to keep off danger from them.

[2.] By keeping or removing them from danger. So was Lot secured; the Lord made more haste to remove him from the danger than he himself, Genesis 19:16. So when Moses was exposed to danger of perishing, the Lord so ordered as he was rescued from it by Pharaoh's daughter, Exodus 2:1-25. Yea, he sometimes makes use of death itself to convey his servants from danger, Isaiah 57:1. 'The righteous is taken away from the evil to come.'

(2.) He can secure us in dangers. He who rules over all can so order it, as danger itself, that which seems most so, shall not prove dangerous: Isaiah 43:2, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.'

Fire and water we count the most unmerciful elements, and such as threaten most danger; yet they are so much at the command of God, that the fire will not burn, the rivers will not drown, when he gives them such order. He preserved Noah in the midst of the deluge which drowned the world, and made the whale prove an ark unto Jonah. Fire, in its greatest rage, could not so much as scorch the three faithful Jews, though cast into the midst of its flame, Daniel 3:27. The fire had no power upon them, because He who rules over all over-ruled it. Moses counted it (as he might well) a wonder, to see a bush burning, and not consumed, Exodus 3:2-3. Hereby the Lord signified, that he can keep his people safe in such circumstances, as threaten no less their ruin, than the fire endangers the consuming of a bush, when it is all on a flame. We need not go far for instances of something like this wonder; multitudes kept unscorched, untouched, when in the midst of those who are set on fire of hell. And as the fiercest elements, so the fiercest creatures become tame and harmless, when He who rules over all will have it so. The hungry lions durst not touch Daniel, when God had given them order not to do it: they could not open a mouth, when God will have it shut; nor stir a paw to hurt him whom the Lord would save harmless, Daniel 6:22. 2 Timothy 4:17, He was in the mouth of a lion, and yet safe there; in the power of a wild and cruel beast, in the shape of a man, and yet there, as good as out of danger. And so was David, when his soul was amongst lions. And so you have known many more, for many years, amongst such who have had rage and power enough to have devoured them, and yet (through the restraint of him who rules over all) have not touched them, Psalms 47:9. When all the males amongst the Israelites went up,

from all parts of the land, to Jerusalem, as they were enjoined thrice every year, all their concernments at home were exposed, as an easy prey, to their enemies, who did encompass them on every side; none were left at their dwellings able to make any defence. In such apparent danger, what was their security? Why, the shields of the earth belong to the Lord; he would be instead of all shields to them, when they were left destitute of anything to guard them. And one way was, that He who rules over all would so over-rule the minds and hearts of their enemies, that they should have no inclination at such a time to attempt anything upon them, Exodus 34:24. If we have had experience of the Lord's thus working in the minds and hearts of them that might endanger us when we are about his worship, let him have the glory of it, who rules over all, and can dispose of all, so as to keep us safe in the midst of disturbances and dangers.

[3.] He can secure by dangers. Everything is not what it seems, but what he who rules over all will have it. That which seems our safety, shall prove our danger; and that which seems our danger, shall prove our safety, when he will so order it. Joseph, by being in Egypt, a place in all reason more dangerous than his father's house, was preserved from the malice of his brethren. And Paul was secured from the rage of his own countrymen, by appealing to Nero, by running into the mouth of that lion.

[4.] After dangers. When those that endanger you have done execution in inflicting what they threatened, or bereaving you of what you enjoyed, the Lord can retrieve all, and can restore you into the same or a better condition, than that which they have disturbed or spoiled. Thus when Chedorlaomer and his confederates had seized upon Lot and his goods, and carried him away captive, the Lord made use of Abraham, with a small company, to rescue him, and recover all, Genesis 14:16. And Melchizedek ascribes it to him whose throne is in heaven, under the notion of the 'most high God,' Genesis 14:19-20. So when the Amalekites had burnt Ziklag, and bereaved David and his associates of all their relations, their substance, their habitation, and reduced him to so great distress, as there was no glimpse of encouragement for him but only in the Lord, he found that all-sufficient; the Lord enabled him to recover all, besides the spoils of the enemy, 1 Samuel 30:18-19; and he gives God the honour of it, 1 Samuel 30:23. Joel 2:25, he promises, by succeeding plenty, to make up the loss they sustained by the years of famine which the locust, &c., had occasioned. When a spoiled people return unto him, he will convince them, that they have been no losers by their losses. He can as easily restore the years which the spiritual locusts and caterpillars have eaten, and can bring a plenty which will more than countervail the scarcity, wherewith the worst of vermin have afflicted souls, Psalms 68:9-11, Isaiah 41:17-18. When the work of God, and all that he has been graciously doing for a people many years, is quite overwhelmed, and seems as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up, he that rules over all, who 'says to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back,' Isaiah 43:6, can gather it up all when he pleases, and restore every drop, when it seems all dried up and lost; yea, instead of drops, can give floods, Isaiah 44:3.

You see what an encouragement this affords against dangers, whatever they be. He that rules over all can prevent them from doing any hurt, or repair all the hurt they do with greater advantage; can make them to be no dangers, or make them to prove your safety; for all things must be and do what he would have them, who rules over all, and over-rules all at his pleasure. In all wants and necessities, which concern inward or outward man, it is a great encouragement to consider that the Lord rules over all; for this assures us, he is both able and willing to afford supplies, so far as

they are needful to us, or good for us.

(1.) There is an all-sufficiency in the Lord, infinitely larger than all your wants and necessities. He that rules all, can order you what supplies and provisions, for soul or body, he pleases. All the treasure in the world is at his disposing, Haggai 2:8-9. The people complaining of the want of gold and silver to adorn the temple, and make it answerable to that of Solomon, the Lord declares, that ought to be no discouragement. If he thought fit to have it so sumptuous, he could easily furnish them; for silver and gold was all his, and all at his disposing. The woman, reduced, in the siege of Samaria, to so great extremity, as she was forced to eat her child, applies herself to the king for help, but in vain, as to the obtaining of any supply, if she had sought that, 2 Kings 6:26, 27. Kings, who should relieve their subjects, may be at such a loss, as they can neither relieve these nor themselves. Oh, but the King of kings, he that rules over all, is never at a loss; no true subject of his ever sought to him in vain, Isaiah 45:19. Let me shew how he is able to satisfy your wants, in some particulars.

[1.] He can make want to be in effect no want, for he so rules all as everything must be what he orders it to be. If he will have plenty to be as bad as want, it will be no better; and if he will have want to be as good as plenty, it will be no worse, it will be as good to all effects and purposes. He can make you not to need what you have not; he can serve the uses of what you cannot have another way, and can make you as contented and well satisfied without it as those that have it, and better too; and so can order it that you shall neither need it nor think you need it, and so can take away all need, both real and in opinion also, which is often the more troublesome need of the two. He can make a little to be as good or better than much; better for the soul, and as good for all exigencies of the body: Psalms 37:16, ‘A little that the righteous hath is better than the riches of many wicked.’ His smallest pittance is better than all the rich and great possessions of all wicked wordlings; so he can make up the defects of grace in its weakness, in its infancy, by his own actual influence, so that holiness, when it is weak, shall do more by virtue of this than holiness in greater strength without it, so that even in this sense that paradox of the apostle holds true, 2 Corinthians 12:10, ‘When I am weak, then I am strong.’

[2.] He can make your expenses increase your estate. When you lay out what you have as he would have you, he can make it, like the widow’s oil, to multiply and increase as you pour it out, 2 Kings 4:1-44. You have his word for it, 2 Corinthians 9:9-10. The apostle is exhorting them to be free and bountiful, for the relief of those in want. And whereas it might be objected that such liberalness might bring themselves to straits and necessities, he tells them the Lord can make them the richer for and by relieving the poor. That is the way to have all-sufficiency in all things, both for themselves and others; so as to abound in every act of bounty is the way to be enriched in everything, so as to be able to express all bountifulness, the way to increase, not to prejudice, their estates. And so in spirituals: the more is communicated to others, the more is the stock increased, whether of grace or knowledge.

[3.] He can order all creatures (if need be) to bring you in provisions; for he who rules over all has all things subject to him, at his command, ready to fulfil his word and observe his orders: Hosea 2:18, ‘I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field,’ &c. A covenant with them, not only not to hurt his people, but to help, relieve, supply them. And this is founded in the Lord’s dominion over them, ‘I will make.’ By virtue of this they are as sure of all this from the creatures as

if there were an express covenant for that purpose, Hosea 2:21-22. Heaven and earth and all creatures shall be so forward to supply the wants of Israel (now returned unto her subjection unto God) that they shall, as it were, seek the Lord to be employed for that end, seek him to enable them to supply her needs; and he will hear them, and employ and empower them, from the highest to the lowest, to furnish her with what she wants. So he can order all things to relieve spiritual wants and weaknesses. Not only his ordinances but their outward enjoyments, their afflictions, yea, their falls and miscarriages, he can make all these work, singly or together, for the increase of holiness, the embittering of sin, the crucifying of them to the world, the advancing of mind and heart towards heaven. He can raise them higher by their falls, as he did Peter, and teach them to profit by worldly objects and enjoyments, and cause the rod to bud and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, Hebrews 12:1-29.

[4.] He can single out any of the creatures, and give them effectual order to supply you. Such, from whom you expect no such thing, those that are never wont to do it, those that are most unlikely to serve you herein, yea, or those that are most opposite to it.

First, He can supply you by unexpected means or instruments. He can order those to do it from whom you could not look for it. So the Lord moved the barbarous people in Melita to shew great kindness to Paul and his company, after they had suffered shipwreck, Acts 28:2, Acts 28:10, and the wise men to supply Joseph and Mary.

Those who want supplies expect them from relations, friends, acquaintance, but the Lord can stir up strangers to do it. A remarkable instance hereof I have had from a credible author. A faithful woman being brought, in a strange place, to great extremities by the extravagancy of her husband, her children crying for bread, and she having nothing to satisfy them, gets out of doors, as not able longer to bear the cries of her little ones, whom she could not relieve; and while she was lifting up an afflicted heart to God, she spies a horse laden with provisions, the sight whereof makes her say within herself, ‘Oh, what a mercy would it be if this were brought to my distressed family’! And even so the Lord had ordered it, stirring up the heart of a stranger, who had some notice of her necessities, to send that provision to her house. And some of you have heard of a godly minister who sent his maid to the market, but could not furnish her with money to buy necessaries. She meets with one she knew not, who unexpectedly gives her money for her master, enough for her occasions. And others have had experience of provisions made for their souls in a way wherein they could never have expected it. He that rules over all can do exceeding abundantly, both for soul and body, above all that we can think or look for.

Secondly, He can supply you by unusual means and ways. Our eyes are upon the means which usually help us to supplies; when these are out of sight, our hearts fail us, we sink into discouragement and despondency. But this becomes not those who believe and acknowledge that the Lord rules over all. He is not confined to usual and ordinary ways; he has all subject to him; both ordinary and extraordinary are at his command; and he can supply us, or do whatever he pleases, by whatsoever he will: Matthew 4:4, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’

Bread, or ordinary nourishment, is not of necessity to the life of man; God can sustain or nourish him by any other means; whatsoever he pleases to order for that purpose will do it. His word is sufficient of itself to sustain him, or sufficient to provide for him in an unusual way, or sufficient to

empower anything to feed him, even that which is not used for such a purpose. The text to which this refers is Deuteronomy 8:3, ‘He fed thee with manna, that he might make thee to know that man doth not live by bread alone.’ He fed them so many years by a means so unusual, that neither they nor their fathers knew it, that they might understand what dominion the Lord has over all things for our sustentation; that his word is enough for us, able to procure us anything, able to sustain and nourish us by anything whatsoever. And the Lord has not left these latter times destitute of some experiments that he can provide for his people in unusual ways. When the protestants in Rochelle were greatly distressed by a long and close siege, multitudes of small fishes were daily brought up to them by the tide, such as had not been seen in that haven before, nor continued after the siege was raised.

Thirdly, He can supply you by improbable instruments, and such as are most unlikely to do it. It was improbable that the prophet Elijah should be sustained by a widow woman who had not enough to sustain herself and her child, 1 Kings 17:12, and she was a heathen too, and so might have an averseness to shew any kindness to a Hebrew. But the Lord so ordered it, and there was no resistance to his order, ver. 9. But it was more unlikely, which we meet with in the same chapter, that the ravens should feed him; for the raven is a voracious creature, and more like to devour what was brought him, than to bring him anything. And, which is more, it is μισ■τεκνος, an unnatural creature, unmerciful to her own brood; is so far from feeding any other, that she will not so much as feed her own young ones: for that is her character, τ■κτοντος μ■ν ο■ τρ■φοντος δ■, she brings them forth, but forsakes them, and will not feed them. The Lord hereby shewed his absolute dominion over the creatures: he can overrule them to do whatsoever he will; he can make them act for the relief of his people even against their own natures; he could make the ravens kind to and diligent for the prophet, though they have no care, no kindness for the fruit of their own womb; he did but command it, and it was done, 1 Kings 17:4-6. They provided him his dinner and supper daily and constantly while he stayed there. Though all probable means for the sustaining of soul or body should fail, yet is there enough in the Lord to encourage us. He who rules over all can provide for both, any way he pleases, even by the most improbable means, as well as any; in the most unlikely ways, as well as the best.

Fourthly. He can supply you by the most opposite instruments, such as would far rather starve soul or body, than afford the least relief to either. Thus he enriched the Israelites by the Egyptians when they had enslaved them, and designed nothing better for them than to keep them poor and miserable in hard bondage, Psalms 68:30, and Psalms 72:6. When Samaria, besieged by the Assyians, was reduced to such extremity, as, 2 Kings 6:25, an ass’s head was sold for eighty pieces of silver, ten pounds, when the whole ass at other times was but counted worth a tenth part of it; and a fourth part of a pint, a cab of doves’ dung at five shekels (a cab was as much of that dung as would serve a man for a day) went at above twelve shillings and sixpence; the Lord takes order that they should be plentifully supplied out of the stores of their enemies, who had designed to starve them, 2 Kings 7:16. Psalms 68:30, ‘Rebuke the multitude of spearmen, the company of bulls,’ &c. The bulls, i. e. such proud and powerful men as demean themselves towards those under them, as bulls do towards the lesser and weaker cattle. The Lord can bring them under, and make them glad to buy their peace, and to enrich those with their own stores, whom they had exhausted and impoverished, Psalms 72:8-10. He that commands his servants, when their enemy is hungry, to feed him, can command their enemies to feed them, and can make them do it,

whether they will or no. When they are bereaved of refreshments for soul or body, he can make the hands which spoiled them to repair them, and to restore what they violently took away.

Thus, when the Philistines looked upon their taking away the ark, as the greatest advantage that ever they had over Israel, and most matter of triumph, that being the pledge of God's presence with the Israelites, and so their strength, their glory, their happiness above all people on earth, one would have thought they would as soon have given them their country as restored this, yet the Lord forces them to do it, and so orders it, that the Philistines, of their own accord, send back the ark to the Israelites.

What cannot he do for the restoring of the gospel, and making provision for souls, even by the enemies of it, who could bring back the ark to his people by such means, in such desperate circumstances?

2. Obj. I do not doubt but he is able to afford me all supplies for soul and body, but is he willing to do it?

Ans. There is no more occasion to doubt of that, so far as it will be good for you, and that is all you can desire, Psalms 34:10, and Psalms 84:11, and Psalms 85:12. He will supply you in all your wants with whatever is good: Php 4:19, 'My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' There are glorious riches treasured up in Christ for this purpose, and out of that treasury he will supply all your needs, even as [to] the things of this life: Matthew 6:33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you.' Seek to get into the kingdom of God, subject yourselves to him in all righteousness, and then he that rules this kingdom will provide all these things for you, so that you need be no further careful or solicitous about it. And you have sufficient assurance of it, in that he rules over all, and over you in special, having given up yourselves to be ruled by him.

[1.] Consider, a ruler who is mindful of his office will not suffer those who are ruled by him to want what is needful if he can easily help it. Even Pharaoh took care that his subjects should have necessaries in the years of famine, Exodus 40:1-38. Good rulers mind that as the end of government, that those who are under them sint beatissimi, as the orator expresses it, may live happily. And he is justly counted a tyrant, who, regarding only his own pleasure or profit, minds not the necessary concernments of his subjects. How far is the Lord of heaven and earth from this, whose goodness and mercy is as large as his dominion, even over all his works? Psalms 145:9.

[2.] He makes provision for those whom he less regards; he is ready to supply all creatures; and can we think him unwilling to do it for those who are peculiarly his subjects, to whom he is more specially related, and for whom he has a more particular affection? Psalms 147:5, Psalms 147:8-9. It is one of the glories of his kingdom, that he provides for all that belongs to it, Psalms 145:10-16. It is an argument of very little faith to doubt, that he who is willing to provide for all, is not much more willing to supply his own. Our Lord Jesus himself tells us so, Matthew 6:26, Matthew 6:28-30.

[3.] The greater any ruler is, the more may reasonably be expected from him, unless where greatness is but a large cypher, or an empty flourish. What then may be expected from him who rules over all, to whom the greatest on earth are as nothing, less than nothing and vanity; from him 'who only does great wonders, Psalms 136:4, and is still willing to do them, as what follows shews, 'For his mercy endures for ever'?

It is a great dishonour to the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth to doubt that he is not willing to act like himself, and to supply you, so much more, so much better than any, as he is incomparably above all: 2 Samuel 24:23, ‘All these things did Araunah as a king give unto the king.’ He acted magnificently, more like a king than a private person. The Lord shews his magnificence, by providing continually for those who depend on him; it is his glory, and therefore there can be no question of his willingness, no more than of his power, to relieve his people in all their necessities, outward or inward; he that rules over all, is ready and able to do it above all.

3. Against the power and violence of enemies. How great soever it be, how terrible soever it seem, how much soever heightened with successes, however enforced with malice and rage, how little soever you see to resist or oppose it, yet need you not be discouraged, you will see no cause for it, if you do but duly consider that the Lord rules over all. This power and rage, whatever it be, is subject to him; he can manage, and order it, and dispose of it as he pleases; he can make it less, or make it useless, or make use of it far otherwise than they intend, or make it nothing, when or however he will.

(1.) He can make it less. He can abate the power and assuage the wrath of man, and bring it down to what degree he pleases; for it is wholly under his dominion and power who rules over all. He can with greatest ease prick the bladder, and make the tumour fall, how much soever it swell. When the wicked are like the raging sea in a storm, foaming out wrath and rage, threatening wrecks and ruin to this or that person or party, he that ‘ruleth the raging of the sea,’ Psalms 89:9, let him but speak the word, and that will be enough to hush the storm, and still the waves, and make all as calm as you can wish. It is the greatness of their power that makes it formidable; but how great soever it seem, it is nothing to his who rules over all, and has the ruling of it. It is little or nothing to him, and he can easily and suddenly make it so to you.

(2.) He can make it useless. And be it never so great, if it be rendered useless, it is as good as none. He that rules over all can effectually forbid and hinder the use of any power. Let the arm of flesh be never so big, and strong, and sinewy, if the Lord lay hold on it, it cannot stir, nor move in the least, no more than the arm of a dead man. If the mastiff be never so fierce, yet if he be muzzled, there is no fear of him. Thus can the Lord deal with the fiercest of those you fear: Psalms 138:7, ■■ ■■. He can put a muzzle upon their nose, or put a hook into it, so that they cannot bite, nor be able to stir, but as he pleases. When the Philistines dreaded Samson’s strength, to render it useless, and not to be feared, they put out his eyes; so can the Lord render the greatest power useless, by binding those that have it, so as they shall not see that they have it, or see how to use it, or see how to take or improve any advantage by it. How useless was the power of the Sodomites when blinded! The whole city could do nothing against one family. The Lord can as easily, and does more ordinarily, blind the mind, and take away a spirit of discerning, Job 12:24-25 and Job 5:12; how, see Job 5:14, Isaiah 59:10. Or if they have their eyes, he can take order they shall not find their hands; and what can they do, how useless is their power, who cannot find their hands! Psalms 76:5. When they come to do their work, they have their hands to seek; the Lord can take them away when he pleases, and so render their designs and undertakings ridiculous, and all their force and power useless.

(3.) He can make them use it otherwise than they intend. If it be not rendered useless, yet shall they not be able to use it as they will, but as he pleases who rules over them and all. He can

overrule them, so as it shall no way hurt you, and then you need not fear it; or so as it shall be for your advantage, and then you may rejoice in it.

He can turn it upon others whom you are little concerned in, or think not of. He can find them other work than their power is prepared for; he can interpose another object betwixt you and their fury, and make that a screen to you; he can raise them another enemy, where their power and rage shall spend itself, and never reach you. When Sennacherib had struck a great terror into Hezekiah and his people, by this does the Lord encourage them: Isaiah 37:7, 'He shall hear a rumour,' that shall divert them; and what that was, see Isaiah 37:9, 'He heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee.'

He can turn it against a common enemy. Such were the Philistines to David; and the Lord turns the force of Saul, which had encompassed David, against them, against David's enemies, 1 Samuel 23:27-28. You think the power and rage you fear will fall upon you, but the Lord can order it to fall upon those whom you are concerned should fall by it. And so the greatness of it, which is formidable to you, will be your advantage: the greater it is, the better it will be for you.

He can turn it against themselves. They bend their bow, and make ready their arrows, and are going to shoot with all their might; but where the arrows will fall they know not. He has the ordering of that who rules all things, and he can order them to fall upon their own heads instead of yours, Ezekiel 9:10, Psalms 7:16. Little did the children of Ammon, and Moab, and mount Seir, think that the great force they raised for the ruin of Jehoshaphat should be made use of to destroy themselves; but so he ordered it who rules over all, and so it came to pass, 2 Chronicles 20:23.

He can turn it for you, and make it serve you and your interest, though it was raised and levelled directly against you. Saul's power and preparations made use of against David, when Saul was taken away, came into David's hands; the greater the power of his enemy was, the more was it for his advantage. The Lord, by turning the hearts of your enemies, can engage all the power which you now dread for you; and that is as easy a turn to him as any other, who rules the heart of man as easily as anything else, Proverbs 21:1. Those who get power, and increase it, to become thereby dreadful unto others, know not for whom they get it, or for whom it shall be used; that must be as he who rules over all will order; and he can, and often does, dispose of it against those who have it, and for those against whom it is designed and levelled. He ordinarily will have it used quite otherwise than those who are in power would have it.

(4.) He can break it, and can easily and suddenly (how great and formidable soever it is) bring it to nothing, and that many ways.

[1.] He can break them himself. He that can rule all things needs no help, no power of men to do it: Psalms 89:10, 'Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces: thou hast scattered thine enemies.' He can deal with all that oppose him and his people, as he did with Pharaoh, called Rahab. It is no more to him to crush the mightiest of them all, than it is for you to crush the snail that is under your foot. He shews how he will deal with those who combine against him and his interest, Psalms 2:1-12. They look big now, like rocks or mountains, and seem to threaten heaven with their lofty aspiring tops; but when he takes them in hand, they will prove but like potter's vessels, and shiver all in pieces, like an earthen pot under the weighty stroke of an iron mace: 'Whosoever shall fall on him shall be broken; but on whomsoever he shall fall, he will grind them to powder,' Matthew 21:44. All their

force against him, as that of the waves against a rock, shall serve only to dash themselves in pieces.

[2.] He can raise the whole power of the world against them, for he who rules over all can muster up all the forces of heaven and earth with a word; and what is that which disturbs you to all this? How many did he arm against Pharaoh, when he would not let his people go to serve him? Yet those which plagued Pharaoh were but as it were a few stragglers in comparison of what the great Ruler of the world can raise in a moment. How many does he threaten to array against Israel, in case they would not be ruled by him! Leviticus 26:21, ‘Seven times more, and yet seven times more.’ But indeed they are past all numbering, beyond all computation; the greatest volumes in the world would not be a sufficient muster-roll for the forces of him who rules over all. The angels are but a small part of his army, as it were his own company or regiment; they are spoken of but as making up one chariot, Psalms 68:17; yet they are myriads and thousands, infinite numbers. And these, with all the rest, fully under command; let him but give the word, and all would be ready together to what execution he pleases. Oh what are all the oppressing powers on earth to the Lord and his hosts! How soon, how easily, can he break them!

[3.] He can break them and their power by the least and weakest thing. He need not raise his whole force to do it; any one thing will serve, if he give it a commission. Such is his power and dominion over all, that anything will be able to do whatever he would have it. A tile, a gnat, a fly, a worm, any disease, will lay the most potent in the dust when he gives order for that purpose. It will fall without hand when he pleases, as that great oppressor did, Daniel 8:23-25. The little vermin could soon make an end of Herod’s power, when he put it forth to vex certain of the church, Acts 12:1, Acts 12:23.

[4.] He can break them by themselves; make them tumble with their own weight, crush them with their own force; and employ themselves, or those whom they count their own, to hew down the bough they stand upon, or cut off the arm wherein their strength and power lies. He that rules over all, can overrule everything to act as ho would have it, though it be against itself. He can break them,

First, By their own relations; can bring their destruction out of their own bowels. Thus fell the great terror and oppressor of Judea, Sennacherib, when Hezekiah and his people had no strength against him, 2 Kings 19:37. When the child is come so near the birth, there is the greatest and sharpest pain, and when the woman’s strength is quite spent, and the child so feeble it cannot help itself, there is the greatest danger. And this was their condition; though the blasphemy, cruelty, insolency of the enemy had made him ripe for ruin, yet the people distressed by him had no power to effect it. What, then, shall the oppressor escape? No; what they could not do against him, the Lord employs his own sons to do. After he had seen the deliverance of God’s people, and the destruction of his own, they bereaved him of life who had received life from him, 2 Kings 19:37.

Secondly, By their own party; by those which raised them and were their support. He can make one leg strike up another, and that which slipped first to break the other in the fall. Thus, when the men of Shechem conspired with Abimelech in a tyrannical design, the Lord so orders it that he first breaks them; and those of them which were left brake him, according to the imprecation of Jotham, Judges 9:20. He that rules over all, thus disposed of it, Judges 9:56-57.

Thirdly, By their own attempts. He can make the blows of the violent to rebound upon themselves, and push them into the pit which they had prepared to bury others in. Thus Haman's attempts upon Mordecai and the Jews proved his ruin, and the instrument of death he had erected does execution upon himself. And Pharaoh's violence against Israel, which would pursue them even into the sea, overwhelmed him and his people, and made an end of them at once. He who rules over all, can cause any engines of violence to recoil upon those who manage them, and hit themselves instead of those they aim at.

Fourthly, By their own hands. He needs no hand at all to break them; but if he will employ any, he can make their own hands as well as any other serve to ruin them, Psalms 9:6. There was no need that David should lay hands upon Saul, the Lord could take order that he should lay violent hands upon himself. He can overrule their hand to work them into such entanglements, as they shall find no easier way out, than by letting out their own souls, and opening the passage by their own hands.

Fifthly, Their own counsels. When they say, Come, let us work wisely, the Lord can order it to prove no wiser, than the contrivement of a subtle head against itself, Job 5:13. He makes their craftiness become a snare to themselves, and gives such wheels to their counsels as carry them headlong as from a precipice; and the more violent they are, the more fiercely they drive, with the more force do they fall to the breaking of themselves: Psalms 10:2, 'Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.' The event will answer the prayer, for the prayer of faith is in such a person a prediction. The web that he weaves to catch the poor fly, the Lord can make use of to entangle the spider, whose fine and subtle device it is.

Sixthly, By their own fears: Proverbs 28:1, 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth.' There needs no other to rout them, but their own fears. The Lord can order this, both to pursue and do execution, Leviticus 26:36-37. Their fear shall put them to flight, and pursue them when there is none to follow them, and make them do execution upon themselves, when there is none else to do it. The Lord promises Israel, by these means, to discomfit and destroy the Canaanites, Exodus 23:27. He who has the command of all, and so can raise what passion he pleases in the heart, will raise and arm their own fears against them, and thereby put them to flight, and bring destruction upon them, 2 Chronicles 14:14. Their own fears made those who had aided the Ethiopians and their cities, and all they had, an easy prey to Asa and his people.

Seventhly, By their own fancy. The Lord needs no other force to rout and break the greatest powers on earth, than the power of their imagination. Thus were the Syrians broken, when there was not a hand lift up against them, 2 Kings 7:6-7. The Lord made such impression upon their imagination, that they fancied they heard such a terrible noise (if it had been really audible, the besieged might have heard it as well as they), and upon this fancy they are all in confusion, run away as for life, and leave all they had to their enemies. Let but the Lord arm the fancy of the mightiest on earth against them, and that will be enough to ruin them.

Eighthly, By their own mistakes. When they think they are in Dothan, he can set them in the midst of Samaria, and so leave them in the power, and at the mercy of those whom they have most injured, as he did the Syrians, 2 Kings 6:1-33. So the Moabites' mistake of the waters for blood, drew them oat of their strength, engaged them on a great disadvantage, and so was the occasion of their ruin, 2 Kings 3:22, &c.

You see what encouragement we have from the Lord's ruling over all, against all opposite power and violence. He can assuage it or render it useless; he can divert it, or break it, and that by anything, even by themselves, by anything of them, either by their power or their weakness.

Here is encouragement as to the lowness of the interest of God and his people in the world, and in these parts of it that we are acquainted with. The interest of God seems to be at a very low ebb amongst the inhabitants of the earth. The kingdoms of the world seem to be the kingdoms of Satan; he rules them and keeps them in subjection to him, and his will and laws have more observance than the will and laws of God. The rod of his strength doth not reach the greatest part of the earth; the gospel, which is his sceptre, has little or no place left in many regions where it once prevailed; and where it yet has any entertainment, it meets with great opposition, is under much restraint, and in danger to be suppressed. Many there are that rise up against it, few in comparison that own it by any due subjection to it; and these hated, oppressed, persecuted, kept under hatches, and in danger to be rooted out; and the special interest of God, which lies in his true and real subjects, like to suffer in and with them. This is matter of great discouragement to those who truly honour the great sovereign of the world, and tender his interest; but for all this the Lord reigns, and will do; he still rules over all; and this duly considered, is enough to strengthen the weak hands and the feeble knees, to inspire the dejected with courage and spirit, and make them bear up cheerfully under the sad apprehensions of the declining or sinking of that interest which is due to them. For,

1. The greatest part of the world does still continue in subjection to God, and gives him the honour due to the universal sovereign; all creatures do it but apostate men and devils, and these are but a very small part of the whole creation, and little or nothing compared with the whole fabric of heaven and earth, which continues absolutely subject to their sovereign.

2. He rules as much over wicked men and spirits, as over those who voluntarily subject themselves to him, though not in the same manner. The power, and wisdom, and justice of his government, is as much honoured upon them, though not the mercy of it. And how far it is his interest to extend the mercy of his government, we must leave it to him to judge, who is the only competent judge of it; it is above our capacity, and beyond our measures.

3. As to his interest which is concerned in his peculiar people, it shall never be quite suppressed, never extinguished in the world. So long as God rules, he will maintain it, he will uphold it; but in what places, in what degree and manner, and by what means, must be left to him, the arcana of whose empire, and the mysteries of his governing are incomprehensible. This is plain. (1.) When it is weak, he can strengthen it; when it seems falling, he can uphold it. It was weak, indeed, amongst the Israelites when the prophet complains, 1 Kings 19:10, 'I, even I, only am left.' But the Lord better upheld it, and kept it up in more strength than he apprehended, ver. 18, 'I have left me seven thousand in Israel which have not bowed the knee to Baal.' The interest of God may be many thousand times stronger than it visibly appears or we see ground to conceive it. It was weak in Zerub-babel's time, lying in a few contemptible restored captives, and these in the midst of raging enemies, ready and resolved to crush them; and yet when they had no strength of themselves, nor any arm of flesh, nor any worldly prop to support them, he who rules over all was their strength and upheld them, and his interest in and by them, Zechariah 4:9-10. How weak and despicable soever they and their undertakings for God might seem, the Lord would make it appear

they were not to be despised; his work should prosper in their hands, they should effectually carry on his interest in building his temple. For these seven, the eyes of the Lord, i. e. his governing providence reaching over the whole earth, was engaged with them.

(2.) When it is straitened and pent up in a narrow compass, he can enlarge it; when it is but as a cloud like a man's hand, he can extend it so as to cover the face of the heavens, and make it spread far and wide. Time was when it seemed confined to Abraham's family, but the Lord promised it should reach all the families of the earth, and be diffused through many nations; and he that rules all those families and nations made it good. And this our Lord Jesus holds forth to us in divers parables or resemblances, Matthew 13:31–33. The Lord can make his kingdom, when it is but like a 'little leaven,' to diffuse its virtue to every part of the world; when it is but like 'a grain of mustard-seed,' to grow up into a vast tree; he hath done it, and can do it again.

(3.) When it is sinking, he can bring it up again. Let the enemies of God fall never so heavy upon his interest, they will never be able quite to sink it; it will up again one where or other, either in the same place, where it seems at some desperate plunge, or in some other, where before it appeared not, or in both. When that great persecution was raised at Jerusalem, at that time the centre of Christ's interest in the world, where the great concerns of the gospel then lay principally, and in a manner only there, Acts 8:13, the enemies thereof made account to sink it quite. But how were they disappointed! While they had it under water there it gets up, and gets head in the cities and countries round about, far and near, yea, in that place, a little after, where it had the greatest plunge. They bear it down in one town, and it breaks out almost everywhere else, and by that means, too, which they used to suppress it. So when the woman, by the violence of the great red dragon, was forced from her former state and place, and when he would have left her no place nor being on earth, the Lord prepared a place for her in the wilderness, where she should have subsistence and nourishment, Revelation 12:6. When he poured forth a flood after her, with a design to have washed her away from the face of the earth, to have overwhelmed her utterly, Revelation 12:15, the Lord disappoints him, Revelation 12:16. The divisions in the empire diverted the torrent of persecution, and swallowed it up; as some.

(4.) When it seems dead, he can reviveit, and give it a resurrection and life, Hosea 6:1-2. Much of the interest of God was involved in the people, yet how low were they brought, even to the grave; not only torn, and smitten, and wounded, but, as it were, dead and buried! Yet, though they were dead, the Lord undertakes to revive them, and so his interest with them; though they were buried, he would bring them out of the grave (the desperate condition, which seemed like their sepulchre), he would raise them from the dead, and make them live in his sight. He that rules over all is the Lord both of death and life; both civil and natural is at his disposing, he can give or restore it to whom and when he will. And death, in every sense, will resign up any under his power when the Lord gives order.

After the captivity of the ten tribes, the two remaining were the only people in the world which visibly owned God and his interest; when they were carried away captive also, and their temple burnt, and no place left for the solemn worship of God, of his institution, this might well seem a deadly blow to the interest of God on earth. Answerably, their state, in these desperate circumstances, is expressed by dry bones, when the body is not only deprived of soul and life, but buried and in the grave, quite consumed, neither skin, nor flesh, nor sinews left, nothing but the

dry bones, and these not set together, but scattered here and there in the valley, not so much as the form of an anatomy left, Ezekiel 37:1-2. Well might it be made a question, as it is, Ezekiel 37:3, 'Can these dry bones live?' Is there any hope, any possibility of it? What could be more hopeless than the recovery of this people, and God's interest embarked with them in such a condition, which the Lord himself thus represents? Yet he who rules over all, who has all things absolutely at his command, and can do what he will with a word, could, with a word, cause these scattered and disordered bones to come together, bone to his bone, in that admirable order as they are placed in the body of man, and lay sinews, and bring flesh upon them, and cause breath and life to enter into them, so that they 'stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army,' as Ezekiel 37:6-9, &c. Thus could the Lord revive his slain interest and the destroyed people which had owned it; and that with a breath, when all hopes of any such thing was lost, and all seemed to be cut off for ever. The meaning of this encouraging vision is expressed, Ezekiel 37:12-14, 'I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel,' &c. So Revelation 11:1-19, when the witnesses, those who gave their testimony for the interest of God against antichristianism, are slain, i. e. (as is probably conceived) by persecution and violence brought into such a condition as they could scarce be numbered amongst the living, when they are, in a civil sense at least, quite dead, the Lord shews he can revive them, and raise his fallen interest with them, Revelation 11:11-12. He will not only restore them to their former place and station, but advance them higher than ever. That he who rules over all is sufficient for all this, will be more evident if we consider particularly,

1. He wants no wisdom. He that is wise enough to rule and order all and everything in the whole world, wants no wisdom for the upholding or restoring his own interest. Those who are wisest for the managing of their interest are but fools to him. The apostle, where he styles him King, calls him also 'the only wise God,' 1 Timothy 1:17. The profoundest and most improved wisdom deserves not the name of wisdom compared with his. He is only wise, he alone. None so well understand their interest, none so apprehensive of what may endanger it, none so knowing what may promote it, or for the ordering of all things in a subserviency to it. The wisdom of angels is but folly to him.

2. He wants no power. He that rules over all has power to keep all in subjection, to make all things obey him, to force all to move or stand still at his beck. It is the Lord God almighty that reigns, Revelation 11:7. It is the God 'which quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were,' and makes them to be what he calls them by so calling them. It is he who has power to rule and order all things in heaven and earth as he will. If some wise men had the power to order all things as they pleased, they would never question the securing of their interest. What fear is there, then, that the Lord will let his interest miscarry, when he has power at will, no less than infiniteness of power, as well as wisdom?

3. He wants no instruments to serve his interest, nor can want any, if the whole world will afford enough, for all in heaven and earth are in his hand and ready for his use, who is κ■ριος κα■ παμβασιλε■ς τ■ν π■ντων (as Athanasius), Lord and absolute Sovereign of all things. The highest angels think it their chief honour to serve his interest, and to serve it in any capacity, and so, we find, are called sometimes his chariot, sometimes his warriors, sometimes the conduct of his people, sometimes their purveyors, always his ministers. And he can make the most untoward instruments to serve his turn, whether they will or no. The crookedest tool will become straight in his hand, who overrules all things to be and do what he will have them, Isaiah 46:11.

4. He wants no opportunities, through want of which many a man's interest miscarries; for times and seasons are in his hand, he has reserved them in his own power, Acts 1:7. He rules them as he does all things else. That must be a season which he will have so. He can make any part of time to be a fit season, and what we count unseasonable he can render it the fittest opportunity. He can remove when he pleases whatever in us or in others renders that unseasonable which would promote his interest. The unfitness of the subject, the incapacity of the matter, the unpreparedness of his people, cannot nonplus him who rules over all, or make him to seek or leave him at a loss for a season; he can overrule these, or anything else, into a seasonable compliance and subserviency to him in any moment.

5. He wants no will. For who can doubt that the great ruler of the world is not willing to secure and advance his own interest? Sure this must be pleasing to him, and 'He will do all his pleasure,' Isaiah 46:10.

Obj. But if he be so willing and all-sufficient to maintain his own interest, why does he suffer it to decline and be borne down, and his people who only own it, and sincerely design the promoting of it, to be oppressed and kept under hatches, to be deprived of power, kept low and weak, and for the most part in an afflicted condition, and their necks under persecution? By this he seems not willing to uphold or advance his own interest in the world.

Ans. 1. We may mistake his interest, and are apt to judge that to be for it which is not. We are apt to think that if the Lord would put his people in a prosperous and plentiful condition, and give them power and greatness, and free them from the cross, and advance them in a worldly station above others, and enable them to shake off the yoke, and to keep those under who oppress and persecute them, this would be more for his interest than the low and distressed state which is commonly their portion. But it is otherwise, and the Lord, who rules and disposes of all with infinite wisdom, knows it, and he has not only said but done enough to make his people understand it. He has given experiments thereof in several ages sufficient to convince us, though we be slow to understand or believe that which does not please us. He has tried his people with outward prosperity, and sometimes with power and greatness, and this has proved more prejudicial to his interest than that low afflicted condition which we are more impatient of. There are instances enough of this; it is well if we ourselves in these nations be not an instance of it.

We have ground enough, both from Scripture and experience, to believe that his interest lies not so much in the outward prosperity of his people, as in exercising them with afflictions and sufferings, and appearing for them therein. This seems to be most for his honour, and best for them too, if they judge like themselves, and count that best which prove so to their souls. That which is most for his honour is most for his interest. Did he not get more glory, by keeping his servants untouched, unscorched, in the midst of the raging flames, than if he had kept them from being cast into the furnace? Does it not honour him more to let the world see that he can keep the bush, when it is burning, from being consumed, than if he should keep the fire from coming near it? Is it not more to keep a spark alive in the midst of the waves, than to make it flame in a chimney, and more for his honour that can do it? Why, thus does the Lord do, and thus does he honour himself, by keeping up a people for himself in the midst of the rage and fury of the world. They are like a combustible body in a fiery furnace, or like a bush flaming, or like a spark in the midst of the sea, and yet kept alive, secured, preserved. Who can do such a thing but he who rules

over all? How much is this for his honour! A thousand preservations from trouble, danger, and extremities keeping these from coming near them would not be so much, if at all taken notice of, would be in a manner lost upon them, would not be observed with any such honourable reflection upon the great God, as his upholding, maintaining, and delivering them when they find themselves in the mouth of dangers, and in the midst of extremities.

It is better for his people too; better for their souls than that condition which is more pleasing to flesh and blood. And that which is better for their souls is more for his interest. It makes more for peace and holiness. They have ordinarily more peace with God, when they meet with tribulation in the world; more peace within, when more trouble without. When affliction lies heavy, sin lies light, was the observation of a wise and holy man. And then holiness thrives more under afflictions, and corruption has less advantage against us than in a prosperous condition: 2 Corinthians 4:16, 'Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' Though he was harassed by affliction, and brought low as to his outward state, yet his soul had great advantage by it; he lost nothing, but what the eagle loseth by moulting her old feathers; she gets fresh and more beautiful plumes, and is renewed into a better state. His inward man is hereby renewed, and refined, and holiness more revived and reinforced. He was freed more from the incumbrance of the old man, and that corruption which brings and keeps the soul in a crazy and decrepit condition. And thus it is ordinarily with the people of God. Hence Isidore, writing to one of Pelusium, from his own experience, gives him this advice, Pray earnestly (says he) that the Pelussets, μ■ποτε δυνηθ■ναι ■ βο■λονται, may never be in such a condition as they desire; for they are better when they are low and oppressed, ■ μικρ■ ■νανε■οντες, than when they get up, though but a little.

2. We may be mistaken about the ways and means which the Lord uses to secure and advance his interest. We may think that tends to ruin it, which he makes use of to promote it. The cutting of the vine, and making it bleed, to those who have no skill, may seem the way to kill it, whereas it tends to make it grow and flourish more, and render it more fruitful. The Lord can make his interest flourish by such ways and means as seem to threaten the destruction of it. Never did it prevail more in the world, never did it rise and spread itself with so great advantage, as in the apostles' times, and some ages after, when it met with the greatest opposition, and was destitute of all worldly advantages, and was assaulted with such violence, as did in all appearance threaten its utter overthrow. But after it got the countenance and power of Christian emperors (though that, we would think, should have a quite contrary effect) it declined and dwindled away, and all sunk in a little time into woful degeneracy, as appears by the complaints of those ancients in the fifth age, who were sensible hereof, and bitterly lamented it. So unfit are our understandings to be the measure of these things, that what we apprehend to be best for it proves worst, and what we think destructive to it, proves its advancement, as it is ordered by him who rules over all.

3. Though his interest should decline for a time, yet would that be no argument that he is unmindful of it, or unwilling to look after it. No, though it should seem a long time to us. For that time which we think exceeding long is little or nothing to him. The woman's being in the wilderness for twelve hundred and sixty days, Revelation 12:6, her continuance in an obscure ejected state, as it were an exile, and excluded from common society for so many years, seems a very long time to us, but to him it is not so much as so many hours; for 'a thousand years to the Lord is but as one day;' nay, not so much, Psalms 90:4, but as a 'watch in the night.' A watch in the night is but the

eighth part of a natural day, a very little while; but yesterday, when it is past, is nothing.

5. Here is encouragement against all troubles, afflictions, and sufferings whatsoever. He who rules over all, has the ruling and ordering of these, of whatever of this nature befalls you; and being under his command, and at his disposing wholly, they must be and do what he would have them, nothing else, nothing worse than he thinks good; neither more nor less than he sees fit. They can do you no hurt, if he forbid them; they will do you good if he command them; and if they would lie heavy or long, he can relieve you when he will, or effectually order any other thing to do it.

(1.) He can hinder them from hurting you; for he has the ruling of them, as of all things, and they must be what he would have them. If he will have them to befall you without hurt, they will be no ways hurtful to you, they can do you no harm, there will be nothing in them to dismay or discourage you. He can make trouble to be as no trouble; sufferings, such as you shall not suffer by; so the apostle found it, 2 Corinthians 4:8, they were in trouble, but it did not trouble them. That befell them which would have distressed others; but the Lord ordered it so as it was no distress to them. He can make want to be as good as no want, 2 Corinthians 6:9-10; they were poor, but as good as not poor, they could enrich others; they were in want, and yet as good as if they wanted nothing, as if they had possessed all; sorrowful, but as good as not sorrowful, always rejoicing. So he can make pain to be as easy as no pain, and heavy pressures to be as light as that which weighs nothing. If there be any snare in them, he can keep it from entangling you; if there be any malignity therein, he can expel it, so as it shall not endanger you; if there be any sting in them, he can pull it, so that it shall not touch you, you shall not smart by it. There is enough in him to encourage us, whatever troubles we may meet with. Since he who rules over all can render them altogether harmless, what is then left in them to discourage us? It is folly and weakness to be dejected at that which can do us no hurt.

(2.) He can make them an advantage to us; for he rules them as he does all things, and they must and will do what he would have them. He can make troubles do us more good than freedom from troubles will do us. He can make them heal us; for he can heal by stripes, and turn that into a sovereign antidote which we shun as poison. He can make us wise by them: Psalms 94:12, ‘Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.’ He can enrich us by them: Hebrews 12:10, ‘They chastened us for their own pleasure; he for our profit.’ He can make them comforts to us: Psalms 23:1-6; 2 Corinthians 7:4, ‘I am filled with comfort in all our tribulations.’ He can prefer us by them: 2 Corinthians 4:17, ‘Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of glory.’ He can enhappy us by them: Matthew 5:10, ‘Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ He can make us safe by them, secure us from greater: Psalms 94:13, ‘That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity.’ He can make them every way expressive of his love and delight, Hebrews 12:5-6, Proverbs 3:11-12. What, can the best condition you can choose do more for you than the Lord can order your troubles to do? And whatever occasion of discouragement you see in them, it will vanish if you do but duly look upon him who rules over all.

(3.) If they lie too heavy, or stay too long; if they be ready to do you hurt, or not like to do you good: he can relieve you, or can command anything else to bring you relief and deliverance. To instance in some particulars:

[1.] He can relieve you from heaven or from earth; for he is the Ruler of both, and has all things in either wholly at his command. He can order the angels to do it; we have many examples in Scripture, and warrant there to expect it now. The angels relieved Lot, Genesis 19:9-10; an angel stopped the mouths of the lions, Daniel 6:22; so an angel delivered Peter, Acts 12:7–11; so an angel relieved Hezekiah and his country by destroying the host of the Assyrians, which I instance in (passing by others) to clear that obscure text, where it is promised, Isaiah 31:8, 'They shall fall by the sword,' neither of the strong nor of the weak. Should they fall by neither, why then by no sword at all. It seems a contradiction; by a sword, and yet by no sword. But all is clear if we understand it of the sword of an angel; for that was no sword of man, either strong or weak. Nor ought we to confine this relief by angels to Scripture times; they may and do relieve and deliver the people of God now, and have done in all ages. The ministry of angels for our relief is held forth in general expressions, without limitation to special times or extraordinary persons: Psalms 91:11-12, 'He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways,' &c.; and Psalms 34:7, 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.' (And he prays not for a miracle: Psalms 35:5-6, 'Let the angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the Lord prosecute them.') Matthew 18:10, 'Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.' Hebrews 1:14, 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' They continue still ministering for the relief of the heirs of salvation, only we take not notice of them, because they appear not in a visible shape, as they did some time heretofore, and we have no such way to know what is done by angels for us as they had. There is no Scripture now to declare and record what is done by them, since the canon of the Scripture was finished. And if the Scripture had not ascribed something there mentioned unto angels, they might have been (as they are now) referred to other causes. Ex. gr., if the Holy Ghost, Acts 12:1-25, had not told us that an angel smote Herod, and so put an end to his persecution, we might have looked no further for his death than such a disease as Josephus ascribes it to, and calls διακ■ρδιον ■δ■νην, and ■θρον τ■ς κοιλ■ας ■λγημα (Ant. lib. xix. c. 8); and the owl which he says Herod saw sitting over his head would scarce have been taken for an angel. So the mortality in David's time might have been ascribed to the pestilence without looking farther, if the Scripture had not mentioned an angel as the instrument, 2 Samuel 24:1-25. We need not sink into discouragement when we see no relief to be had on earth, we may lift up our eyes above the mountains; he whose throne is in heaven can from thence bring salvation. And he is not a God of the hills only, and not of the valleys. He can raise relief out of the earth when he pleases: Revelation 12:16, 'The earth helped the woman,' &c. So Paul and Silas were delivered by an earthquake, Acts 16:26; so Psalms 18:6, for David's relief, you may see a concurrence of heaven and earth, angels and clouds, thunder and hail, wind and rain, fire and water, darkness and lightnings. He who is the Ruler of all these, and all things, interposed as effectually for the deliverance of his servant as if he had made all these conspire to effect it.

[2.] He can do it by things great or small. Sometimes the Lord is represented as acting for a distressed people 'with a high hand and a stretched-out arm,' Exodus 6:6; sometimes as bringing relief with a word, Psalms 44:4, 'Command deliverance for Jacob.' He that rules over all is a King of such power, has all things so much at his command, that he can bring deliverance with a word; he can with one word bring ■■■■■■, many deliverances. With a breath, Psalms 18:15, 'the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered; at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.' This was one way whereby he relieved David

against his enemies overpowering him, Psalms 18:17. With a smile: Daniel 9:17, the shine of his face, his smile, was enough to restore his desolate sanctuary into a flourish. He can make the highest and strongest stoop to the meanest offices for his people: Psalms 68:1-35, ‘Moab is my wash-pot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe.’ The washing-pot is the vilest part of household stuff, for the washing of the feet, the lowest part of the body; and the shoe is held forth to be untied or taken off by the meanest servant. The Lord made Moab and Edom, those stout nations, subject themselves to Israel, in such a way, for the meanest services. So Revelation 3:8-9, ‘I will make them come and worship before thy feet.’ And he can order the least things to make way for their deliverance. So the frogs, and the lice, and the swarms of flies, Exodus 8:1-32, and the hail, Exodus 9:1-35, and the locusts, Exodus 10:1-29, are made use of by the Lord to make his people’s way out of the house of bondage. Small and great are at his command, who rules over all; strong or weak are all one to him. The strongest shall do the meanest work, and the weakest shall do the work of the strong, if he order it.

[3.] He can relieve you by motion or rest, either by action or sitting still. Ha can make his people active, or any others active for them, if that be the way he likes to bring relief; if not, he can order it to be done though they act not at all, contribute nothing toward it, stir neither hand, nor foot, nor tongue for it: Exodus 14:13, ‘Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.’ One would have thought, if ever there was need to bestir themselves it was now, when Pharaoh and all his host was at their heels, ready to fall upon them, and cut them off utterly if they did not make a stout resistance. Was this a time to stand still? Yes; this is the best way, when the Lord so will order it. He can bring salvation when they move not at all, act nothing towards it, when they both hold their hands, and hold their peace. So 2 Chronicles 20:17, ‘Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord.’ Isaiah 30:7, ‘The Egyptians shall help in vain: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still;’ your strength, Heb. Rahab (as the Egyptians are called for their power), is not to busy yourselves, to get assistance from the Egyptians or others; this course which he prescribes will be a greater strength, a better security to them than any Egyptian could afford them.

[4.] He can do it either by friends or enemies; either by those who would, but cannot, by making them able. So he enabled Abraham, with a small inconsiderable company, to rescue Lot from the joint forces of many kings, in the height of their successes and triumphs, Genesis 14:14; or by those who can, but will not, by making them willing: Proverbs 16:7, ‘When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.’ He can overrule those whose designs and intentions are nothing but wrath and ruin, to entertain thoughts of peace and amity. When the great council amongst the Jews were engaged against the apostles, and intended to slay them; when they were, as the word διεπρ■οντο signifies, Acts 5:33, furious like wild beasts, ready to tear and devour what is next them: Gamaliel, a leading man amongst the Pharisees (and so one that had enmity enough against Christ and his followers), is stirred up to give moderate counsels, and the hearts of the rest are on a sudden inclined to agree with him; so the storm is laid, and the apostles escape, Acts 5:40-41. So Paul, being in extreme danger, takes occasion to declare that the doctrine of the resurrection, for which he was questioned, was that which the Pharisees embraced in opposition to the Sadducees; and hereupon the Pharisees, instead of seeking his death on a sudden strove for him, Acts 23:9, whereas he might have expected, and at other times found, that they were his fiercest enemies. As the Jesuits, they hate all protestants, but

if one fall off to them, who was before a Jesuit, him they abhor above all; he shall not live, if they can any ways compass his death. Of such a temper were the Pharisees, enemies to all Christians, but more enraged against Paul, because he was once of their way; yet the Lord so overrules them, that when he was in their hands, instead of seeking his death they strive for his life, declare him innocent, and insinuate that his persecutors are ‘fighters against God,’ Acts 23:9.

[5.] He can do it either by good or evil. That which is good is of itself of such a tendency, and he can overrule and dispose of that which is evil to serve the same purpose. What the midwives told Pharaoh is suspected for untruth; yet thereby the Lord preserved the children of the Israelites, Exodus 1:19-20. It is a horrible thing for a people to arrive at the full measure of their wickedness; yet this, in the Amorites, made way for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and their possession of the land of Canaan, Genesis 15:16.

It was a malicious suggestion of the princes of the Philistines against David, 1 Samuel 29:4-5. But the Lord so ordered it, as hereby David was freed from great distress, and his way made out of such a strait as his own wisdom could otherwise have never discovered; for hereupon he was dismissed the army, where, if he had stayed, he must either have been treacherous to the Philistines who had obliged him, or a traitor to his own country and people, in fighting against them; but by this means he comes off untainted either way, and very seasonably too, for the rescue of all that he had, then seized on by the Amalekites. If they had not thus and then impeached him, and called in question his loyalty, he was like to lose both a good conscience, and all that he had besides. So can the Lord dispose of the malice of enemies, as it shall serve his servants for the greatest advantages.

It was very grievous to Hezekiah, if not his sin, to part with not only so much of his own treasure, and that of the house of God, but to spoil the temple also of so much gold, as was forced from him for the satisfying of Sennacherib, 2 Kings 18:13-16. But hereby he got one advantage which countervailed all, and made him capable of the great and wonderful deliverance which the Lord afterward wrought for him and his people; for his father having made an agreement with the Assyrian to pay tribute, if he had not paid it, the breach had been on his part; but having given what was demanded, and the Assyrians after this invading them, the breach and unfaithfulness was on their part, and so his cause was good, and the Lord accordingly owned it, appearing wonderfully for his relief.

[6.] He can do it by things natural, or supernatural, or artificial. So he delivered Jonah from the destruction wherewith the sea threatened him by a whale. The means that relieved him was natural; but that he should be relieved by such a creature was supernatural, being otherwise such as was more likely to destroy than preserve him. But he who rules over all can order the most unruly things in nature to act as he will, even against or above what is natural to them. The whale was absolutely subject to the command of this great ruler: he ‘prepared’ it, Jonah 1:17; it was ready at his order to follow his instructions; received him into his mouth without any hurt to him from its teeth; swallowed him down, though the throat of the whale is said by naturalists to be so narrow, as it cannot let down anything of such a bulk. He was, as the word is, in the bowels of the fish, and there kept safe three days, neither choked for want of breath, nor digested into the substance of the fish; and then, at his word, delivers him safe on shore, Jonah 2:10.

Noah and his family were delivered by the ark, an artificial expedient of God's own contriving, the Lord both of nature and art. This might seem as strange as the former to those who had never seen any such thing on the waters before. That a vessel of such a form and bulk, with so vast a lading, so many creatures, and provisions for a year sufficient for them all, should live so long on the waters, was a signal instance that the Lord hath nature and art at his command for the relief of his people. Thus was Paul delivered from death by a basket, Acts 9:23. Those trumpets, pitchers, and lamps were by the Lord made effectual to relieve Israel and ruin their enemies, Judges 7:1-25.

[7.] He can do it by that which is real or imaginary. He can work real impressions by that which is merely imaginary. Accordingly some understand that in Isaiah 31:9, 'afraid of the ensign,' if they spied but an ensign on some watch-tower, though in their own country, they should fancy it to be some banner of their enemies, and so fly, as though their enemy were at hand, though there was none near them. Such a course did the Lord take to deliver his people from the Assyrians. And so were the fancies of the Philistines disturbed, that they imagined their friends to be enemies; and so saved the Israelites a labour of doing execution upon them, they themselves destroying one another, 1 Samuel 14:16. The Lord can make a fancy do as much for his people as the greatest reality.

[8.] He can do it by things necessary or contingent. That the sea should keep its channel, and the clouds their place, and the years their seasons, is according to the course of nature, necessary; yet all was so overruled in the flood, that the earth became a sea, and the clouds met the lower waters, and the seasons of that year lost in the deluge; yet all contributed to Noah's deliverance, and made it more wonderful, he was saved by water, 1 Peter 3:20.

How contingent was it that Ahasuerus could not sleep one night, that he should have a mind to read when he could not sleep, that he who read to him should light upon that place which mentioned the good service of Mordecai! Yet so the Lord disposed of those contingencies, in order to the Jews' deliverance, Esther 6:1-2. How contingent was it that the Jews' conspiracy against Paul's life should come to the knowledge of Paul's kinsman; that the chief captain should admit him, hearken to him, believe him, that he should take such order to secure him; but that the Lord overruled all for the deliverance of his servant, Acts 23:1-35.

[9.] He can do it by that which is deliberate or casual. Esther asked deliberately, and upon advice, for the preservation of her people; but the casualty of the purim, or lots, in order hereto, was purely of his disposing who rules and overrules all, Esther 3:6, 7. Haman designed to massacre all the Jews; but, according to the superstition of the heathen, he would have a lucky day to execute his bloody project; and to find such a day he makes use of lots, and this he did some time the first month. But the Lord so ordered the lots, as the day they directed him to fell not out till the twelvemonth after; so that the Jews, and their friends at court, had a year's time to counterwork this cruel project. And in that time, all was so overruled by him who rules over all, that the plot was quite defeated, the mine discovered, and fired upon those that laid it, Esther 9:1. Their supposed lucky day proved a dismal day to them; and they found the Lord had so ordered the lot, as it led them to the day of their ruin instead of the day of destruction to the Jews.

[10.] He can do it by well-grounded actings or mistakes. Not only by such actings as are undertaken and pursued upon right grounds and true apprehensions, but by such as proceed upon mistakes and misapprehensions. So was Jehoshaphat delivered, and all in confederacy

against him ruined, 2 Chronicles 20:22. He set ambushes against them; he employed his angels invisibly to destroy some of them; and the rest seeing them slain, but not seeing by whom, supposed it done by some of their own troops; and so concluding them treacherous, upon this mistake fall one upon another, till all were destroyed, and so Jehoshaphat and his people delivered from their fears and great distress.

Sometimes he works deliverance for them by their own mistake. That which Possidonius relates, in the Life of Augustine, is remarkable for this purpose. He being to preach at a town some miles off, as he was going missed his way; and, as he understood afterwards, that mistake was ordered for the securing of his life, his enemies lying in wait for him in the way which he should have gone (if his guide had not misled him) with a design to have killed him—atque per hunc, quem postea cognovit, errorem, manus impias evasit—and so by this mistake he escaped their wicked hands.

[11.] He can do it not only by means, but without or against means. Without means, Deuteronomy 32:1-52. When there are no means left within or without, none to be had at home or abroad, then will the Lord compassionately resent their distresses and relieve them. Against means, Acts 27:1-44. When Paul and his companions were in great extremity, the mariners are ready to betake themselves to the boat as the only means to escape, but the apostle tells them unless they stayed in the ship they could not be saved; and following his advice they were delivered, in a way repugnant to that which the seamen judged their only safety. So was Jacob's family preserved and relieved by that means which many of the chief in it thought it their interest to destroy. Genesis 45:5, Genesis 45:7, 'Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.'

SINNERS UNDER THE CURSE

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.—Galatians 3:10. The way to Christ lies through the sense of misery. The foundation of our misery is sin, sin original and actual; of original sin, the corruption of our natures before. The words hold forth a sinner's misery by reason of actual sin. The coherence stands thus: the apostle is endeavouring to bring the Galatians into the way of truth and life, out of which they were bewitched. He endeavours to persuade them that justification is by faith in Christ, not by the works of the law. He brings many arguments to prove this; one of them abundantly demonstrative you have in this verse. It lies thus: our present observance of the law leaves us under the curse, Ergo, it cannot justify. The consequent is evident. The antecedent he proves by an artificial argument, the testimony of God: 'It is written.' Every imperfect performance of the law is cursed; but all our observance of the law is now imperfect. No man continues in all, &c., and therefore every man, without some other provision than the law affords, is cursed. The words are a categorical proposition; the parts of it are the subject and the attribute, which, that we may explain, we will briefly consider them apart. And,

1. The attribute, 'cursed.' This curse is the penalty of God's violated law, and so an evil of punishment. This evil of punishment being assigned by divine justice, must be proportionable to the evil of sin. If it be proportionable to the evil of sin, it can be no less than the everlasting wrath of God. The product of this everlasting wrath is the sinner's eternal death, begun here and consummated in hell. This death was the penalty of the first covenant, 'Do this, and live;' fail of

performing this, and thou shalt die; die every way, spiritually, temporally, eternally. The expression in the text is according to the tenor of that covenant, so that the curse here is death, especially eternal death, and they are cursed who are under the sentence or execution of it. Now, who these are the other part of the proposition discovers, ‘Every one who continues not,’ &c.

2. There is the subject expressed as fully and pregnantly as anything in Scripture. Here is no less than a threefold universality; it extends to all persons, times, things.

(1.) It is extended to all persons, every one. It is not some; for so, many might escape. It is not many; for so, some might escape. It is not the greatest part; for so, a considerable part of mankind might be excepted. It is not all; for that might be taken de generibus singulorum, for some of all sorts; for so, some of every sort might be exempted. But it is every one, simply and absolutely; universal, without restriction, without exception; every one, Jew and Gentile.

Adam himself not excepted; the curse seized upon the root, and so diffused itself into every of the branches.

Nay, the second Adam, Christ himself, is not exempted; he taking upon him our sins, came under our curse.

Sin and the curse are inseparable. Wherever sin is, the curse will be, even there where sin is but by imputation. Conclude but all, every one, under sin, and this conclusion will prove an argument to conclude all under the curse.

(2.) It is extended to all times. ‘That continues not.’ It is not enough to begin well, it is not enough to persist long, if at length there be any desisting from a practical observance. There must be a continuance, without the least moment’s interruption. Wherever there is a breach, the curse enters. If a man should punctually observe the law an hundred years, and at last fail but a moment. A moment’s intermission in a life of Methuselah’s continuance exposes to the curse; the last* moment’s discontinuance of a perfect observance lets in the curse; for so it runs, ‘that continues not.’

(3.) It is extended to all things: ‘In all things that are,’ &c. If a man should avoid all things forbidden, yet if he do not all things commanded. Suppose a man should commit no sin, if he should omit any duty; suppose a man should do many things, as Herod, yet if he do not all; suppose he should do the more important things enjoined, the βαρ■τερα το■ ν■μου, the weightier things of the law, if he neglect but the least, he is nevertheless cursed. The neglect of performing duty, as well as of avoiding sin; neglect of some, as well as neglect of all; neglect of anything, as well as the neglect of everything; the neglect of the least things, as well as of the greatest, exposes to the curse. Not only neglect of sections and paragraphs, the great momentous things of the law, but neglect of iotas and tittles, things which seem of smallest concernment, brings under the curse. How small soever they seem, if they be but written, it is enough. The largeness of the expression brings in all; cursed is all and every person that continues not in all and every moment, to do all and every thing, great and small, written in the law. Hence take this,

Obs. The sin brings the sinner under the curse. Any sin whatsoever, the least sin that can be committed, exposes the sinner to the everlasting wrath of God, and makes him liable to eternal death.

1. The least sin deserves everlasting wrath. Eternal death is due for the least sin, and that by the determination of divine justice.

2. The least sin is under the sentence of eternal death, is condemned already by the sentence of the judge of heaven and earth.

3. And the least sin will, if not prevented by the course prescribed in the gospel, bring the sentence into execution, and actually plunge the sinner into everlasting burnings. To be under the curse includes all this, either expressly or by implication. The desert of the least sin is eternal death; sentence according to desert, and execution according to the sentence. There needs no more for explication. In the process, I shall observe this order: I. Premise something by way of caution; II. Bring some arguments to confirm it; and, III. Apply it.

I. That the expression may not be mistaken (when I say the least sin) observe, there is no sin absolutely little. Every sin is big with guilt and provocation. Πο■ον ■μ■ρτημα μικρ■ν τολμ■σει τ■ς ε■πειν; who dare call any sin little, since it is committed against the great God? If we speak absolutely, every sin is great; but if we speak comparatively, some sins are greater than others. And so those that are not the greatest, we call them less, not because they are small in themselves, but because they are not the greatest. Astronomy teaches us that the earth, compared with the heavens, is of no sensible magnitude, it is but like a point; yet considered in itself, we know it is a vast body, of a huge bulk. Compare an idle word with blasphemy, it will seem small; or a vain thought with murder. Ay, but consider these in themselves, and they are great sins. There needs no other proof of this than what I am to undertake in the next place. They make liable to eternal death.

I shall insist the more upon the proof of this truth, because its usefulness depends upon the belief of it; and if we regard the practice of men rather than their profession, there is little faith as to this point in the earth, there are too few that effectually believe it.

II. The arguments I shall draw: 1. from general testimonies of Scripture; 2. from instances in some particular sins which pass for small in the world; 3. from the object against which sin is directed; 4. from the continuance of that law, which at first made eternal death the penalty of the least sin.

1. Argument. We have the Lord's testimony to this truth, which is more to faith than any demonstration to reason: Romans 6:23, 'The wages of sin is death.' Of sin in general, and therefore of every kind of sin; for that which belongs to the genus belongs to every species. The least sin as to essence and formality is as truly sin as the greatest; for degrees do not vary the species. If death, then, be the wages of sin in general, it is the wages of the least sin. Death, that is, eternal death, as appears by the antithesis in the latter clause of the verse. It is that death that is opposed to eternal life. Eternal death is the wages of the least sin, as due to it as wages are to a hireling, as due as a penny was to him who had wrought all day in the vineyard. The Lord, in point of justice, is engaged to repay the least sin with eternal death. But that which is but indefinitely delivered here, is universally expressed, Romans 1:18, ■π■ π■σαν ■σ■βειαν κα■ ■δ■κιαν; against all, without exception, without distinction; and where the law does not except and distinguish, we are not to do it. Against all; every deviation, the least declining from the rule of righteousness is unrighteousness. And therefore since it is declared against all, it is declared against the least sin; since the least is unrighteousness as truly as the greatest, in respect of its

formality, though not equal in respect of degree. But that which we do but collect from this text is express, Matthew 5:19, ‘He shall be the least,’ i. e. he shall not be there at all. The following verse justifies this exposition; he shall have no more place in heaven than the scribes and pharisees, who shall in no case enter into it; if he receive according to the demerit of the least sin, no place will receive him but hell.

2. Arg. I prove it by some instances of those sins which the world count least. Those sins which men make light of are burdened by the Lord with threatenings of everlasting wrath. I will shew this in five particulars, which will be sufficient to make an induction.

(1.) Omissions of good. These pass for venials, for peccadilloes, with many. If they escape the gross pollutions of the world, they promise themselves exemption from the curse, though they omit or neglect the duties of holiness, the exercise of godliness in their families or in secret. Whereas we see in the text the curse is expressly directed against omissions, against those who do not and continue not to do what is written. The wrath of God will be poured out upon those families, not only who blaspheme and profane his name, but those who call not upon his name, those who set not up the worship of God in their families, Jeremiah 10:25.

Men are apt to think they shall escape well enough, if they misspend not their time in gaming and lewd practices, though they do not lay it out for the great concernments of eternity;

If they employ not their parts against God and his people, though they employ them not principally for him;

If they spend not their estates in drunkenness, uncleanness, and like excess of riot, though they lay not them out for God, the support of his truth, the maintenance and propagating of his gospel, and comfort of his members; If they grossly abuse not their talents, though they bury them, or improve them only for themselves, not for their Master’s advantage. But oh, ask the unprofitable servant what a delusion this is! Why was he cast into outer darkness? Matthew 25:30; why, not because he did wickedly abuse his talent, but because he did not employ it for God, he hid it in the earth, Matthew 25:25. Who are they who must depart into everlasting fire? Matthew 25:1-46. Not only who persecuted, reviled, abused, the people of Christ, but those who did not clothe, and feed, and visit them, and entertain them, Matthew 25:42-43. For mere omissions they are cursed, and turned with the devil and his angels into hell,

(2.) Secret evils, those that are confined to the heart, and break not out into visible acts. Men are apt to think that the Lord is such a one as themselves, that he will take little notice of those things which men cannot take notice of, and therefore are secure if no pollutions taint their lives, whatever evils lodge secretly in their hearts. But this is a delusion too, Ecclesiastes 12:14. Why will he bring them into judgment, but that justice may have its course against them? Time will come when you shall be arraigned before the Lord’s tribunal for the most secret and retired motions of your hearts, arraigned in order to condemnation. If a man would so live as the world could never take notice of any sin in his whole life, yet if he gave liberty to the motions and secret acts of an evil heart, here will be matter enough at judgment to condemn him for ever. It may be thou wast never guilty, as to outward act, of murder, atheism, blasphemy, adultery; ay, but if there be any motions, any secret tendency to these in thy heart, this is enough to make thee liable to the curse, to the condemnation of murderers, &c., Matthew 5:28. A wanton glance, though none perceive it, a

lascivious motion, though it pass no further than the secret of thy heart, is enough to render thee an adulterer in the sight of God, and to involve thee in the condemnation of adulterers. And it is as true of the other abominations. So specious was the outward deportment of the pharisees, as their conversation, by the testimony of Christ, did appear to be really beautiful; but because they tolerated many secret corruptions in their hearts, see with what indignation he falls upon them: Matthew 23:33, 'Ye serpents,' &c. That interrogation is a vehement negation. Though there be no scandalous act in your lives, the very secret corruptions of your hearts, if cherished, if tolerated, will make it impossible you should escape the condemnation of hell.

(3.) Idle words, how fearless or careless soever ye are of them, are sufficient to bring you under the curse, Matthew 12:36-37. You must not only give an account before the tribunal of Christ of corrupt, lascivious, blasphemous, profane, revengeful, injurious, spurious, but even of idle words, of 'every idle word,' of such discourse as is unnecessary, unprofitable, unedifying, though not otherwise offensive. Why must we give an account of these, but because they are debts; such debts as, if they be not forgiven, if satisfaction be not tendered, thou shalt be delivered to the judge, and the Judge will cast thee into that prison, out of which thou shalt never come till thou hast paid, that which thou canst never pay, the utmost farthing?

(4.) Vain thoughts, the unaccountable vagaries of the cogitative faculty, the mere impertinencies of the mind, are of no less concernment to the soul than everlasting condemnation, Acts 8:22. What need he pray so doubtfully for pardon, but that these thoughts had brought him under the sentence of condemnation? Isaiah 55:7, those thoughts which denominated their subject ■■■ ■■■ a man of iniquity, must be forsaken, at least as to resolution and endeavour, or else there is no pardon, no mercy. Evil thoughts, while not forsaken, are unpardonable, they are such as infinite mercy will not pardon; and what then remains for these but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation? But, it may be, the thoughts in these two instances were more than vain. See, then, Jeremiah 4:14; Jerusalem's heart must be washed from wickedness, else she cannot be saved. This wickedness (if the latter part of the verse expound the former, as is usual in Scripture) is made up of her vain thoughts; whilst these have free entertainment, there can be no admission into heaven, no salvation. 'Wash thy heart from these,' &c.

(5.) Motions to sin without consent. Such motions as, arising from our corrupt natures, are suppressed, stifled in the birth, these expose to the curse. For the law requires a conformity to itself, both in qualities, motions, and actions, but such motions to sin are a nonconformity to the law, therefore sinful, and consequently cursed; for the penalty annexed to the law is due to every violation of it.

Besides, that which pollutes and defiles the soul makes it incapable of heaven, but such motions pollute and defile the soul. The corruption of our nature is as an ulcer, these motions to sin are as the putrefaction issuing out of that ulcer. Such corrupt matter defiles the man, however he be offended at it; consent is not necessary to make it a defilement; and, being a defilement, till it be removed it leaves the soul in an incapacity for heaven and glory; Revelation 21:27, there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles; and there is no place for those who are excluded heaven but the bottomless pit. This is the second argument, which, if we gather up its parcels, runs in this form. If omissions of good, secret evils, &c., then the least sins expose to the curse, for amongst these are the least sins we can discover. But omission, &c., expose to the curse, ergo the least

sins expose to the curse.

3. Arg. The least sin is infinitely evil. And we usually ascribe infiniteness to these two: God the greatest good, and sin the greatest evil. God is infinite essentially, sin is infinite objectively; infinitely evil because against him who is infinitely good, because injurious to an infinite God; an offence of infinite majesty, a contempt of infinite authority, an affront to infinite sovereignty, an abuse of infinite mercy, a dishonour to infinite excellency, a provocation of infinite justice, a contrariety to infinite holiness, a reproach of infinite glory, an enemy to infinite love. It is infinitely evil, and therefore deserves to be infinitely punished, for justice requires that the punishment should be proportionable to the offence. A punishment intensively infinite cannot be inflicted, because a finite creature is not capable of it, therefore it must be infinite extensively, and what it wants in degrees must be made up in duration. Because the infinite treasures of wrath cannot be laid out at once upon a finite creature by reason of its incapacity, therefore justice will be expending thereof by degrees to all eternity. The least sin, being infinitely evil, deserves infinite sufferings, infinite in respect of duration, i. e. everlasting sufferings.

4. Arg. From the continuance of the law. The law which was first given to mankind, obliged to perfect obedience, and consequently prohibited the least sin, the least imperfection, and the penalty was eternal death. When this law continues in force, eternal death is due to the least sin. But this law is still in force, for neither did Christ repeal it, neither is the gospel an abrogation of it. Christ did not repeal it; he professes the contrary, Matthew 5:17-18. The gospel does not abrogate it; the apostle testifies the contrary, Romans 3:31. The preceptive part, whereby it obliges to perfect obedience, and the avoiding of the least sin, this continues inviolable. Only the sanction whereby it engages hereto under the pain of eternal death, this is not so peremptory. The tenor of the law is still the same, and to this day runs: ‘He that continues not in all things to do them’ is cursed, shall die eternally; but the gospel brings an exception, he shall die except he believe and repent. But as for those who continue in impenitency and unbelief, the law is in full force against them, neither the obligation is removed, nor the rigour of it mitigated.

Those that do repent and believe, they have the advantage of the gospel exception; but it is upon this ground that the law is first satisfied, both as to the obligation and penalty, though not by themselves, yet by their surety. So that the law is abrogated to none at all, mitigated but to few, and the mitigations as to them respects not the demerit, but the event of their sin; it makes not their least sin not to deserve death, but prevents the execution, so as they receive not what sin deserves, their surety having suffered according to their demerits. So far was Christ from altering the constitution of the law which makes death due for the least sin, as he would not so much as hinder the execution of it; nay, rather than the penalty denounced should not be suffered, he would suffer it himself. To conclude. Since the law is not abolished but established by Christ, and since this law, thus established, makes eternal death the penalty of the least sin, it necessarily follows that the least sin exposes the sinner to eternal death.

III. Use. 1. For conviction; 1, To gross sinners; 2, To formal professors.

1. To gross sinners, in whose lives the characters of wickedness are so large and visible, as he that runs may read them. These words should be to you as the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar, Daniel 5:6. They should make your countenance change, your thoughts troubled, your joints loosed, and your knees smite one against another. Is he cursed who continues not in all

things to do them? How will the curse fall upon him who continues in all things to transgress them? Does the least sin expose to the curse of God? Oh then how heavily will the curse of God fall on you for your great enormities! Is the wrath of God due for the omissions of good? Oh what wrath will be revealed from heaven against your abominable practices! Is everlasting death the wages of secret evils? Oh what shall be the wages of your open wickedness! your drunkenness, uncleanness, injustice, profaneness! How shall these escape the damnation of hell?

Must ye be accountable for idle words in order to condemnation? Oh, what account will ye give of your oaths and imprecations, of your scoffs, slanders, and reproaches, of your lascivious and corrupt communication? Do vain thoughts hazard salvation? How just then will be your condemnation for your contemplative wickedness, your covetous, lustful, revengeful thoughts? Are the motions to sin, without consent, enough to damn the sinner? How shall you escape with your beloved sins, your plotted mischief, your contrived wickedness? Will the least sins, which ye count but as atoms, sink the sinner into hell? How then can you stand under gross evils, which are as mountains in comparison?

If hell be kindled for small sins, sure it will be made seven times hotter for them. ‘If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall they appear?’ Why, where they shall ‘call to the mountains,’ &c., that they may have neither appearance nor being.

You that persist in gross sins, you discern here the state of your souls. If God be true, if there be any truth in the word of truth, this is your condition, you are under the curse, you are condemned already; for anything you know, the execution may be the next day, the next moment; there is but a step betwixt you and death, your souls and eternal death.

2. To formal professors; those who think their condition good because they are not so bad as others; think they shall escape the curse merely because they have escaped the visible pollutions of the world, who are apt to say with the pharisee, Luke 18:12, ‘I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.’ As if this were sufficient to justify them, to exempt them from the curse! Oh remember the Lord often condemns those who justify themselves, and denounces a curse against those who are ready to engross to themselves the blessing.

It may be thou dost not act that wickedness which is frequently perpetrated by the sons of Belial amongst us. Oh, but let thy conscience answer, Dost thou not omit the exercise of holiness and mortification? Dost thou not omit, in whole or in part, the duty of religion and godliness? Or when thou performest them, is it not negligently, as though thou performed them not? Oh consider, there is a curse denounced against those who perform the work of the Lord negligently. How can they then escape the curse who neglect to perform it? It may be thou performest those duties but by fits unconstantly; oh remember, the curse reaches those, not only who do them not at all, but continue not to do them.

It may be thou wholly abstainest from open wickedness. Thy conversation may be as unblameable as the apostle’s was while a pharisee, Php 3:7. It may be, ■μωμος, ■μεμπτος, such as a captious censorious man cannot justly challenge, either for visible commission or omissions. Ay, but dost thou not freely entertain or peaceably tolerate some secret corruptions in thy heart? Are there not some secret invisible lusts which thou dost not constantly bewail and endeavour to mortify? Why,

then, though thy conversation be as a whited sepulchre, as a gilded monument, and appear beautiful indeed outward, yet if there be any dead bones, any rottenness, any tolerated corruptions within, thou canst no more escape the curse than the pharisees, upon whom the Lord Christ showers down curses. If thou art indifferent, so thy outside be clean, whatever fill thy heart, be sure the curse will be one ingredient. Open wickedness makes a large breach for the curse to enter; ay, but any secret allowed lust will open a door to let it in. All things include both externals and internals, and the words run so, ‘Cursed is every one,’ &c.

It may be thou tremblest at blasphemy, and fearest a profane oath, and art offended at unclean, lascivious speeches, and abhorrest injurious slanders and false accusers; ay, but dost thou make no conscience of idle words? Dost thou not, as to these, set a watch before thy mouth and keep the door of thy lips? Why, then, thou leavest it open for the curse to enter, for that reaches all, even every irregular word.

It may be thou entertainest no atheistical, adulterous, or bloody thoughts; ay, but dost thou endeavour to wash thy heart from the wickedness of vain thoughts? If these quietly lodge in thee, the curse will rest on thee, for all things include all acts, words, thoughts, that are not exactly conformable to the law: and ‘cursed is every one,’ &c.

It may be thou dost not plot wickedness upon thy bed, nor study how to make provision for the flesh; ay, but dost thou bewail the unvoluntary motions of thy soul unto evil? Do not these lead thee to the spring-head, the corruption of thy nature? Does not this deep call effectually for deep sorrow and humiliation, for the pollution and woful degeneracy of thy nature? Why, then, though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked out before God (though no eye see it), and thou art marked out for the curse; it will cleave to thee as the leprosy of Naaman to Gehazi, which will continue on you while you continue in this state.

Use. 2. Exhortation; 1, To those that are under the curse; make haste for deliverance. You that live in gross sins, you that have gone no further than to an outward conformity to the letter of the law, hearken to this word as that which infinitely concerns you. Either you have continued in all things written in the law to do them, or have not. If you say you have continued, &c., you grossly, you wofully deceive your souls, and the truth is not in you. If you have not continued in all things, then either the word of God is false, or you are cursed; either you must give the lie to the Spirit of truth, or believe that the curse, the everlasting wrath of God, hangs over you.

Since you are under the curse, either you must bear it yourselves or some else must bear it for you; the justice of God can admit no medium. Bear it yourselves you cannot; alas, it will sink you into the bottom of hell, and there oppress you to all eternity. No creature can bear it for you; the heavens mourn for it, the earth groans under it, a great part of the angels are pressed down by it into the bottomless pit; and for men, every one must bear his own burden. What, then; is there no relief for a woful cursed sinner? No deliverance from the wrath of God? No redemption from the curse of the law?

Here comes in the glad tidings of the gospel: ‘The Lord has laid help upon one that is mighty,’ upon Christ, who was only able, who was only willing to bear man’s curse, who is both able and willing to deliver sinners from it; but then you must come to him for deliverance, in a way honourable to him, prescribed by him. You must believe his word, the word of the curse; you must

apply it, you must be affected with your misery by reason of it; you must be willing to accept of him upon his own terms. As he is willing to bear your curse, you must be willing to take his yoke. You must shake off security, self-confidence; renounce your sin, your dearest lusts; those which have brought the curse upon you, abandon them as cursed things. You must resign up yourselves wholly unto Christ, as your king, your redeemer. This is the way. Why linger you? Why do ye not make haste to get into it? Is this a condition to be rested in? Can you live at ease while you are every moment in danger of everlasting death? Can you take comfort in any enjoyment while the curse of God is mixed with it? Can you sleep securely while your damnation sleeps not? Oh give no rest to your souls, no rest to your eyes, till you find rest from Christ. The fiery serpent, the curse of God, has stung you, death is seizing on you; oh look up unto the brazen serpent, look up to Christ, else there is no hope of life! The avenger of blood, revenging justice, pursues you; oh make haste, fly for your life unto the city of refuge, unto Christ the only refuge from the curse! Make haste, escape for your life, lest justice overtake you, and you perish without remedy.

2. To those that are delivered from the curse. You whom Christ has redeemed from everlasting wrath, you whom he has saved from going down into the pit, you whom he has rescued from these everlasting burnings, oh praise, admire, adore, rejoice in your Redeemer. If the curse of the law have stung your consciences, how sweet, how endearing, will these two expressions be! How will they draw out your affections to Christ! Galatians 3:13; ‘And Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come,’ 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Oh, was he content to bear the curse rather than I should bear it, to be cursed that I might inherit the blessing, to lie under the wrath of God rather than it should sink me into hell! Was he content to die that he might save my life, and to drink up the dregs of divine vengeance that I might not taste of the second death? Oh, love the Lord! Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Oh how wretched had I been if Christ had not been so wonderfully gracious! How cursed and miserable, if Christ’s love had not been so infinite! Every act, every word, every thought of mine had been cursed; every ordinance, every enjoyment, every relation of mine had been cursed. I had been cursed in my going out and coming in, in life and at death, cursed here and cursed for ever hereafter. Had it not been for Christ, I had been of all creatures most miserable. Say, Oh why am I not under the same curse, in the same condemnation with others? Why am I not in their woful condition, who continue under the curse, and continue senseless under it; who dance upon the edge of eternal ruin, and sleep upon the brink of the bottomless pit, every moment in danger to drop into the lake of fire? Oh the wonderful love of Christ! Oh the wonders of that distinguishing love, which has set my feet upon a rock, when others are split upon the curse, and wreck their souls in the gulf of eternal wrath! Oh, what shall I render unto Christ for this love? This should be your constant inquiry, and the answer to it is the work of eternity.

3. To all. If the least sin bring under the curse, then look upon the least sin as a cursed evil. Let your apprehensions, affections, actings, be answerable. Say not of any as of Zoar, ‘Is it not a little one?’ &c. Hate the least sins as you hate that which is destructive, that which will destroy the whole man. Fear them as you fear the curse of God, everlasting death; resist them as you would resist a mortal enemy, the wounds of a cruel one; avoid them as you would avoid the wrath, the indignation of the Most High; bewail the pollution wherewith they stain the soul, as that which the Lord is of purer eyes than to endure: ‘Avoid all appearance of evil,’ 1 Thessalonians 5:22. As we shun not only the possession of Satan, but the appearance of the devil; as you not only shun the

embracements of a serpent, of a toad, but startle at the approach, at the appearance of them; Jude 1:23, ‘Hate the garments spotted with the flesh.’ Not only the flesh, or the spots thereof, but the garments spotted. As you are afraid not only of a plague-sore, or of a person infected with the plague, but of garments of an infected person; anything, the least thing, that may convey infection. Marcus, bishop of Arethusa, he would not in the leastwise countenance sin, not to save his life. The terrors of death could not move him to give ne obolum quidem; not a halfpenny to re-edify an idolatrous temple. The Christians, in their contests with the Arians, would not countenance their error by yielding to them the least letter, so much as an iota; they would not change their ■μοο■σιος into the Arian ■μοιο■σιος, no, not to avoid the fury of a persecution. They were so far from quitting the thing, as they would not so much as quit the word. I might bring a cloud of like examples, but I will not be prevented. This is the way to shew you love Christ entirely. That love to Christ is great indeed that will not offend him in the least. This is the way to evidence your sincerity. Hypocrites and formalists may avoid gross sins, open wickedness; but that is an upright heart indeed that will not decline in the least. That is a heart after God’s own heart that will fulfil π■ντα τ■ θελ■ματα, all his wills, every part of it. Hypocrites and formalists shall be clothed with shame and confusion, but then shall not you be ashamed when you have respect to all God’s commandments. Then has Christ, then has grace, an absolute sovereignty in the soul, when not only the arch-traitors, but the petty Boutefeus, are quelled; when both great and small are brought into subjection unto Christ. But to enforce this more distinctly, let me represent to you the heinousness of the least sins in some particulars. Nor will I digress; the considerations will be such as have a near affinity with the truth, and such as do tend to confirm and illustrate it.

1. There is something of atheism in these small sins. It is atheism to deny there is a God, to deny the Lord to be God. Now, these less sins are a denial of God; if not expressly, yet by interpretation; if not directly, yet by consequence; for he that denies any excellency to be in God which is essential to him, denies him to be God. If that rule be true, which is received without contradiction, quicquid in Deo est Deus; if every perfection be God which is essentially in him, then he that denies any perfection which is in him, denies him to be God. Even as he that denies a man to have a reasonable soul, to have a will and intellect, denies that he is a man; or he that denies that the sun is a luminary, denies that it is a sun; or he that denies a piece of metal to be gold or silver, thereby denies that it is current money, when nothing else is current money amongst us. But these less sins deny many perfections, which are essentially in God. His omniscience, truth, holiness, justice; nay, they deny all in one, denying him to be the chief good.

Why do men venture more freely upon secret sins than upon open wickedness, but that they say in their hearts, God sees not? Is not this to deny his omniscience?

Why are men so bold with these smaller sins, but that they believe the least of them do not bring under the curse of the law, will not expose them to the everlasting wrath of God, though he expressly affirm this? And is not this to deny the truth of God?

Why do men so little regard these lesser sins, but that they think the Lord does not much regard them, is not much offended with them? And is not this to deny his purity and holiness?

Why do men think it harsh to be restrained from these lesser evils by such dreadful menaces and penalties, but that they in their thoughts represent it as summum jus, extremely rigorous. And is not this to question the justice and righteousness of God?

I might shew you how the least sin denies several other perfections, but it will suffice to instance in one, which denied divests him of all at once. The least sin denies God to be the chief good. To clear this, observe that the chief good and the last end are convertible. He that denies God to be the last end, denies him to be the chief good. Then further, every human act has an ultimate end, this is clear and granted; then the least sin being an human act, must have some ultimate end; so that if the Lord be not the last end of that sinful act, he is thereby divested of this prerogative; he is denied herein to be the last end, the chief good. But the Lord cannot be the end of any sin whatsoever; it can in no wise, in no respect, be referred to him as its end; therefore the least sin can be no other than a denial that the Lord is the chief good; and if it deny this, it denies him to be God. See here the desperate tendency of the least sin, and tremble at it: 'The fool has said in his heart, There is no God,' Psalms 14:1. This folly is bound up in every heart. It is bound, but it is not tonguetied; it speaks blasphemous things against God, it says there is no God. There is a difference indeed in the language: gross sins speak this louder, there are crying sins; but though less sins speak it not so loud, they whisper it. But the Lord can hear the language of the heart, the whisperings of its motions, as plainly as we hear one another in our ordinary discourse. Oh how heinous is the least sin, which is so injurious to the very being of the great God!

2. There is something of idolatry in these small sins. For idolatry, Romans 1:25, μετ■θεσις τ■ς προσκυν■σεως ■π■ το■ πεποιηκ■τος ■π■ τα κτ■σματα, Naz. Orat. 33. Now, the acts of the soul are the principal acts of worship; those of the body are but inferior and subservient thereto. Then is the Lord honoured with the highest act of worship, when he has the pre-eminence above all in our minds and hearts; and therefore when any other thing has the pre-eminence of God, we make an idol of it, and give it that worship which is due only to the Most High, which is flat idolatry. But now, in admitting these small sins, we prefer other things before God, and so give that worship to others which is due only to God, and hereby become in effect idolaters.

He that will offend God, to please himself in the least sinful indulgence, he prefers his pleasure before God.

He that will do that which deserves the loss of God's favour, to gain any temporal advantage,—the less the worse,—prefers his profit, advantage before God.

He that will hearken to Satan suggesting the least sin, rather than to the Lord forbidding, threatening, dissuading from it, prefers the devil before God.

He that will hazard the loss of communion with God (as the least sin does, considering its demerit), rather than abandon his sin, he prefers his sin before God. He prefers these before God, they have the pre-eminence of him; he gives that worship to pleasure, profit, Satan, sin, which is due only to God. Now, I beseech you, should we not tremble at this apprehension? What idolatry is it to worship the devil; to worship sin, which is worse than the devil! And yet, the premises considered, it will evidently appear that such idolatry there is, virtually and interpretatively, in the least sin that is deliberately acted.

3. There is something of murder in admitting the least sin. The least is a deadly evil, of a bloody tendency, as to the life of the soul, Ezekiel 18:20. He says not, 'that sinneth thus and thus, that sinneth in this or that degree,' &c., Romans 6:21. No matter how small the seed be, the fruit is death. The least is a deadly evil, and that should be enough to make it formidable. A spider may

kill, as well as a lion; a needle run into the heart or bowels may let in death, as well as a rapier or cannon bullet; a small breach neglected may let in the enemy, and so prove as destructive as if all the walls and fortifications were thrown down.

Sin is compared to poison, the poison of asps, Psalms 140:3, and the venom of dragons, Romans 3:8, Deuteronomy 32:1-52. Now a drop of such strong poison may kill as well as a full draught. The tongue is but a little member, says the apostle, James 3:5, yet he calls it a world of iniquity, James 3:6. This little member he calls a fire, James 3:6, and yet 'behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth,' it 'sets on fire the whole course of nature.' You know what a spark will do, when it falls into gunpowder; it often fires it as effectually as a brand. What less than the sting of a adder? Yet what more deadly? Such, so destructive is the least sin. Sin is expressed hereby, 1 Corinthians 15:56. An error, a sin in opinion (counted by some in these times a small sin), is compared to a gangrene, 2 Timothy 2:17. Now what is more dangerous, what more destructive than a gangrene? Yet this you have occasioned by the prick of a pin.

Look upon the least sin as the Scripture represents it, as full of deadly poison, as a spark in powder, as the sting of a serpent, as tending to a gangrene, and you will see more reason to dread it, because it is deadly, destructive, than to slight it, because it seems small.

4. The least sin is a violation of the whole law, and therefore more heinous, of more dangerous consequence than we are apt to imagine: James 2:10, he that offends in the least, offends in one; and by offending in the least, becomes guilty of all. You may think it strange, that an idle word, &c., should make one guilty of blasphemy, idolatry, murder, adultery, and all other abomination, but the apostle affirms it, and so it is unquestionably true. The law, with its several precepts, is like a copulative proposition; though it consist of ten or twenty several parts, yet if one fail, the whole becomes invalid; he that denies one, denies all. The reason is, because the truth and validity of such a proposition depends upon the copulation or connection, which by the default of one part is dissolved. There is a concatenation of duties in the law, they are linked one to another; break but one link, and the whole chain is broken. The reason why one violates all is drawn, ver. 11, from the authority of the lawgiver; the precepts of the law, they are as a string of pearls, they are strung upon the authority of God; break but the string in any part, and they all fall. The authority of God is as a pillar that supports the tables of the law; pluck but this from them, by the least tassel, and the tables fall, the whole law is broken. Or the least breach is a violation of all dispositivè, because the least sin may dispose the sinner to every sin. (The authority of God is as a bank to secure the law from sin's encroachments; make a break in this bank, though you intend it but for a little water; yet the whole river may find the passage, and overflow all.) A sip of pleasing tempting liquor may tempt a a man to drink, and that may incline him by degrees to large draughts, till at length he come to wallow in that which at first he did but desire to taste of. So it is in sin; the least degree leaves a disposition to a further, a higher degree, and so, if it be not quashed betimes, is apt to carry on the sinner to height, and breadth, and depth of excess.

There is in the least sin, as in plants (and other creatures) a seminal virtue, whereby it multiplies itself. The seed at first is a small inconsiderable thing, but let it lie quietly on the ground, it will take root, grow into a bulky stock, and diffuse itself into variety of branches. Sin is like that grain of mustard seed (a comparison used by Christ in another case), Matthew 13:31-32, which indeed is the least of all seeds, &c. It grows till at length it becomes a receptacle for Satan to nestle in,

where he may hatch all manner of wickedness in the branches of it. A sinful motion (if not stifled in the conception) will procure consent, and consent will bring forth into act; and one act will dispose to others, till custom have begot a habit, and a habit will dull and stupefy the conscience. And when the modesty and purity of the conscience is violated, it is in the highway to prostitute itself at every solicitation, and to entertain all comers, lies open to all wickedness.

Oh the danger, the prodigious fruitfulness of the least sin, which can multiply itself by degrees into all the wickedness that the law forbids! The least is, in this respect, a violation of the whole law. Oh take heed of admitting any, though it seem small. Stand upon your guard; if you open the wicket to one, you may have a whole army rush in upon you; the guilt of the least may involve you in the guilt of all.

5. The least part of the law is more valuable in God's account than heaven and earth; a tittle of the law of more account than the whole fabric of the world. He had rather heaven and earth should perish, than one iota of the law, Matthew 5:18. First, heaven and earth shall vanish, rather than the least letter, one ■ωτα, rather than the least apex, the least point, one κ■ραια of the law shall pass away. So much more valuable is the law, &c., as he seems more tender of the least point of this, than of that whole fabric. But lest this should seem a paradox, let us a little inquire into the ground of it. The end has the pre-eminence in point of value and dignity; it is more valuable than all the means; and of all the means those are most valuable which contribute most to the attainment of the end. Now the supreme and sovereign end of all is the glory of God; that therefore is most valuable, wherein he appears most glorious, wherein most of his glorious perfections are displayed. In the fabric of heaven and earth the power and wisdom of God appears; in this respect they declare his glory, by shewing his mighty power and wisdom, Psalms 19:1-14. But now in the law of God there is a more ample and glorious appearance, there is an effulgency of more divine excellencies. This not only declares his wisdom in proportioning rewards and punishments to obedience and disobedience, and his power in giving law to the creatures, and to execute and accomplish what he has threatened and promised; but herein also is displayed his sovereignty and authority, his mercy and justice, his holiness and righteousness. His holiness and righteousness in the preceptive part, his mercy in the promissory, his justice in the minatory, his authority and sovereignty in all. Behold, here shines forth, not a single star or two, but a constellation of divine excellencies, and this of the first magnitude. Well may the Lord be so tender of the law, when it so much concerns his glory.

Besides, that is more valuable which comes nearer to the highest excellency, which most resembles the idea. That is the best, the fairest copy, which comest nearest to the original. But the law has in this respect the pre-eminence of heaven and earth. In earth there are some dark shadows of God; in heaven (the visible heaven) there are some plainer, some more visible footsteps of God. Ay, but the law is his image. Why was man said to be made according to the image of God, but because he was made according to the pattern in the mount? The law was writ in his heart. The Lord did, as it were, stamp the law, wherein was engraven his own likeness, upon the soul of man, and so left thereon the impressions of holiness and righteousness, the lineaments of the divine nature. The conformity of man to God, both in the first creation and second, consists in his conformity to the law of God.

Moreover, consider the great things of God, τ■ μεγαλε■α το■ Θεο■, the great things, both of creation and redemption, were ordered in a subserviency to the law of God, and this does exceedingly enhance the value of it. Earth, that was made for man as a convenient place for the observance of the law; heaven (the third heaven), as a reward of obedience to the law; hell, that was created as a punishment of disobeying the law; the gospel, that was published to establish the law, Romans 3:31. Nay, Christ himself, he was sent, he came to fulfil the law. This was the end of his glorious undertaking, the end of his obeying, of his suffering, ver. 17. This is assigned as the ground why the law is preferred before heaven, &c., ver. 18. Christ, his spotless holiness was to fulfil the precept of the law; his death and sufferings were to satisfy the threatening of the law; both life and death were that the promise of the law might be accomplished. The Son of God must live as a man, and die as a slave, rather than one iota of the law should not be fulfilled. No wonder, if heaven and earth must perish, rather than one tittle of the law fail, since the Son of God must become man and die, rather than the least part of the law shall not be accomplished; sure the Son of God is of more value than heaven and earth.

Now, since upon clear grounds the least part of the law is more valuable than heaven and earth, consider what ye do when you sin, when you offend in the least. It is better, more tolerable to do that which tends to the destruction of heaven and earth, the ruin of the fabric of the world, than to violate the least command, than to offer violence to the law by the least sin.

Oh what weight does this lay upon the smallest sin! In the respect fore-mentioned, God has more dishonour by the least violation of the law, than if heaven and earth were turned into nothing.

6. The least sin is the object of infinite hatred. The Lord infinitely hates the least sin; he hates it, is not only angry for it, offended with it, grieved at it, but he hates it; he hates it perfectly; there is not the least mixture of love, liking, or approbation, nothing but pure hatred. The will of God as to sin is pure hatred in the abstract; he hates it eternally; possibly he may be reconciled to the sinner, but never to the sin. Whilst he is himself, whilst he is God, he hates it, i. e. from everlasting to everlasting; he hates it infinitely, for the hatred of an evil object is proportionable to the goodness of the subject where this affection is seated. Now God is infinitely good, and therefore his hatred of evil must be proportionable; he must hate it infinitely. When I say infinitely, I say he hates it more than tongue can express, than heart can conceive, more than men or angels can either express or imagine. ‘Who knows the power of his wrath?’ The largest apprehension cannot measure the dimensions of it, the height and depth, length and breadth of it are, like God himself, incomprehensible.

Yet to help your apprehension a little, collect all the hatred that, since the foundation of the world, has had place in all the creatures, suppose all this were compacted in one soul; conceive further an object offered to it made up of all hateful ingredients in earth or hell; suppose this hatred hereby sublimated to the height, drawn out and extended to the utmost: the imagination of such a hatred, such an affection, may astonish us; oh, but all this would be nothing, not so much as a drop to the ocean compared with that hatred, wherewith the Lord hates the least sin. This is infinite, this is an ocean without banks or bottom.

Now consider this seriously; will ye do that which the Lord infinitely hates? I will not do this, will a child say, my father hates it; I dare not do this, will a servant say, my master hates it. Oh, but their hatred is nothing to God’s, and shall this be less regarded? Oh, tremble to do that which the Lord

hates with an infinite, with an everlasting hatred. Count not that small or light, which is burdened with the infinite hatred of the most high God.

7. There is more provocation in the least sin against God, than in the greatest injuries against men. Let all the injuries imaginable be put together, the total sum of them will not amount to so much as a single unit against God. For that rule is unquestionable, quò persona in quem peccatur nobilior est, eo peccatum gravius est, the greater the person is whom you offend, the greater, the more grievous is the offence; the dignity of the person puts an accent upon the injury. The law makes it not so heinous to smite an inferior, as to affront a magistrate; it is more heinous to clip the prince's coin, than to kill a private person. Every degree of dignity in the person injured raises the injury a degree higher; but now the highest dignity amongst men is but finite, the majesty of God is infinite; and therefore the least sin against God is so much more heinous, than the greatest injury you can do to the greatest of men, as that which is infinite exceeds what is but finite; there is incomparably, unproportionably, infinitely more provocation in it; for finiti ad infinitum nulla proportio, betwixt that which is finite, and that which is infinite, there is no comparison, no proportion. It would be counted intolerable to spurn at a prince, or throw dirt in the face of majesty. Oh, but this is infinitely less than the least offence directed against the majesty of heaven. For the distance is greater betwixt God and the greatest monarch on earth, than betwixt the greatest prince and the meanest subject, nay, than the most contemptible fly or vilest worm. You would count it intolerable, if your servant should kick you, or your child should spit in your face. Oh, but you do more, that which is infinitely more provoking, in the least sin you commit against God, because your obligements to him are more, and the distance infinitely greater. The least sin is an infinite injury in respect to its object, and that is more than all the greatest, the most provoking injuries that can be offered to the sons of men. Oh that ye would consider this seriously, and look upon the least sin as infinitely injurious to the great God.

8. The least sin requires infinite satisfaction. Such an injury is the least sin, as nothing can compensate it, but that which is of infinite value; this is grounded upon the former. The least sin is an infinite injury; now the rules of reason and justice require, that what is given for satisfaction should be proportionable to the injury; nothing therefore can be a compensation for an infinite injury, but that which is of infinite value. And since it is so, where shall the sinner find such a compensation? 'Wherewith shall we come before the Lord,' to satisfy for the least sin? (to make use of the prophet's words, Micah 6:6-7). Can these satisfy the Lord, for the injury the least sin has done him? Oh no! Psalms 49:8. The redemption of the soul from the guilt of any sin is far more precious; if something infinitely more valuable be not offered for it, it ceases for ever, we may desist from it everlastingly as altogether unfeasible.

If the blood of all the men on earth was sacrificed to satisfy for the least sin, if all the angels in heaven would offer themselves to be annihilated for the expiation of the least sin, this would not be effectual.

If heaven and earth, and all the treasures thereof, and all the creatures therein, were put into one sum, and offered as a recompence for the injury of the least sin, this would fall infinitely short of the value of a just compensation; these would not be so much as a mite, when more than a hundred thousand talents are due and in justice required; for the value of these is finite and limited, but that which compensates the injury of the least sin must be of infinite value.

Consider what ye do when ye venture upon the least sin: you do such an injury to God as heaven and earth, men and angels, can never make amends for; you do that which may undo you for ever, which may ruin your souls eternally, though all the saints and angels in heaven should interpose to their utmost to prevent your ruin. ‘Without blood there is no remission,’ Hebrews 9:22. This supposes that by blood remission may be obtained; but what blood? It is not the blood of bulls and goats, nor of the cattle on a thousand hills; these are too low priced for such a purpose. It must be blood of infinite value; it must be the blood of God, Acts 20:28; the blood of Christ, who was God as well as man—man that he might have blood to shed, and God that he might derive an infinite value upon that blood. Such is the stain of the least sin, as nothing can fetch it out but the blood of Christ.

Consider then, when thou art under temptation, when thou art solicited to a sin which thou countest small, say thus to thy soul, Either this sin will be expiated with the blood of Christ, or it will not. If it be not expiated with the blood of Christ, then it will ruin me, soul and body, for ever, without remedy, without redemption. If it be expiated, satisfied for by the blood of Christ, oh then resolve concerning it, as David of the water of the well of Bethlehem, 2 Samuel 23:1-39. He longed for it, his mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines to procure it for him; but when they brought it, he would not so much as taste; his reason, see verse 17. So say thou, so resolve: Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this! Is not this the blood of Christ, who not only hazarded but lost his life for me, that I should have a hand in that which shed the blood of Christ, and put to death the Lord of life.

9. The least sin is now punished in hell with those torments that will last for ever. Hell is the reward of the least sin, not only in respect of its demerit, but in regard of the event. The damned do now feel the weight of God’s eternal wrath for those sins which they made light of, Matthew 5:25. The moral of the expression is this: those that will not be reconciled to God here shall be tormented in hell for ever hereafter; they shall be cast into hell, and not come out till they have paid the utmost farthing, i. e. till they have satisfied for the least sin, for every sin. Sins are debts run upon the score of justice; of these debts some are greater, some are smaller; there is the debt of talents and the debt of farthings; divine justice must be satisfied for all. He does not say he shall not come out till he have paid every talent, but till he have paid the utmost farthing. The sinner can never satisfy for the least, and therefore for the least must everlastingly suffer. The least sin is enough to kindle that fire that never goes out. Those sins which ye count but as wind, idle words, are enough to blow this into a flame that will never be quenched, Matthew 12:1-50. The least corruption is enough to breed that worm that never dies. We have experiments enough on earth to persuade the belief of this. We have diverse dreadful representations here of what the least sin can do in hell hereafter. Have ye not known such a sin as we count small kindle a hell in the conscience of the sinner, and make him feel the tortures of hell upon earth? Hell is enclosed in the least sin. If the Lord do but unfold it, do but lay it open to the conscience, there needs no other devil, no other tormentors, to make the guilty sinner conceive he can scarce be worse in hell. There is the materials of hell in the least sin; let but the Lord speak the word, let him but breathe on it, it will kindle in an instant, and scorch, as though it were set on fire of hell. And if the least sin be matter apt enough to kindle such flames now when it is but green, oh how will they kindle on it in hell when it is dry, when the sinner is cut down by the last stroke of justice! Look upon the least sin as thus represented, as burdened with the weight of everlasting wrath, as kindling those everlasting

burnings. Judge of them not by the suggestions of Satan, not by the cries of despairing, tormented souls, and then you will see reason to fear them as hell, rather than to slight them as small.

10. The least sin is worse than the greatest punishment. The least sin is worse than hell, worse both than the tormentors and the torments. Sin is worse than the devil, for it was sin that made him a devil; it turned the angels of light into spirits of darkness. Nay, if the least sin had place in the most glorious angel now in heaven, the malignity of it would be still as powerful, as mischievous; for aught we know, it would in an instant transform the highest seraphim into an ugly fiend. The least sin is worse, too, than the greatest punishment, the greatest torments; for the least is contrary to God, opposite to his nature, will, holiness, nay, his very being, reflects dishonour upon all; whereas punishment is an act of divine justice, the proper issue of an infinite excellency, and that which, in its sphere, tends to make the Lord as glorious as the act of any other attribute.

Sin is the act of degenerate creatures, fallen men and devils as such; but punishment is the act of the holy and righteous God, and that as he is such. And is there here any comparison? Can the unrighteousness of men come in competition with the justice of God? Is there any room to question which is better, justice or injustice, light or darkness?

Punishment is but malum creaturæ; sin is malum both Deo et creaturæ. Sin is evil both to God and the creatures, punishment is only evil to the sinner. Now the rule, malum quo communius eo pejus, evil, the more extensive it is the worse it is, is true here with infinite advantage. Evil of sin is so much the worse by how much an infinite good, to which it is opposed, is better.

Punishment is evil to the creature, but it is only a physical evil; but sin is both morally and physically, in every respect, evil, therefore worse than any punishment. Punishment is for repairing of what breach sin has made; now which is better, the restorer or the destroyer?

If reason were perfectly rectified, and the will of man exactly conformed to the divine nature, he would choose horrorem inferni, rather than turpitudinem peccati, the torments of hell (abstracted from all sinful mixtures) rather than the least sin.

Consider, then, what ye do, when ye venture upon the least sin; you choose that which, upon a true, a rational account, is worse than hell.

Use. 3. Information.

1. See here an impossibility for a sinner to be justified by his observance of the law, or according to the tenor of the first covenant. The law requires to justification a righteousness exactly perfect; but the best righteousness of fallen man is as a menstruous rag. It is not only torn and ragged, but spotted and defiled. The law curses every one that continues not in all things; whereas in many things, in everything, we offend all. If man could, by the utmost improvement of his remaining abilities, spin up a garment of righteousness that would cover him, yet if there were but one hole to be found in it, the curse would there enter; whereas now, alas! it is nothing but holes and rags. If the Lord had not made other provision for the justifying and saving of man than the law holds forth, then no flesh would be saved. Oh what cause have we to admire the rich grace of the gospel!

2. See here the dangerous error of those who make account to be justified and saved by works; by their conformity to the law, or observance of it. The apostle is express, ver. 10. An imperfect observance of the law leaves the observer under the curse, but all observance of the law by fallen

man is imperfect; no observance of all, no continuing in the observance of all, imperfection in both.

True, say they, it is imperfect as to the avoiding of small venial sins, but perfect as to the avoiding of gross and mortal. Ay, but the law makes no such distinction, and ubi lex non distinguit, &c. The law curses all without exception; the least sin exposes to the curse, wrath, death. Oh enter not into the secret of these men! They are Babel-builders; think with their own hands to raise a structure, whose top shall reach to heaven. Ay, but these words confound them and their language; this text is as a thunderbolt, overthrows them and their structure, and tumbles both into the dust.

They have got a ladder indeed, by which they think to mount up to heaven, but the rounds of it, being the works of their own hands, are all rotten. And this text snaps them all in pieces; they that have no other footing must fall unavoidably, and fall as far as the curse will sink them, and that is weighty enough to press them into the lower hell. ‘By the works of the law no flesh living can be justified.’

3. See here our necessity of Christ. All that continue not in all things are liable to the curse, and this is the condition of all. Either we must be delivered from the curse, or else we perish. Now who is there that can deliver us? Why, none but Christ, Galatians 3:1-29, Psalms 110:1-7. The necessity of Christ to redeem from the curse due to gross sins, that is obvious, that will be easily acknowledged. Ay, but there is as great a necessity of Christ in reference to small sins. You see a necessity of Christ in respect of the sins of your unconverted state; oh, but there is as much need of him as to the sins you are guilty of since conversion. You see a necessity of Christ in reference to gross sins, blasphemy, intemperance, &c. Oh, but you have need of him in respect of the sins and failings of your best thoughts, actions, designs, prayers, &c., your holy duties, when performed in the best, the most holy, affectionate, heavenly manner. For the curse reaches the least failing; and if Christ redeem you not from the curse due thereto, the least will certainly damn you.

We should be apprehensive of our necessity of Christ, his blood, his redemption, his mediation, and our application of it, in every thought, every act, every step, every motion in the world. If Christ interpose not, the curse will meet us everywhere; in every employment, in every enjoyment, nay, in every ordinance. The curse falls upon every offence, and in everything we all offend.

There is a necessity of Christ in reference to the least failing, though it be but one. Suppose that Christ had redeemed a sinner from the curse due to all his sins, one only excepted, and suppose that one sin were but a vain thought, or an idle word, or some dulness under an ordinance, or some wandering in a holy duty, yet this one sin, though so small, would be such a handle for the curse to fasten on, as men and angels, all the creatures in heaven and earth, could not remove it; the curse would drag that soul to hell without recovery. Oh, then, what need have we of a Saviour! Get lively apprehensions of your necessity of Christ. Walk continually under the sense and power of these apprehensions, and be often making applications of the blood and mediation of Christ to your souls. So hath the Lord ordered the way to salvation, as that every one should see a necessity of Christ; a continual necessity of him, and a necessity of him in all things. And it is evident upon this account, because ‘cursed is every one that continueth not in all things to do them.’

# 03 - Volume 3

The Works of

DAVID CLARKSON

Volume III

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SERMONS, &c. THE LOVE OF CHRIST And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice, &c.—Ephesians 5:2.

Here is the greatest duty of the law, 'Walk in love;' and the greatest pattern of the gospel, 'as Christ also hath loved us.' It is this latter, as the most alluring and enforcing motive to the former, I shall insist on in this discourse. This love of Christ is what this apostle always admired, since the first day its warmth thawed his cold frozen pharisaical spirit: 1 Timothy 1:14, 'The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.' And here in the context, after twenty-two years' study, Ephesians 3:19, he says, 'it passeth his knowledge' still, passeth all natural knowledge, passeth the knowledge of ordinary Christians that enjoy and use the telescope of faith, passeth apostolical, passeth angelical; Ephesians 3:10, 'might be known by the church.' When saints are perfect in heaven, 2 Thessalonians 1:10, they admire Christ and his love still, Ephesians 3:18. He gives a reason of its incomprehensibleness, because it exceeds natural dimensions. Nature knows but three measures for solid quantity, length, breadth, and depth, but here height also; and since it knows no standard but itself, he compares it with itself; because he cannot measure itself, he measures by its effects, offerings, and sacrifices. The Teruma, the wave-offering, went in its significant pointing as low as hell and as high as heaven, to relieve us from the lowest dungeon of misery, and to exalt us to the glory of the highest heaven. The Tenupha, the wave-offering to and fro, points at the breadth and length of this love, either in the four points of the mediatorial office,—the undertaking it from eternity; the performance in time, by his assuming our nature and laying it down a sacrifice for us; the love whereby he woos and espouseth us to himself in effectual calling; the love by which he loves them to the end, from eternity to everlasting,—or four corners of the earth, to shew the extensiveness of it. There is no kind of person but what shall be saved, or kind of sin but what shall be forgiven, through the love of him who 'hath given himself for an offering and sacrifice.' The two most considerable things in that part of the words I propose for the ground of the ensuing discourse are, 1, The ardency of this all-governing affection, as immanent in Christ's breast, 'hath loved us;' 2, That incomparable method of his expressing it towards us, that never had either, or can admit, precedent or copy, 'and hath given himself for us, an offering and sacrifice.' The first proposition upon which I will discourse shall only take in Christ's love with its object. As Christ also hath loved us. You can look upon no place of evangelical Scripture where this may not be proved, either directly or by consequence. Take one for all: 1 John 4:16, 'God is love.' Love is one of his most eminent attributes. Now Christ, Hebrews 8:1-13, is called 'the brightness of his Father's glory,' i. e. the bright manifestation of his Father's glorious attributes. These all meet in Christ, and are there united as the beams in the sun. But amongst them all there is no beam so bright and conspicuous as love. The love of God was always the same in itself, but not always the same to us. It was a long time clouded from the world, and shined but with a weak osbcure ray, till the Sun of righteousness did arise; but since, the brightness of this love, of this glory, shines in the face of Christ, and we may see it with open face; we may see with open face this ray of glory, this love of God in Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glorious love. Christ is also called, 'the express character of his person.' All divine perfections were imprinted upon Christ in an express manner; but (if there be any inequality) that which made the deepest impression, and appears in the most legible character, is love, Colossians 1:15. He is called 'the image of the invisible God.' There was clear discoveries of some divine attributes before Christ, Romans 1:19-20; but divine love was never made so visible till it was represented to the world in this image. But how doth it appear that

Christ loves us?

1. By amorous expressions. Christ acts the highest strains of a lover in the Song of Songs. See what amorous compellations he treats his spouse with: ‘My love, my dove, my fair one, my undefiled.’ Read his love songs, and see how affectionately he sets out the beauty of his beloved, Song of Solomon 4:1-3, &c., and then concludes, ‘Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot on thee;’ and complains, Song of Solomon 4:9, ‘Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,’ &c.; and Song of Solomon 6:4-6, &c., ‘Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me;’ Song of Solomon 6:10, ‘Who is she that looketh out as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun;’ so Song of Solomon 1:10. Hear how he woos: ‘Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away,’ Song of Solomon 2:10; and Song of Solomon 4:6, ‘My dove, &c., let me see thy face, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.’ See his love posture, how he embraces: Song of Solomon 2:6, ‘His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.’ He condescends to set out his love by such expressions as we can best judge of, though it transcends all.

2. By his thoughts. Thoughts and affections are mutual causes one of another. Thoughts give life to affection, and affection begets thoughts. Where is much affection, there will be many thoughts; and where there is strong affection there will be high thoughts of what we affect. Christ’s thoughts of us are many and high. He had thoughts of love to us from eternity, and we were never one moment out of his mind since then. We are graven on the palms of his hand, Isaiah 49:16; nay, we are written in his heart, and there he wears us, as the high priest the names of the ten tribes upon his breast. He has set us as a seal upon his heart, as a signet upon his arm, Song of Solomon 8:6. We can never be out of his sight, and so never out of his mind. It is as impossible he should cease to think of us, as it is for a mother to forget her sucking child, which is always in her arms, or on her knee, or in her bosom, Isaiah 49:15. Nay, ‘she may forget,’ but Christ will not, cannot.

Also he hath high thoughts of us. We are his jewels, Malachi 3:17; precious to him, not only in life, but death, Psalms 116:15; his treasure, his peculiar treasure, Exodus 19:5; and where his treasure is, there will his heart be also. As the most rich and precious stones, the stones of a crown, Zechariah 9:16, he accounts us his joy, John 17:13, his glory, 2 Corinthians 8:23, a crown of glory and a royal diadem, Isaiah 62:3; yea, an eternal excellency, Isaiah 60:15. He has preferred us before the rest of men, though in all worldly respects to be preferred before us. He has chosen us, the foolish, weak, and base, despised things of this world, and rejected the wise, mighty, and noble, 1 Corinthians 1:26-28. He has preferred us before the angels fallen; for when we were both involved in the same misery, those, sometime gay morning stars, are reserved in everlasting chains of darkness; but he has lifted up our heads and crowned us with glory and dignity; nay, he has in some respect preferred us before himself, for he loved us and gave himself for us.

3. But this flame, where it is, cannot be confined to the breast and thoughts, but will break forth into action. And so does the love of Christ appear to us, by what he has done for us. He has made us rich, fair, honourable, potent, yea, one with himself. We are by this love enriched. The Lord is our portion, Psalms 16:5, and this is incomparably more than if we had heaven and earth; for all the earth is but as a point compared with the vastness of the heavens, and the heavens themselves are but a point compared with God. What a large possession have we, then! There is no confiscation of it, no banishment from it. Our portion fills heaven and earth, and is infinitely above

heaven and below earth, and beyond both. Poor men boast and pride themselves of a kingdom, but we have more than all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof. Christ has given us more than the devil could offer him.

He has made us beautiful; decked our souls with rays of his own beauty, made us partakers of the divine nature, filled us with the fulness of God, conformed us to himself, who is the brightness of divine glory. And now we are all glorious within; the King delights in our beauty. There is a brighter lustre on our souls than shone in Moses's face when he had been talking with God, or sparkled in the habit of Christ and his glorious companions when they were transfigured. If the beauty of a sanctified soul could be made visible to the world, the sun would be no longer esteemed a glorious creature, nor the fairest face lovely. Indeed, it was no easy matter to beautify such deformed souls. Christ tells us what it cost him in the text: he loved us and washed us from our sins with his blood. Otherwise his pure eye could never have beheld us with such complacency, his heart could never have been ravished with us.

He has made us honourable. See what titles we bear. We are his servants. The angels count this their honour, to be ministering spirits. But it is the lowest of our titles. We are his friends, his favourites, John 15:15, 'Henceforth I call you not servants,' &c., 'I have called you friends,' yea, intimate friends, such as he entrusts with his secrets. 'All things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.' We are not only friends, but brethren: Hebrews 2:11, 'He is not ashamed to call us brethren;' sons of the same Father: 'What manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God,' 1 John 3:1; nay, not only sons, but 'heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ:' Romans 8:17, who is 'appointed heir of all things,' Hebrews 1:2. There is no such love amongst men as for an heir to admit another co-heir with him. Nay, we are kings and priests in the text; conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, Romans 8:1-39.

He has made us potent. No such potentates on earth, as these whom Christ loves: Php 4:1-23, 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.' What! A creature omnipotent, able to do all things? Yes, by a better reason than Cato proved the Roman women ruled all the world. Christ can do all things, but these whom he loves can prevail for all that he can do. For he hath promised: John 14:12-13, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do;' Hosea 12:3-4.

These are large expressions of love indeed. But the proper act of love is union; love is ever accompanied with a strong inclination to unite with its object, which, by some secret and powerful virtue, as it were by the emission of some magnetical rays, attracts the lover with a restless solicitation, and never ceases till they meet and unite, as intimately as their nature will permit. The grossness of the matter in corporeal parts will not admit of such intimacy and penetration as love affects; but souls, they can mix, twine about each other, and twist into most strict oneness. We see this effect in Christ's love. His affection moved him to union with us; and one degree of his union was the assuming our nature, by which Christ and we are one flesh. He may say to us as Adam, 'Thou art bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh' Nay, we are not only one flesh, but one spirit: 2 Corinthians 6:17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' O transcendent love! As if some man, out of love to a worm, should take upon him the form and nature of that irrational, contemptible creature. Hence David (in that a type of Christ) calls himself 'a worm, and no man,' Psalms 22:1-31. Yet Christ's love, in being incarnate, is infinitely more; as the disproportion betwixt him and us is infinitely greater than between us and worms. This was greater love, greater honour,

than ever he would vouchsafe to angels: ‘He took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.’ But the love of Christ would not rest here; he thinks us yet not near enough, and therefore holds forth a more intimate union in such resemblances as these: John 15:5, ‘I am the vine, ye are the branches.’ We are united as closely to Christ as the branches to the vine. More than this: Ephesians 1:22-23, ‘gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.’ We are united to Christ, as the body to the head. Each of us may look upon ourselves as a part of Christ; so that whatever glory and happiness shines in our head, reflects upon us; and whatever dignity and injury is cast upon us, it reaches our head. But the union which importeth most love, is that betwixt man and wife. Christ expresses his love and our union by this: Isaiah 54:5, ‘Thy Maker is thy husband,’ Isaiah 54:6. He has ‘taken thee, a woman forsaken, a wife of youth:’ Isaiah 62:9, ‘As a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.’ No such love amongst mortals as betwixt man and wife; nor is this love and complacency at any time so vigorous and conspicuous as in the day of marriage. Yet such a love is Christ’s, he is our husband, and we shall ever be in his account as a wife of youth, as beautiful, as delightful; and eternity shall be but a continued marriage-day, as full of joy and triumph. Oh happy souls that have interest in his love; you whom the Lamb has chosen to be his bride; you who must taste the sweetness of those joys, and must be the object of that complacency and delight; you who must be kissed with the kisses of that mouth, and folded in the arms of such a bridegroom! Oh how unsavoury may the joys of earth be to you, how contemptible the choicest beauties in the world! The creature can reach no higher either in desires or conceits; but the love of Christ goes above both, and expresses itself in a nearer union than this. A conjugal union is very intimate; yet not so near, as that the terms thereof should denominate one another; the husband cannot be called the wife, nor the wife the husband. Yet so near is our union with Christ, that it grounds such a denomination; for we are called Christ: 1 Corinthians 12:12, ‘So also is Christ,’ i. e. Christ mystical. We are not only Christ’s, his members, his spouse; but Christ, in the apostle’s phrase. Yet further, the wife is not said to be in the husband, yet Christ is said to be in us; ‘that Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith,’ Ephesians 3:17, Galatians 2:19. Here is not only a cohabitation, but inhabitation.

Yet further, to add one consideration, which advanceth the intimacy of this union above all those mentioned. The branch may be said to be in the vine, but not reciprocally the vine in the branch; yet Christ is both in us, and we in him: John 14:20, ‘At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you.’ What more intimate mixture is there in the world, than that of light and air? Yet here is not this reciprocation; though the light be in the air, yet is not the air said to be in the light. What nearer conjunction is there than betwixt the soul and the body? Yet here, though the soul be in the body, yet is not the body in the soul. Sure, when Christ is said to be in us, and we in him, here is some intimacy intended more than ordinary union; some mystery for which we want a name, so far are we from reaching its nature. The apostles themselves here knew it not, as the words imply, propounded in the future, ye shall know. They could not apprehend it, till that extraordinary effusion of the Spirit, to which this place refers; and then, it is probable, rather apprehend, than comprehend it. And if ever those most comprehensive creatures, the angels, had need to bend themselves downward, and stretch out their necks (as the word used by Peter implies), to pry into a gospel mystery, sure it is the mystery of Christ’s love, in mixing himself thus intimately with us.

It is true, indeed, while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord. There is some distance betwixt us, which, though it dissolves not the union, yet hinders the comfortable effects of it. And Christ is sensible of this; his love will not long endure it; he cannot abide that those whom he loves so dearly, should be so far from him. He longs for that happy time when we shall meet never again to part. He is gone to prepare the place; and now that it is ready, hear how he woos us: Song of Solomon 2:10, ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past,’ &c. And, as though he wondered at our slowness to meet our happiness, he calls again, Song of Solomon 2:13, ‘Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.’ And when he sees we stay, and call for him to meet us, how cheerfully does he reply, ‘Behold, I come quickly;’ and, in the mean time, with all importunity solicits his Father: John 17:24, ‘Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me, that they may behold my glory;’ and urges the Father, as he loves him, to do it. That is his argument: ‘For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.’ And why is he so importunate? See it, John 17:21-23, where we have the project of Christ’s love four times repeated in three verses, ‘That they all may be one;’ ‘that they may be one in us;’ ‘that they may be one, even as we are one;’ ‘that they may be made perfect in one.’ You have the union in all three: the pattern and exemplar of the union in John 17:22, ‘that they may be one, as we are one;’ and John 17:21, ‘that they may be in us, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.’ Not only as the branch is in the vine, or a member in the body, or the light in the air; these are too low resemblances of so high a mystery; but ‘that they may be in me, as I, Father, am in thee,’ &c. I say not that it is the same union with that betwixt the Father and the Son. It is infinitely distant from it; but, as those expressions import, it has some resemblance. And, lastly, the motive inducing this, John 17:23, ‘That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.’ See here, and wonder, an union, that resembles the highest, most mysterious, and incomprehensible union, the unity of the Father with the Son, proceeding from a love, which is the highest, most stupendous, and inconceivable love, the love of the Father to the Son. Such is the union wherewith Christ has united us to himself, and such is the love which moved him so to unite us. What nearer union than this? What greater love than this?

4. The love of Christ appears by what he has given us; his love-tokens. Whatever we have, for being or well-being, spring from his love. It is love that opens those infinite treasures of goodness, which had else been eternally locked up from the creatures. And though, in these showers of mercy, some drops fall upon the wicked, and so seem common, yet the fountain of love, from whence they issue, is not common. There is a vast difference betwixt the provision which a man makes for his wife, and for his servants. Every mercy we enjoy is a drop from the ocean of his special love. Let us ascend, by some degrees, to the height of this bounteous love.

He gives us plenty of mercies. This love daily loads us with benefits, Psalms 68:19, 1 Timothy 6:17. He gives us nothing but what is good. The wicked have some good things, and some bad; those which are materially good in themselves, yet are formally evil to them, both in God’s intention and in the event. Their table is a snare, the word is the savour of death, and sacraments seals of condemnation; but Christ’s love makes that which is materially evil in itself, yet formally and finally good to us; for all the ways of God are mercy, Psalms 25:1-22. He curses their blessings, but he blesses our curses; temptations, afflictions, sin and death, prove all good to us. Even all his ways; and not only all the ways of God, who loves us in Christ, but all the ways of those who hate us, whether reprobates or devils. For ‘all things shall work for the good of those

that love God,' Romans 8:1-39. This is the great privilege of those whom Christ loves; nothing shall befall them, but what shall prove good for them. They may conclude, in whatever condition they are, it is the best for them; and if it had not been so, they had never come into it; and whenever they shall cease to be so, they shall be removed out of it. It is the sweetest privilege, yet the most difficult to believe at all times, since there is often great opposition both of sense and reason, yet it is most true. And the reason is, the love of Christ making a sweet connection betwixt his glory and our good; so that whatever advanceth the one must promote the other. Now every thing must tend to his glory, therefore to our good; these two cannot be separated.

Besides, Christ's love gives us whatever is good. 'He gives grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold,' &c., Psalms 80:1-19. We shall want no good thing, Psalms 34:10. Take a survey of heaven and earth, and all things therein; and whatever upon sure grounds appears good, ask it confidently of Christ; his love will not deny it. If it were good for you that there were no sin, no devil, no affliction, no destruction, the love of Christ would instantly abolish these. Nay, if the possession of all the kingdoms of the world were absolutely good for any saint, the love of Christ would instantly crown him monarch of them. But if you yet doubt of the bounty of Christ's love, see here a further consideration that will satisfy.

Christ's love will give you whatever you can desire. For what reasonable man can desire that which is not good? This is included in the former. Now all that is good the promises have already assured to you. But lest this limitation should seem to straiten this large privilege, it is propounded absolutely (though indeed it were no privilege if this condition was not implied). 'Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee thy heart's desire,' Psalms 37:1-40: John 16:23, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you'; and John 16:15, John 16:17, 'Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' The reason is, John 16:9, 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.' But if this satisfy not, if you still question what is this what you will, and fear lest you should desire too little, though this be a rare fault, behold the love of Christ will fully satisfy you; he tells you 'All is yours,' 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. And will you have more? 'All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or to come; all are yours.' See here the extent of this all; the world, and all the world is yours. Yea, but alas! I shall not live long to enjoy it; fear not that, for life is yours, you shall live till you be fit to take possession of a greater, a better world. And then death is yours, to convey you from the enjoyment of things present, to the fruition of things to come; from this present world to the world which is to come. See here, no less than two whole worlds is yours. If, as Alexander, thy vast desires cannot be filled with one world, here are two, both thine; one present, one to come. Oh the wonderful love of Christ, the wonderful bounty of this love! It was a royal offer of Ahasuerus to Esther, and a sign of great love: Esther 5:3, 'What is thy request? it shall be given thee to the half of the kingdom.' Ay, but Christ not only offers, but gives, not half, but whole kingdoms, yea, whole worlds. But you will say, This is but a chimera, an empty notion: for we see there are none enjoy less of the world than those whom you say Christ loves. I answer, the world is not able to judge of true enjoyments. There are none that have a more real, and advantageous, and a less troublesome and dangerous enjoyment of the world than saints. And I prove it thus. We may be most truly said to enjoy that which we reap the greatest emolument from, and get the greatest benefit by, that can be imagined; but there are none that improve the world to such a real advantage as the saints: for the love of Christ has so ordered the world, and everything in it, as it tends to their happiness, Romans

8:1-39. And what greater benefit imaginable than happiness? On the contrary, we cannot be said truly to enjoy that by which we get no benefit; but the wicked (those who seem to have engrossed the world to themselves) get no benefit by it: for both it and all things in it tend to make them miserable. There is no more reason to deny the saint's interest in the world, because it seems to be possessed by others, than to deny a merchant has interest in his estate, because it is in the hands of mariners and factors, whenas it is but committed to them, that it may be the better improved for the true owner. And so is the world in the hands of others, for the saints' best advantage, which they receive, as a landlord from his tenants, without trouble or hazard. It is evident then that this present world is ours. And for the world to come, there is no question. So that we need not wonder at Jacob, who, when he was the poorer man in the world's account, conceived himself richer than Esau: Genesis 33:9, Esau says, 'But I have enough;' but Jacob says (as it is in the original) 'I have all.' And so may every one whom Christ loves say, 'I have all;' all that I stand in need of, all that is good for me, yea, all that I can desire. This is enough, sure. Who can imagine more? Ay, but Christ's love has provided more than we can desire. See 1 Corinthians 2:9, compared with Isaiah 64:4, 'As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love him.' What is there in the vast circuit of the world that eye hath not seen? Yet more is prepared for us than eye hath seen from the beginning. There is no man whose ear has not heard more than his eye ever saw; yet is there more prepared for us than ear ever heard. But there has more entered into the heart of man, than ever was offered either to his eye or ear; yet the vast and unlimited thoughts of man could never conceive what great things are prepared for us. Here then is more than the largest desire can reach; for no man can desire that which his heart could never conceive. That which never entered into the mind of man to be the object of his knowledge, never entered into his heart to be the object of his desires. Christ has given more than heart can think, more than heart can desire; nay, more than the angels can conceive, whose apprehensions are widest and highest. There is a word in Isaiah upon which we may ground this: 'For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has eye seen, O God! besides thee, what he has prepared for him that waiteth for him.' None besides thee, O God, whose apprehensions are infinite, can conceive. Not the glorified saints, not the glorious angels, none besides thee. Nothing but infiniteness can comprehend what the incomprehensible love of Christ is. It is true indeed, it is said that God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, ver. 10, and the Spirit given to this end, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. But this knowledge is not proportionable to the dignity of the object, but to the capacity of us the subjects; for if the Spirit should raise his style as high as the glorious expressions of Christ's love, he must use such words as Paul heard when he was rapt into paradise, 2 Corinthians 12:14; unspeakable words, that cannot be spoken, that cannot be understood by us in the body. The glorious riches of Christ's love cannot be expressed but in the language of paradise; cannot be understood but by a transported soul, a spirit rapt into the third heaven. The expressions which the Spirit uses to us in the body are such as may rather signify despair of full apprehending them, than lead us to a comprehensive knowledge of them; such as these: he tells us of joy, but which is unspeakable, 1 Peter 1:8; of peace, but such as passeth all understanding, Php 4:7; of love, but such as passeth knowledge, Ephesians 3:19; of riches, but such as are unsearchable, Ephesians 3:8. But we are not yet come to the height of Christ's love. These unspeakable, unconceivable, unsearchable favours are but streams or drops of love; Christ has given us the fountain, the ocean: these are but

sparks and beams; he has given us the sun, the element of love. The love of Christ gives us interest in the glorious Trinity. The holy and uncreated Spirit is ours. How often does he promise to give the Comforter? See one for all, John 14:16. The Spirit is ours, and his graces and comforts, those dawnings and glimmerings of glory, those irradiations of the divine nature, those joys, and that peace, which cannot be spoken, cannot be understood. The Father is ours: John 20:17, 'I ascend to your Father, and my Father; to your God, and my God.' The Father, and all that he is, all his glorious attributes, are ours, his all-sufficiency, wisdom, power, mercy, justice, truth, and faithfulness, &c. All that he does is ours, for us. His decrees, they are the spring of our happiness, Ephesians 1:4-5. His providence, the acts of it are as so many streams, which carry us with full sail into the ocean of glory, Psalms 25:1-22. All that he has made: heaven, that is our home, our inheritance; earth, that is our inn, to accommodate us in our pilgrimage, in our journey homewards; angels, they are our guard, Matthew 4:6; inferior creatures, they are our servants, Genesis 1:28. For Christ has renewed that charter which we then forfeited. Yea, the reprobates, the devils, and hell itself, are made so ours by the love of Christ, as they shall increase our happiness, and illustrate the freeness of his love; their temptations and persecutions, whatever they intend, shall have no worse effect than, as Daniel 11:35, and Daniel 12:10, to make us white, more lovely in the eye of our bridegroom. And how will this endear the love of Christ to us, that he should reject so many fallen angels and men to choose us! That we shall be those two who must enter into Canaan, when two hundred thousand of our fellow-travellers are shut out and perish in the wilderness! What thoughts shall we have, when, sitting in the bosom of him whom our souls love, we shall see the greatest part of the world tormented in that flame! The tortures of that lake will sweeten those rivers of pleasures in which we shall eternally bathe our souls. That dismal place shall be as a beauty-spot to make our glory more glorious. And now, what is there in heaven and earth that the love of Christ has not made ours? There is nothing of all left but himself. And, alas, what would all these things profit, if we want him? Without Christ, earth would be hell, and heaven would not be heaven. He is the hope of earth, and the glory of heaven. See here, then, the height of his love; he has given us himself, and all with himself. He is our husband; heaven and earth is our jointure. He deals not with us as some husbands, who, out of more providence than love, instate their wives in part of their wealth, and reserve the rest for they know not what posterity; no, his love hath withholden nothing from us. No, let him take all, saith he, as Mephibosheth; all that I have by inheritance, and all that I have by purchase. His person is ours, he has married us; his offices are ours, he is our king, our priest, our prophet; his sufferings are ours, his merits, resurrection, ascension, intercession—all, all is ours that Christ hath, or doth, or suffereth. His love would let nothing be detained from us; not his life, he gave his life a ransom for us, Matthew 20:28; not his blood, he washed us in his blood, as in the text; no, not his glory: John 17:22, 'And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.' O boundless love! O the unsearchable riches of Christ's love! O happy souls that have interest in this love, in these riches! How may we contemn the pride of such as account themselves great and rich in the world! Your large domains and greatest possessions are but as a point compared with ours, whose poverty you despise. If the map of our worlds were set before you, how would you be ashamed, with the Athenian gallant, to see your imagined vast estates shrink there into nothing! We have riches that you know not of. We have more than you can desire, though your desires were as wide as hell. We have more than you can imagine, though your thoughts were stretched out to the wideness of angelical apprehension. There is no valuing of our revenues, no measuring of our possessions, no bounds of our

inheritance; it is infinite; God, and heaven, and earth is our portion. The love of Christ hath done this for us, has given these to us.

5. Take an estimate of the love of Christ from his sufferings. Consider how and what he suffers by us, with us, for us.

(1.) His love makes him patiently suffer many things by us. It puts up many affronts, and indignities, and undervaluings; many acts of unkindness and disloyalty. See the provoking nature of sin, what a grievance and pressure it is to Christ: Isaiah 43:24, ‘Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities;’ Isaiah 1:24, ‘Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries.’ Implying sin is an oppressing burden: Amos 2:3, ‘Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves;’ Ezekiel 6:9, ‘I am broken with their whorish heart.’ There is nothing so provoking, so injurious to man, as sin is to Christ; for what higher provocations amongst men than treason, adultery, murder? Now, every sin against Christ involves in it the heinousness of these crimes. Sin is high treason against Christ, would depose him, and advance itself and Satan into his throne; he says, ‘I will not have this man to rule over me,’ and ‘Who is Jesus Christ, that I should obey him?’ Sin is an act of spiritual whoredom and adultery, a defiling of the marriage bed, a violation of our conjugal vow to Christ, when it carries away the heart from Christ, as in covetousness and sensuality; hence such expressions, ‘How is the faithful city become an harlot!’ Isaiah 1:21. That sin has murdered Christ needs no proof; nay, it strikes not only at his life, but at his being; would annihilate him, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from us, Isaiah 30:11. ‘The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.’ Oh, then, what manner of love is this, which makes Christ willing to bear with such a thing as sin, and to continue so tenderly affectionate to those who have so frequently committed it! What king ever so loved a subject as to continue his love to him after he be found an enemy to his crown and dignity? What man could ever be friend to him that seeks his life? It is great love in a husband to bear with the frowardness, unkindness, and ordinary infirmities of his wife; but who ever could bear with whoredom? No love but the love of Christ, that love which has no bounds, no example, no parallel.

But, lest you should think the sins of saints deserve not to be compared with such heinous crimes, consider that the sin of one whom Christ loves is more heinous, more provoking than the sin of any damned reprobate; for those sins are most grievous that are against clearest light and greatest love. Now, the light which is in reprobates is darkness, Matthew 6:23, compared with ours; their knowledge is ignorance; and therefore all theirs are sins of ignorance in comparison of ours. And for love, they were never the objects of it, it was never assured to them; whenas we are both beloved of Christ, and know it, and yet sin. Sure there are no sins so heinous as these, nor any that Christ so much resents, Hosea 4:15; Deuteronomy 32:19, ‘When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provokings of his sons and of his daughters.’ No provokings like the provokings of sons and daughters, nor any love like that which these cannot exasperate. Such is the love of Christ.

(2.) This love makes him willing to suffer with us. ‘In all our afflictions he is afflicted.’ He remembers his in bonds, as though he were bound with them; and those that are afflicted, as though he also were afflicted in the body. He knows by experience what it is to be poor, despised, slandered, persecuted; he bare infirmities, that he might pity us under the burden: Matthew 8:17, ‘Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses,’ that he might sympathise with us: Hebrews

4:15, ‘We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are.’ He is intimately touched with them, even as the head with the pain and torture of a member: 1 Corinthians 12:26, ‘And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it,’ especially the head, which, being the fountain of sense, must be most sensible. This love occasions such a reciprocation of interests as he accounts what is done for us is done for him, and what is done against us is done against him, Matthew 25:40-45. He thinks himself hungry and thirsty, when we want meat and drink; a stranger, when we are banished; restrained, when we are in prison; and not well, when we are sick; as is evident, Matthew 25:35-36. Those that persecute us persecute him, Acts 9:5; and those that touch us touch the apple of his eye, Zechariah 2:8.

(3.) His love made him willing to suffer for us. And for us he has suffered all miseries that all our sins had deserved, and cruelty could inflict. He who with one word caused the vast fabric of heaven and earth to start out of nothing, who was King of kings and Lord of lords, who had heaven for his throne and earth for his footstool, was, out of love to us, content to take upon him the form of a servant, and to live in such a poor condition as he had not a cradle when born, nor a place to lay his head while he lived, nor a sepulchre to bury him when he died. He who was the King of glory, the splendour of whose glory dazzled the eyes of seraphims, nay, whose glory is above the heavens, was, out of love to us, willing to be ‘despised and rejected of men,’ Isaiah 53:3; to be accounted as ‘a worm, and no man, a reproach of men and scorn of the people,’ Psalms 22:6-7. He who was adored by the glorious host of heaven, was the object of their eternal praises, yea, and ‘counted it no robbery to be equal with God,’ was, out of love to us, content to be ‘numbered amongst transgressors,’ to be reviled and slandered as a wine-bibber, a glutton, a Sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, a mad-man, and possessed with the devil. He in whose presence was fulness of joy, and from whose smile spring rivers of pleasures, was, for love of us, willing to become ‘a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief,’ yea, and it seems with nothing else; we never read that he laughed. He whose beauty was the glory of heaven, the brightness of his Father’s glory, the sight whereof transports those happy spirits that behold it into an eternal rapture, was, for love to us, by his suffering so disfigured as he seemed to ‘have no form nor comeliness in him, nor beauty that any should desire him;’ ‘he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he hid not his face from shame and spitting,’ Isaiah 50:6. He in whose sight the heavens are not clean, who was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, was, out of love to us, content to ‘bear our sins on his body upon the tree,’ to be ‘wounded for our transgressions,’ and to have all our iniquities laid upon him. This love made God, blessed for ever, willing to be made a curse, the glorious Redeemer of Israel to be sold as a slave, and the Lord of life to die a base, accursed, and cruel death. And, which is above all, he who was his Father’s love and delight, who was rejoicing before him from eternity, and in whom alone his soul was well pleased, did, out of love to us, bear the unconceivable burden of his Father’s wrath,—that wrath which was the desert of all the sins of the elect, which would have sunk the whole world into hell, the weight whereof made his soul heavy unto the death, and was a far greater torture to him than ever damned soul felt in hell (if we abstract sin and eternity from these torments), the burden whereof pressed from him that stupendous bloody sweat, and made him, in the anguish of his oppressed soul, cry out to heaven, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ and cry out to earth, ‘Oh! have ye no regard, all ye that pass by? See if there be any sorrow like my sorrow, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce wrath.’ No, Lord, there was no sorrow like thy sorrow,

no love like thy love. Was it not enough (dearest Saviour) that thou didst condescend to pray, and sigh, and weep for us, perishing wretches? Wilt thou also bleed and die for us? Was it not enough that thou wast hated, slandered, blasphemed, buffeted? but thou wilt also be scourged, nailed, wounded, crucified. Was it not enough to feel the cruelty of man? Wilt thou also undergo the wrath of God? or if thy love will count nothing a sufficient expression of itself, but parting with life, and shedding that precious blood, yet, was it not enough to die once, to suffer one death? Wilt thou die twice, and taste both first, and something of the second death, suffer the pains of death in soul and body? Oh the transcendent love of Christ! heaven and earth are astonished at it. What tongue can express it? what heart can conceive it? The tongues, the thoughts of men and angels are far below it. Oh the height, and depth, and breadth, and length, of the love of Christ! All the creation is nonplussed; our thoughts are swallowed up in this depth, and there must lie till glory elevate them, when we shall have no other employment but to praise, admire, and adore this love of Christ. But further, to set out this love of Christ, consider some properties by which the Spirit describes it. It is free, unchangeable, incomprehensible.

1. Christ loves us freely. He loved us when we had neither love nor beauty to attract his affections. The time of his love was when we lay trodden under foot, or polluted in our blood, Ezekiel 16:6; when we had torn off the veil of light and beauty wherewith our souls were at first invested, and clothed them in Josadech's habit, Zechariah 3:3, filthy or (as the original is) excrementitious garments; when we were wallowing in sin, more filthy than the puddle of a sow, and besmeared our souls with that which is more loathsome than the vomit of a dog. When the image of God was withdrawn, the life of holiness expired, and our souls were dead, putrifying and stinking as an open sepulchre. And what think you, could Christ love us in this condition? Will any of us set our affections on a worm, take a toad into his bosom? But Christ embraceth us in the arms of love, when we had made ourselves worse than the beasts that perish. Oh the freeness of this love! Nor had we more love than beauty when Christ loved us. We were enemies to him, and all that were of his alliance. When we hated his person, scorned his love, rejected his offers with disdain, trampled upon his favours, and preferred our base lusts and his deadly enemy Satan before him. When we told him, we saw more reason to entertain the devil's offers than his, and rather be damned than be beholden to his love for heaven. And could Christ love us now? Yes: Romans 5:8, 'When we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' No greater enemies to Christ than sinners, no freer love than love of enemies, no higher expression of free love than to die for enemies.

2. It is unchangeable, John 13:1. No act of unkindness or disloyalty of ours can nonplus it; no, not that which admits of no reconciliation amongst men, adultery: Jeremiah 31:1-40, 'Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return unto me, saith the Lord.' See that full place, Romans 8:35 to the end, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,' &c., 'shall be able to separate me from the love of Christ.' Death shall not, for that conveys us to a full enjoyment of this love; nor life, for that is a preparatory to this enjoyment; nor angels, good or bad; not bad, for if they separate us, it will be by accusing of us to Christ, shewing him our deformity or disloyalty, to make us seem unworthy of so great love; but Christ will hear no such thing: Zechariah 3:1-10, 'The Lord rebuke thee, Satan;' nor good angels, for if there be any danger, it is because they are more lovely, more excellent creatures than we, and so might withdraw the heart of Christ from us to them as the more worthy objects, but this could not hinder Christ at first from loving us, and therefore cannot hinder him from continuing to love us; nor

principalities, nor powers, i. e. no princes or potentates, by acts of cruelty or tyranny, expressed verse 35, ‘Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine?’ &c. No; these are so far from separating us from the love of Christ, as they occasion sweeter expressions of Christ’s love. The saints find by experience never more consolation than in tribulation. They are never more enlarged than when distressed, never more affectionately embraced than when persecuted, never sweetlier feasted than in famine, &c.: ‘In all these we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.’ Those things which they intend for our ruin, are by the love of Christ made our triumph. We are more than conquerors, and may more than triumph, in this unchangeable love of Christ.

3. It is an incomprehensible love: Ephesians 3:19, ‘Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.’ There was great love betwixt David and Jonathan: 1 Samuel 20:17, Jonathan ‘loved him as his own soul.’ It is a tenderer affection which a mother bears to her sucking child, the son of her womb, Isaiah 49:15. There is yet a stronger love than this, viz. a conjugal love between husband and wife, as is implied in Elkanah’s speech to Hannah: 1 Samuel 1:8, ‘Am I not better to thee than ten sons?’ But the highest strain of love we meet with is that of Moses and Paul to the Israelites, which made one of them contented to be blotted out of the book of life, the other to be accursed from Christ, for them. These are all high degrees of love indeed, but such as were in the breasts of men, and therefore not beyond their knowledge. Yea, but the love of Christ passeth knowledge. He is the pattern and subject of all relations; and the love of all relations is concentred in his breast, and unspeakably more. His love to us is many degrees higher than the love which flows from all relations would be if united in one soul; and therefore when he would express it, he goes higher than the world for a resemblance of it, even to infiniteness itself: John 15:9, ‘As the Father hath loved me, even so love I you.’ This is such a love as we can neither express nor conceive; we must supply the defect of both with admiration. And this should have been the, 1.Use. To admire the love of Christ.

2. To admire the happiness of those whom Christ loves.

3. To move us to love Christ with all, for all, above all.

4. To move us to love one another.

Use 1. Admire the love of Christ. Heaven and earth never beheld, angels and men never considered, anything so wonderful, so apt to astonish, as Christ’s love to men. It is wonderful in the eyes of glorified creatures angels and saints do, and will, admire and adore it to all eternity. And it is wonderful in the eyes of all considering men on earth; nothing more, nothing so much. Wonderful is Christ’s attribute, Isaiah 9:6; due to him in all respects, but above all in this, and in all other for this. All will confess it, if they consider the grounds of this admiration, whom, who, and how.

1. Consider whom he loves. How unfit, unworthy, unlovely. It was not, it could not be, in the thoughts of any, whose thoughts are not infinite, to imagine that ever man, of all creatures, should be the object of Christ’s love. For,

(1.) How vile and contemptible is man in Christ’s account! What is man but dust and ashes, breathing dust and enlivened clay? Genesis 18:27. What more despicable creature than a worm? The best of men, compared with Christ, are no more, nay, not so much in his sight, as a worm in ours: Job 25:6, ‘How much less man that is a worm, and the son of man which is a worm?’ He is

more indeed absolutely, but not so much comparatively. The highest on earth is farther below Christ than a worm is below a man. Man, so considered, is not so much as a worm, he is but as a moth: Job 27:18, ‘He builds his house as a moth;’ nay, he is inferior to this small contemptible creature: Job 4:19, ‘Crushed before the moth.’ Yet there is something on earth more inconsiderable than a moth; as small in quantity, and far inferior, as being inanimate, a drop, an atom. Yet man is not so much, compared with Christ, as one of these: Isaiah 40:15, ‘All the nations.’ If all the earth, all the inhabitants of the earth, be but as one drop, what is one man? Imagine a drop, a mote, divided into as many millions of parts as there are people on earth, how small would one of those parts be, even beyond imagination! It would be as nothing. Nay, but all nations are.’ less than nothing,’ ver. 17. Oh what, then, is one man! Oh what a wonder that Christ should love such a thing, such a nothing, as man! Oh that Christ should embrace a worm, and take a moth into his bosom! That he should delight in and rejoice over a drop, a mote, and set his heart upon that which is not! Psalms 8:4.

(2.) How impotent! Man can do nothing to engage or deserve love, nothing to please or honour such a lover; and was so considered when Christ had intentions of love, therefore it is admirable. It is a wonder that any should love a creature whose being is despicable; but if it be considerable in acting, it takes off from the wonder. But man is despicable, not only as to his being, but actings. As he is nothing comparatively, so he can do nothing; nothing to glorify Christ, much to dishonour him; nothing to please Christ, much to provoke him. As an impotent slave has no power to be serviceable to his prince, much to dishonour him by treasonable speeches or practices. An affront from a slave is a greater provocation than from an equal. How can one that is halt, lame, or maimed, walk or work; one that is dead, act? Such were men, so represented to Christ, when he entertained thoughts of love; without active principles, faculties, or qualities. And when Christ has bestowed these, yet cannot he act but as he is acted; it is not he works for Christ, but Christ that works all his works for him. He cannot act but in Christ’s strength, cannot move except he be drawn, cannot walk except Christ lead him, cannot stand except Christ uphold him. Yea, when he is empowered to act, yet are not his actings more valuable than his being. Operari sequitur esse. As he is no more, compared with Christ, than a worm, moth, mote, so his best actions, most glorious performances, are of no more advantage to Christ than the crawlings of a worm, the acting of a moth, the motion of an atom, the falling of a drop. As these are to us, so we to Christ; when we have done all, but unprofitable servants. What a wonder that Christ should love those in whose being he can take no pleasure, and by whose acting he can get no glory, no advantage! Who amongst us would love or marry one who could not stand but while supported, nor rise but as lifted up, nor move a finger but as moved? Such a lame, sick, impotent, dead creature was man, when Christ first thought of love, Romans 5:6.

(3.) How poor! No such poverty as man’s. He is nothing, can do nothing; nay, and hath nothing. Who poorer than he who has neither food, nor raiment, nor money, nay, and in debt besides? Man is in a starving condition, a famished soul; must needs be so, wanting Christ the bread of life. He feeds on nothing but wind and husks, the vanities and brutish pleasures of the world please his senses, his soul languisheth, consumes, and is at the gate of death. He has not so much as will cover his nakedness; though he think, with Laodicea, he is rich, and stands in need of nothing, yet he is poor and naked, Revelation 3:1-22. The poor, forlorn condition of man, when Christ intended love, is described Ezekiel 16:6; lay polluted in his blood, and no eye pitied him. A degree below

misery, below pity; yet this was ‘the time of love.’ He has no money, nothing to purchase meat or clothes. Those whom Christ entreats with loving invitation to participation of himself, are such as have no money, Isaiah 55:1. He not only wants all things, but owes more than ever he had, more than he is worth. He cannot, upon a just account, say his soul is his own; he has given his soul to Satan, sold himself to work wickedness; and Satan leads him captive, has taken possession; the strong man armed keeps the house. He has forfeited not only his soul, but his very being to God; a greater debt than men can owe one to another. The least sin is such a debt as all the riches in the world cannot discharge; nothing can cancel the handwriting which is against us but Christ’s blood. What a wonder, that Christ should love such poverty! No such love amongst men. If a great prince, such as Cyrus or Alexander, should set his love on one he finds in the highway, poor, famished, and naked, it would be the astonishment of all that should hear of it; much more this, Christ’s state being infinitely greater, and man’s spiritual poverty unspeakably more.

(4.) How deformed! Poverty alone cannot hinder love, especially if there be beauty; but who can love deformity? Man not only wants beauty, but is covered with ugly and loathsome deformity. He was created fair and lovely, his ornament was the beauty of heaven, the image of God; but, alas! that is razed out, and the deformed image of Satan drawn in its place. His light is turned into darkness; the fair, and sometimes faithful soul, is become a filthy harlot: and, as Isaiah 3:24, ‘Instead of a sweet smell, there is stink; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and burning instead of beauty.’

There is no lovely complexion, no comely proportion left in man’s soul, nothing that can please the eye of Christ. The surface of it defiled as with a menstruous rag. It is overspread with a filthy leprosy, and full, as David’s bones, of loathsome diseases, that break forth into rotten ulcers and putrefying sores, as Isaiah 1:6. Nothing is to be seen in the face of the soul but fretting cankers, and spreading gangrenes. Sin has made the soul as unlovely as Lazarus’s body, whose sores the dogs licked; or as Job’s, full of sore boils, when he sat in the ashes and scraped himself. And who can be in love with such a soul? The soul is no less deformed in respect of proportion. It is perverted, crooked, and, as that woman, bowed down with a spirit of infirmity, all broken, and out of joint. It is defective in those parts that should make it lovely; it is lame, and maimed, and blind. The eyes, no less an ornament to the soul than to the body, are put out: ‘The God of this world has blinded’ natural men, 2 Corinthians 4:4. Mislocation is a monstrous deformity in the body, when the feet are where the head should be, or the thighs in place of the arms, or breast where the back, &c. There is such a mislocation on the soul. That which should be lowest is highest; the appetite and fancy above the mind and will; that which should obey commands; that which should rule is enslaved. A woful deformity! That which should be supreme is subordinate; and that which should be subject is supreme. What mother would love a child whose parts were so monstrously displaced? A dislocation in the soul is as odious a deformity in Christ’s eye, as that of the body in ours. But that which makes the soul most unlovely is this, it is dead. When the life of the soul expired, all its beauty expired with it. A dead soul is as unlovely to Christ as a dead body is to us. Abraham loved Sarah dearly while she lived, but when she was dead he could not endure her sight; he desired a place to bury his dead out of his sight. That which is pleasing and amiable when it is living, is a ghastly and fearful spectacle when it is dead. The soul of every son of Adam is dead, dead in sins and trespasses, dead of a noisome and contagious disease. This removes it at a greater distance from love, has lain long rotting in a grave. How wonderful is Christ’s love!

Who but Christ would entertain thoughts of love towards such an ugly, loathsome, deformed, monstrous, dead creature, as man is made by sin?

(5.) How hated! Not only hateful, but hated; hated of all. Who would love him, whom none loves, who has no friends, who can meet with none in the world but enemies? A natural man is hated of God; he hates all workers of iniquity: and the natural man works nothing else, Genesis 6:5. He is born a child of wrath, it is his inheritance, entailed upon him, the wrath of God. And will Christ love what his Father hates? The angels hate him. These are the immediate attendants and subjects of the King of heaven, and have the same friends, the same enemies with their sovereign. The seraphims, well rendered φλοξπ■ρος,* have their name, not from the order of their love, but of their anger, as appears Isaiah 6:1-13, the only place where angels have that name. For there the Lord is represented as an incensed judge, and they as ministers of his anger, kindled with his indignation. What the saints in heaven do, we may judge by the saints on earth: Psalms 139:21, ‘Do not I hate them that hate thee? Am I not grieved?’ &c.

Nay, all the inferior creatures are at enmity with man. And good reason, since by the corruption of man it is brought into woful bondage, groaneth and travaileth in pain under it, Romans 8:20-22. The whole creation is at enmity with man. He cannot meet any creature, but harbours a secret hatred, and would be ready to manifest it at God’s command. What a wonder, that Christ will love that which all hate!

(6.) What enmity! Man is not only hateful, and hated, but a hater of Christ, with such a hatred as would exclude all love from the breast of any creature; a hatred so extensive, that he hates Christ and all that is his, all that is like him; all his offices, especially that which is most glorious, his royal office; keeps Christ out of his throne as to himself, and would do it in others. Nay, it reaches to any resemblance of Christ, hates him so much, as his heart rises against the image of Christ. Herein man manifests the height of his hatred against Christ, in that he hates his very image, that which does but resemble him, holiness wherever it is, in his people, in his ordinances, in his ways.

Causeless. It is a wonder if any hatred meet with returns of love, but above all causeless hatred. In this respect David was a type of Christ, in that so many hated him without a cause, Psalms 69:4. There is not in Christ the least occasion of hatred, he is all glory, all beauty, altogether lovely, nothing else. Nor doth he give the least cause: for all his administrations are gracious or righteous; and as his goodness is to be feared, so even his justice is to be loved. It is lovely in itself, being a divine, an infinite perfection, and should be so to men. Christ may say to all men, as to the Jews, John 10:31, ‘Many good works have I shewed, &c.; for which of these do ye hate me?’ Though none have cause, yet all hate. That Christ should requite any hatred with love, is a wonder; but to return love for causeless hatred, is an astonishment!

Perfect hatred, without any mixture of love, Romans 8:7. His heart is as full of hatred, as a toad of poison, or hell of darkness. He hates Christ more than any man on earth ever loved him; for love is but imperfect here, and mixed with much unkindness; but there is no mixture of love, not the least degree of it, not the least desire, inclination, or tendency to it. Oh that Christ should love those with perfect love who hate him with perfect hatred, who have no inclinations to love him.

Mortal and deadly. What more than that which murders what it hates, and delights to do it? Those that delight in sin, delight to murder Christ, for it was sin that murdered him. Who is there that has

not delighted in sin? Eternal love for deadly hatred!

Implacable. It is not a disposition easily removed, but a habit so firmly rooted in the heart, as it can never be plucked up, till the heart itself be taken out; and therefore when God roots out his hatred, and plants love, he quite takes away the old heart, Ezekiel 11:19.

Oh what enmity is here! It is a wonder that any creature should so far degenerate as to turn enemy to its Creator and Redeemer. Oh what a wonder that Christ should love such enemies.

Enemies in their minds, who have hard, low, base, dishonourable thoughts of Christ; think Christ a hard master, a tyrant; think his yoke an intolerable grievance, an insupportable burden, and therefore plot how they may break his bonds. In their hearts. Every motion there is rebellious, quite opposite to Christ; hate that which he most loves, love that which he most hates, delight in that which grieves him, &c. In their lives. Every action an act of rebellion, and their whole life (till conversion) a continued fight against Christ. This is the cause of the quarrel: ‘We will not have this man to rule over us.’

Oh wonder that Christ should love enemies, such enemies, with such love! Romans 5:10; love them better than his life, who hated him to the death! love them unchangeably, who hated him implacably! love them against all provocations and discouragements, who hated him without a cause! love them with superlative love, who hated him with perfect hatred! Behold what manner of love! behold, and wonder! So God loved the world, so Christ loved man, so as none can express, none can choose but admire.

(7.) What base dispositions, what ill conditions, after Christ’s love hath overcome their hatred, and by his infinite power [infused] some degrees of love; yet they continue so froward, unkind, undervaluing, disobedient, ungrateful, jealous, disloyal; as it must needs be a wonder Christ can love them. How cross, froward, perverse, almost always complaining of and quarrelling with Christ, though he give not the least occasion; quarrel with him for his words, though he express himself never so sweetly. Why was not this promise made more particular? Why clogged with such conditions? It belongs not to me, I can get no comfort from it; he might as well have spoken nothing as spoke thus. And at his actions; why is his promise no sooner performed? Why hears he not my prayers? Why want I that which others have? Why thus afflicted? In vain am I innocent, Psalms 73:12-13.

How unkind. How seldom visit him. With how little delight and affection. How few thoughts of him. How seldom, how coldly entertain him. It was Christ’s spouse who would suffer his head to be wet, before she would wet her foot, and would not stir to the door to let him in, though he wooed her with all sweet importunity. Prefer sinful ease and pleasure before communion with Christ. How often do they stop their ears when he speaks, refuse when he offers, give no answer when he calls, turn their backs when he would embrace!

How do they undervalue him. The highest thoughts of angels do not reach him, the best thoughts of men fall infinitely short of him. What then do those low, hard, disparaging thoughts of Christ, more frequent than those that are better? How do they slight his tokens, prefer the husks of the world before the jewels and dainties of heaven. Who would love such a one, as knows not how to esteem of love, or any expressions of it?

How disobedient. Omit many things that he commands, but do nothing at all as he desires; fail in time, manner, end, &c. Who would endure such a servant as will do nothing as he is commanded? Who would choose such a friend as will do nothing as he is desired? Who would love such a wife as will do nothing as her husband would have her? Yet such a servant, a friend, a spouse, has Christ of man; yet he loves more, unspeakably more, than men; here is the wonder.

How ungrateful. Though Christ give all that is good for them, more than they make use of, more than they desire or can conceive, yet they think they have not enough, they murmur, complain: What, but a drop of comfort, but a dram of grace? And which is more provoking, for worldly things, they often will not so much as acknowledge they have received what Christ has given in possession; judge that counterfeit which has the stamp of an heaven and the picture of Christ on it. What more ingratitude than this! What more odious than ingratitude! Who can love an unthankful person!

How jealous. Not only an unkind but cruel affection. Suspect Christ does not love, when his love is writ with characters of his own blood, when he has bestowed himself and all on them; suspect he will not be constant, notwithstanding all pledges, promises, asseverations, oaths; thinks, upon no ground, that Christ affects others more, because of common favours; misinterprets his expression, thinks that is sent in hatred which is given in love; think he uses them as enemies, when he chastens them as children; when he withdraws for trial, they conclude he has forsaken, forgotten, with Zion, Isaiah 49:14, forgot to be gracious, Psalms 77:9.

How disloyal. Many inclinations to spiritual whoredom, after they are espoused to Christ. Too much eye the world, lust after disavowed vanities; too high thoughts of, and eager affections to, those things that are Christ's rivals. If to look upon a woman to lust after her, be enough to make one guilty of adultery in a carnal sense, then to look upon sin and the world, with delight, desire, &c., will bring the guilt of adultery in a spiritual sense. And then how much cause has Christ to complain, that those whom he loves, and has espoused, do play the harlot with many lovers! How often do these forsake the guide of their youth, and embrace the bosom of strangers. How much are whoredoms multiplied, Ezekiel 16:25. And those that pass for the spouse of Christ are, Ezekiel 16:32, as a wife that committeth adultery, and taketh strangers instead of her husband. O wonder! will Christ's love be carried to one who runs a whoring from him!

How disingenuous. To venture more freely upon what is sinful or doubtful, because the Lord is so ready to pardon. To grow remiss, negligent, indifferent as to endeavours after growth in grace, through mortification, entire self-denial, strict, watchful, holy, fruitful, exemplary walking, because they think themselves sure of heaven. How disingenuous to grow worse by mercy, turn grace into wantonness, presumptuous security.

(8.) How pre-engaged to his deadly enemies, sin and Satan. Who will love one for a wife, who is contracted to another, given her heart and self into his possession, and has long continued so? Such is a man's state, married to sin, in league with Satan, and brings forth fruit, not unto God, but unto them. Fruit unto death, this is the issue of that woful marriage, described, Romans 7:1-25 from 1 to the 5; these have his first love, Christ has but the leavings; they the first fruits, Christ many times but the gleanings; they have the strength of the body and vigour of the soul, Christ but a decrepit body and languishing affections; they have the spirits of the soul and its acting, Christ but the dregs. And will it not astonish any that Christ should be content with these? Is it not a

wonder that Christ can love and marry a soul, who has prostituted itself a long time to that ugly fiend Satan, and that which is more ugly, sin?

(9.) How miserable. Nothing on earth more, or so much. Who would woo misery, or match himself with wretchedness? As there is a strange propensity in every one to happiness, so a strong antipathy and averseness to misery; the very approach of misery begets dread and horror, passions at a great distance from love. You may take an estimate of man's misery from the former particular, not only deprived of beauty, strength, riches, favour, &c., but also of liberty; enslaved to sin and Satan, in bonds and fetters, laden with sins, the chain of darkness, bound in affliction, and in that which is worse than iron; and the poor soul is bowed down under the weight of it, though insensible.

Nay, he is under the sentence of condemnation. The Judge of heaven and earth has passed sentence: 'He that believes not is condemned already,' John 3:8; not only worthy, or in danger to be condemned, or will be condemned hereafter.

Nay, the execution is begun, the sentence is part executed: 'The wrath of God abides on him;' wrath, wrath of God, abiding wrath. He that is under wrath is half in hell. This makes hell and wrath, here and there, differ but in degrees. Oh what misery! Involuntary misery attracts pity, and there is some love in pity; but wilful misery can expect no pity, and none more wilful than these. He involved himself in it, and is unwilling to be delivered; he had rather have his sin with misery, than happiness as the gospel offers it. Let these meet in your thoughts, consider how despicable, &c.; any one of them render Christ's love wonderful, altogether an astonishment.

2. Ground of admiration, is, who, the lover. That Christ should! It would be a wonder if an angel, if any creature, could love such a thing as fallen man, so despicable, decrepit, hateful. Oh! but that Christ should love him, is an astonishment; from six considerations.

(1.) How excellent is Christ! The highest excellency in heaven, and the chiefest excellency on earth, meet in his person. He is 'fairer than the children of men,' Psalms 45:2; nay, fairer than the sons of God. So the angels are called, Job 1:6. That beauty that shines in the angelical nature is not so much as a glow-worm to the sun, when it comes in comparison with Christ. The lustre of it shines so bright, as it dazzles their eyes, and they cover their faces; and all the heavenly company lie prostrate at his feet, adoring, admiring that beauty which they cannot behold.

It is his beauty that makes heaven a glorious place. The sight of it, though it cannot be seen as it is, makes all those both happy and glorious that behold it. This is the blissful vision, which makes the angels blessed. This is it which makes the saints glorious, transforming them from glory to glory.

Imagine that all the beautiful accomplishments, and lovely excellencies, that ever the world saw or heard of, were united in one person; imagine that innumerable more than ever eye saw, or ear heard, or heart can conceive, were added to and mixed with the former; imagine that every of these excellencies were screwed up to the nil ultra of infiniteness; imagine these, and infinitely more than can be imagined, to meet and shine in one person: and this is Christ. All the rays of beauty which are dispersed in heaven and earth are united in him, as in the sun. Every spark of beauty in Christ is an excellency, such as heaven and earth cannot match. And every excellency in him is infinite. See how many wonders! And can such excellency deign to love such baseness?

The bright morning star unite itself to a dunghill? Will such beauty love such deformity? One so fair, us so ugly? Will so great a king, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, marry such a slave? The most high God the basest and most wretched creature? Will happiness and glory match itself with misery and vileness, and infiniteness stoop to that which is nothing? Will he, whose purity cannot behold sin, cast an eye of love upon sinners; and he, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, set his heart upon a worm, a mote? Would you not wonder to see a peerless beauty espouse a deformed hag?

(2.) How glorious. In Christ is not only all beauty, that which is the perfection of beauty, excellency; but that which is the highest degree of excellency, glory. What glory, see Hebrews 1:3, 'the brightness of his glory.' Here is glory, and brightness of glory, and brightness of his Father's glory, i. e. of infinite glory. So that Christ is infinitely glorious. And to that which is infinite nothing can be added. Whatever man can do, he cannot add to the glory of Christ. And since he can get no glory by him, why does he love him? Man's goodness upon this account is no advantage to Christ, as Eliphaz expresses it, Job 22:2.

It is true, relative glory may be increased or diminished, that is, when essential glory is manifested or acknowledged. But this is extrinsecal to Christ; he had been infinitely glorious if no creature had ever seen or acknowledged his glory. Besides, if desire of this might be an engagement of Christ's love, yet it is a wonder that man, of all creatures, should be beloved out of this respect; for there never was any one man upon earth but did more dishonour Christ, than all the creatures on earth besides, from the beginning of the world to the dissolution of it. One man does more dishonour to Christ than the whole creation.

If Christ have any honour by man, yet he has much more dishonour; therefore it is a wonder Christ should love man, for it will be hard to conceive how respect to his glory engages him to it. While man is unregenerate, his whole life is a continual impeachment of his glory. And after he is regenerate, in the services which tend most to Christ's glory, he seems to be more dishonoured than glorified. For there is no one act, but has many sins mixed with it. And do not many sins more impair his glory than one good act illustrates it?

What wonders are here! Will infinite glory love that which is the shame of the whole creation? Will Christ, whose glory is himself, love that which most impairs his glory? Will he pass by them who dishonour him, and set his heart upon those who do nothing else? Who would not wonder to see a king in his glory embrace a toad, and cherish it in his bosom; or run into the embraces of a slave, a traitor to his crown and dignity? But when the King, the Lord of glory, for love to such a one, becomes 'the reproach of men, and shame of the people,' Psalms 22:6; that glory should be content to be covered with shame, and divine excellency to be clothed with ignominy and reproach; what a wonder is this!

(3.) How happy. Christ was perfectly, infinitely happy, before the creation, and had been so to eternity if no man had ever been created. Men love, that they may be more happy, that they may have more delight, or contentment, or abundance, or assistance. Christ stood in need of none of these; men and angels could not contribute more of these to Christ than he enjoyed. His happiness was in the enjoyment of the eternal Father and divine Spirit. To this nothing can be added, from it nothing detracted. For it is himself, and so infinite, et infinito non datur majus. Man is of no use to Christ, as to his happiness. If there had been a million of worlds of men, Christ had

been never the happier. If no man had been created, or all men had perished, Christ had not been, could not be, one jot less happy. Man cannot add so much to Christ as a spark to the sun, or a drop to the ocean, or a point to the vast frame of heaven and earth.

Christ is not only π■νταρκης, but ■υταρκης; not only all-sufficient, but self-sufficient. The creature's sufficiency is from him, his is from himself. The Lord declares how little need he has of man, Psalms 50:9-12. 'The eyes of all wait upon him, and he satisfies the desires of every living thing,' Psalms 145:15-`6. But he is infinitely satisfied in looking upon himself; for in himself dwells all fulness satisfactory to him, and more than sufficient to all his. He stands in no more need of man than the heavens stand in need of a gnat to move them, or the earth of a grasshopper to support it, or the sea of a mote to confine it to its bounds. Fulness emptied! Blessedness cursed! What a wonder! Infinite happiness unite itself to extreme misery! Why does Christ mind that which is useless to him? But, oh why should he love him? Christ is all-sufficient, and perfectly happy without man; why should he shew himself unsatisfied till man be happy? Christ was infinitely, fully satisfied, in the enjoyment of his Father; why would he do, suffer so much, to bring wretched vain man into that blissful enjoyment? Christ had lost nothing if man had perished. Why should he expose his person to so many hazards to save him? Christ had suffered nothing, if man had suffered to eternity; why would he suffer so much to free him from suffering?

(4.) How knowing. Christ is omniscient. He knows all things that may discourage him from love, and nothing is to be known in man but may discourage, and all things that are hateful meet in man. If one that hath nothing lovely can conceal or hide what is hateful, can make fair shows when there are foul deformities, it is less wonder if any be surprised with love of such an one. But when there is nothing lovely in man, and all things that are hateful, and Christ knows this distinctly, exactly, better than man himself, this makes his love a wonder. But so it is, not the least part of man's unloveliness was, or could be, concealed from Christ, Hebrews 4:13, Jeremiah 23:23-24. All the former particulars, and more than we can number, were from eternity presented to Christ at once; not one after another, as to us, but he saw them at one view, and he saw them, sees them always actually. His knowledge is not, as ours, habitual, but actual. His eye is always fixed on them, they are never forgotten, never laid aside, but always present, continually presented to his thoughts; for in him cognoscere et cogitare idem sunt. This consideration adds as much wonder to Christ's love as any. Does he know man's frame, and considers he is but dust; and will he count such a base thing his jewel, his peculiar treasure? Does he weigh man, and find him lighter than vanity; and will no other expression satisfy his love, but 'weight of glory'? He foresaw man would fall, and shatter the beautiful frame of his soul into pieces, and so make himself lame, blind, maimed, impotent, decrepit, unable to do anything pleasing; and would he do and suffer so much for him, who could do nothing for him, so much against him?

He knew he was poor, beggarly, naked. Oh why did he not disdain to look upon so forlorn a wretch? Or if he would shew some pity, would nothing serve to cover that nakedness but his own robe; to relieve that poverty but unsearchable riches, his own fulness? His pure eye saw nothing lovely in man, had a distinct view of all his deformities, his loathsome complexion, and monstrous dispositions. He saw that in him alone of all the earth that his soul hated, and would he love him more than all the earth? He saw he had made himself worse, more deformed than the beasts that perish, and would he so love him as to equal him with angels? He saw man had forsaken God, and was cast off by him and all his, and would his soul cleave to him? He knew man alone, of all

his creatures on earth, did hate him, and would he pass by them who loved him, to love man who only hated him? Would Christ suffer his friends to perish, and save his mortal enemy?

Christ not only knows that man's disposition is froward, unkind, rebellious, disingenuous, ungrateful, and disloyal, but he saw from eternity every froward look, every unkind gesture, every rebellious motion, every disingenuous act, every ungrateful return, every disloyal inclination. He knows, and knew, the hearts and reins, 2 Chronicles 6:30, Psalms 7:10; every heart and every motion of it was as visible to him from eternity as our faces to us when we look most stedfastly one upon another, and infinitely more. He who takes notice of every hair of our heads did take more notice of that which more concerns him, the disposition and inclination of our hearts; if those are numbered, surely these are. He tells not only tears, but wanderings; they are in his book, Psalms 56:8. Would he be kind to those who he knew would be froward? so indulgent to one so rebellious? multiply favours upon such ungrateful wretches, so disingenuous? would he engage himself to one who he knew would play the harlot? He knew how long he would resist before, and how treacherous after. Why would he pity wilful misery, and be at such expenses to make him happy, who he knew had rather be miserable? Why would he love that which he knew was more in love with sin, and accept of that which Satan had so long possessed, and espouse Satan's strumpet?

(5.) How free and independent. There was no necessity, no motive, no engagement upon Christ to love any creature. He enjoyed more liberty than is to be found in the creatures. It was in his choice whether any creatures should have a being, much more whether any should be the objects of his love. There was no necessity he should create anything, none sure that he should love any. The Lord was infinitely satisfied in the enjoyment of himself, and none but himself could be an object meet, proportionable to his love, worthy of it. Why then did he think of making, much more of loving, anything else? Or if he would not confine his love to his own breast, yet in the expressions of it to those other creatures before man, or any men before those that are chosen, as at his liberty. He amongst us, who may love whom he pleases, and enjoy whom he loves, will choose the best, or else it is a wonder.

Here is the wonder of Christ's love, that it does fix upon the worst of creatures, man, yea, and upon the worst of men in some respects.

Christ has not loved those that are most lovely, nor those who can make the best returns, otherwise he had chosen the fallen angels rather than fallen man. The angelical nature is more excellent, and comes nearer to the divine nature, being spiritual. They had more power to answer his love, as being more intelligent and more active, yet when Christ had his choice, see what a wonderful determination his will made: Fallen angels I will hate, but fallen man I will love. He leaves them where they fell, to lie in chains of eternal darkness; but he lifts up man's head, and crowns it with glory and dignity.

Nay, since Christ is so free as he might love whom he pleases, it is a wonder he did not respect the inferior creatures rather than man. For why? They never offended, never dishonoured him, but constantly declare his glory and execute his will. But man is the only offender, the only guilty creature on earth; none else dishonour and offend Christ. Yet when Christ had his choice, see his resolution, and wonder. I will give him eternal life who has dishonoured me; I will suffer them to perish who never offended me! But if man must be the object of Christ's love, it is yet a wonder he

did not love other men rather than those whom he has chosen. Christ has not chosen men of choicest parts, and sweetest dispositions, or greatest ability; not those that might have been more able and more willing to answer his love and do him service. It is a wonderful distinction his love made; the apostle tells us, 1 Corinthians 1:26-28, not the wise, but the foolish; not the mighty, but the weak; not the noble, but the base, despised, nothings, things which are not. We may see it and wonder. Earth will wonder at it while there are men on earth, and heaven while there are saints and angels in heaven.

(6.) How powerful. 'All power is given to him in heaven and earth,' Matthew 28:18, that as Mediator; but as God, he is coequal with his Father, and so omnipotent. He could have created more lovely, more excellent creatures than any [that] are in being. He did not act as natural agents, ad extremum virium; but with as much ease as he made the world could have formed creatures innumerable degrees more excellent than the most excellent piece of his creation, the angels. There is a vast, an unconceivable distance betwixt the angelical nature and infiniteness, therefore there is room enough for variety of creatures inconceivably more lovely than angels, and such as might have been incomparably more serviceable.

Now since man is so extremely deformed and unserviceable, and therefore so unfit, so unworthy to be beloved, it is a wonder that Christ would take notice of man, and not rather think of forming some creatures more meet to be objects of his love. Since man had made himself equal, if not inferior, to the beasts that perish, Christ might have suffered him to perish with them without further regard of him, and chosen a more noble, a more lovely object to please himself withal. It is more a wonder than if a curious florist, having choice of the rarest flowers on earth, should please himself with such weeds as grow in every field; or than if an exact lapidary, being acquainted with the richest mines in the world, and having power to possess himself of what precious stones he list, should content himself with pebbles, and such stones as are to be found in every street; or if one, having that imaginary philosopher's stone, and power to turn every metal into gold, should be satisfied with lead or iron. What a wonder would this be! Much more wonderful is Christ's love, which chooses those who are unspeakably more inferior to the creatures he could have formed than lead is to gold, or a stinking weed to the sweetest and fairest flower. How should we wonder, in the words of the Psalmist, Psalms 8:1-9, 'Lord, what is man?' Thou mightest have made creatures unspeakably higher than both, yet thou wouldst not prefer these before man; suffer these to sleep in their abhorred state of nonentity, and give man a being, and so as to be the object of his love.

(7.) How absolute. The sovereignty of Christ makes his love a wonder. Christ might, without any prejudice to his glory, have annihilated all men if they had continued innocent, and might have justified the act upon the bare account of his sovereignty. Shall not I do with mine own as I list? Matthew 20:15, 'Is it not lawful?' But after sin, he might have executed the sentence of death upon all mankind in that very moment they received life; and, as he threatens Ephraim, Hosea 9:11, might have made the glory of man to fly away as a bird, from the birth, the womb, and the conception. He might have crushed these cockatrices in the egg, and never let them grow up into fiery flying serpents. And this he might have done with advantage to his glory, and thereby much prevented that dishonour which he suffers by their lives. It is the Lord's mercy that every man in his infancy is not consumed. What a wonder of mercy is it that he is loved! What a wonder, when Christ might with so much glory to his justice, power, wisdom, sovereignty, have destroved man,

he should rather choose to love him. When there was, as it were, a contest betwixt mercy and justice, love and hatred, and when there was so much more reason for hatred, so little or none from man for love, yet Christ should interpose his sovereignty rather than man should perish, and, when there was no other reason, love him because he would love him, Deuteronomy 7:7-8, Exodus 33:19. And as if the Lord should say, There is no reason in men why I should love any one of them; I see many weighty reasons why I should hate him; my hatred will be justified before all the world, and my justice much glorified thereby: yet for all this, though there be much reason from my own glory, and all the reason in the world from man utterly to hate him and all his posterity, yet I will not hate him, nay, I will love him.

3. How Christ loves man. This is a ground of much admiration. Its transcendency makes it transcendently wonderful. It is a wonder man has a being, that more excellent creatures did not supply; it is a wonder he is not cut off from the birth, hated; it is a wonder, if Christ should but carry himself indifferently as to the inferior creatures, if Christ did but vouchsafe the least degree of love imaginable to him, in the highest degree hateful. But that he should be so far from destroying, as to glorify him; so far from hating him, as he should love him superlatively, transcendently; not only love him positively, but comparatively!

(1.) Christ loves men more than the best of men love one another. There is more love in Christ than is to be found in the sons of men. There is no human breast can contain so much love as moves in the heart of Christ. The dearest, the most affectionate relation on earth, affords not so much love as is in Christ. Nay, there is as much love in him as in all relations united; nay, there is more love in him than in all relations together. Single out that relation, which of all on earth does most engage, and does usually afford, the most love, and this will fall far short of the love of Christ. Amongst all the examples of love which all generations have afforded, choose that which is most eminent, and rises higher than all the rest, as not to be paralleled; yet even this will fall far below the love of Christ. We may take Christ's testimony in this case, though it be his own: John 15:13, 'Greater love hath no man, than that a man lay down his life for his friend.' But Christ's love was greater than the greatest love of men, he laid down his life for enemies. To die for such, and such a death, makes his death a nonsuch. His love is as far above man's as his thoughts. Love is proportionable to thoughts. But how high are his thoughts above men's? Isaiah 55:9, 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' And those high thoughts were thoughts of love, thoughts of mercy and pardon, Isaiah 55:7. His love comprises, and eminently contains, the love of all relations. The sparks of love, which are found dispersed in several relations, are laid together in Christ's breast, and there break out into a flame, such a flame as many waters cannot quench, Song of Solomon 8:6-7. The love of all relations meet in him, and therefore he is held forth under all relations, that the defect which is in one may be supplied by another, and so his love represented to us as perfect and entire: Matthew 12:50, I will love, as if endeared to me by all relations. He calls us his 'friends,' John 15:15; 'brethren,' Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 2:17, John 20:17; he is a 'father,' Isaiah 8:18; 'I, and the children,' &c., Hebrews 2:13; a 'mother,' Isaiah 40:11, Matthew 23:37, 'As a hen gathereth her chickens,' &c.; 'a husband;' and to shew the strength and vigour of his love, 'a bridegroom.' In Christ there is the faithful love of a friend, the careful love of a brother, the provident love of a father, the indulgent, compassionate love of a mother, the intimate love of a husband. Christ's love is so abundant, as it runs forth in every relation, and supplies and answers the office of all. He

answers the engagements of all, better than the best of men can answer any. He has the love of a friend; this made him willing to become our surety, counsellor, intercessor. His love is a brotherly love; this makes him willing to advise, comfort, sympathise; a paternal love, so he provides, instructs, corrects; a mother's love, so he does nourish and embrace, with complacency, with passion; a conjugal love, so he vouchsafes his presence, his estate, his person, his honours, his secrets, and his guard. Christ's love is propounded as an example. His does perfectly supply all, is not defective in any, as men are. A man may be a loving friend, but an unkind father; an indulgent father, but an unfaithful husband, as David; an affectionate husband, but an unkind brother, as Solomon. But Christ's love is large enough to reach all. No such friend, father, &c., as he.

Christ's love is more than the love of all relations. His love amounts to more than all these summed up together. No such friend as Christ, who would die to make men his friends. No such brother as Christ, who makes all his brethren co-heirs. No such father as Christ, who, to bring his children to life, would die himself. No such husband as Christ, who will love his spouse though she play the harlot. Christ's love is stronger than the united love of all relations. His soul, his heart is more capacious. All the love of the creatures will scarce fill a corner of his heart; it is widened by glory and hypostatical union. His love is stronger, because he has stronger engagements to love; not from us, but from his Father: the strength of a law, a law of God, a law written in his heart, Psalms 40:8. It binds us as much, but is not so much obeyed, because we are not so apprehensive of the strength of the obligation as Christ. He is as much more loving, as he is more apprehensive than we. He is as loving as he is obedient, and his love exceeds ours as much as his obedience. As he fulfilled all righteousness in the highest degree, so he performs all acts of love without the least defect. His love is perfect. It is not a passionate love, but a perfect love, that deserves the name of strong. He is free from all imperfection, that might abate the heat, and eclipse the light of this pure flame. His love is without folly, hypocrisy, selfishness, alteration, diminution, inordinacy, defect, excess. There is a double exercise of love in Christ, but one in the creatures; so it exceeds not only the love of men, but angels. He loves as God, he loves as man. Christ has two natures, and so two wills, both seats of love. The divine will, that is infinite; and so his love is unspeakable, passing knowledge; this fountain of love has no banks, no bottom. The human will, that is shallower indeed; but the streams of love that issue from it are so strong, so pure, as the love of the creatures is but as a drop, a polluted drop, compared with it; for the human nature is glorified, so it is perfect, and all its acts, and this of love. This holy fire flames as high, and burns as pure, as any created flame in heaven. What is earth to it? But besides, it is assumed into union with the Godhead, and so this love transcends both the love of angels and glorified saints. The love of Christ is both the love of an infinite God, and the love of a most perfect glorious man. No wonder if, having such springs, it fill the channel of every relation; but most wonderful that all these streams should run towards man. Oh that Christ should love an enemy with a greater love than any friend! should be more indulgent to a rebel than any father to his son! should be more affectionate to sin and Satan's offspring than any mother to her sucking child!

(2.) Christ loves man more than man loves himself. The love of Christ is more than self-love in man; therefore it is wonderful. The philosopher tells us that self-love is the ground of all love. The reason why man loves others is because he loves himself, therefore it is the greatest love; for quod efficit tale est magis tale. If man loves others because he loves himself, the love of himself must transcend his love to others. This love exceeds all others; but. Christ's love exceeds it,

therefore wonderful.

Besides, self-love is propounded by Christ as a pattern, an example, to which our love to others must be conformed, Matthew 22:39. That which is chosen for example is eminent. No love like self-love amongst men. How wonderful then is Christ's love, which is stronger than this, and exceeds it in many respects! A natural man loves his body, not his soul, and so not himself; for animus cujusque, is est quisque; Christ loves both. Nor does he love his body in reference to eternity, but time only; the love of Christ has a sweet eternal influence on both. He desires no more than sensual happiness, or rational at most; Christ desires he should be spiritually, eternally happy. He satisfies himself with outward enjoyments; Christ gives himself to enjoy. He seeks but corn, wine, oil; Christ would vouchsafe the light of his countenance. He loves death; Christ purchases life. Man cannot truly love himself till he have a spiritual principle of love; this he cannot have but from Christ; wretched man cannot love himself till Christ enable. Now he that makes man love himself, does love man more than he loves himself.

After a man is spiritualised, yet in some respects Christ loves him better. His love of himself is imperfect; Christ's is without defect. Man desires some good things, some bad; Christ purchases and bestows nothing but what is good. Man would be content with some; Christ gives all. Nay, what man can be found who would do so much, part with so much, suffer so much, for his own salvation, as Christ hath? It would be a wonder if Christ, considering the premises, should be willing to love man as much as man loves him. Oh what wonder that Christ should love him as much as he loves himself! Who would expect or desire any more than that he should love him as much as he loves himself? That there should be more love is unreasonable to expect, and wonderful where it is found. It is so in men, much more in Christ.

(3.) Christ loves man more than he loves the angels, in divers respects. It is evident in that distinction his love has made betwixt both fallen by sin. Not one of the fallen angels have, or ever shall taste of his love; but innumerable companies of men are restored to his favour. Those, sometimes bright morning stars, Job 18:7, are thrown into eternal night and utter darkness; and poor pieces of earth, men, are fixed in their sphere of glory. Herein that saying of Christ, by his distinguishing love, is verified, 'The first shall be last, and the last first.' The angels, the first-born of Christ's love, are disinherited; and man, the least of creatures capable of happiness, put in possession. The angels, first in excellency and glory, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, as Jacob of Reuben, Genesis 49:3, now banished from their father's presence, and must never see his face more. Yet men, inferior in all things but rebellion, are reconciled and made his favourites. These nobles of his court are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, Jude ver. 6; and men, his poorest peasants, though equally guilty, are restored into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

It is evident also in the hypostatical union. He preferred men before angels, in that he chose rather to unite the human nature to himself personally than the angelical: Hebrews 2:16, 'He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.' It is wonderful he seemed to love man so much as to neglect his honour, that which we account honour. If the Lord had a mind to disguise himself in the shape of a creature, why did he not rather clothe himself with the robes of angelical perfection than the rags of humanity? Their nature would have been a pavilion of glory, ours but tabernacles of clay. What reason has poor man to say, with the centurion, 'Lord, I am unworthy

thou shouldst come under my roof'? Why would he bear the image of the earthly, rather than the image of the heavenly? Why did he not appear rather in the glory of a star than the baseness of red clay? Oh that he should have such respect to the lowliness of wretched man, to respect him so, as if he seemed not thereby to disrespect himself, yet to neglect the angels!

Oh, there was wonderful love which caused such a strange condescension. He never stooped so low for their sakes, though he might have done it at an easier rate. Their nature does more resemble him; their excellency is more akin to divinity, though many degrees removed. Why did he not appear in the shape of spirit, rather than in the likeness of sinful flesh? They are called gods, Psalms 86:8. And the Chaldee reads it, 'Among the high angels,' 1 Samuel 28:13, Psalms 82:6. But man, poor man, is a worm. We would say a king forgot himself if he should but speak with his hat off to a servant. Oh what did the King of glory when he became flesh, a worm! Elizabeth said with wonder, when Mary came but to visit her, Luke 1:43, 'Whence is this to me!' How may man with wonder cry out, Whence is this, that the Lord himself should come unto me; should come, not to see me, but to be one with me! Where union is affected, there is love; and where the nearest union, the greatest love. No union so near as this in heaven and earth, but that whereby God is one with himself. Nothing is more one with Christ than man but Christ himself. No union so intimate as the hypostatical, but only the essential, ■νωσις ■κρ■. Angels were never so nearly united, and therefore never so much beloved. The reason of this union is a demonstration of this truth. Why did Christ take our nature? The apostle tells us, Hebrews 2:17, 'He was made like his brethren, that he might be merciful.' More like, that he might be more loving; that he might be more tenderly affectionate, more feelingly compassionate. Likeness is the mother of love; and where there is more likeness, there is more love. Christ is now more like to men than angels, therefore in this respect he loves man more, Hebrews 4:15. He is not one that cannot be touched,' &c., μ■ δυναμ■νος συμπαθ■σαι. He became a man, that he might love as man; and had experience of man's necessities, that the expressions of his love might be conformable thereto. But how can he sympathise with angels? Unlikeness in qualities and dispositions makes love keep a distance, much more a total unlikeness in nature. However Christ be affected to angels, as he is God, he is more affectionate to us, as he is man; he is more φιλ■νθρωπος than φιλ■γγελος. It is a wonder he should love man more in any respect, who is in all respects more unlovely.

(4.) Christ loves man more than heaven and earth, more than the kingdom of heaven, more than all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of both, more than the whole world. For earth, it is evident: Matthew 4:8-10, 'The devil taketh him up into a mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then Jesus saith unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan.' As if Satan had said, If thou wilt put thyself into an incapacity of redeeming man, and so lay aside thoughts of loving him, all this will I give thee. But Christ rejects the motion with indignation, 'Get thee behind me,' &c. So I love man, as all the kingdoms of the world are not so valuable in my account as man's salvation; so I love man, as I will not for all the world that he should miscarry; his soul is more dear to me than all the kingdoms of the earth. What will it profit me to gain the whole world if man lose his soul? Heaven and earth shall pass away, rather than one jot of my love shall fade, one soul whom I love should perish.

He loved man more than heaven. It is true, no motion or alteration can be properly attributed to the second person. But since the Scripture ascribes that to the person of Christ which was proper to

one nature, we may warrantably use such expressions of Christ as Mediator. Christ forgot his kindred and Father's house, and came to sojourn amongst strangers, amongst enemies. He came from the height of glory to the lowest step of shame and misery, where, instead of the joys of heaven, the sorrows of hell encompassed him, Psalms 116:3. He exchanged a life of infinite blessedness with a cursed death; and, instead of the praises and adoration of angels, he was entertained with the reproaches and contradiction of sinners. Now, what is heaven but life, glory, joy, happiness? What is hell, but death, shame, sorrow, misery? Christ exchanged heaven for hell, that he might purchase man. His love made him willing to part with heaven, rather than man should be excluded from it; to enter the gates of hell (sufferings equivalent), rather than man should be tormented in it. He feared not hell; he loved not heaven, so much as he loved man. Oh what wonderful love, that would prefer a poor parcel of dust before the glory of the whole world, the happiness and glory of heaven and earth! As man, he lived out of heaven all the time that he had lived on earth; whereas he had right and title to heaven as soon as he was born into the world.

(5.) Christ loves man as himself, in some respect more. Christ loves man more than himself, as man. I do not say Christ as God, or absolutely; but as man, and in some respects. With these cautions, it is a truth, that Christ loves his people as himself.

[1.] He is obliged to it by virtue of that law which himself proclaims: Matthew 22:1-46, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' For this law binds Christ as well as men; for he was 'made under the law,' Galatians 4:4. He acknowledges it his duty to fulfil all righteousness, Matthew 3:15. And for this end he came, to fulfil the law, Matthew 5:19. Christ is bound by the law to love his neighbour; but his people are his neighbours, 'a people near unto him,' Psalms 148:14. No such vicinity or nearness on earth. They live not only near him, but with him, in him, John 13:4-5; and he near, in, with them. They are not only neighbours, but inmates; not only vicini, but propinqui, cognati; allied to him, one with him; so intimately as he and his make but one Christ mystical, 1 Corinthians 12:12. They are his neighbours, and he is bound to love such as himself; and none ever answered the law's obligation so punctually, so perfectly, as he. He that was so observant of the ceremonial law, as appears in his circumcision, but as a beggarly rudiment, would much more obey the royal law, as this is called, James 2:8. If he would not transgress that law which enjoined sacrifices, he would not neglect that law of love which is 'better than all whole burnt-offerings,' Mark 12:33. He that submitted to positive institutions, as baptism, would not disobey moral commands, as this is. He that was so punctual in observing every tittle of the law, would not neglect that which is instar omnium, the whole law; so this is called, Galatians 5:14. Nay, this doth virtually contain both law and prophets, Matthew 22:40. If Christ should not thus love, &c., he would violate the whole law, and run cross to all the prophets, which are to the law as comments on the text. This cannot be imagined without blasphemy. Christ should sin if he should not love his people. He should disobey the law which obliges him, and neglect that which he condescended, by becoming man, to make his duty, if he did not love, &c.

[2.] He advances them to the like state with himself, so far as man is capable. He bestows upon them all things that himself hath, so far as they are communicable. The same natures. He consists of divine and human, and so does man in some sense. That Christ might be like them, he took human nature; that they might be like him, he communicates the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4. Not that it is altogether the same, but that it most resembles it. There is in them θει■της, though not θε■της, some divinity, not a deity; θε■α ϕ■σις, not θεο■ ϕ■σις, not substance, but quality. The

offices. He is king, priest, and prophet; so are they, in the text, ‘kings and priests.’ Prophets, ‘all taught of God.’ The same privileges. Union, as he is one with the Father, so they with him, with both, John 17:21; a kind of περιχ■ρησις, a reciprocal union. Birthright, Christ is ‘first-born,’ Colossians 1:15, Colossians 1:18. They constitute ‘the church of the first-born,’ Hebrews 12:23. Heirship, Christ is ‘heir of all things,’ Hebrews 1:2. They are ‘co-heirs,’ Romans 8:17. Heirs of the world, as Abraham, Romans 4:13. The same enjoyments. The Lord gave Christ all things, John 3:35; and Christ has given them all, 1 Corinthians 3:21, 2 Corinthians 4:15, His own joy, John 15:11, the best of all; not only joy, peace, &c., but his own: John 17:3, ‘My joy fulfilled in them.’ His own peace: John 14:24, ‘My peace’; ‘the peace of God,’ Php 4:1-23. His own righteousness, Jeremiah 23:1-40. He is made so to us, 1 Corinthians 1:1-31, the righteousness of God, Php 3:9. His own grace: John 1:18, ‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.’ He would have it with them. The fulness of God. His own glory, John 17:22; his own throne, Revelation 3:21. Where there is such a community, love makes all common. Where no distinction in expressions, we may conclude some equality in affections. When Christ does for all them as for himself, we may say, he loves them as himself. The difference as to accidental happiness arises not from want of love in Christ, but for want of capacity in man; there is love enough in him to vouchsafe more, if we were capable.

[3.] Christ takes what is done to his people as done to himself. He punishes what any do against them, as though they acted against himself; and rewards what is done for them, as though it were done for him. Nor has he only this account of actions, but of what is less, words, and thoughts, and intimations; he resents all as his own concernments, nay, he takes notice of all omissions of what is due to them, and interprets all neglects of them, as neglects of himself. The people of Christ are parts of Christ, as uxor est pars mariti, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. The head and members make but one body; so also Christ. The intimacy of this union causes a reciprocation of interests. ‘In all their afflictions he is afflicted,’ as the head suffers when the body is tormented. Christ accounts the least injury done to them as done to himself: ‘He that toucheth you, toucheth me.’ You cannot touch them but Christ feels.

He is as sensible of words. There is a verbal persecution, such as that of Esau’s. Christ counts himself wounded, when the tongues of the wicked are sharp swords to his people, Psalms 57:4. Christ is persecuted in all their persecutions: ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’ and this is one kind; nay, affections, though concealed. If any hate a saint in his heart, though he never manifest it, Christ looks on such an one as a hater of himself, 1 John 4:20; so of anger, rage, Isaiah 37:29. Intimations; putting out the finger, Isaiah 58:9; lifting up the eyes in derision or contempt, the Lord counts himself derided and contemned thereby, Isaiah 37:23; nay, Christ puts this interpretation upon thoughts, though they seem not considerable. He that has low thoughts of Christ’s people, in his account has low thoughts of him, Luke 10:16, 1 Thessalonians 4:8. He owns and rewards what is done for them, as done for himself; he accounts himself clothed, when their nakedness is covered; feasted, when their hunger is satisfied; relieved, when their necessities are supplied; entertained, when they are harboured, Matthew 10:40, Matthew 25:39-40. He rewards the least kindness to them as royally as the greatest that is done to himself, Matthew 10:42.

Nay, he has this account, not only of kind actions, but even of every kind look, Matthew 25:36. When they but lend an ear and hear them, in his account they hear him, Luke 10:16.

[4.] Christ does for them what he would have done for himself, and nothing else. He loves another as himself, who is thus despised. Take an instance of it, Luke 20:1-47, where, Luke 20:27, having laid down the rule of loving others as ourselves, he explains it in a parable, Luke 20:30, in which we are directed both to the object and measure, who, and how. He that does demean himself to others, as the Samaritan to that traveller, loves him as himself. But Christ comes up to, nay, goes far beyond this instance. This traveller is a figure of every man by nature, fallen among thieves, the powers of darkness, and his own lusts; stripped of the image of God, knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; wounded by sin, so as there is nothing in his soul but wounds; half dead, his soul dead, deprived of spiritual life, Ephesians 2:1-22; forsaken of all the world, who could neither relieve nor pity him. The Samaritan is a figure of Christ. He sees and pities fallen man; has compassion on him, shews it in curing and accommodating him. Went to him, yea, he came from heaven to shew his love; bound up his wounds, yea, he was willing to be wounded, Isaiah 53:1-12; pours wine and oil, yea, he poured out his blood to wash and cleanse our wounds, applied that for cure; sets him on his own beast; yea, he charges the angels with him, his own ministering spirits; defrays the expenses; he lays down all that law and justice could demand; defrays all at his own charge, though it cost him his life and soul. If the Samaritan, by doing so little, be said to love the distressed man, how did Christ love, who did much more?

[5.] Christ honours man with those relations which engage to as much. A man must love his wife as himself, Ephesians 5:33, as his own body, Ephesians 5:28. A man should sin if he do otherwise. Christ will be far from failing; this love in its highest degree is exemplary in him: Ephesians 5:25, ‘As Christ loved the church.’ Why, how did he love it? He tells, Ephesians 5:28, from whence it follows, that when husbands love their wives as themselves, they love as Christ loves. Besides, man loves his members, his flesh, his bones, as himself, but Christ accounts us so, Ephesians 5:29-30.

(6.) Christ, in some respects, loves man better than himself. These are many.

[1.] Christ would suffer, rather than man should suffer; rather undergo all that man had deserved, than man undergo any. We may imagine Christ’s love expressing itself thus: Is poor man in so forlorn a condition, as none in heaven and earth will pity him? I will take to me the bowels of a man; I have seen his misery, and will sympathise with him. Is man reduced to this woful strait, as either he must suffer, or he that is God, for him? I will fit myself with a body for his sake; I will give my back to the smiters, &c., rather than man shall bear the burden of infinite wrath, rather than the weight of it shall sink him into eternal torments; let it fall upon me, I will bear it, though it make my soul heavy unto death. Rather than man shall drink the cup of the Lord’s indignation, oh let it be put to my head! I will drink it, even the dregs of it, though the bitterness of death be in it. Rather than man shall be cast into that place of torments, to spend eternity in weeping and gnashing of teeth, I will be content to become a man of sorrows, yea, let the sorrows of death encompass my soul. Is the sentence of eternal death passed upon man? Can none else procure pardon or reprieve? Is he, and must he indeed be condemned? Why, righteous is the Lord, but let that dreadful sentence be executed upon me, let me die for him, so as poor man may escape. Will nothing else purge man from that woful pollution which makes him odious to my Father? I will open a fountain in my heart, I will wash him in my blood. Must all the curses of law and gospel fall upon wretched man? Alas! what will become of him? The least of them will sink the whole creation. Let them rather fall upon my soul and body; I will become a curse for man, I will bear it, though it be

the curse both of first and second death. Is the vengeance of eternal fire man's portion? Oh, how can he dwell with everlasting burnings! rather let the flame be turned upon me, though it scorch both body, and torture my soul. Will nothing satisfy the avenger of blood, nothing satisfy justice but blood? Every part of me shall bleed for you; lo, here is my head, my heart, my whole body; let me be scourged, nailed, pierced; yea, let my heart send out its last drop of dearest blood, if man may escape.

[2.] He prayed more for men than himself. Prayer is the pulse of love, by it we may know its strength or weakness. Fervent and frequent prayers are symptoms of strong and ardent affections. Those that pray much, love much; and them most, for whom they most pray. Christ hereby makes it known that he loves his own, not the world; because he prays for them, not for that, John 17:9. And as it is a positive sign, so also comparatively. As by this we know whom Christ loves, whom not; so whom he loves more, whom less. By all his prayers recorded in Scripture, it appears he prayed more for man than himself. Nor was this because Christ had less need to pray for himself. For who had so much need, so great extremities, so many infirmities, temptations, dangers, necessities, afflictions? Who has more need to pray, than he who has most of these? Yet, behold the love of Christ! When all these were rushing in upon him, when God and man, men and devils, death and hell, were at once falling upon soul and body, when he had most need to pray for himself, then he prays most for men. See John 17:1-26, the prayer made immediately before his sufferings; twenty parts of that chapter are taken up with petitions for men, but one verse or two for himself. He desires many things for them, but one for himself. He importunes his Father for union, joy, holiness, perseverance, glory for them; he desires nothing but glory for himself, John 17:1-5. Nor does he desire this for himself alone, but for their sakes; he begs glory of the Father that he may give it them, John 17:22. Oh that Christ should be so mindful of them as he seems to forget himself! That his thoughts should be more taken up with them, than with his own grievous sufferings, that he knew were then approaching, and his apprehension of them most quick and piercing!

[3.] He expressed more joy for their welfare, than himself as man. Love is proportionable to joy; for as desire is love in its motion, so joy is love in its triumph. Joy is as it were the smile, the blossom of love; it is a sign love is well rooted in the heart, when joy breaks forth in outward expressions. We love that best in which we take most pleasure, most rejoice. Desire is love in pursuit, so joy is love in possession. Desire is a sign of some love, but joy of more. Now Christ seems to rejoice more for men, than himself as man. He never took pleasure in anything below, so much as in advancing man's happiness; and never manifested more grief and indignation than when any would hinder or dissuade. What was that wherein he took as much delight as nature does in meat and drink? It was the conversion of souls, John 4:34. But with what indignation does he rebuke Peter, dissuading him from grievous sufferings, sufferings upon which man's happiness depended: 'Spare thyself,' Matthew 16:22-23; 'Be it far from thee.'

It is true, indeed, we seldom find Christ rejoicing in the whole history of his life. He was 'a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief,' and scarce with anything else, a stranger to joys. But when we meet him rejoicing, the occasion is usually, if not always, some advantage to men. We read he rejoiced, John 11:15, χα■ρω δι■ ■μ■ν, it was for man's sake. He says not, he was glad because he should get glory by the miracle, because he should get the honour and repute of one that could work miracles; but ■να πιστ■υσητε, more that it would make them happy, than bring him honour

and reputation. See Luke 10:21, we find Christ in an ecstasy, almost transported with joy, ■γαλλ■ασατο τ■ πνε■ματι, his spirit leaped within him, and as though he had been rapt into heaven, adds praises, his joy breaks forth into thanks. But what is the occasion of both? Not that the devils were subject through his name, not that Satan fell, &c., but that it pleased the Father to make known the mysteries of salvation to despised men. Christ seemed to make man, of all earthly things, his chief joy on earth; this was it which revived him, joyed his heart in the midst of his sorrows and sufferings, that man should be thereby made happy.

[4.] He gave himself for men. This is held forth as an expression of a transcendent love, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:2, Ephesians 5:25. In giving himself for man, he seems to love man more than himself; so we judge in transactions with men. A wise man in purchasing, accounts the things he buys as good, or better than the price; he values, he loves that which he purchaseth more than what he parts with. Christ seemed to make more account of man than himself, when he gave himself for man, when he made himself the price to purchase man. And his affliction is answerable to his apprehension; whom he esteems more, he loves more. 'We are bought with a price,' 1 Corinthians 6:20. Himself is the λ■τρον, Matthew 20:28, 1 Timothy 2:6; the price of redemption, Leviticus 25:51. The Lord, as a sign of his love to Jacob's seed, promiseth, Isaiah 43:3-4, 'I will give men for thee, and people for thy life,' &c.; therefore, he valued, he loved Israel more than Egypt, Ethiopia. He that sold all to buy the pearl, valued it more than all that he had, Matthew 13:46.

Oh how did Christ value man, when he gave himself for him, when he delivered himself into the hands of sinners, enemies, murderers, justice, revenging justice! It had been much if Christ had but given his word, and engaged his person for performance; if he had become a pledge, a surety, hostage; more, if he had given himself to be prisoner, captive for man. But oh! that he should give himself to the death, to die, after he had exposed every member to torture, hands and feet, head, side, heart, face, his whole body! that he should give his body to death, separated from his soul! nay, not only his body, but give his soul too, Matthew 10:28; an offering, Psalms 20:3, a burnt-offering, scorched with wrath, his soul to worse torments than death; his whole man.

[5.] He parted with his dearest concernment, as man, for man's sake. Does not he love that party more than himself, who will part with what is dearest to him for his sake? Christ, as man, did thus. What is dearer to men, what so dear to Christ, as his honour? He made nothing of this when he 'made himself of no reputation,' when he was content to be 'numbered amongst transgressors.' It must needs be more grievous to Christ to lie under the suspicion of the least guilt than man of the greatest; yet did he lie under such suspicions all his life, and in the conclusion was content to be accounted worse than a thief, to have Barabbas preferred before him. Man was more dear to Christ than his honour; but is nothing dearer? Job determines this: Job 2:4, nothing so sweet, so dear as his life; we will part with all, rather than this. But man was dearer to Christ than his life. He loved not his life so much as man. Ay, but is there nothing dearer, better than life? Yes; David tells of one thing better: Psalms 63:3, 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.' This is it I pitch on as the dearest, the sweetest thing that Christ as man, or any creature ever enjoyed. Those that have tasted the ravishing pleasures that spring from this, will part with life, body, soul, all, rather than it. We have instances of some who have been willing to suffer, to part with all; but none that ever would forego this. The world has had worthies who were content to wander in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth; to be separated from the comforts of all enjoyments

and relations, Hebrews 11:38, rather than part with this; willing to wander in sheep skins, goat skins, to be destitute, afflicted, tormented, as Hebrews 11:37, of all, by all, in all. Such as have undergone trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, of bonds and imprisonment, Hebrews 11:36, not counted their lives dear, willing to be stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, tortured to death in flames, and would not accept of deliverance; counted nothing too dear to part with, too cruel to undergo. But if you should come to any of these and ask, You are willing indeed to part with all that man can take from you, and suffer all that the cruelty and malice of men can inflict on you; oh, but will you part with this sense of God's love? will you undergo the weight of his wrath? you would have them answer, Oh, no; let me rather be annihilated; let me rather die ten thousand deaths; let me rather endure all the torments that men, that devils can invent.

Oh, but though this was dearer and sweeter to Christ than ever it was to any saint or angel, yet, for man's sake, he parted with it. The light of God's countenance was even totally eclipsed, when he cried out, 'My God, my God!' And what mountains of wrath did oppress his spirit, when he complained so sadly, 'My soul is heavy unto the death!'

[6.] He advanced man's interest (with submission) more than his own. What more advantage to man than himself? He so disposed of his life and death as whatever he did and suffered was more advantageous to man than himself. You will say,

Obj. Did not Christ get much glory by the work of redemption? Was not this the most glorious administration that ever the world was witness of?

Ans. Yes. Yet the glory the Son of God got hereby was an inconsiderable advantage to him, compared with the benefits thereby purchased for man. The Son of God had lost nothing, if he had wanted this; this did not add any degree of glory to that which he enjoyed from eternity. He was infinitely glorious before the foundation of the world, and nothing can be added to that which is infinite. If he had never assumed man's nature, he had been as glorious as he is now; that glory which accrued to him by this great undertaking is nothing but the manifestation of his infinite glory to men, or the acknowledgment of it by men. Now, what is this or that to the Son of God? what does it add to him? He gets no more real glory de novo by it than the sun gets new light by shining, or honey gets more sweetness by being commended for its sweetness. The sun would be as full of light if no eye saw it, and honey as sweet in itself if no palate tasted it. He might have been without this glory, and yet have been, nevertheless, glorious through want of it. What advantage, then, is it to him, since he might have wanted it without any disadvantage? Oh, but man got real advantages by Christ's undertaking; he was thereby freed from sin, wrath, misery; he thereby recovered the favour of God, the divine image, perfect happiness, and eternal glory. See here, then, how Christ advanced man's interest more than his own, and hereby judge of his love. He got but one advantage; man gets many. That one was but small, and almost inconsiderable; these were great, and of highest concernment. He might have been as well without this; man had better never been than wanted these. He had not been the least jot less happy or glorious without it; man had been eternally wretched and miserable without these. He got nothing that he had any absolute necessity to desire; man got all that he can desire. Oh how evident is it that Christ manifested in this more love to man than himself! And who can consider this without wonder and astonishment?

(7.) As the Father loves him, so does he love man. We can go no higher, nor durst have used such an expression, but that Christ himself uses it, John 15:9. Christ would have this made known to the

world, John 17:23-26. He loves men, as the Father loves him; I say not with the same love, but such a love. As is not a note of equality or identity, but of similitude and resemblance. A love like to that, in respect of duration, perfection, expression.

[1.] Permanency. The Father's love to the Son is everlasting, eternal, unchangeable, like himself, without variableness or shadow of change. So is Christ's to men; he loves them to the end, he loves without end; his love is everlasting, and so is the bond of it, the covenant. It is like the covenant of day and night, Jeremiah 33:20. Night and day shall cease before this; nay, night shall become day, and day night, before his love become hatred. It is like the covenant with Noah, Isaiah 54:8-10. As nothing can separate Christ from his Father's love, so nothing can separate man from Christ's, Romans 8:25, &c.

[2.] Perfection. It is amor ardentissimus, as Piscator calls it; Dilectio absolutissima, as Aretius, without flaw, defect, alteration, diminution; free from these imperfections and gross mixtures which deaden and darken the flames of love in creatures. God's love to Christ is incomprehensible, and Christ's to man passes knowledge, Ephesians 3:19.

[3.] Expressions. Christ vouchsafes to express his love to man, as the Father expresses his love to him. To love is βο■λεσθαι τ■ ■γαθα. The Father wills as much good to Christ, as man, as he is capable of; and Christ wills as much to men as they are capable of. As the Father is one with Christ, so Christ has made man one with himself. Christ desires the like union to evidence the like love, John 17:21-23. Christ is his Father's Son, and believers are Christ's sons, Isaiah 8:18; he is the Father's delight, Isaiah 42:1, they are Christ's, Psalms 16:3; he is the Father's glory, Hebrews 1:1-14, and they are Christ's, 2 Corinthians 8:23; God is Christ's head, 1 Corinthians 11:3, Christ is their head, ibid.; he always hears Christ, John 11:42, and Christ them, John 15:1-27; all power is given to Christ, Matthew 28:18, and by Christ to them, Php 4:13, John 14:12; he has committed all judgment to Christ, John 5:22, Christ makes them his assessors, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; not only Israel, Luke 22:1-71, but the world; not only men, but angels; Christ is the Father's joy, and they are Christ's: 'That my joy may remain in you,' i. e. that I may rejoice in you; he has exalted Christ to be a prince, and they are princes: Psalms 45:16, 'Instead of thy fathers, shall be thy children;' Christ is anointed, ver. 7, so they: Psalms 105:14, 'Touch not mine anointed.'

Quest. 1. Whether Christ's love be universal, extended to all men; or particular, restrained to some?

Ans. No. The Scripture holds forth a restrained, a distinguishing love. The contrary opinion is against the stream of Scripture, and makes Christ's love less endearing, less free, less engaging. The text evinces this; he loves only those who are washed in his blood; all are not washed; those who are made kings and priests, all are not such.

Besides, Christ only loves his own, John 13:1, those that are given him by his Father. All are not his; he knows his, and is known of them, John 10:14, John 10:27; but some he professes he knows not, Luke 13:27. It is the church that he loves, Ephesians 5:25; but all belong not to the church, the most are not in the church, the greatest part in it are not of it. He gives his life for those he loves, Ephesians 5:2; but he lays not down his life for all. This act of love is restrained to those whom he calls his sheep, John 10:11. All are not sheep, for who are those that will be found at Christ's left hand? Christ's flock is a little flock; he intercedes for all whom he loves, John 16:26-27,

and John 17:20. He prays not for all; there is a world that he prays not for, John 17:9; he expresses it when he loves, gives love-tokens; manifests himself, John 14:21-23, not to all, John 14:22, draws near them, abides with them, gives consolation, good hope, peace, 2 Thessalonians 2:16, victory, Romans 8:37. The Lord hates some, Psalms 5:5, Hosea 9:15, Malachi 1:3. There is a common love, which bestows common favours, outward and spiritual; and a special love.

Quest. 2. Who are those whom Christ loves?

Ans. Those that are washed and made kings and priests.

Washed. If so, then you are

(1.) Clean from guilt; sin pardoned; are washed in the fountain, Ezekiel 36:25; not the outside only, Luke 11:39; you are free from pollution, John 13:8-9; your filthy garments taken away; your hearts are no more a nest for unclean birds; cleansed in mind and heart; no unclean thoughts, projects, affections; not so many, so frequent, so well entertained.

(2.) Fearful of being again defiled: 'I have washed my feet, how can I defile them?' Song of Solomon 5:3. Look upon sin as the greatest, most loathsome, contagious, dangerous pollution; fearful of it as of a leprosy, a filthy dungeon, a poisonous ulcer, a miry pit, an infectious disease, a putrefying sore. 'How can I do this great evil, and sin against' Christ his blood? defile that which Christ has taken such pains, and been at such cost, to wash.

(3.) High, endeared thoughts of Christ's love: thankfulness both for the benefit and the price it cost; to be made clean, beautiful, lovely, glorious, the benefit; his own blood the price. It cost not Christ only some words; yet, why should Christ speak for us? he stands in no need of us; nor prayers only, though an inducement; nor tears, why should he concern himself to weep? but blood, his own blood, 1 Peter 1:18-19. Oh who would not love thee? O king of saints! God of love! what thankfulness can answer such love as this? what expressions can manifest such thankfulness as is due for such a favour, of such value, procured at such a rate? The resentment of this is the occasion of the text, the doxology which concludes it. How unworthy shall I shew myself, if I return not love, for such a love as would cleanse me when I was all loathsome, and do it, when nothing else would do it, with his own blood?

Kings. In respect of, 1, state; 2, power; 3, spirit. Free, not slaves to sin, not obey it in the lusts thereof; it has not dominion, it rules not, they resist its motions; Satan does not work them, Ephesians 2:1-22. Plentiful, glorious, conquerors, victorious kings; they conquer the world, sin, Satan. The world is cast down in their minds, out of their heart, cast off in the life.

(2.) Disposition; raised, generous; not low designs, below them, confined to this world, above the serpent's curse. Public, not for private, interest; prefer the designs, the glory of Christ, before private; mind the things of Christ, and not their own.

Priests. They do the act, execute the office of priests, which is, 1 Peter 2:5, to offer spiritual sacrifice; sacrifice threefold: (1.) acts of charity to the body, Hebrews 13:16; we think it best to receive good, but to do good is the best sacrifice; (2.) to the soul; acts of piety, prayer, praise, Hebrews 13:15; much in prayer, and spiritual; not offer the sacrifice of fools, the calves of the lips only, but the mind and heart; (3.) the whole man an holocaust, Romans 12:1; he looks not upon himself as his own, he is bought with a price; and why? to glorify God; and how? by offering and

devoting the body and Spirit.

Quest. 3. Whether Christ's love be personal? whether it respect some sort of men, viz., believers, infinitely and in general, or descends to, and fixes upon, this and that believer in particular, as John, Peter?

Ans. It is personal, whether we consider it in the streams or in the spring; in time or from eternity. By love in the stream, I mean the expressions of his love, those peculiar favours which in time he bestows on those whom he chose from eternity. Love, so taken, must needs be personal; for though the designment of favours (amongst short-sighted men) may be indefinite, yet the actual collation must be personal, both with God and men; for this is an action, et actio est suppositi, which is true both in respect of agent and subject; it must be an individual both that acts and receives the act.

Love in the spring. The eternal act of Christ, together with the Father, choosing some to be the objects of his love, the same really with the decree of election, is personal. This is most controverted. I prove it.

(1.) We have one clear instance proving this love to be personal; therefore we may conclude it universally, because the decree is uniform, not partly indefinitely, partly personal. The instance is brought by Paul, Romans 9:13, out of Malachi 1:2, 'Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated;' so Jeremiah 1:5.

(2.) If Christ loves, i. e. chooses men by name, then his love, his decree, is personal; for there can be no more personal designment than that which is by name. But he chooses men by name; for the Scripture describes election by writing the names of the elect in a book; by a metaphor, taken from those who list soldiers, chosen out for military service, by writing their names in a muster-roll. Luke 10:20, the disciples' names were written in heaven, chosen by name, and enrolled, listed, registered, from eternity; Paul testifies the same of his fellow-labourers: Php 4:3, their names writ in the book of life; and John, Revelation 13:8, says the names of all that worship not the beast were written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world, and Revelation 21:27.

(3.) If Christ choose not particular men, he knows not particularly who are, or shall be, his; because the knowledge of futures, in our apprehension, follows the decree, and depends on it, and is conformable to it; if no decree, no knowledge. But Christ knows his by name, personally, distinctly, 2 Timothy 2:19; he 'calleth his sheep by name,' John 10:3; John 10:14, John 10:27. They say, he knows who are believers; ay, but he cannot know who will continue so, if, as they say, perseverance depend upon their will, left free from all necessity both of Christ's decree and influence; for this granted, the perseverance of a saint in heaven will be uncertain, and so not certainly known to Christ himself; for to apprehend a thing certain which is uncertain is an error.

(4.) Certain men are ordained to condemnation, Jude 1:4, ergo certain men to salvation; but indefinite is uncertain.

Quest. 4. How can Christ be said to love those to whom he denies so many temporal blessings, and visits with such variety of grievous afflictions?

Ans. 1. These outward dispensations were never a sign of love or hatred; much less under the gospel, which promises fewer outward mercies, and bids expect more afflictions. The names of

legal and Old Testament spirits have been of late abused, misapplied; but if they belong to any, it is to those who expect more outward blessings and fewer afflictions, and judge men by these. Solomon's rule is true here: Ecclesiastes 9:1-2, 'No man knows either love or hatred, by all that is before him. All things come alike to all,' &c. Ye cannot conclude that Christ hates you because he afflicts; nor that he loves because you are blessed in temporals. The least drachm of grace is a surer sign of Christ's love than all the kingdoms, all the glory, all the pleasures of the earth, if in one man's enjoyment; and victory over the least lust, than freedom from all outward pressures; otherwise, we might say, Dives was loved, Lazarus hated, and Festus in more favour with Christ, than Paul; nay, Christ himself might conclude he was hated of God, since none more afflicted, or less encouraged, with temporals.

Ans. 2. Wants and afflictions are so far from being arguments of Christ's hatred, as they are many times evidences of his love. For afflictions it is evident, Hebrews 12:6-8, Christ thereby conforms us to himself, and makes us partakers of his image, holiness, Hebrews 12:10-11. And for wants I thus prove. The people of Christ want nothing but that which is not good, for he has promised to withhold no good thing. Why does a father envy his child that which is not good for him, but because he loves him? From wants outward you should conclude the employment* of what you want is not good, rather than the want of what you would enjoy is from hatred. It is no defect of love in Christ, but defect of goodness in what you want, that makes you want it.

Quest. 5. Whether is love properly attributed to Christ, or metaphorically?

Ans. Both: metaphorically as he is God, properly as he is man.

(1.) Love, as it is an human affection, cannot be properly ascribed to Christ, as he is God, because it includes imperfection. That rule is true, Nihil est in intellectu, quod non fuit prius in sensu, our understandings apprehend nothing but what is first some way offered to our senses. Now, God being an entity at the furthest distance from sense, it follows that our apprehensions of God, taking their rise from things sensible, are not only inadequate, falling infinitely short of comprehensiveness, but improper and analogical, and no otherwise true but by analogy. Now, the Scripture, speaking linguâ humanâ, and condescending to our capacities, describes the spiritual essence of God by things sensible, and so uses many metaphors taken from things we are best acquainted with. Sometimes an ■θιοπο■α, 1 Kings 22:19, Psalms 68:33; an ■νθρωποπαθε■α, when it ascribes hands, eyes, feet; an ■νθρωποπαθε■α, when it attributes passions to him, as joy, anger, sorrow, jealousy, hatred, love. So that when we hear any of these ascribed to God, we must not conceive them to be in him as in us, but must rectify our apprehensions according to the old rules, per viam negationis, separating all imperfections from them, et per viam eminentiœ, attributing to him whatsoever is purely excellent without any mixture of imperfection. So love in God is not a passion, a perturbation, accompanied with any corporeal motion of blood and spirits, but a pure, perfect, eternal act, whereby he wills good to us.

(2.) Love may be properly ascribed to Christ as he is man; for so he has soul and body, will and affections, blood and spirits, as well as we. Only we must give him a large allowance of pre-eminence; the human nature and the grosser part of it, the body, being not only made glorious and spiritual, as the bodies of the saints shall be, but also assumed into union with Godhead, and so elevated to perfections many degrees above the glorified saints. So that love is properly in Christ's human nature as in ours, both in respect of its rise and operations, beings and workings. It

differs from our love in respect of the manner of its existence and operations, quoad modum, without, Inordinacy. Being guided not only by the dictates of right reason, but infinite wisdom without reluctancy.

Perturbation. It is no grievance, no pressure to him, as sometimes to us, but a sweet, quiet, regular motion of his perfect human will.

Detriment. Though it move blood and spirits, yet it inflames not that, nor wastes or impairs this. Its motions are innocent, serene, pacate, and spiritual, in that sense as his body is spiritual, and not as in infirm men.

Quest. 6. Whether Christ's love be infinite?

Ans. Christ's love may be considered four ways: (1.) in its prime act, (2.) in its termination, (3.) its manifestation, (4.) its duration.

(1.) The prime act of divine love, velle bonum, Christ's good will, willingness to do good. It is an act of the divine will, an immanent act, and so in God. Quicquid est in Deo, est Deus. God is infinite, therefore love is infinite. In this sense God is love, and love is the same really with God, and therefore infinite.

(2.) As it is terminated to its object. We considered it before simply and precisely in itself without its object, but here as it is determined to it; not simply as good will, but as good will to this or that creature. In respect of this termination, it is not infinite, for that which is infinite is essential and necessary to God; but this is not necessary, but an act of liberty; for it was in God's choice whether he would make any creature, and consequently whether he would love any creature. Whatever is contingent is not God, nor infinite. Indeed, Christ's love was necessarily terminated upon his Father, and so his love to the Father is infinite in both respects, act and termination; but to us in the former respect only.

(3.) In the manifestation, in respect of the expressions of it. The expressions of Christ's love are not infinite, for they are transient acts, and so not in God; and whatsoever is not in God is not absolutely infinite. Besides, they are actually received by us, therefore not infinite; for that which is finite (as we are) is not capable of what is infinite.

Obj. But this is one expression, to give himself; and he is infinite, therefore expression is so.

Ans. This giving of himself is the cause, not of identity, but of interest only. The creature is not the terminus or object of that act of giving himself, but God's paternal authority as founded on the law of nature; the creature only enjoys the effects of offering or sacrifice. He is infinite in excellency and value, but our enjoyment of him is not infinite. All the acts of enjoyment are finite; he gives no more actually than we enjoy; we enjoy no more than we are capable of.

Christ's love is infinite, yet he loves not infinitely. There may be infinitus amor, and yet it does not infinite amare; even as he hath infinitam potentiam, and yet doth not infinite agere; has infinite power, and yet does not act infinitely. If he should act infinitely, he should act ad ultimum sui posse, as natural agents do. Every act is from infinite power, but the actings of that power are limited by his will as to the existence of things; and in his actings towards things existing, he limits or accommodates himself to the nature and capacity of those things, so that the actings and

effects are not infinite, though the principle be. Semblably he loves infinitely, but does not express that love infinitely; the objects are not capable of infinite expressions. The reciprocal expressions of love betwixt the Father and Son are infinite, but not betwixt Christ and the creatures. That must be infinite to which love makes infinite expressions.

(4.) In duration it is infinite. It is eternal, without beginning, without end, and so has no limits as to continuance, Ephesians 1:4, Matthew 25:1-46, Isaiah 54:8, Jeremiah 31:3, 'everlasting light,' Isaiah 60:19-20, 'everlasting joy,' Isaiah 51:11, 'everlasting salvation,' Isaiah 45:17, 'everlasting covenant,' Jeremiah 32:40; so that in two respects Christ's love is infinite, viz. as to act and duration; in two respects not infinite, as to termination and manifestation.

Quest. 7. What must we do to render us capable of Christ's love? What will make us lovely in his eye?

Ans. 1. You must be like him. Likeness is the greatest attractive of love, ■μο■οτης τ■ς φιλ■ας μ■τηρ, that which brings forth and nourisheth love. Christ likes none but those that are like him. The more likeness, the more love. This was the first act of eternal love: Romans 8:29. 'Predestinated to be conformable to the image of his Son.' And this is the first expression of love in time, makes us like him. And both are in order to all the expressions of love that must continue to eternity. Till you have his likeness, you are not capable of his love. There may be amor benevolentiæ, good will, before, but not amor amicitiæ or complacentiæ. He will not use you as friends, nor can his soul take pleasure in you till you be like him. But what will make you like him? How shall we resemble him? Holiness, this is Christ's resemblance, likeness, his image: Colossians 3:10, 'Renewed after the image,' &c. What this renewing is you find, Ephesians 4:23-24. Holiness is the image of Christ. The apostle mentions two images, one whereof every man bears, 1 Corinthians 15:49, earthly and heavenly; that of the first, this of the second Adam. Christ is the image of the invisible God, and holiness is the image of Christ. He that is holy is a living image of Christ. Christ sees himself in a holy soul, and cannot but love it; he is Χριστο■ ■ικ■ν ■μψυχος, a lively portraiture of Christ.

It is true nothing finite is properly like to Christ, as he is God; for likeness is founded in proportion, and there is no proportion where the distance is infinite. But of all things in heaven and earth, nothing more resembles divinity and God himself than holiness; therefore it is called 'the divine nature,' 2 Peter 1:4. But consider Christ as he is man, and that holiness which is the glory and ornament of his soul is the same in specie, in nature, with that which is in his people, differs only in degree. No created being is so like Christ as he that is holy; he sees nothing in man or angels so beautiful, so lovely.

If then you would have Christ to love you, you must be like him; if like him, you must be holy. Holy thoughts, this is the way to have the same mind in you, Php 2:5; holy affections, so your heart will resemble Christ; holy speeches and actions, so holy as he was in all conversation, 1 Peter 1:15. Set Christ before you as a pattern, strive to imitate him, express his virtues, 1 Peter 2:9; set the life of Christ before you as a copy, and draw your lives after it; eye it in every act, and strive to bring them to conformity; meekness, Matthew 11:29, no passionateness; patience, 1 Peter 2:20-21, Isaiah 53:7, returning not evil, reviling, hatred; self-denial, Php 2:3, &c. Be his disciples, learn it by his doctrine and example. Humility, Matthew 11:29, Zechariah 9:9, in the lowest condition, or worst accommodation; activeness, Acts 10:38, John 4:34, delightfully, constantly; love, Ephesians 1:1-2;

spiritualness, or making spiritual use of common things: these graces are the sparks of holiness, let them shine. Those that hate, contemn, jeer holiness, under what name or pretence soever, shall never taste Christ's love; nay, those that are without it, though they never arrive at such a height of wickedness as to contemn it, shall never see God, Hebrews 12:14. They shall be so far from partaking of the intimate expressions of his love, as they shall not be admitted into his presence, not so much as to see him. Be sensible of the want, bewail the neglect; love it, thirst after it, endeavour by all means to perfect it, 2 Corinthians 7:1; hear, John 15:1-27, meditate, pray, and prefer it, as Solomon did wisdom, 2 Chronicles 1:10-11.

Ans. 2. Avoid all that Christ hates. If you love, approve, entertain that which is hateful to Christ, how can he love you? What is that which Christ hates? The psalmist, Psalms 45:7, tells us, making it one of Christ's attributes, to hate wickedness. The lusts of your hearts, and sins of your lives, is that alone which is hateful to Christ. Sin is the only object of Christ's hatred; he hates nothing but sin, or nothing but for sin. He loves many things, but this is that one thing which he hates. The world had never known any thing but love in Christ, had it not been for sin. If the devil himself were without sin, Christ would love him; but if the most glorious angel in heaven sin, Christ will hate him. Christ has much reason to hate sin, for it murdered him, exposed him to the dreadful wrath of his Father, and is the only, the greatest, the most odious deformity, that his pure eye sees in the world. It is more hateful than a toad to us, more loathsome than the vomit of a dog, more noisome than the stench of an open sepulchre. Therefore while you let sin lodge in your hearts, while you stain your lives with it, Christ will not, cannot love you. So long as you harbour malice, pride, averseness to God, contemn the gospel, neglect ordinances, profane Sabbaths, covetousness, contention, intemperance, uncleanness, deceit, never expect any love from Christ, nothing but dreadful expressions of hatred. No love from Christ, till at enmity with sin, till you fight against, endeavour to mortify it, have continual war with it. As Christ hates iniquity, so the workers of iniquity, Psalms 5:5. You must not love them, so as to be intimate with them, delight in the company of evil doers, openly profane, scorners of godliness, obstructers of the power of it, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. If you love so near relations to wicked men, Christ will have no relation to you. If you would have communion with Christ in sweet acts of love, you must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor those that act them.

Ans. 3. Comply with his will, obey his commands. This is a powerful inducement amongst men, compliance, observance, officiousness; and Christ engages both his and his Father's love upon this account, John 14:21, John 14:23. That you may comply with his will, you must be careful to know it. He is as odious to Christ who will not know what he should do, as he who will not do what he knows. It is as provoking disobedience to refuse to know Christ's will, as to refuse to do it; equally threatened, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. Wilful ignorance is so far from excusing, as it aggravates sin; brings a double guilt, guilt of disobedience, and guilt of the most provoking ignorance. Ignorance is wilful, when the means of knowledge are offered, but neglected.

Ignorance excuses none who have the means and the use of reason. How little ignorance is there amongst us, that is not wilful and inexcusable; do not know, because they will not use the means? Nor will use of means suffice; it must be with all diligence, Proverbs 2:3. Careless use is little better than neglect. There is contempt in this, when Christ speaks to you, to hear as though you heard not; when Christ writes to you, to read as though you read not, this is to affront Christ; and will he love those that affront him to his face? But suppose you know Christ's will by the use of

means; yet if you close not with what you know, you are as far from Christ's love. He that knows, and does not, shall be beaten, Luke 12:47; he must expect no other expressions of love. Christ loves the truth so well, as he will not love those that imprison it. You may see how Christ resents disobedience against knowledge in Saul, 1 Samuel 15:23; it is as witchcraft or idolatry. Where there is this disobedience, there is a covenant with hell and death, a league with Satan; there is an idolising ourselves, preferring our will to God's, idolatry. To disobey the gospel, is to be disobedient to the heavenly call, it is to neglect salvation. Oh what madness is it to prefer a lust before your own salvation! To prefer a lust before the love of Christ, before Christ himself! What a heinous provocation, to love sin more than Christ, to prefer sin, the vilest and [most] abominable thing in the world, before God blessed for ever! How can Christ love such, who love that more than him which murdered him, and will damn them? Yet this you do in disobedience. The least jot of Christ's will is of more value than heaven and earth, and you prefer that which is the worst thing in hell before it. The way to win Christ's love, is to use all means to know his will, that you may obey it; and to obey it as soon as you know it, immediately, impartially, cheerfully. He loves a cheerful doer, as a cheerful giver. That which comes by constraint is servile, unacceptable. Expect not the love of sons, while you act as slaves, and serve him not but from fear or force, unless it be that of love. Immediately, consult not flesh and blood, with carnal interests, with base lusts, with outward disadvantage or respects; then your obedience will be partial, not do what Christ commands, but what these advise. As good not obey at all, as not obey in all; you must not leave a hoof; you must be more respecters of duties than of persons. It is universal obedience that engages Christ's love. Obey in all, especially the principal commands of Christ and the gospel, faith and repentance.

Ans. 4. Converse much with Christ. Be much in his company. Labour to be, as David, continually with him: ■προσηγορ■α πολλ■ς τας φιλ■ας δι■λυσε. Estrangement, neglect of converse, dissolves friendship, occasions a consumption of love amongst men, and so it will be with Christ. There is both an assimilating and an attractive virtue in communion. It will make you like Christ, and so make you capable of loving expressions; and it will engage, attract, kindle Christ's love, and so make you actually partakers of it. Delight then to walk with him, to meet him, to view his beauty, to hear his voice, to taste his sweetness. And since Christ delights to see the face and hear the voice of his spouse, Song of Solomon 2:14, therefore you must take all occasions to present yourselves before him, in the most lovely and delightful posture, that the King may take pleasure in your beauty, that your eye be fixed on him, he may be ravished with your eye. But where shall we meet with Christ? Where may we converse with him? Even in his ordinances; where these are, there is Christ's presence-chamber; prayer, hearing, reading, meditating. When you attend on the word preached, you see him, and hear his voice. Here are those sweet interviews and colloquies, wherein Christ vouchsafes to manifest his love familiarly. He has writ his mind, yea, his heart, in the Scriptures, and there you may read the sweetest strains of love that ever the world knew; and when you read those heavenly lines, you should look upon them as a letter of love sent from Christ. In meditation, there you may have a full gaze at Christ, and if your minds be fixed, you may see every lineament of him who is altogether lovely, whose beauty ravishes the angels, makes them seraphims, flames of love. When you are using these ordinances, you are in Christ's banqueting-house; he spreads over you the banner of his love; there he feasts his people, stays them with flagons; there he admits them to familiar embraces, kisses them with the kisses of his mouth, and vouchsafes such manifestations of his love as are better than wine, sit down under his shadow with great delight. Ordinances are the mirrors wherein

Christ makes himself visible; herein, as in a glass, we may see the glory of Christ, and no other way, till in heaven, where we may see him face to face. These are as Zaccheus's tree: when we get our hearts raised, our souls climb up, and with advantage see Jesus; and there he will spy you, come feast with you, and bring salvation to your house.

Delight in ordinances, and manifest it by being frequent in them. Be much in prayer; be not satisfied in ordinances, without his presence, except you may see and enjoy him. Depart not out of his presence, till he smile, till he speak kindly, speak to your heart, till he testify his presence by impressions, light, heat, enlargement; expressions, the still voice speaking peace, accepting. That you may enjoy his presence, that he may delight to meet you, you must put your souls into that dress that is most lovely; come with inflamed affections, with acted graces, so you will appear in the beauty of holiness. This is the beauty wherein Christ delights. Nothing so lovely as a soul of a gracious, a spiritual complexion waiting on him; to him will he look.

Ans. 5. Take heed of unkindnesses. There is so much affinity betwixt love and kindness, as they are often joined in Scripture. Love, amongst men, will not endure unkind returns; how much less Christ, who hath infinite reason to expect the best requitals?

(1.) You are unkind when you undervalue Christ. Contempt is the greatest unkindness. You contemn Christ when you set him at nought. He is then ■ξουθεν■θεις, set at nought, when you prefer that before him which is worse than nought, sin. When you set little by him, that is properly ■λιγωρ■α, when you have a higher esteem of that which is little worth, outward enjoyments, relations, interests; when these have more of your thoughts, more of your affections, than Christ. He is contemned when anything is more loved, desired, delighted in, feared, than Christ; when any object is more lovely, any happiness more desirable, any enjoyment more delightful, any suffering more fearful, than Christ's absence or displeasure.

(2.) When you refuse his offers. He has writ, not a letter, but a large volume of love; will you cast it behind your back? He sends ambassadors to woo, to beseech you to be reconciled to his Father, and accept of him for your husband; you will not give audience, much less obedience; despise both messengers and message. He sends his Spirit to solicit you, makes many motions of love to your hearts (how often have you had experience of it?) you quench the Spirit, reject his motions. He comes and knocks at your hearts, and stands till his head be filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, Song of Solomon 5:2. You will not open, send him away without admission, while sin is welcome, has quiet possession, and kind entertainment. He stretches out his hands all the day long, and stands with open arms, entreating you to come and be embraced; but you refuse, delay, and weary him out with unkind denials or excuses. He sends his servants to invite you to the marriage-feast of the Lamb, tells you all things are provided for your delight and happiness, all is ready, and stays for your coming; but you are so busily employed in the world, you cannot, you will not come; and force him to that sad complaint, 'Ye will not come to me.' Oh how often are you guilty of this!

Ans. 6. Get and keep up love to him. Love is attractive of love. Christ condemns those as worse than publicans that return not love for love, Matthew 5:1-48. He will be far from that which he condemns us for. He that could think thoughts of love to those that had no affection for him, will not fail to love those who love him, Proverbs 8:17. Those who shew they love him by seeking him diligently, as we are wont to seek that which our heart is on, shall find him ready to express his

love to them. His nature, so gracious, so affectionate, so compassionate, might assure us of this, without his word; but to give us all assurance of it, he has engaged himself by promise again and again, John 14:21. He will manifest himself to him in all the riches of his love, John 14:23. Both Father and Son will shew that they love such an one, by visiting him with loving-kindness, coming to him for that purpose, and staying with him, as we would do with those whom we most love. He promises here such expressions of love on earth, as he vouchsafes in heaven, though not in the same degree. For how does he express his love to the saints in heaven, but by abiding with them, and manifesting himself to them? The love of Christ should be both the pattern and the motive of our love to him. We should labour to love him as he loved us, and be constrained to love him because he so loved us. Endeavour to love him in all that is his. That is the way to have his love reach us in all our concerns. In his person; for the infinite excellencies and loveliness of Christ. To love him only for the advantages we have by him, is such a love as we ourselves care not for from others. We value not his love, who only affects us for his own sake, for what he may get by us. That is a selfish love, and comes short of the love of true friendship. He is not a friend indeed who loves you not for yourself, but only for what he expects from you. Christ challenges the Jews for something like this, Luke 6:26. They followed him, not because they had seen the miracles, whereby he had discovered the excellency of his person; they loved him not, but for the loaves. If Christ had not loved us, but for what he expected from us, what advantage he might have by us, he had never loved us at all. In his offices. Though we must not love him only for the happiness we expect from him, yet we must love him for that too, and shall be most inexcusable if we do not. The spring of those blessings he enriches us with, is his offices, and the execution of them.

Love him as he is a priest for ever. A priest who made himself a sacrifice for you, to expiate your guilt, satisfy justice, and deliver you from wrath; who washed you, &c., in his own blood, and is still presenting it; he ever lives to make intercession.

Love him as he is a prophet. To discover himself, to make known his will, to shew the way to life, as ready to guide you by his counsel.

Love him as a king. One who will rescue you from your spiritual enemies, subdue your iniquities, conquer your hearts for himself, bring you under his government, so as in all to make you more than conquerors.

Love him in all ways: those wherein he proceeds towards you, and those wherein you should walk with him; the former, whether they be pleasing or afflictive. When his ways are apparently mercy, the goodness, the sweetness of them should command love from you, Song of Solomon 1:3, Psalms 31:16. When they are afflictive, they are mercy too, though sense will not always let you discern it. There is love in them, when they make you smart, such love as made the apostles triumph: Romans 8:1-39, ‘In all these things we are more than conquerors.’ Why more than conquerors? Because the love of Christ was in them. Yea, when there is some anger in them, there is love also, Revelation 3:19. We are slow to believe this, and that may be the reason it is so oft repeated in the Old and New Testament, Proverbs 3:11, Hebrews 12:5. As he shewed his love by being afflicted for us, so also by afflicting us. And that love he shews should engage us to love him, even in the furnace of affliction, there should our love to Christ flame out, even when the waves and the billows go over us. The opposition should fortify love, many waters should not quench it. And love him too in the ways wherein we should walk with him,—the ways of holiness,

self-denial, mortification. These are not grateful to the flesh; but they are the ways of Christ, the ways of him that loved us. And, therefore, he made them our ways, and leads us into them, because he loves us; and, therefore, in despite of our corruptions, they should be lovely to us. They should be ‘ways of pleasantness,’ because they are ‘paths of peace,’ Proverbs 3:17. His commandments are the paths of life, none of them should be grievous. It is the yoke of Christ, his burden which seems heaviest: he lays it on us, because he loves us; and shall not that consideration make it light and easy? When he came into the world for us, if he had declined that which was grievous to flesh and blood, that which was difficult, and expensive, and hazardous, and meddled with nothing for our sakes but what was cheap, and easy, and safe, and pleasing, oh what had become of us, our redemption had never been effected! Oh, but his love to us made him count nothing too costly, too difficult, too grievous! Let us likewise shew our love to Christ, in counting no part of his ways, no part of our duty, too hard, or too expensive, or too hazardous, or too grievous. How can we say that we love him, if we be so disaffected to any part of the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of Christ, who loved us? Let us resolve to subdue our own wills, to cross our carnal inclinations, to quit our worldly interest, to oppose our own humours; to follow him in painful, and costly, and reproached, and hazardous services; to abate him nothing of what he expects, to spare ourselves in nothing that he requires of us. Then shall we shew that we love him indeed, and find that he loves ns; otherwise we are in danger to be found no better than pretenders to Christ and his love, and such as he will not know, nor own.

Love him in his people. In them all who have anything of his image and likeness, however sullied with weaknesses and infirmities, or blotted with distasteful carriages, or soured with the crabbedness of an unhappy temper, or varying from you in some particulars of practice or opinion, 1 John 4:10-11, 1 John 4:20-21; say not, they are cross, and froward, and peevish, and selfish, and every way unworthy, and every way disobedient; how can I love such? Oh, but might not Christ have said this of you, and much worse? If he had refused to love you on this account, what had your condition been? And if he would not be hindered from loving you, when there was unspeakably more in you to forbid his love, shall some little things (little in comparison of what Christ might have objected against you), how great soever you think them, hinder you from loving Christ in his members? Say not, I cannot think them his members, they are so unlike him; for if you look well into your own hearts and ways, may not you see much to make you think yourselves not like him? May not Christ see therein much more to make him judge you very unlike? Take heed you venture not to dismember Christ, out of any little pretences or prejudices. He will take it better at your hands to love those as his, who are not, than not to love any who are his indeed, though they seem not so to you. You love not Christ, if you love not his people; and if you love not him, you cannot expect love from him.

CHRIST’S SACRIFICE And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice, &c.—Ephesians 5:2.

He gave himself for us. The next thing considerable in the text is the expression of Christ’s love; he gave himself for us, &c. To open this, and offer it to you distinctly and clearly, take notice of the several words and parts of the expression.

1. He gave. Gifts are expressions of love. We judge of love by the quality or value of the gift. He that loves heartily gives freely, and he that loves much gives much, if he have much to give. We

conclude with reason that he who gives us things of great value, and gives freely, loves us answerably, has a great love for us. Now what did Christ give?

2. He gave himself, nothing less than himself; and that is more, incomparably more, than if he had given all the angels in heaven, all the treasures on earth for us; more than if he had given all the works of his hands. It is more than heaven and earth together; as much more than the whole world as the whole world is more than the drop of a bucket, and the small dust of the balance; for the disproportion is greater betwixt the Son of God and the whole world, than betwixt the whole world and the drop of a bucket. The small dust of the balance is as nothing to the universe, and the universe is as nothing compared with the Son of God. And it is himself that he gave; not so little a thing as the whole creation, but, that which is infinitely more and greater, himself. That word comprises more than ten thousand worlds amount to.

It is exceeding much that the apostle says is given us; and it will appear, if we view the several parcels of the gift, in the account we have thereof, 1 Corinthians 3:22. Not only Paul, &c.; not only life and death, but the world; not only the world, but that which is to come, things present and things to come. No less than two worlds! Could the heart of man desire more? Oh but he has given more, infinitely more! When he gave himself, he gave more than ten thousand worlds. All is yours. Ay, but that all, and the great contents thereof, are nothing compared with himself, and he gave no less than himself.

3. How did he give himself? He did not give himself as we are wont to give, nor did he give himself as he gives other things. But as the gift was extraordinary and transcendently great, so was his way of giving it. As the greatness of the gift, so the manner of giving it, expresses a great, a transcendent love. He gave himself, not in the common way of giving; but, as the text shews, his giving was an offering of himself. ‘He gave himself an offering for us.’ But then,

4. How did he give himself as an offering for us? What kind of offering did he make himself? There are several sorts of offerings mentioned in Scripture. We meet with offerings that were not sacrificed, and also with offerings that were sacrificed.

Offerings that were not sacrifices. Such were the persons and things which were devoted or dedicated unto God for the service of the tabernacle and of the temple. Thus the vessels and utensils given up and set apart for the service and ministration under the law are called offerings, Numbers 7:10, and those offerings are specified, Numbers 7:13, &c. Silver chargers, bowls, and spoons; and not only things, but persons are called offerings when set apart; for thus the legal ministry, Numbers 10:10-11, Numbers 10:13. The other sort of offerings were sacrifices, such as were offered so as to be consumed and destroyed, and to be deprived of life, if they were things that had life. So that there is a great difference betwixt these offerings: the former were offered so as to be preserved, the latter were offered so as to be killed or consumed. For that is the true notion of a sacrifice; it is an offering daily consumed. And such an offering was Christ, such an offering as was a sacrifice, as the text shews. He gave himself to be sacrificed for us. ‘He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.’ He was slain, and his blood shed and poured out. It had been much for the Son of God to give himself for us as an offering in any sense, though not one drop of his precious blood had been shed, though he had not suffered in the least. Oh what manner of love was it, that he would offer himself as a sacrifice for us; that he would be slain, and so far destroyed for us as the sacrifices who lost their lives in the offerings! But,

5. What kind of sacrifice was it? There were several sorts of sacrifices under the law. They are commonly reduced to two heads.

(1.) Some were eucharistical, sacrifices of thanksgiving, offered as thankful acknowledgments of deliverances, or other mercies obtained.

(2.) Others were propitiatory, sacrifices for expiation, to make atonement, to expiate guilt, and procure pardon and reconciliation. Now Christ offered himself a sacrifice, not of thanksgiving; none have entertained, or can give any reason, for such a conceit. But he gave himself for us a sacrifice for expiation, to expiate the guilt of our sin, to procure pardon, and make our peace with God. And this appears by the phrase which the apostle here uses to explain and illustrate it; it was offered to God for a sweet-smelling savour, which is an expression by which propitiatory sacrifices are wont to be described in Scripture. In the first place, where we meet with it, it is applied to Noah's sacrifice, Genesis 8:21. This was a sacrifice for propitiation; for upon the offering it the Lord declares himself appeased, and that though the imaginations of man's heart be evil, yet he will not again curse the earth; which words express that God was atoned with the sacrifice which Noah offered. The word signifes a 'savour of rest;' for though the Lord was moved with anger against the world, so as to bring a deluge upon it, yet now he would rest from his anger, his wrath did cease. And this is the proper effect of a propitiatory sacrifice, when it prevails and is accepted. And elsewhere also these sacrifices for expiation are set forth by this expression, Leviticus 1:9, Leviticus 1:15, Leviticus 1:17. That the sacrifices or burnt-offerings prescribed in this chapter were piacular is plain, ver. 4. To make atonement was the proper end and design of sacrifices for expiation. The Socinians, [who] will not upon any terms allow the death of Christ to be such a sacrifice, and so strive to illude* every text which we allege to prove it, do use this evasion here. They say the phrase is used of free-will offerings; these are the sacrifices which are commonly said to be a sweet savour. But there is no reason in this, for sacrifices for expiation were free-will offerings, as much as those for thanksgiving; and those sacrifices particularly which I have instanced and proved to be piacular, viz., that of Noah; for it was not offered at a time determined by God, for anything appears, and that is it which makes the difference between free-will offerings and the solemn stated sacrifices. And for those, Leviticus 1:1-17, the text is express, Leviticus 1:3. Or if they should allege that this phrase is applied to peace-offerings, yet this would not serve their turn; for peace-offerings for the congregation had something of expiation in them, Leviticus 7:38. And this appears, not only because what is required in propitiatory sacrifices is found in peace-offerings, viz., the slaying of the beast, the sprinkling of the blood, and the consuming some part of it upon the altar, Leviticus 9:18-19, but also because what is proper and ascribed to sacrifices designed for expiation is ascribed to peace-offerings, Ezekiel 45:15, Ezekiel 45:17, where peace-offerings, amongst the rest, were to make reconciliation for the people; and this is the proper and special end of sacrifices for expiation. To turn away the Lord's anger, and appease his wrath, was the main design of propitiatory sacrifices. And David, when the Lord's anger was kindled and consuming the people, he offers peace-offerings, 2 Samuel 24:21. And this was the issue of it, the plague was stayed, God's anger was appeased, 2 Samuel 24:25. So that, whatever the Socinianists object against the text, who, by denying the death of Christ to be a propitiatory sacrifice, would raze the foundations of all our hopes and comforts in the gospel, we have made it clear and firm, that the sacrifice which the text says Christ offered for his people in offering himself, was a sacrifice for expiation.

Obs. Christ offered himself a sacrifice of expiation for his people. To give you distinctly the evidence which the Scripture affords for this great and fundamental truth, take it in these severals.

1. He offered himself, Hebrews 7:27; ‘He offered up himself,’ Hebrews 9:14 and Hebrews 9:28.

2. He offered himself a sacrifice, 1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 9:26. Those things which were necessary and requisite to a real and proper sacrifice concurred in this sacrifice of Christ.

(1.) The person offering was to be a priest; it was the peculiar office of the priest under the law, Hebrews 5:1. So Christ, that he might offer this sacrifice, was called to that office, and made an high priest, Hebrews 5:5-6, Hebrews 5:10.

(2.) The things offered were to be of God’s appointment, otherwise it had been, not a true and acceptable sacrifice, but will-worship; and no more a sacrifice in God’s account than the cutting off a dog’s neck, or offering swine’s blood, as appears by the laws given by God to Moses concerning free-will offerings, Leviticus 1:1-17. In the free-will offerings, though the precise time for offering them was not determined, yet things to be offered were appointed. So that what* Christ offered was appointed and prepared by God, Hebrews 10:5. He prepared him a body, that he might offer that for a sacrifice; and that he offered, Hebrews 10:10. It was a living body that he prepared for him, a body animated, enlivened with a soul, which soul was separated from his body in the offering; and therefore he is said to make his soul an offering, Isaiah 53:1-12. And soul and body constituting his human nature, and making up himself, he is said to offer himself, Hebrews 9:26, Hebrews 9:14.

(3.) That which was offered for a sacrifice was to be destroyed. This is essential to a sacrifice; it is oblatio rite consumpta, an offering duly consumed. Those things that had life, that they might be offered as sacrifices, they were killed, and their blood poured out; and the other parts of them, besides the blood, were burned, either wholly or in part.

Thus was Christ sacrificed; his dying and bleeding on the cross answered the killing and bloodshed of the Levitical sacrifices, and his sufferings (expressed by the pains of hell) were correspondent to the burnings of the sacrifices, Hebrews 13:12-13; his sufferings without the gate are held forth here, as answering the burning of the sacrifices without the camp.

(4.) The person to whom they were offered was God, and him only. Sacrificing was a divine honour appropriated to God. To offer sacrifice to any else was gross idolatry, Hebrews 5:1. What were those things, τ■ πρ■ς τον Θε■ν? Oblations and sacrifices. And this sacrifice Christ offered unto God, Hebrews 2:17. He performed the office of a merciful and faithful high priest, in offering to God what belonged to him. What were those things? Why, such as made reconciliation, i.e. in offering to God a propitiatory sacrifice. The Socinians will have Christ to offer this sacrifice, not to God, but to us, that they may deny it to be a real and proper sacrifice. But here they offer plain violence to Scripture; the text is express, he offered to God, not to us, Hebrews 9:14. By these particulars we see, that what was necessary to constitute a real and proper sacrifice is found in this sacrifice of Christ.

3. He offered himself a sacrifice of expiation. And this is it I intend to insist on. That his death was such a sacrifice may be made evident in general by this one consideration, that the propitiatory sacrifices under the law were figures and shadows, whereby this great sacrifice of Christ was

typified; for if the figures and shadows had something of expiation in them, that which was the substance of them, and was typified by them, must have it also, else there would not be so much in the substance as in the shadow, and the thing typified would not answer that which prefigures it, nor would the things which the Lord appointed to resemble one another bear a resemblance.

Now, that those sacrifices under the law did prefigure and shadow out this great sacrifice of expiation in Christ's death, appears, because the apostle declares them to be figures and shadows, Hebrews 9:9 and Hebrews 10:1. Those expiatory sacrifices had some resemblance of this, as the shadow has of the body, though obscure and imperfect; they were but shadows, the substance and perfection of expiation was in the sacrifice of Christ, Colossians 2:17. And if we come to particulars, and view the several sorts of them under the law, we may find, that whatever sacrifices were then offered to make expiation, they all prefigured and signified this of Christ. And we have ground to conclude so, from other places of Scripture, applying them to this great sacrifice. Vid. Sermon or Homily 58. And let not this discourse seem tedious to you, or not worth your best attention here, or your serious consideration in private, for there is scarce any subject I can insist on either more profitable or more necessary; for without understanding this point I am upon, that Christ is a sacrifice of expiation, you cannot fully understand either the law or the gospel. We shall but understand the law as the blind Jews do, who, in all the laws about sacrifices, see nothing of Christ; and we shall but understand the gospel as the Socinians do, who quite deface and utterly subvert it.

I have given you some evidence in what is already said, that Christ in his death gave himself for his people, not only a proper and real sacrifice, but also a sacrifice for expiation.

I proceed now to some particulars, which will both explain and confirm this weighty point, and withal clear up divers main truths of the gospel, of very great consequence for our comfort and establishment; which, for some seeming difficulty and obscurity in them, are mistaken by some and rejected by others, though the gospel itself signify little to us without them.

If this point, Christ's being a propitiatory sacrifice for us, were well understood, there would remain little or no difficulty concerning our sin being imputed to Christ, or satisfaction made by him for us, or the imputation of that satisfaction to us, or his performing it in our stead.

All these, and others of this nature, would be clear, so as to be entertained and believed without doubt or difficulty, if this was but clear, that Christ gave himself a sacrifice for expiation. And this I shall endeavour to make plain to you, by shewing in some particulars that whatever is essential to a propitiatory sacrifice, and is required in such a sacrifice under the law, is to be found in the sacrifice of Christ. But let me first premise this one thing: by the judicial law (which was to the Jews their civil or statute law, by which they were governed as a commonwealth or body politic) corporal death was the penalty of all disobedience to God, Deuteronomy 27:26. The curse is death, death corporal in the civil or political sense of it; death eternal in the spiritual sense, as the apostle applies it, Galatians 3:10. Now, the Lord, who was the King and Lawgiver of Israel, relaxed the laws as to many offences; and instead of the corporal death of the person offending, accepted of the death of a sacrifice.

Let this be minded and remembered all along; for much of what follows will be mistaken, or not well understood without it. And so I go on to the particulars mentioned, which will shew that the

sacrifice of Christ was fully correspondent to the propitiatory sacrifices under the law, in all points that are essential or necessary to such a sacrifice.

1. The sin of the offender, whether a particular person or the people, was laid upon the sacrifice, imputed to, or charged on it. The sin of the offerer was in a manner transferred to the sacrifice, so as it became responsible for it, and was made liable to answer or suffer for it, as if itself had contracted the guilt. As when the debt is charged on the surety, or he takes it on himself, he is as much obliged to pay it, to be answerable for it, as if himself had contracted it. The sacrifice was looked on as under guilt, and treated as a guilty thing; not as having sinned, but as if it had sinned.

Hence the word used for such a sacrifice does signify sin itself. And the sacrifices are said to bear the iniquities of the people, Leviticus 16:22, and Leviticus 10:17, because the people's sins were laid on them. For this we have further evidence, by their laying hands on the head of the sacrifice, Leviticus 1:4, Leviticus 4:4. And it is observed, that in all the propitiatory sacrifices for the whole congregation this rite was used, and in no sacrifices for them, but those. And because all the people could not lay on their hands, some other representing them did it for them; sometimes the elders, Leviticus 4:15, 2 Chronicles 29:22-24, sometimes the high priest, Leviticus 16:21. When they laid their hands on the sacrifices, they confessed their sins over them. This the text calls a putting their sins upon the head of the sacrifice. Hereby was signified, as the Hebrew doctors observe, that the iniquities of the people were laid upon the head of the sacrifice, and the guilt transferred from themselves unto the victim that was sacrificed for them. Hereupon the scape-goat, and all those sacrifices, whose blood was carried unto the holy place, and whose bodies were burnt without the camp, because the sins of the people were laid on them, they were looked on as if they were polluted and defiling things, and accounted execrable and polluted; insomuch, as those who did but touch them, contracted such pollution, that they were not to be admitted into the congregation till they were purified, Leviticus 16:26, Leviticus 18:24. The Hebrew doctors say* this was the reason, because the scape-goat and those other sacrifices were charged with so much guilt, such a multitude of sins being laid on them. And as sin was charged upon the legal sacrifices and imputed to them, so was our sins charged upon Christ, the great sacrifice, and imputed to him, 2 Corinthians 5:21. The righteousness of God here is the righteousness of him who is God, the righteousness of Christ, that righteousness which he performed in being obedient unto death. What is said of Christ's righteousness in reference to us, that is said of our sin in reference to Christ; we are made righteousness, he is made sin. But how was his righteousness made ours, how was our sin made his? Why, by imputation only. We were far from being righteous in ourselves, but his righteousness is imputed to us. He was far from being a sinner, but our sin was imputed to him. But what is it to be imputed? If we will speak exactly of this, we must speak differently of them, according to the different nature and quality of the things imputed, which are good or evil. That which is evil, is said to be imputed to us, when it is charged on us. Good is said to be imputed to us, when it is accepted for us. When evil is said to be charged on any, so as he is to suffer for it, though he committed it not, we say it is imputed to him. And when good is accepted for another, so as he has the advantages of it, though he performed it not, but another for him, and in his stead, then it is said to be imputed to him.

Thus the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, when it is accepted for us, so as we are entitled to the advantages of it, though we performed it not, but Christ in our stead. And thus our sin was imputed to Christ, when it was charged on him, so as he was to suffer for it in our stead, though we

only committed it. And thus was sin imputed to sacrifices under the law, in that sin was charged on them, so as they were to suffer for it, though they were not the transgressors. So a debt is imputed to a surety, when he takes the debt upon himself, and is thereby obliged to pay, though he never contracted it. And this not only clears the nature of the act, but also the justice and equity of it. It may seem unjust, that one who is innocent should be charged with the sins of another. But there is indeed no unrighteousness herein. It was the righteous act and appointment of God, that the sins of the people should be laid on the sacrifice; and it was his act and appointment, that our sins should be laid on Christ the great sacrifice. And there is no unrighteousness with God in this act, more than in the other; to say nothing that the practice of the world justified it in all their particular sacrifices. Nay, there is more to be pleaded for charging sin on Christ, than in that of the other legal sacrifices; for volenti non fit injuria, there is no injury where there is consent. But sin was laid upon the other sacrifices, when they were not capable of consenting to it. But Christ gave his consent to have our sins laid on him. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all, but he was willing they should be laid on him; and it was in reference hereto that he said, Hebrews 10:7. He himself bare our sins, he took upon him the burden of our guilt freely. It was his own voluntary act, so there was no more unrighteousness in it, than in charging the debt upon the surety, who freely and out of choice takes a debt upon him and thereby engages himself to discharge it. Never did any surety so freely charge himself with a debt, as Christ charged himself with our sins.

It may be objected, that, if our sins were charged on Christ and laid upon him, then he was under guilt; and the most innocent Son of God, who was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips, must be counted a guilty person; nay, the most guilty of all others, as having upon him the sins of all his people.

I answer, there are two sorts of guilt; a culpable and a penal guilt. He is under culpable guilt, who himself committed the offence. He is under penal guilt, who is obliged to suffer for the offence, though he committed it not: for this guilt is no more than an obligation to punishment. Now Christ, as our sacrifice, was only under this penal guilt. The offences that he was charged with were committed by us, not by him; only by undertaking to be a sacrifice for us, he came under an obligation to suffer for us, as if he had sinned, though we only were the transgressors. And thus it was in those legal sacrifices, which were shadows of Christ. We need go no further to clear it. In them it appears that these two sorts of guilt may be separated; so that he who is not culpably guilty, may be penally guilty, and may justly suffer, though he did not personally sin: for those peculiar* sacrifices, the sins of the people being laid on them, were under penal guilt, and did justly suffer as if they had sinned; and yet they were not culpably guilty, for they neither had sinned, nor were capable of sinning. And in respect of this penal guilt, it may be granted that it was under more guilt than any, as the sacrifice for the whole congregation was under more guilt, being charged with more sin than any sacrifice offered for a particular person. The text insisted on is a sufficient proof of this point. Christ was ‘made sin for us.’ Those who hereby understand a sacrifice for sin, say the same thing in consequence that I have said, for if Christ was made a sacrifice for sin, that must be granted of him which necessarily belongs to every sacrifice for sin; that the sin of those for whom it was offered was laid on it, or, which is all one, imputed to it. This is also signified by those scriptures, where Christ is said to bear our sins, Isaiah 53:6, Isaiah 53:11-12, Hebrews 9:28, 1 Peter 2:24. For the bearing of our punishment is hereby commonly understood.

Yet his being charged with our sin must necessarily be included; for our punishment could not have been justly inflicted, nor would his sufferings have been penal, but that our sin was charged on him, or imputed to him. For punishment is never duly inflicted, but where sin is some way charged.

2. The penalty due to the transgressor under the law was inflicted on the sacrifice offered for him. The sinner deserved temporal death and destruction; and the sacrifice was slain or destroyed. So it was with the sacrifices for the high priest and the whole congregation. A bullock is appointed to be brought as a sin-offering for the high priest, and that was to be killed, Leviticus 16:11; a goat was the sin-offering for the people, and that is ordered to be killed, Leviticus 16:15; and the scape-goat, sent into the wilderness, was so sent in order to its destruction one way or other. So it was likewise with sin-offerings for private persons. If it was a lamb or a kid, they were killed, as other beasts offered for sacrifice, Leviticus 5:6; if they were turtle-doves or young pigeons, their heads were to be wrung off from their necks, Leviticus 5:8; and when not able to bring doves and pigeons, they were to offer fine flour, and this was to be consumed, a handful of it was to be burnt, Leviticus 5:11-12. The sinner deserved to be killed or destroyed, that was the penalty due to him by the law; and so the sacrifice that was offered, and thereby suffered for him, was killed or destroyed. The transgressor's sin being transferred to the sacrifice, and laid on it by the institution of God, signified by the imposition of hands on the head of the sacrifice: hereupon being supposed to be under guilt, and guilt being an obligation to punishment, the sacrifice was obliged to suffer, and did suffer, the penalty which the offender deserved. This is further cleared by the words which they used when they brought a sacrifice: Let this be [redacted], my expiation; the meaning of which, as they generally agree, is this, What evil I have deserved, let it fall upon the head of my sacrifice.

Thus it was with propitiatory sacrifices, or sin offerings under the law. And thus it was with Christ the great sacrifice, shadowed out by them; and thereby it is manifest that he was such a sacrifice. The punishment which was due to our sins was inflicted on Christ; he suffered what our sins deserved, 1 Peter 2:24. As the sacrifice bare the sin of him for whom it was offered, and thereupon bare the penalty due to him, so Christ bare the sins of his people, and thereupon bare the punishment due to their sins. This expression includes both; both his taking our sins upon him, which sins were the meritorious cause of punishment, and his bearing the punishment, which was the effect of our sins, that which they deserved. The sacrifices, by having the sins of the people laid on them, became liable to undergo the penalty, and did actually undergo it. So Christ, by taking our sins on him, became liable to the punishment, and did actually suffer it. We have them joined together, Isaiah 53:12. As the life of the sacrifices was poured out unto death in the pouring out of their blood, so was Christ's life poured out in the shedding of his blood. And why was his life poured out, and death inflicted on him? Because he was reckoned amongst transgressors, our transgressions being laid on him by the will and counsel of God. He was reckoned amongst transgressors, not by the Jews only, but by God himself. The Jews reckoned him a transgressor upon his own account; the Lord reckoned him so upon our account. And so he bare the sins of many; he having taken our sins, bare the punishment of our sins. This is plainly expressed, Isaiah 53:5. As the sacrifices were wounded and slain for their sins for whom they were offered, so was Christ wounded, and bruised, and killed for the transgressions of his people. What the sacrifice suffered, was the punishment due to the offender for whom it was offered; so what Christ suffered was the punishment which the transgressions of his people deserved. These expressions here

used by the prophet, are proper to sacrifices for sin, and so applied to Christ as such a sacrifice, ver. 10. He was wounded, he was punished for our transgressions, in making himself an offering for sin. The Socinians would have no more understood by these phrases of Christ bearing our sins, but only that he took away our sins; and so no more than when God the Father is said to take sin away. But the expressions here used will not endure such a sense. For the Father takes away sin so as not to suffer for it; but it is plainly expressed here, that Christ so bare our sins, as to suffer for them. He bare our griefs, our sorrows; he was wounded, bruised, he poured out his soul unto death, he was offered up, he bare our sins as a sacrifice. The punishment due to our sin was suffered by him, as the penalty due to transgressors was inflicted on the sacrifice.

3. The sacrifice under the law suffered instead of the sinner. There was a substitution of the sacrifice in the room of the transgressor. This is evident by the former head last insisted on; for to suffer in one's stead, is nothing else but to suffer for another what himself should have suffered. Observe what it is to be in one's stead; for not only the doctrine of the law concerning piacular sacrifices, but the great doctrines of the gospel concerning Christ's satisfaction and our justification thereby, depend on it, and will be mistaken, or not understood without it. To be punished in another's stead, is to undergo for him the punishment due to him, that he may escape. And so the sacrifice did; when the transgressor deserved death, the sacrifice suffered death for him, that he might not die. Thus the sacrifice died in his stead, the life of it went for his life. That there was such a substitution of the sacrifice in place of the offender, the life of the sacrifice being taken away instead of his life, is apparent also in Scripture, Leviticus 17:11. The life is in the blood, the blood is the vehicle of life; when the blood goes, the life goes; and because the life is in the blood, therefore was it given for atonement for them that they might not die. And so the blood, which is the life, being offered to save their life, the life of the sacrifice went instead of the life of the offender. So the Jewish writers understand it, who yet will understand nothing of Christ in their sacrifices. When, say they, the guilty person deserved that his blood should be shed, and his body should be burned, the Lord in mercy accepted of a sacrifice as a thing substituted in his room; so that the blood of the sacrifice was shed instead of his blood, ■■■ ■■■ ■■■, and the life of the sacrifice went instead of his life, ■■■ ■■■ ■■■. Vide Outr. 274, Buxtorf. in Stilling. 359. And whereas, when they brought a sin-offering, they were wont to say, Let this be my atonement, ■■■■■; it is all one, they tell us, as if he had said, Let this be substituted in my stead.

Answerably, Christ suffered in our stead; and it is so plain, by that substitution in the other sacrifices, that we need wish for nothing more to make it clearer. Those that will grant him to be a sacrifice, do not leave themselves the least reason to doubt but he suffered in our stead, and not only for our good and advantage. When he made himself, his soul, an offering for our sin, he was substituted in our room; he died and suffered, not only for us, but in our stead. For to suffer in our stead, is nothing else but to suffer what we deserved to suffer, that we might escape. And thus he suffered; he did undergo what was due to us, that it might not be inflicted on us. That he bare the punishment due to us, is sufficiently proved in the former head. And there needs no more to prove that he suffered in our stead, to those who will understand what it is to suffer in our stead. The nature of a piacular or propitiatory sacrifice requires this. The sacrifice was always supposed to suffer instead of those for whom it was offered. The Scriptures declare this, the Jews acknowledge it, the heathen did not question it. None can deny it in reference to Christ, but those who, against all evidence of Old and New Testament, will deny that Christ was such a sacrifice. But besides,

there is abundant evidence in Scripture that he suffered in our stead, Romans 5:6, 1 Peter 3:18. In that he suffered for sin, he suffered as a sin offering, and that was instead of the sinner, the just for the unjust, as the innocent sacrifice instead of the unrighteous transgressor, so 1 Peter 2:6, Matthew 20:28. As the life of the sacrifice was a ransom for the life of the transgressor, i. e. instead of his life, λ■τρον, the word here used is the same with the Hebrew, ■■■, which is the word in use amongst the Hebrews for a propitiatory sacrifice, Matthew 26:28. He speaks of his blood, just as of the blood of a sacrifice for sin. Such a sacrifice for the whole congregation, the blood of it was shed for many, it was shed instead of many. It was shed that they might be forgiven, and that is here for remission of sins. Not only the words here used in these Scriptures, ■π■ρ and ■ντ■, but the things spoken of and referred to, do declare a substitution of Christ in the place of sinners, and that he died and suffered in our stead; even as the proper sacrifice for expiation died and suffered instead of those for whom they were offered.

Finally, in all those places wherein Christ is said to die for us, since he died as a sacrifice, the sense must necessarily be the same, as when the sacrifice died for a sinner; but the word for, here, in the sense of the Jews, of the Gentiles, of all the world, is to die in the stead of the sinner.

4. The sacrifice made satisfaction to God for the sinner. Both the words ■■■ and ■■■, used in the Old Testament for expiatory sacrifices, and expiation by them, do import satisfaction; so Genesis 31:39, 'I bare the loss,' i. e. I made it good. The word is ■■■, which, in other places, is to expiate by a sacrifice; the sense is here, I did make the satisfaction for it; for to make good what is lost, is to make satisfaction for it. So 2 Samuel 21:3, 'What shall I do to satisfy you? wherewith shall I make atonement?' both expressions signify the same thing; to make atonement, is to make satisfaction, ■■■■, wherewith shall I atone, i. e. wherewith shall I satisfy? The word is, in other places, wherewith shall I atone or expiate? the sense is here, wherewith shall I make satisfaction? And in our translation, the same word which, in some places, is atonement or expiation (which is the proper effect of propitiatory sacrifices), is in other places satisfaction, and so rendered, Numbers 35:31-32; ye shall take no ■■■, no sacrifice for expiation shall be offered in this case. That sacrifice which would make satisfaction in other cases, shall not be accepted for satisfaction in this. To satisfy for another, is to undergo for him the penalty of the law, incurred by his transgressing it; it is the suffering the punishment which his sin deserves. The offender under the law had deserved death, temporal death (that was the penalty of the law, speaking, as we do now, of civil guilt); this death was inflicted on the sacrifice which died for him. So the law had its execution upon the sacrifice instead of the sinner, and justice was satisfied, this being what it required.

There was mercy in appointing and accepting the sacrifice for the sinner. But justice had satisfaction too, in that the penalty of the law was so far inflicted.

More distinctly, there are several things required, that satisfaction may be made by sacrifice. That which is satisfactory in this case, must, 1, be some affliction and suffering. 2. Not only so, but the suffering must be penal; not any kind of affliction or calamity, but something threatened by the law, and deserved by the sinner. Justice, that it may be satisfied, requires the execution of the law; and therefore to satisfy justice, not only that which is afflictive must be suffered, but the penalty of the law must be inflicted, or what is equivalent to it; it must be something penal. 3. Not only so, but it must be suffered for him, and in his stead by another; if one suffer for himself, and on his own

account, that can be no satisfaction for another; he must suffer for him, and in his stead for whom he satisfies.

Now all these concurred (as was shewed before) in the death of a sacrifice. 1. It was a suffering; the sacrifice was killed, and death is one of the most grievous sufferings. 2. It was penal, that which the law threatened; the penalty of the law was death. 3. This was suffered by the sacrifice, not for itself or on its own account, but instead of the transgressor.

These particulars may be further cleared by an instance. A murderer under the law was to suffer death, that was the penalty of the law, Numbers 35:30, and in case he was not put to death, the land was polluted with blood, and the people liable to suffer for it, Numbers 35:33. But when justice could not be done upon the murderer, because he was not to be found, the Lord found out an expedient to satisfy his law and justice, so as the land, the people should not suffer, Deuteronomy 21:1-9. So that, though no satisfaction was to be taken for the life of the murderer, yet here was satisfaction to be made for the people amongst whom it was committed, that they might not suffer for it. And this was made by the heifer that suffered, and suffered the penalty, was put to death; and this not on its own account, but instead of the people, that they might be quitted, and blood-guiltiness might not be charged on them. There was satisfaction made on behalf of the people by the death and suffering of the heifer; and therefore the guilt of innocent blood put away, as the text expresses it, which was the proper design and effect of satisfaction.

Answerably, thus did Christ our sacrifice make satisfaction to justice for us; he suffered, and that which he suffered was penal, and he suffered it for us and in our stead.

1. He suffered. He was a man of sorrows and sufferings; his whole life was a state of humiliation, and his humiliation was a continued suffering. But near and in his death he was made perfect through sufferings; there was the extremity of his sufferings, there he became a perfect sacrifice, Hebrews 2:9-10, and Hebrews 5:9. Christ wanted something to make him perfect in his office, till he had satisfied his Father’s justice; and this he did, and so was perfected, by suffering death as a complete sacrifice.

2. What he suffered was penal; it was that which sin deserved, and the law threatened. His sufferings had a respect to sin in the meritorious cause of them; and that is plainly signified, as any, but such as will be blind, may see, when he is said to suffer for our sins. If we will consult with common sense, what is it to suffer for sin, but to suffer for the desert of sin? what to suffer for our sin, but to suffer what our sin deserved? This he is still said to suffer, Isaiah 53:1-12, Romans 4:25.

He suffered the penalty of the law, not a mere calamity, but a punishment; for what was the penalty of the law but death? Genesis 2:17, and the curse, Galatians 3:10. And he suffered death, 1 Peter 5:6, 1 Corinthians 15:3, not on his own account, but ours; not for our good only, but in our stead. And he was made a curse for us, Galatians 3:13. The enemies of Christ’s satisfaction cannot deny, but the curse in the former clause is the penalty of the law, the punishment which it threatens; and why it should not be so in the latter clause, they can give no colour of reason.

3. Thirdly, he suffered this in our stead. We made that plain before. The mere understanding of the expression puts that out of the question. He that suffered what we deserved, that we might go free, did unquestionably suffer in our stead.

Put all together, and we have clear and unanswerable evidence, that Christ made satisfaction to divine justice for us. If Christ suffered for us, and in our stead, did bear the penalty of the law, the punishment due to us, so that the law had its execution upon him, then did he satisfy justice for us, and tendered that which it required. But, &c.

Obj. If it be objected that satisfaction is not made, unless the self-same thing be suffered which the offender did deserve, and which the law threatened; but Christ did not suffer the same thing which was in the sentence of the law, and our sins deserved. For we deserved eternal death; and it was not only the first, but the second death, that the law threatened; therefore the death of Christ, which was but the first, but temporal death, did not make satisfaction to law or justice for us.

Ans. For the making of satisfaction, it is not necessary that what is suffered for another should be the same thing every way, and in all respects. It will be enough if it be the same in kind and substance, though it be not just the same, but only equivalent in other respects and circumstances. And this is very plain by the matter before us. The sacrifice made satisfaction for offenders, so that they suffered not according to law; and for this it was enough that the sacrifice was put to death, as the offenders should, though it was not the very same death in all respects and circumstances, not the same sort of death. The throats of the sacrifices were cut, their bodies flayed and dissected, and part, or all of them, consumed with fire; whereas the malefactors were to be stoned to death, or hanged on a tree, or beheaded. Here was the same punishment in kind and substance, death, but not the same sort of death, but very different in circumstances.

4. Whereas it is said, that the second death, eternal death, was in the sentence of the law, and this Christ suffered not (vide Serm. I. on Romans 5:7, and conclude). Satisfaction may be made by the same sufferings in substance, and equivalent in other respects. So it was in the sacrifices under the law, and so it was in the great sacrifice in Christ's death.

5. The sacrifice pacified, appeased the Lord, made atonement, turned away his anger. That was the principal end and effect of expiating sacrifice, to make atonement, and so expressed in all sorts of them. In sin-offerings, whether the matter of them was beasts, Leviticus 5:6, or fowl, Leviticus 5:7, Leviticus 5:10, or flour, Leviticus 5:11, Leviticus 5:13; also in trespass-offerings, Leviticus 6:6-7, it is ascribed to both of them together, Leviticus 7:7.

Likewise the burnt-offerings, whether the time for offering them was determined, as in their stated solemn sacrifices; or not determined, but left to their arbitrament, as in free-will offerings, Leviticus 1:4, Leviticus 1:6, Leviticus 6:9. To make atonement is to pacify, to make his peace with one that was wroth with him, Proverbs 16:14. And it is conceived by some, not without ground, that peace-offerings were for this end; and therefore they have the name ■■■■■, because the design and effect of them was to make peace between God and those for whom they were offered. Answerably the word ■■■, rendered to atone, is to appease and turn away anger or wrath, Genesis 32:20. And this was the end why David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, 2 Samuel 24:21, and this was the effect of it, 2 Samuel 24:25.

Sometimes it is expressed by reconciling, or rendering propitious, Leviticus 6:30. And this is expressed to be the design of burnt-offerings and sin-offerings, 2 Chronicles 29:24, and the end of peace-offerings amongst others, Ezekiel 45:15, Ezekiel 45:17. And because the Lord was thereby rendered propitious or well-pleased, therefore those sacrifices are said to be a sweet-smelling

savour, in the phrase in the text, Leviticus 1:5, Leviticus 1:9, Leviticus 1:13, Leviticus 1:17; and in Noah's sacrifice, a savour of rest, because when the Lord is pacified and well pleased, his anger does rest, Ezekiel 16:42. Thence these sacrifices are called ■λαστικ■, propitiating sacrifices, or propitiatives. So that propitiation, reconciliation, appeasing, pacifying, and atonement, whereby the end and the effect of those sacrifices is expressed, are terms of the same import, and signify the same thing.

Now these same ends and effects are ascribed to the death and blood, i. e. to the sacrifice of Christ, and expressed by the same terms. As the legal sacrifices made atonement, and they received it for whom they were offered, so did the sacrifice of Christ make atonement, and they are said to receive it, Romans 5:11, and that was the death of his Son, Romans 5:10.

Propitiation is the very same thing with atonement As the Lord was rendered propitious by those offerings called propitiatory sacrifices; so is Christ, by his sacrifice, a propitiation, 1 John 2:2, i. e. a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, 1 John 4:10, Romans 3:25, a propitiation through the blood of his sacrifice. The Lord did not only shew himself propitiated and appeased, but it was this blood, this sacrifice, that appeased and propitiated him; as those sacrifices were not to shew that the Lord was atoned, but to make atonement or propitiation. And so the mercy-seat, called ■λαστ■ριον (the word here used by the apostle), by virtue of the blood of the sacrifice, was a propitiatory. As the sacrifice did appease and turn away the anger of God, which they were liable to in reference to the temporal effects of it, as they did pacify him and make their peace with him, so by the sacrifice of Christ wrath is turned away, Romans 5:9; our peace is made with God, Ephesians 2:12, &c. By the blood of Christ, the great sacrifice, peace was made not only between Jew and Gentile, but between God and them, Isaiah 53:1-12. The chastisement of our peace, i. e. those sufferings by which our peace was made, he suffered as a sacrifice that we might have peace with God, Colossians 1:20. And as the legal sacrifices were to make reconciliation for transgressors, so was the death and sacrifice of Christ, Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:20-22, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, and how, 2 Corinthians 5:21. To evade these plain texts, they say the phrases used by the apostles are for reconciling us to God, not reconciling God to us, and so will have the reconciliation to be on man's part only, as if none at all were needful on God's part, when yet it is he that is the party offended; as though the end of the death and sacrifice of Christ were only to gain sinners' favour for God, and not at all to procure God's favour for sinners; as if it were to make God's peace with us, and to make our peace with God. But this, as it is intolerable in the very sound of the expressions, and plainly against the sense of the phrases in Scripture about reconciliation, Mat., Cor.* so it destroys the correspondence between the legal sacrifices and this of Christ. For none will imagine that the Israelites offered sacrifices to turn away their own anger from God, but to turn away his anger from them. And these being types and figures of Christ's sacrifice, how can it be imagined that the end of it should be to divert men's wrath from God, and not to divert his wrath from us? Both were to 'make reconciliation for iniquity,' Daniel 9:1-27, so as sin should not be imputed. Now there can be no such reconciliation but by pacifying the party provoked by iniquity; and whether that be God or man, let the adversaries themselves judge.

6. These sacrifices put away guilt (civil guilt), released the sinner from the obligation to temporal punishment, procured forgiveness for him. This was the effect of them when they were accepted, sin was forgiven them for whom they were offered. And so it is frequently expressed that forgiveness was the effect of them, whether they were offered for particular persons or for the

whole congregation, Leviticus 4:20, Leviticus 4:26, Leviticus 4:31, Leviticus 4:35, and for the whole congregation, Numbers 25:6.

Sin is loathsome and offensive to a holy God, and so liable to the effects of his displeasure, which are punishment; accordingly it is set forth in Scripture as uncleanness, Leviticus 16:16, as a defilement and pollution, Psalms 106:39, Ezekiel 20:31. Becoming guilty they were defiled; by contracting guilt, the sinner defiles and pollutes himself and becomes unclean, and when guilt is removed, he is said to be cleansed, purged, purified. Answerably, the taking away guilt by sacrifice is expressed by cleansing, purging, purifying. By cleansing, Leviticus 16:30. By purging, Hebrews 9:13. The blood was sprinkled for that end, and sometimes with hyssop, Leviticus 14:6-7, Numbers 19:6; in reference to which, David begging freedom from guilt, does it in these terms, Psalms 51:7. By purifying, Hebrews 9:13. And so these expiating sacrifices are styled by other authors ■γνιστικ■, purifying sacrifices, and καθαρικ■, sacrifices for purgation or lustration; because they were supposed to purge them from guilt, to make them clean and pure from that guiltiness which was their pollution. And this was the effect of the great sacrifice of expiation in Christ's death. Thereby we are freed from guilt, and have forgiveness of sins. And it is expressed in the same terms, to signify that it was procured in the same way by that grand expiatory sacrifice, John 1:29. How did he take away sins? As a lamb sacrificed; he was the Lamb slain and sacrificed. That is here sufficiently intimated, but it is plainly expressed elsewhere, Hebrews 9:26; and it is signified where we are said to have forgiveness by his blood, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Romans 3:25, Matthew 26:28. As under the law, so under the gospel, without blood no remission, Hebrews 9:22. No remission of sin, no expiation of guilt, but by the death and blood of a sacrifice. And the expiation of guilt, by the sacrifice of Christ, is set forth in the same terms as the expiation by other sacrifices. It is expressed by the washing, sprinkling, cleansing, purging, purifying, and so expressed by the same reason; because sin is an unclean thing in the eye of an holy God, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Matthew 15:18, Matthew 15:20. He that contracts guilt defiles himself; the defiling guilt cannot be done away but by the blood of this great sacrifice; this and this alone can wash, and cleanse, and purge, and purify guilty souls; these are sacrificial terms, which refer to sacrifices for sin, and denote the expiation of its guilt. Let me instance in those several phrases, whereby the Holy Ghost in the New Testament holds forth the sovereign virtue and efficacy of that precious blood, and inestimable sacrifice for the taking away our guilt; hereby you may more clearly understand both the expressions, and the things what they signify and refer to. The removing of guilt by the blood and sacrifice of Christ, is expressed sometimes by washing, Revelation 1:5, and Revelation 7:14; by sprinkling, Hebrews 10:22, and Hebrews 12:24. The blood of the propitiating sacrifices, on the great day of expiation, was to be sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat, Leviticus 16:14-15. Hereby might be signified, that this seat, which would otherwise be a throne of justice, was a mercy-seat, that there was pardoning mercy to be found at his mercy-seat, which was Christ in a type; and that through his blood, signified by the blood there sprinkled. The people, then, were kept at a distance from the mercy-seat; they might not come and see this blood, sprinkled. But, says the apostle, 'Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling.' That which was the mercy-seat in the Old Testament, is the throne of grace in the New Testament; and we may come boldly to the throne of grace, with confidence that we shall find pardoning mercy, through the blood of sprinkling, by virtue of which it is become a throne of grace, a mercy-seat, without any veil interposing, without anything to debar us from it. We may find the expiating virtue of that blood of sprinkling flow freely in upon our souls for the cleansing of them from guilt.

Washing and sprinkling was in order to cleansing, and that is another word used to signify this great effect. It is expressed by cleansing, 1 John 1:7, καθαρ■ζει; that is ascribed to the blood of Christ which is proper to sacrifices for expiation. And to be cleansed from sin, is to be forgiven, ver. 9. Cleansing from guilt is expressed by forgiveness. By purging, Hebrews 1:3, by himself, i. e. by the sacrifice of himself, Hebrews 9:13-14. Purging from guilt, i. e. free from all the obligation to eternal death which wicked works lay on it. When an Israelite committed an act, to which the law threatened temporal death, his conscience told him he was liable to death, till the sacrifice appointed for his expiation was offered; but thereby he was freed from the obligation, and his conscience freed from the sense of it. By sanctifying, Hebrews 10:10. Sacrificed* in a sacrificial sense, as expiating sacrifices do sanctify, i. e. by cleansing from guilt, Hebrews 13:11-12. It is a sanctifying by his blood, not by his Spirit; such as is proper to the blood of sacrifices for expiation, which took away guilt; whose peculiar efficacy was not in working holiness, but in procuring forgiveness. By purifying, Hebrews 9:22-23, καθαρ■ζεθαι. The sacrifices under the law did in their way purify from guilt; but the sacrifice of Christ, as far excelling those as heavenly things do earthly, purifies in a far more excellent way.

Use. For information. 1. Hereby we may discover the horrid wickedness of the sacrifice of the mass, which yet, with the papists, is the chief part of their religion. By what we have said of a sacrifice, it will appear that their doctrine and practice as to the sacrifice of the mass does both destroy Christ himself, and destroys the sacrifice of Christ. That thereby they destroy Christ, the man Christ Jesus, will appear if you take notice of these three particulars.

1. They teach that Christ, not only as he is God, but as he is man, his whole human nature, soul, and body, is in their mass sacrament, and there really and substantially. To open this a little. In their mass, which they use instead of the Lord's Supper, after the Epistle and Gospel, and some short collects, they have a longer prayer, which they call the canon of the mass, in which are the words of consecration, 'This is my body, this is my blood;' by virtue of which words they say, the bread and wine, which the priest consecrates, loses its substance; the substance of both vanishes, and the accidents of bread and wine only remain; the quantity and quality, the figure, colour, and taste, and not the least substance of either; but in the room thereof the substance of Christ's body and blood is brought or produced. So that under the forms or accidents of bread and wine, there is really and substantially the whole body of Christ, flesh, blood, and bones, and his soul too. It is the living body of Christ, his body enlivened with his soul, which the priest holds in his hands, and puts into his mouth. This monstrous change, of this substance of bread and wine into the substance of the real body and blood of Christ, has a monstrous name; they call it transubstantiation, a change of substance. I pass by the multitude of absurdities, contradictions, impossibilities, which they must swallow who believe this, and which none can digest but those whom the spirit of delusion has bereaved both of the use of sense and reason. It is enough for my purpose that they will have whole Christ to be there, body and soul. And the council of Trent, of so great authority with them that it is to be reckoned the standard of their faith, curse those who do not believe this in these words: 'If any shall deny that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there is contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore whole Christ; or shall say that he is there only in sign, or figure, or virtue; let him be anathema.' They will have all to be cursed as heretics, and burnt too, when they are in their power, who will not believe that whole Christ, soul and body, his

living body, to be in the mass.

2. They determine, and will have it believed as an article of faith, that Christ is truly and properly sacrificed in the mass; his body and blood is there offered, his living body is there made a true and proper sacrifice.

There are some things are called sacrifices, but are not so indeed: they have not the true nature of a sacrifice, but only some little resemblance, therefore have the name. So praise, Hebrews 13:15; doing good, Hebrews 13:16; giving up our bodies, ourselves, to God, Romans 12:1; such are called spiritual sacrifices, 1 Peter 2:5. They have not the true nature, but only some likeness of a sacrifice; and therefore are not truly and properly sacrifices, but only metaphorically. But they will have Christ, as offered in the mass, to be not a spiritual or metaphorical, but a true and proper sacrifice; not so called because of some resemblance, but because it has the nature and essentials of a sacrifice, and therefore truly and properly so. The Council of Trent decrees, 'If any shall say that in the mass there is not offered a true and proper sacrifice, let him be accursed.' They will have it to be as true a sacrifice as the paschal lamb was, yea, as any propitatory sacrifices were under the law; they maintain that it is a propitiatory sacrifice both for the living and the dead.

3. In every true and proper sacrifice, that which is sacrificed is really destroyed. There is all sorts of evidence for this. It is essential to a sacrifice to be destroyed. The definition of it declares this; it is oblatio rite consumpta, an oblation duly consumed. And this is the difference betwixt an oblation and a sacrifice. That which is offered unto God, and preserved for holy uses, is an oblation. That which is offered, so as to be destroyed, is a sacrifice.

Thus it was with all sacrifices under the law; if they were things without life, they were some way consumed; if they were living things, they were killed, put to death. Thus it was, especially in sacrifices for expiation (of which sort they will have the sacrifice of the mass to be), when they were for particular persons, Leviticus 5:6; when they were for the whole congregation, the consumption was greater, Leviticus 16:27.

Nay, this themselves acknowledge, their doctors of greatest repute, not only Cardinal Bellarmine, but the most eminent followers of their angelical doctor, determine it to be essential to a true sacrifice, that it be killed, and put to death.

Put these together. Christ, his living body, is in the mass; he is truly and properly there sacrificed; that which is truly sacrificed, is really killed and destroyed. The inference from hence is clear as a day the sun shined, that Christ is really killed and destroyed in the mass. This, many of them acknowledge in plain terms; take only the words of Bellarmine, instead of many others who might be produced. Either in the mass, says he, there is a true and real killing and slaying of Christ, or there is not; if there be not, then there is no true and real sacrifice; for a true and real sacrifice does require a true and real killing, because the essence of the sacrifice consists in the killing of it. Where he not only affirms that Christ is killed in the mass, but proves it by such an argument as can never be answered by those who will have the mass to be a real sacrifice. Nor can they possibly find out any shift, to excuse their killing of Christ in the mass, without denying that it is a true and real sacrifice; and if they deny this, they abandon their whole religion, and must acknowledge that they have no religion at all amongst them; for they say, there is no religion at all

where there is not such a sacrifice. Yet this may seem a less inconvenience; for who would not count it more tolerable to have no religion at all, than such a one as consists principally in destroying or murdering of Christ? And if they deny this, viz. a real sacrifice, they overthrow the foundation of their faith and church, the infallibility of popes and general councils, who have decreed this to be an article of faith, to be believed by all, under pain of damnation. And they must acknowledge that they have murdered all those whom they have put to death, and burnt alive, because they would not believe the mass to be such a sacrifice.

CHRIST'S DYING FOR SINNERS But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us—Romans 5:8. The apostle having proved at large that we are justified by faith, in the former chapters, in this and the following, he draws several instances from that doctrine. First, for comfort to those that are justified, giving an account of the several comfortable effects of this privilege.

Romans 5:1. Having pardon of sin and title to heaven, hereby we know the Lord is appeased and reconciled, &c.

Romans 5:2. By Christ we have admission to this gracious state in which we are established, and rejoice in hope of a more glorious condition.

Romans 5:3. We not only rejoice in our present happy state, and hopes of future glory, but even glory in our sufferings. Tribulation being sanctified, helps us to the exercise of patience, which, as other graces, grows and is increased by exercise, &c.

Romans 5:4. Experience; in the exercise hereof we have experiments of the grace of God in us and toward us, of his favour and our own sincerity, and this raises and increases our hope.

Romans 5:5. That hope which will not disappoint us, especially having our hearts replenished by the Holy Ghost, with the sense of the love of God in Christ.

Romans 5:6. Which love was herein expressed wonderfully, that when we were in a state of sin and damnation, without any power to free ourselves from this misery, in the fulness of time Christ died, even for those who were without God and opposite to him.

Romans 5:7. This was greater love than is to be found amongst men, for if perhaps one may be found who would die for a merciful, an obliging, an useful or public-spirited man, yet none can be found that would lay down his life for any other, though he were a just and righteous man. But who would die for those that are useless, or odious, as contrary to him, as sinners are to God? But this is the glory and triumph of divine love. Romans 5:8. By this the love of God appeared in its highest exaltation, that when we were so far from being good or righteous, that we were sinners; when useless and impotent, when, loathsome and hateful, when enemies and haters of God; when there was nothing in us, that might move in the least to love us, when we were full of that which might oblige him to express his hatred and indignation against us, even then he vouchsafed the very highest expression of love; then he gave his Son, even then Christ exposed himself to death for us. Herein both the greatness and freeness of his love appeared, to the wonder and astonishment of all that duly consider it. Of the love of Christ in dying, I have spoken on another subject. It is his death I shall now consider, in these words, which offer this observation.

Christ died for sinners. This is the sum of the gospel, the foundation of Christianity, the root and spring of all our comforts and hopes, of all our happiness here and hereafter. For explication, we shall inquire, 1, what death it was he died; 2, what the particle for imports. As to the former, 1. It was a real death. He died not in appearance, but indeed; Christ himself, not another taken for him. An old impostor, Basilides, in the primitive times, held that it was not Christ who was crucified, but Simon of Cyrene in his stead; and thence inferred, that none are to believe in him that was crucified. Mahomet took up the conceit after him, and delivered it in his Alcoran, that it was not Christ but one of his disciples that the Jews crucified. This is an impudent fable, against the types and prophecies in the Old Testament, and the history of the New Testament, which, with the evidence of miracles too, declares that Christ himself was really put to death. He gave Thomas a sensible demonstration that he really suffered, John 20:25. Hereby Thomas was convinced that he suffered indeed. And it was death that he suffered. Life is the result of the union betwixt soul and body. This union was really dissolved, and the soul separated from the body; though both, in the state of separation, continued united in the person of the Son of God.

2. A violent death. It is true he suffered willingly, Hebrews 10:6-7; John 10:18. The sacrifices under the law were led to the altar; but he offered himself to those who made a sacrifice of him. When I call it violent, I mean, it was not natural. The thread of his life was cut off when nature might have spun it out much longer, Daniel 9:26; and when he was at the point of death, he did not dismiss his soul out of the body, as he had power to do, but it was forced out by the pain of death. The violence which he suffered, destroyed the vital disposition in the body, which is needful to continue it in union with the soul, and hereupon life did not so much expire as it was expelled. It is true, it was in his power to have secured himself from that violence; but having willingly submitted to it, it had its effect upon him, and sooner than upon those who suffered with him, Mark 15:44; John 19:32-33.

3. A cruel death, full of exquisite pain and torture; he was crucified. Tully calls it crudelissimum supplicium, the most cruel punishment. Nails were forced through the hands and feet, which, being the most nervous, are the most sensible parts, though least vital. The body was distended upon the cross with such pains as when all the bones are out of joint. That in the psalmist is meant of Christ, Psalms 22:14-17. In this torturing posture they continued on the cross, which made no quick despatch; the pain was prolonged. It was a lingering death, such a death as cruelty itself would have one die, ut sentiat se mori, that he might have all the sense of the pains of death, both a quick and lasting sense thereof. Such a sense Christ had of it, and was willing to have, and shewed it by refusing the wine mixed with myrrh and other poisonous ingredients, if they be right who think that this potion was given him to stupefy sense, or hasten death.

4. A shameful death. Crucifying was thought fit for none amongst the Romans but the vilest persons, for slaves, renegadoes, the worst of malefactors, such as were counted pests of the earth. It was thought too ignominious a death for the meanest person that was a free man. When they would choose a death to shew their greatest abhorrence and detestation of any creature, this was it; therefore the dogs, that by their silence betrayed the capitol, were crucified.

Christ, the Lord of glory, was willing to die such a death for sinners. There was a concurrence of pain and shame in it; when he endured the cross, he endured the shame too, and made nothing of it, Hebrews 12:2.

5. A cursed death, Galatians 3:13-14. It refers to Deuteronomy 21:23. He that was hanged is said to be accursed of God, not only because the sentence of the law (called a curse) was passed and executed upon him, but also to prefigure what was to befall Christ, who was to be crucified, as if he had been a cursed malefactor. The legal curse was a signification of that real curse which Christ was to undergo.

6. The same death, as to the main, which was due to us. The same death was threatened in the law as to the substance of it; and as to the circumstances, that which was equivalent. The first and second death was the sentence of the law, and Christ tasted both. The worm of conscience, indeed, did not touch him; for that is the effect, not of imputed sin, but of personal guilt, wherewith he was not in the least tainted. Eternal sufferings are in the sentence of the law, not absolutely, but with respect to a finite creature, who could not suffer all that was due in less than eternity. But Christ being God, his temporary sufferings were equivalent to eternal; he could pay down the whole sum at once; what it wanted in duration was made up in the value. His sufferings for a time was of more weight and worth than the eternal sufferings of sinners; and it was far more for the Son of God to suffer for a while, than for all creatures to suffer everlastingly. But as to the substance, he endured the pains of the second death, so far as was consistent with the perfection of his nature. The sufferings of that death are punishments of loss and of sense. Punishment of loss is separation from God. Of this he complains, Matthew 27:46, Psalms 22:1-31. The personal union was not dissolved, but the sense and effects of divine love and favour were withheld. His Father appeared as a severe and incensed judge, and dealt with him, not as his Son, but as an undertaker for sinners.

Then for the punishment of sense, how grievous were his inward sorrows! They were equivalent to the sorrows of the second death, Matthew 26:38.

It was not the sense of his outward sufferings that so much burdened his soul; it was immediately the wrath due to our sins, which were then laid upon him, Isaiah 53:10.

How comes it that Christ expressed a greater sense of these his sufferings than many of the martyrs did, when yet their outward torments were more grievous? It was not because they could not endure* more, but because they suffered far less; no bitterness of the second death was in their sufferings. That which Christ endured in soul was incomparably more grievous than all outward tortures.

Thus much for the first thing propounded, what death this was. We are highly concerned to set it out in all its aggravations, that the greatness of Christ’s love, and the horrid nature of sin, may be more apparent, and upon other accounts; of which in the application.

Come we to the second: what is the import of this word for? Hereby it will appear that the death of Christ was for satisfaction to divine justice. A truth denied by too many, who, under the name of Christians, strike at the root of Christianity, and agree with the Jews and Turks, change together with the gospel the foundation of our faith and hopes, comfort and happiness. When it is said Christ died for us, for denotes, not only that he died for our good or advantage, but in our stead. He died, not only to confirm his doctrine, and induce us to believe it, and to imitate his graces, but he suffered death in our stead, i. e. he suffered what we had deserved, that we might not suffer it. There was a substitution of Christ in our place; he, by compact with the Father, undertaking to

suffer what should have been inflicted on us, that we might escape. This the word ■π■ρ, here used, commonly denotes, so twice, Romans 5:7; when a good or righteous man is liable to death, scarce will any one die to save his life, i. e. die in his stead: 2 Corinthians 5:15, 'If one died for all, then all died;' all died in the death of one, because that one died in stead of all, 1 Peter 2:21, and 1 Peter 3:18, and 1 Peter 4:1. He suffered what we, had deserved, that we might not suffer; that is to suffer in our stead. The just suffered what unjust deserved, &c., Hebrews 2:9. The cup of God's wrath, which our sins had filled, and which we should have drank, was by the grace of God taken out of our hands, and put into Christ's, and he drank it up, when the bitterness of death was in it, that we might not taste it, i. e. he tasted death in our stead. The word for, in all these, and many other places, signifies the same that it does in that expression of David, 2 Samuel 18:33, Would God I had died in thy stead, so that thou mightest have lived. So Pythias would have died for Damon, and Terentius for Brutus, i. e. instead of him, that his friend might live, Valer. Magn. lib. iv. cap. 7.

■ντ■ is another word which the Holy Ghost uses in this business, which always signifies substitution, acting or suffering in another's stead, Matthew 20:28, paid that which they were obliged to, did it in their stead, 1 Timothy 2:6; so it is used, Matthew 17:27, ■ντ■ ■μο■, pay this in my stead; and so it is rendered, Matthew 2:22, ■ντ■ ■ρ■δου. That we may understand more clearly and distinctly what the design of Christ's death was, let us observe those notions wherein the Scripture represents it. Three are commonly taken notice of: 1, as the punishment of our sin; 2, the price of our redemption; 3, a sacrifice for sin. In all which, satisfaction for us by his death is evident, though the word be not used.

1. Christ's death was the punishment of our sin. Christ in dying was punished for our transgressions. To clear this, let me shew, 1, the notion of punishment; 2, what evidence there is in Scripture that Christ in dying was punished for our sin; 3, how the proceeding was just and righteous, that Christ, though innocent, should be punished for those that were guilty. The notion of the punishment will appear in the matter, form, and ends of it. Of which briefly.

(1.) In punishment there is an inflicting of some evil of suffering. That is the matter of punishment; it is something afflictive, whether in being deprived of something that is good, or undergoing something that is grievous. Christ suffered both ways; privatively, in the loss of what was most desirable; and positively, in bearing what was most intolerable and grievous.

(2.) Punishment is a suffering inflicted for some offence deserved by some sin. That is the form of it. If it be not upon the account of sin, it may be a calamity, but not a punishment. Christ's death was properly a punishment in this respect, because he suffered death for sin. Not his own; he had none to deserve death, by the testimony of Pilate, Matthew 27:18-19, Matthew 27:23, but ours.

(3.) The end of punishment is the common good; the same with the end of laws and government, the good of the community, rulers and subjects. Partly in deterring and restraining persons from breaking the laws (and so securing the rights of all sorts, which good laws provide for) when they see that such as transgress must suffer the penalty. This is the proper end of those punishments, which are called παραδειγματα, exemplary.

Partly in asserting and maintaining of the honour and interest of those who have suffered by the breach of the laws, which is the end of satisfactory punishment.

Answerably, in the death of Christ, the severity there used is to restrain and deter all from transgressing the laws of God. In that respect it was exemplary punishment; and thereby the honour and interest of God, as he is lawgiver and governor of the world, was to be vindicated and asserted, and a compensation made for the injury and dishonour he had by sin. In that respect his punishment was satisfactory. But then, negatively, the end of Christ's death was not to satisfy the anger of God, as anger signifies a desire of revenge, and as revenge is taken for a pleasing one's self in the evils which another suffers, merely because they are grievous to him whom we are angry at; for such a revengeful humour is not tolerable in men, much less is it to be ascribed unto God.

Now, of these particulars, it is the second we must* stick at, who are against the satisfaction of Christ. They do not deny that he suffered grievous things; they cannot deny, but if that he suffered the punishment which our sins deserved, his death would be satisfactory; but they deny that his death was the punishment of our sins. And it is the second thing I propounded to shew, what evidence there is in Scripture, that his death was the punishment of our sins. Let me, for a more distinct view thereof, reduce it to some heads.

1. It is said, 'He bare our sins,' 1 Peter 2:24-25. To bear sin is to undergo the punishment due to sin, whether he be said to bear his own sin, or the sins of others, Leviticus 19:5, i. e. he shall be punished for it, Leviticus 20:17, where 'bearing his iniquity,' is to be punished, i. e. expressly to be cut off, Leviticus 20:18-20, to 'bear sin,' is to be punished for it, and the punishment specified by childless. So to bear the sins of others is to be punished for others' sins, Numbers 14:33, i. e. they shall suffer the punishment of your fornications, Numbers 30:15; Ezekiel 18:20, he shall not bear the punishment of his father's sins, i. e. as it is expressed, he shall not die; so that when the apostle says, 'He bare our sins,' if we will understand it as the Holy Ghost leads us, by the constant use of the phrase, the meaning is, he bare the punishment of our sins when he died; our sins were imputed to him, and so the punishment was transferred from us to him.

Answerable to this of the apostle is that of the prophet, Isaiah 53:6, Isaiah 53:11-12; that which is iniquities here, is punishment, ver. 4; that which he suffered, in being stricken, smitten, afflicted, bruised, wounded, slain, cut off. By all these phrases, and more, are his punishments expressed; and that it was the desert of our sins, is clear in the connection. The Jews thought him stricken of God, justly punished for his own sins, such as they unjustly charged him with, Isaiah 53:4; but the meritorious cause of the punishment inflicted on him was indeed our sins, Isaiah 53:5; so that no other sense can be put upon this phrase, but what is contrary to the natural and perpetual use thereof in Scripture.

(2.) Christ is said to be made sin and a curse for us, which do plainly import that he was punished for us, 2 Corinthians 5:21; he was charged with our sin, and so punished as if he had been a sinner; he was made sin for us, as we are made the righteousness of God in him; his righteousness being imputed to us, the Lord rewards us as those that are righteous; and our sins being imputed to him, the Lord punished him as a sinner. Not for his own guilt, but for ours, was he punished; as not for our own righteousness, but for his, are we saved. The sacrifice that was slain, and so punished instead of the sinner for whom it was offered, is called by the name of sin, Leviticus 4:29, Psalms 40:6. The same word the prophet uses, speaking of Christ, Isaiah 53:10. Answerable to which is the apostle's expression, when he says Christ was made sin for us; he

died and was therein punished instead of those whose sin he bare; as the sacrifice was killed, and so suffered instead of him whose sin was laid on it. So he is said to be ‘made a curse for us,’ Galatians 3:13. The curse of the law, in the former clause, is confessed to be the punishment of sin; and no reason is, or can be, given why it should not be in the latter. To be made a curse for us, is to be punished for us, as such malefactors were who are accursed of God.

(3.) He is said to suffer for our sins, Romans 4:25. He was delivered up to death for our sins. To suffer for sin, deserving it, is in a proper sense to be punished; and the particle for, when joined with sin and sufferings, does still denote the meritorious cause of sufferings, Ephesians 5:6, Leviticus 26:28, Deuteronomy 18:12, 1 Kings 14:18. That Christ was punished for our sins, is likewise signified by those other expressions, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 1 Peter 3:18, Galatians 1:4; these plainly denote that sin was the cause of his suffering. And how can sin be the cause of sufferings, but as deserving them? and sufferings deserved by sin are properly punishments. This is enough to make it evident that Christ’s death was the punishment of our sins.

3. As to the justice of the proceeding. Is it not unjust that an innocent person should be punished for the offences of others?

(1.) It is not unjust for the innocent to be punished for others’ sins, when there is a conjunction betwixt the sufferer and the offender; such as is betwixt parents and children, princes and subjects; for in this case the Lord, the righteous judge of heaven and earth, punishes relatives for sins which not they but their relations acted; he threatens it, Exodus 20:3. And this is not to be understood only in case they imitate their fathers’ sins: for if they imitate them, God visits their own sins upon them, not their fathers’; so Ham’s sons were cursed for his sin, Genesis 9:25; and Saul’s sons punished for his offence, 2 Samuel 21:8, 2 Samuel 21:14; and Achan’s children for his crime, Joshua 7:24. So he punishes subjects for the sins of their rulers: thus Judah is punished, in Josiah’s time, for the sins of Manasseh, though then they were reformed, 2 Kings 23:24; and the abominations taken away, 2 Chronicles 34:33; and the people before for David’s sin, when he declares they were innocent, 2 Samuel 24:15, 2 Samuel 24:17.

Now, if the proceeding was just, upon the account of conjunction, in these cases, why not in this before us; when there was such a near conjunction betwixt Christ and those for whom he suffered; when he was not only of the same nature, but a king, a father, a head to many of them actually, to all of them in God’s design?

(2.) It is just in case of consent; when he that is punished has power to dispose of that wherein he suffers, and puts himself freely under an obligation to be punished therein, and admitted by him who has power to punish. In these circumstances, by the verdict of God and mankind, it is righteous to punish a person for the offences of others, which yet he is not guilty of. Now there is a concurrence of these in the case.

[1.] Christ freely consented to die and undergo what was due to us. To compel one that is innocent to suffer for another’s offences, when he has no mind to it, may be an injury; but in this case there was no constraint, no need of it. Christ offered himself willingly to become our surety, he freely came under the obligation, and became responsible to all that was due from us. He was not only willing, but earnestly desirous to suffer and die in our stead, Luke 12:50, as desirous to see the travail of his soul, what pangs soever it cost him, as a woman near her time is to be delivered,

Psalms 40:7-8; Song of Solomon 2:8.

[2.] Christ had absolute power to dispose of what he suffered in. One reason why a man is not allowed to lay down his life for another that deserves death, is because his life is not his own to dispose of. But Christ was absolute Lord of his life, and had full power to keep it, or lay it down, as he pleased, John 10:18.

[3.] The Father admitted Christ as our surety. He was content that his sufferings should stand for ours, and that we thereupon should be discharged. It was his will that Christ should undertake for us, Psalms 40:7. They agreed in the design, and upon the way and means of our deliverance, Zechariah 6:13. The Father loves him, because he consented to it, John 10:17. So that in a case where all parties concerned had power, all were satisfied, none had cause to complain of injury; and so there was nothing of injustice.

[4.] Let me add another thing: Christ's loss in suffering was not irreparable; it was fully compensated. If an innocent person suffer for a malefactor, the community loses a good man, and may suffer by sparing of an evil member, and the innocent sufferer cannot have his life restored, being once lost. Though David wished it in a passion, yet it had been great wrong and damage to himself and the public if he had suffered death instead of Absalom. But in this case all is quite otherwise. Christ laid down his life, but so as he took it up again, John 10:17-18. He continued not under the power of death for ever, nor as others who suffer death must do, till the general resurrection; but rose again the third day; death was swallowed up in victory. By dying he 'prolonged his days,' Isaiah 53:10; his loss of life for a while was countervailed and outweighed by infinite advantages.

Then also those offenders, in whose stead he suffered, are, by virtue of his death, reclaimed, effectually changed, made useful and serviceable to God and man.

Briefly, here was no injury to any party whatever; not to those for whom he died: they have unexpressible advantage thereby. Not to the person suffering; he was willing, and endured nothing without his consent; he had that in prospect which made up all, Hebrews 12:2, and Hebrews 2:9. Not to God, nor any concerned in his government, for by Christ's death the ends of his government were all secured. His honour was hereby vindicated, the authority of his law preserved, and his subjects, by such an instance of severity in his own Son, deterred from violating it. So that, upon the whole, in Christ's being punished for sinners, here is no appearance of injury to any, and so nothing at all of injustice upon any account. This for the first consideration of Christ's death proposed in Scripture, as the punishment of our sins.

2. His death is also represented in Scripture as the price of our redemption. Redemption in general is a delivering of one from a calamity by a ransom, i. e. some valuable consideration, which comes under the notion of a price. To understand the nature of it more distinctly, as it is ascribed to Christ's death, and to free us from the misconstructions put upon it by the opposers of redemption by Christ, take notice of three particulars.

(1.) Man, by disobedience to God, was brought into misery, such misery as the Scripture often expresses by captivity. The Lord, for our rebellions, being the supreme judge and governor, did, as it were, commit us, deliver us to Satan, leave us under the power of sin and the world. Satan, as the gaoler, leads us captive at his will; he makes use of sin and the world as fetters to increase

and continue this misery.

(2.) We could not be redeemed from this misery, but by a ransom. Where there is freedom from a calamity without a price, it is deliverance simply, but it is not properly redemption. Our deliverance from this misery is still in the New Testament ascribed to a price, a valuable consideration, which, tendered to the Lord, and he being satisfied with it, does grant a discharge. The word ■πολ■τρωσις, used for redemption, 1 Corinthians 1:30, and 1 Corinthians 7:23, signifies deliverance by a ransom. Hence the delivery of the Israelites from Egypt, though it be called redemption, as being a type of that great deliverance from spiritual bondage and misery, yet it is not redemption properly, because it was not procured by ransom.

(3.) The price, upon consideration of which we are delivered, is the sufferings, the death, the blood of Christ, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14. The price by which we are acquitted is the blood of Christ. Also Romans 3:24-25, Hebrews 9:12, 1 Peter 2:18-19. The price, by which we were redeemed, was not so mean things as silver and gold, but that which is infinitely more precious and valuable. That is a price, by the laying down of which something is acquired; and when it is laid down for deliverance from misery and slavery, it is a ransom. So Christ's laying down his life is our ransom, Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45.

(4.) This price Christ paid in our stead. His sufferings were the price; and he suffered what we should have suffered, or what was equivalent thereto, that we might be delivered, 1 Timothy 1:6. ■ντ■λυτρον signifies a price or ransom paid instead of another, for ■ντ■ (as was shewed before) denotes substitution, when one is put in the place of another; and, in this case, not a thing instead of a person, but the sufferings of one person instead of the sufferings of others. ■ντ■λυτρον is such a ransom, in which the redeemer undergoes some such thing as the redeemed were liable to, which is fully expressed by the apostle, Galatians 3:13. He redeemed us, how? by paying the ransom in our stead, i. e. by undergoing the curse which we should have undergone, and thereby discharging us from it.

(5.) The price was paid to God. Those that would have all that was done for us by Christ to be only a metaphorical redemption, confess that it would be properly redemption, and properly a price, if the price were paid to any; but since Satan detains us, it should be paid to him, if to any; and seeing it is absurd to have it paid to him, it is paid to none at all. We say it is God to whom it is paid, for the price is the blood or the death of Christ. This is sometimes set forth as a price, sometimes as a sacrifice. These are but one and the same thing, under several notions. Now the sacrifice was offered to God, and therefore the price, being the same thing, was paid to God, Ephesians 5:2.

It is the great God, the supreme governor of the world, that detains sinners in this misery. Satan is but the instrument of his justice. It was for the injury done to God that we are cast into this misery. The injury is transgressing of his law; the law cannot be satisfied, nor the injury repaired, but by suffering the death which it threatens. Christ suffered death in our stead, thereby the injury done to God is repaired, the law of God satisfied; and the Lord accepting of this, which the Scripture calls a price, tendered for his satisfaction, it was clearly paid to him, Revelation 5:1-9, which may as well denote that the price was paid to God, as that the people were purchased for him.

3. The death of Christ is proposed in Scripture as a sacrifice of expiation. So that, when he is said to die for sinners, we are to understand that he died as a sacrifice to expiate their sins. Now that ye may the better apprehend what a sacrifice for expiation is, and how his death is such a sacrifice, take serious notice of some particulars.

(1.) There were some sorts of sacrifices under the law, to which all those in use may be reduced.

[1.] Eucharistical sacrifices of thanksgiving, which were offered to signify their gratitude for mercies received of God; as acknowledgments of their own unworthiness, and his bounty and goodness to them. Such a sacrifice the death of Christ was not, it had another design and end, and was of another nature.

[2.] Propitiatory sacrifices for expiation. These were to atone God offended by their sin, to divert his wrath, and the punishment due to sin, when was offered what, by way of satisfaction, might appease God, and procure pardon of him, and favour or reconciliation with him, Leviticus 4:26, Leviticus 4:31, Leviticus 4:35. The design of these sacrifices in reference to God, was to make atonement, i. e. to appease him when he was provoked, to render him propitious when he had cause to shew his wrath. And in reference to the sinner, to obtain forgiveness, and prevent the punishment which his sin deserved. And such a sacrifice was the death of Christ, of this nature, and for this end.

(2.) Those sacrifices under the law did prefigure and shadow out the great sacrifice of expiation in Christ's death. The apostle so speaks of them, as of other things belonging to that administration, Hebrews 8:5, and Hebrews 9:9, Hebrews 10:1. Those expiatory sacrifices had some resemblance of this, as the shadow has of the body, though obscure and imperfect. They are but shadows, the substance and perfection of expiation was in this sacrifice of Christ's death, Colossians 2:17. Whatever sacrifices were then offered for expiation,

[1.] They all prefigured and signified this of Christ, those especially which were sacrificed on the great day of expiation, of which there is an account, Leviticus 16:1-34. The apostle instances in those as figures, Hebrews 9:7-9, shewing how far the virtue of the sacrifice signified did transcend that of the signs and legal figures, Hebrews 9:11-12, &c.

[2.] Likewise the trespass-offerings and sin-offerings did signify the same; ■■■, the word used for a sin-offering, is applied to Christ by the prophet, Isaiah 53:10.

[3.] The same was typified by the burnt-offerings of all sorts; whether they were stated, and the time for them determined by the law, or occasional, and such as they called free-will offerings, for both were for expiation, or, which is all one, for atonement, Job 1:5, Leviticus 5:10; both the voluntary, Leviticus 1:4, and the prescribed, Leviticus 16:6, Leviticus 16:10, Leviticus 16:1, Leviticus 16:18, &c. And burnt-offerings with the sin-offerings are reckoned by the apostle amongst those which were shadows of this most perfect sacrifice, Hebrews 10:1, Hebrews 10:6, Hebrews 10:8. Both burnt-offerings and sin-offerings (expressly applied to Christ) were for expiation, with this difference, that the sin-offering was to expiate one sort of sin, specified; burnt-offerings were to expiate all sins.

[4.] The peace-offerings for the congregation seem to have been for expiation, and so of the like typical signification with the rest, because what is required in expiatory sacrifices is found in them,

Ezekiel 45:15, 2 Samuel 2:10; the slaying of the beast, the sprinkling of the blood, and consuming some part of it upon the altar, Leviticus 9:18-19.

[5.] The paschal lamb had something of expiation in its first institution. The blood of it secured the Israelites from wrath and punishment, which they had deserved, and the Egyptians suffered, Exodus 12:13, Hebrews 12:24, Hebrews 12:28. Through the blood of Christ, typified by that of the paschal lamb, the Lord is propitious and favourable to his people, so as not to destroy them, as he did the first-born in Egypt. The passover is referred to Christ by the apostle, 1 Corinthians 5:7.

[6.] The lamb offered in the daily sacrifice was a burnt-offering; and burnt-offerings, as was said before, were for expiation, Leviticus 1:4, and Leviticus 16:24; to make atonement, to remove guilt, to cleanse from moral and legal impurities too, Leviticus 14:12, Numbers 6:12, Leviticus 5:6. In reference to lambs thus sacrificed for expiation under the law, Christ is styled, Revelation 13:8, the Lamb sacrificed, John 1:29, by whose blood the guilt of sin is taken away, 1 Peter 1:18-19. So that all sorts of propitiatory sacrifices are referred to Christ, and shadowed out that most perfect expiation which we have in the sacrifice of himself. The most material resemblances betwixt them will appear in what follows. I have stayed the longer here, because it is a most delightful and comfortable prospect to one in love with Christ, to see him in those parts of the Old Testament which give an account of these sacrifices, which otherwise may seem dark, jejune, and useless to us.

(3.) That which was offered as a sacrifice for expiation was to be destroyed. Being a living creature, first it was slain, and the blood, part of it, sprinkled upon the horns of the brazen altar, or round about it, sometimes before the veil of the sanctuary, and some of it put upon the horns of the altar of incense; all the rest of the blood the priests poured out at the foot of the altar, Leviticus 4:18. The other parts of it besides the blood were sometimes partly burnt on the altar, partly eaten by the priests, sometimes wholly burnt upon the altar, Leviticus 1:8-9, as in the whole burnt-offering; or burnt without the camp, as in the sin-offering for the high priest and the whole congregation, Leviticus 4:11-12.

Now the sufferings of Christ were correspondent to the burnings of those sacrifices, Hebrews 13:11-12, and his death to the blood of them. Indeed, it is the blood to which expiation is peculiarly ascribed, Leviticus 17:11. It is the blood that makes atonement; and why so? The reason assigned is this, ‘the life is in the blood,’ repeated Leviticus 17:14. That sin might be expiated, the life of the sacrifice was to go for the life of the sinner; and the blood being shed, the life which is within the blood was given, and so the blood made expiation. Hence the apostle, to shew the necessity of Christ’s blood to make atonement, Hebrews 9:22. Without blood there was no expiation, under the law or under the gospel; and all the effects of expiation are expressly ascribed to the blood of Christ, Romans 3:25, Ephesians 2:13-14.

(4.) The sacrifice for expiation was slain instead of the sinner that offered it. There was a substitution here, one being put to death in room of the other, and suffering, that he might escape. This is of great consequence, to clear the nature and design of Christ’s death, in opposition to those who would nullify it. Therefore I will insist on it a little, and shew what evidence there is for it.

Let me promise this, which is the observation of many. By the judicial law, which was to the Jews their civil or common law, by which they were governed as a commonwealth or body politic,

corporal death was the penalty of all disobedience to God, Deuteronomy 27:26. The curse is death, death corporal in the civil or political sense of it; death eternal in the spiritual sense, as the apostle applies it, Galatians 3:10. Now the Lord, who was the king and lawgiver of Israel, relaxed the law as to many offences; and instead of the corporal death of the offender, accepted of the death of a sacrifice. Now that there was such a substitution, the life of the sacrifice being given for the life of the sinner, one suffering instead of the other, appears divers ways.

[1.] In that the blood is said to make atonement, Leviticus 17:11. The reason why the blood was for atonement, is because the life was in the blood; and therefore when the blood was offered to make atonement for the offender, the life of the sacrifice was supposed to be given instead of his life.

[2.] The offender, bringing a beast for a sacrifice, was to lay his hand upon the head of it, Leviticus 1:4, whereby is signified that he offered it in his stead; and so, says the text, it was accepted for him, i. e. in his stead, to make atonement, i. e. to satisfy for him, as suffering in his stead.

[3.] The sacrifice is said to bear the iniquity of the people, Leviticus 10:17; and to bear iniquity is to be punished for it, which is to suffer what the offender should have suffered, to suffer death instead of them.

[4.] The sins of the people were confessed over the goat in the day of expiations, Leviticus 16:21, which signified that the sin and punishment of the people were transferred to the goat, and upon his head, that he might bear them in their stead.

[5.] A heifer was to be slain when the murderer could not be found, and so to suffer in his stead, and secure the land from being defiled with blood, as if justice had been done upon the murderer, and himself had suffered, Deuteronomy 21:1-4, Deuteronomy 21:8-9. The guilt that was to be put away by the death of the murderer, was put away from the land by the death of the heifer killed instead of him. In short, the Hebrew doctors, as Buxtorf observes, lay it down as a general rule, that wherever it is said, Behold, I am for expiation, it is to be understood, Behold, I am in the place of another, to bear his iniquities.

Now this substitution of the sacrifice in the room of the sinner under the law, typified the substitution of Christ in our stead, in that great sacrifice of expiation when he offered himself on the cross. He was offered in our stead, he bare our sins, our guilt was transferred to him; he bore our punishment, and suffered it instead of us. His life went for ours. He died, that the death threatened in the law might not be inflicted on us; as the sacrifice was slain that the sinner might live. In this sense is he said to die for sinners in the text, as a sacrifice for them, suffering death in their stead. And that is the sense of the expression wherever he is said to die for us. It still implies substitution. Many instances I have given, to which add Luke 22:19-20, John 11:50-52.

(5.) The sacrifices for expiation were offered to God, and had an immediate respect to him. They were to atone God, and obtain forgiveness of him, as is frequently expressed, and had that effect, Numbers 16:46, 2 Samuel 24:25. I mention this particular, because the opposers of Christ his sacrifice and death contend that his death had no respect to God immediately, but only to man. It did not make our peace with God, nor incline him to pardon, but only disposed us for pardon of sins past, by leading us to amendment of life. And so they leave nothing of a priest to Christ, nothing of a sacrifice in his death. Whereas the apostle tells us, Hebrews 5:1, gifts and sacrifices are things appertaining to God, being offered to him. And so Christ our high priest offered himself

for a sacrifice to God, Ephesians 5:2. What the effect of his death was in reference to God, shall be shewed hereafter.

(6.) The animal designed for expiation was sacrificed, not in the sanctuary, but at the door of the tabernacle, Leviticus 1:1-17. Indeed, part of the blood was sometimes carried into the sanctuary, sometimes into the most holy place; but that was not for sacrifice, but the application of the blood of the victim already sacrificed. This I add, because the adversaries will have no sacrifice of Christ on earth; and though they make show of one in heaven, yet they assign nothing there which is like either sacrifice or expiation. Christ was sacrificed when he was put to death, and his blood shed. The Lamb of God was made a sacrifice when he was slain. If they make a sacrifice of him in heaven, either he was not sacrificed on earth, or he will be sacrificed more than once, contrary to all evidence of Scripture, Hebrews 7:27, and Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 9:25-28, and Hebrews 10:10-12.

(7.) The effects of expiatory sacrifices, and answerably of the death of Christ, are divers. We may take notice of the virtue and efficacy thereof, in reference to sin, to God, and the sinner.

[1.] The efficacy thereof in reference to sin is to expiate the fault, or, which is all one, to satisfy for the offence. Piare is luere (as Grotius), to expiate is to bear punishment, to undergo the punishment due to the sin; the very same, or what is equivalent, is to satisfy. When this is suffered, the law is satisfied, and that which justice requires is done, whether it be suffered by the offender himself, or by one legally admitted in his stead. Satisfaction was made by the sacrifice, substituted in place of the sinner, suffering what was due to him. The offender deserved to be punished, the sacrifice bare the punishment; the offender deserved to die, the sacrifice was put to death in his stead. Hence the sacrifice is said to bear his sin, Leviticus 10:17. To bear their iniquity, is to bear the punishment due to them. In correspondence hereto the apostle says, Christ bare the sins of those for whom he was offered, Hebrews 9:28. In being sacrificed, he bare their punishment, suffered what was due to them for their sins, and so satisfied for their offences, which is to expiate their sin.

Both the words used in the old Testament for expiation, ■■■ and ■■■, import satisfaction, 2 Samuel 21:3; atonement, ■■■■, the word is, ‘Wherewith shall I expiate?’ the sense is, Wherewith shall I make satisfaction? so Genesis 31:39, ‘I bare the loss,’ is, I made it good. The word is ■■■, I did expiate; the sense is, I made the satisfaction for it. This was the end of Christ’s death, this was the effect of it, to expiate sin, to satisfy for it. What God lost by sin, Christ made it up; what injury he had by sin, Christ gave satisfaction for it by being made a sacrifice for expiation.

[2.] The efficacy of those sacrifices in reference to God is to atone him, i. e. to appease him and divert his wrath. Making atonement is frequently ascribed to the legal sacrifices that were for expiation, Leviticus 1:4. Answerably we have atonement by Christ, Romans 5:11, i. e. by his death, Romans 5:10, by virtue of his sacrifice.

Upon this account those sacrifices are said to be a sweet savour unto the Lord, as being thereupon well pleased, no more angry, Leviticus 4:31. Such a sacrifice was Noah’s, a placatory sacrifice, and the effect of it so expressed, Genesis 8:20-21; it is rendered odor quietis, a savour of rest, a word which comes from ■■■, used, Genesis 8:4, where the ark is said to rest, and denotes that the Lord’s anger did now rest; he ceased to be angry; he would no more let out his wrath

against the world in such a way.

Such was the effect of Christ's death and sacrifice, and so expressed by the apostle, Ephesians 5:2. The Lord was well pleased with Christ, and upon the account of this sacrifice well pleased with those for whom it was offered. Now he says, 'Fury is not in me.' By virtue of the blood of this sacrifice the Lord becomes propitious and gracious; hence Christ is said to be set forth, Romans 3:25. He exhibits himself as on the mercy-seat, on the throne of grace, to which we may come with confidence, &c., 1 John 2:2.

[3.] The effect of these sacrifices, in reference to the sinner, is forgiveness of sin and freedom from guilt; hence it is often said upon the offering of such a sacrifice, it shall be forgiven him, Leviticus 5:10, Leviticus 5:13, Leviticus 5:18, Numbers 15:27-28.

Answerably by the blood of Christ sacrificed for us, we are said to have forgiveness. Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Matthew 26:28. It is by virtue of this sacrifice that we are said to be freed from guilt in variety of expressions. Hereby we are 'purged,' Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 9:22, Hebrews 9:26, guilt is uncleanness, Leviticus 5:2, 'washed,' Revelation 5:11, 'cleansed,' 1 John 1:7, 1 John 1:9, 'sprinkled,' Hebrews 10:21-22, which are such expressions as other authors, Greek and Latin, use for their expiations.

Both these sacrifices procured freedom from guilt; but there is a great difference in this respect betwixt the expiations by the legal sacrifices and that by the death of Christ. Which that we may understand, there are three sorts of guilt to be taken notice of, civil, ceremonial, and spiritual. Guilt is an obligation to punishment. To be guilty is to be bound over or made liable to some punishment or other, which being various, guilt is accordingly distinguished.

1. Civil guilt, when an Israelite was liable to corporal death for some transgression of the law, for which death was to be inflicted, Deuteronomy 21:9.

2. Ceremonial guilt, when he was to be debarred from the tabernacle, and joining with the congregation in the ceremonious worship then authorised, for some legal pollution, Leviticus 5:2-3. Spiritual guilt, when one is liable to eternal death for some sins against God, who has made eternal death the wages of sin. Now, the legal sacrifices might free those under the law from the two former sorts of guilt; but the death of Christ and his sacrifice alone frees from the third, spiritual guilt.

1. The legal sacrifices might and did free those for whom they were daily offered from civil guilt, and saved them from corporal death; for when this is supposed to have been due for disobedience to God, and was to be inflicted by the magistrate, the Lord (as was said before) relaxed the law, and admitted the death of the sacrifice which he appointed instead of the death of the offender, so that the offering of such sacrifice dissolved the obligation to this penalty, cleared the delinquent from this guilt, and freed him from corporal death.

But, then, a sacrifice would not quit the sinner in all cases from civil guilt and penalty. There were some crimes for which no sacrifice was appointed, none would be admitted: such were, wilful idolatry, murder, adultery, &c. Accordingly some understand Psalms 51:16. Those crimes of David were of that nature that no sacrifice could expiate. Such were wilful sins, done in contempt of the law, as the apostle intimates, Hebrews 10:26-28; and herein the sacrifice of Christ far transcends

the legal sacrifices, expiating those sins spiritually which those sacrifices could not expiate (or procure pardon for) so much as civilly, Acts 13:38.

2. Those legal expiations could free them from ceremonial guilt. If he had contracted some legal uncleanness, he was not suffered to come to the tabernacle till he was cleansed, and that impurity expiated; but having made use of the means prescribed for expiation in such cases, he was freed from this ritual guilt, and admitted to join in public worship with the congregation at the tabernacle, or afterwards at the temple; an instance we have hereof, Numbers 19:13, Numbers 19:16. If one had touched a dead body, or one slain, or a bone, or a grave, he was unclean, contracted such guilt thereby that his coming to the tabernacle before it was expiated (or, as the Dutch render it, before he unsinned it), was counted a defiling it. The way of unsinning or expiating such uncleanness is described there: a red heifer burnt to ashes, water was put to the ashes, and with hyssop sprinkled upon the unclean, Numbers 19:17-18. David refers to it, Psalms 51:7; and this the apostle calls a ‘sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh,’ Hebrews 9:13, an external sanctification, an expiating of them only as to the flesh, not as to the soul and conscience, and so comes infinitely short of that expiation which is to be had by the blood of Christ, as he shews in the next verse.

3. The legal sacrifices could not free them from spiritual guilt, could not secure them from eternal death, to which they were for sin bound over by the sentence of the law. The life of a beast, or of many, was not of sufficient value to satisfy for men’s sins, which deserved everlasting wrath and endless sufferings; these could not be a compensation for the injury sin had done to God; this could not vindicate the holiness, truth, justice, authority of God, which all suffered by the violation of his law, which yet must all be fully asserted and vindicated, or else the Lord was engaged in justice to execute the sentence of the law, and inflict eternal death on transgressors. Nothing less than the death of the Son of God could do this, whose blood was of infinite value. The legal sacrifices were of no such value, of no considerable worth or virtue, for such an effect. Hence the apostle: Hebrews 10:4, ‘Impossible they should take away sin’ as to spiritual guilt; not possible they should free the sinner from the obligation he was under to suffer eternal death. The same he signifies Hebrews 9:9. They could not perfectly satisfy the conscience that sin was pardoned, the spiritual guilt removed, and the sinner secured from everlasting death by such offerings. The conscience could not have any sufficient or perfect ground of assurance that justice was satisfied by such sacrifices; and the sinner, being conscious that he is exposed to the justice of God, cannot be perfectly satisfied by anything but that which will satisfy justice. But did these legal sacrifices only respect civil and ceremonial guilt? Were they not at all considerable as to spiritual guilt? The apostle shews how far they were considerable as to this, when in this verse he calls them figures. They did prefigure that which would remove this spiritual guilt; they themselves did not, could not remove it. They freed the sinner from civil and ritual guilt really, but they only typified that which was alone sufficient to free from spiritual guilt. They had no virtue of themselves to do it, but only signified and shadowed out the sacrifice of Christ, by which it was perfectly done, Hebrews 9:13-14. These legal expiations, which cleansed them from ceremonial impurities, signified that the sacrifice of Christ would do more; this being of infinite value, since it was offered ‘by the eternal Spirit,’ i. e. by virtue and power of his own Godhead, would ‘purge the conscience from dead works,’ i. e. free the soul from spiritual guilt, the guilt of those acts whose desert was eternal death. Thus you see the difference betwixt the legal expiations and that by Christ: the one freed but from

temporal death, the other wrought eternal redemption; the former cleansed from legal impurities, the latter purges the conscience, &c.; the former did but typify that expiation as to spiritual guilt, which the latter did really effect.

Use. 1. This should teach us to admire the love of God, who gave his Son, the love of Christ, who gave himself to die for sinners. This is the use the text leads us to in this, &c.

Here the glory of this love shines forth most admirably, both in the greatness and freeness of it; the greatness of it, in that he died; the freeness of it, in that he died for sinners.

1. The greatness of this love, that appears wonderful in the expression of it. What greater expression of love was the world capable of, than that the Son of God should die for sinful men? What greater expression of love could the great God vouchsafe, than to deliver his Son unto death? What greater expression could Christ make of his love to us than to die for us, and to die such a death, and in such a capacity, in our stead, in the stead of the vilest malefactors? How wonderful is it that God should become man, when man at his best estate is but vanity; that he should take the nature and innocent weakness of man, who is but a worm, and the son of man that is but a worm; that he should become man, not to enjoy any comforts of human life, but to undergo all the sorrows and sufferings of life and death; that he who gave life and being to all things, and sustains all in life and being by the word of his power, should die; that infinite glory should suffer a shameful death, should endure the cross, and despise the shame; that God blessed for ever should become a curse, and die a cursed death, the death of accursed malefactors, hanging on a tree; that he who was the God of all consolation, the fountain of all comfort and happiness, should expose himself to the rage and cruelty of men, and the incensed wrath and justice of his Father; should suffer most exquisite pains and tortures in body and soul from men, and God too; the pains and sorrows both of first and second death! That he who was the righteous lawgiver, the supreme judge, the almighty governor of the whole world, should not only suffer, but be punished in our stead, and bear the punishment of our crimes in his body too! That he who was more valuable than ten thousand worlds should give himself a ransom for us, and not think his life, his blood dear, but lay it down freely as a price of our redemption from hell and wrath!

That, he to whom angels, men, and all creatures owe themselves a sacrifice, should sacrifice himself to expiate our guilt, should make his soul a sin-offering, that he should love us, and wash us from our sins in his own blood!

Oh how is everything herein—every notion, every consideration of Christ's love expressed in his death—astonishing and full of wonder! that which may amaze heaven and earth, that which may transport the angels, that which we should never speak of, never think of but with admiration! Oh the height and depth, &c., Revelation 5:9-13. Heaven and earth owes all honour to Christ for his wonderful love; and those that have any sense of it will be giving him the honour due to his name, to his love. And this is one special way to honour him for it, by admiring it.

2. Not only the greatness, but the freeness of this love is most wonderful; that which we should eternally admire, as being, of all things that the mind of man can consider, most worthy of admiration. That love is most free which is expressed to those that are most unworthy; but of all creatures in the world, none so unworthy of any love from Christ as sinners. And yet, which the text shews, it was sinners that Christ loved, it was sinners to whom Christ expressed his love, and

gave the greatest expression of it that was possible, so as to die for them. Sinners are to Christ the most unworthy of love; for in that they are sinners, they are impotent and worthless; have nothing, can do nothing to deserve love, nothing any way to engage his affection, or to move him in the least to express any love to them. In that they are sinners, they are hateful to him, and were so far from deserving any love, as they on this account deserved all his hatred.

3. In that they are sinners, they are haters of God; and upon that account so far from expecting any sign of love that there remained nothing for them but a fearful expectation of acts of wrath and enmity. Now, he that could love such as these must love freely; his love expressed to sinners must be wonderfully free.

(1.) Sinners are impotent. Sin has divested them of the image of God, primitive holiness and righteousness, which was both the strength and beauty of their souls; and so they have nothing, can do nothing to excite love. This impotency implied here is expressed ver. 6. When they were 'without strength' either to relieve themselves, though extremely miserable, or to apply themselves to him for relief; when they did not so much as expect to* desire it, he was found of those that sought him not; when they had no strength to make any answerable return for his love, any considerable acknowledgment of it; when they could do nothing, speak nothing worthy of his love, and such an expression of it. He that loves such creatures as these must do it freely; yet so impotent were sinners when he loved them, and so expressed his love as to die for them.

(2.) Sinners are hateful to Christ, the only objects of his hatred in the whole world. All other things, as being the works of his hands, are good, and so he likes them, and is pleased with them; but sinners, as such, are evil, and so hateful to him; they deserve his hatred and nothing else, as being contrary to him who is holiness itself. And they are actually hated by him: Psalms 45:7, Psalms 5:5. Now, could he love that which is hateful, that which he is of purer eyes than to behold without loathing and detestation? It is true, he could not delight in them as such, but he would bear them good will and pity them; and had such compassion on them, as to expose himself to wrath and misery, yea to death itself, a cruel, a cursed death, for their sake. Sure such love, to those who were so hateful, must needs be free, wonderfully so.

(3.) Sinners, as such, are haters of God, enemies to Christ, hate him, as David complains, 'cruelly,' Psalms 25:19, 'wrongfully,' Psalms 38:19, 'without a cause,' Psalms 35:19, which is the most provoking and intolerable kind of hatred.

It is strange for any to love those that are hateful, but more wonderful if that hatefulness be accompanied with hatred. Yet there was a concurrence of these in sinners, when Christ loved them and died for them, Romans 5:10. He would die to make our peace with God when we were enemies to him. Oh what manner of love was this! John 15:13. Greater love than this the world never knew, till Christ appeared in it; but in him the world had an instance of greater love than this, a love more free, more wonderful, when Christ laid down his life for enemies, when he loved those more than his life, who hated him. No love can be more free, more wonderfully free, than the love of Christ to sinners; so weak and impotent, so hateful and loathsome, yet so much enemies to him. Oh give him the honour due to this love, by admiring it, by adoring him for it.

Use 2. This engages us to love Christ. This shews we are infinitely obliged to it. Shall we not love him who loves us? That is an intolerable, an inhuman temper, that will not return love for love. The

worst of sinners will do this in reference to one another, Matthew 5:46. The return of love for love is so due, that it deserves no thanks, no rewards; the very publicans, counted the worst of men, will do this. And shall we be worse than they? Shall we deal more disengenuously, more unworthily with Christ, than the worst of men do with one another?

2. Shall we not love him, whose love has prevented ours? John 4:19. He does not require that we should love him upon any other terms, but because he loved us first. If he had resolved not to love us, till first we loved him, he should never have loved us; for we would never have begun to him. But since he begun to us, and propounds it as a motive to love him, that he loved us first; how great will our sin, how great will our condemnation be, if we do not answer the love of Christ with a return of love, 1 John 4:10. Herein was the height of his love, and not to answer it with affection will be the highest provocation, and that which ourselves count most intolerable from others.

3. Shall we not love him who loved us freely, when we were sinners, when we were so far from deserving any love, as we deserved all hatred? Did he love us when we were utterly unworthy of it, and shall we not love him who infinitely deserves all our affection; him who is not only altogether lovely, entirely, infinitely amiable, but is as affectionate to us as he is lovely in himself, and has expressed his love to us in such a way as is most obliging; by dying for us that we might live, when the sentence of eternal death was passed upon us, that we might be happy in the eternal enjoyment of the fruits and expressions of his love? Did he love us when sinners, when we had nothing in the least to engage him to it? and shall we not love him, when he has laid infinite engagements upon us to do it? If we would not fall under the greatest and most inexcusable guilt, the heaviest and most dreadful condemnation, let us love Christ with,

(1.) An ardent love. Such was his love to us, a love strong as death, Song of Solomon 8:6-7. Death itself could not give any check to it, he would love us though he died for it. Many waters could not quench it, the sorrows of death could not extinguish it, nor any floods or sufferings abate the fervour of it, though all the waves and billows thereof went over him, and seemed to overwhelm him. Oh, can we be content, that our love to Christ should be weak and remiss? No; let us have such an affection for other things, the things of the world; let us love them, as though we loved them not. But let us not deal so with him who loved us so as to die for us. Let it be a greater shame and affliction to us, that we have so little love for Christ, than that we have little worldly wisdom, little wealth, little power, little interest, little respect, or little of any thing that men naturally desire. Let little in any thing be more tolerable to us, than little affection to Christ, to him who loved us so much as to die for us, and suffer the pains of first and second death in our stead. Kindle this love by all means. And that it may kindle effectually, bring it to the flame, lay your hearts under the serious consideration of this love of Christ; if this will not influence them, they are hearts of stone.

(2.) A transcendent love. Love him more than all persons, than all things; love him above all, for so he loved you. He loved you more than he did the sinning angels; they tasted not of redeeming love, this run out in full streams to sinful men.

He loved you more than that which is dearest to you, and which naturally is most loved. He loved you more than riches, 2 Corinthians 8:9, more than honour and repute, Php 2:7, exposed himself to scorn, reproach and shame.

More than the comforts of life: he became a man of sorrows, and lived a life of sorrows, afflictions, and sufferings.

More than his own blood, Revelation 1:5.

More than his life: he ‘counted not his life dear,’ but laid it down as the price of your redemption, Matthew 20:28.

More than blessedness: would be made a curse, Galatians 3:13.

More than his own body: he gave up that to be scourged, pierced, wounded, crucified, hanged on a tree.

More than his soul, Isaiah 53:10.

More than himself, Galatians 2:20; 1 Timothy 2:6. When he had no greater thing to give, he gave himself.

After all this, shall any thing, any person whatever he loved more than Christ, or equally with him? Your own hearts must needs pass sentence against this, as most accursed ingratitude, as that which is worthy of the dreadfullest curse, 1 Corinthians 16:22. If any man love not him above all, for to love him less, is not to love him at all. When any thing would come in competition with Christ, or take place of him in mind or heart, throw it down with indignation; say, This place is reserved for one more worthy, for him who loved me so as no creature ever loved; who did that for me, who has given that to me, who purchased, suffered that for me, which none in all the world, which no man or angel, can or will do.

(3.) An effectual love, 1 John 3:18. Christ loved indeed. He shewed the reality of his love by such expressions, as may be the astonishment of heaven and earth. He counted nothing too dear to part with, nothing too grievous to suffer for us. Shew that you love Christ by real expressions. He requires nothing that need seem great or grievous to us. It is only this, to comply with his will in order to our own happiness. When Christ was to do his Father’s will, not in order to his own, but our happiness, he applied himself as cheerfully to it, as a hungry man would do to his meat and drink, John 4:34. Shall not we be willing to do the work of Christ, and do it cheerfully, when the end of it will be eternal life? If we love Christ indeed, we must do his will, John 14:15, John 14:21. When obedience is proposed in general, every one will be ready to profess a compliance, God forbid that I should not obey Christ. But when it comes to particular instances, and some duty is pressed on us that seems difficult, or chargeable, or reproachful, or hazardous, here is the trial of our love. Then he that loves Christ indeed, will say with David, ‘Shall I serve the Lord with that which costs me nothing?’ Oh if Christ had done thus in reference to me and other lost sinners, what had my condition been? If he had been willing to have undertaken some small and easy things, but declined that which was difficult, and reproachful, and hazardous, and painful, he had never been obedient to the death of the cross, he had never died for me, and then I had never been pardoned, I had never been saved, I had been a child of wrath now and for ever, I had been a son of eternal death, I had been without hope to escape it, nothing had remained for me but a fearful expectation of judgment, &c. But did Christ think nothing too hard, nothing too grievous to perform for me? And when he calls me to a duty, which intrenches upon my ease, or repute, or estate, or safety, shall I stick at it? shall I decline it? shall I spare myself in opposition to Christ’s

will, and neglect of his command, as the flesh and the world would have me? Oh, then, how can I say that I love Christ? Indeed, those that accustom themselves to do thus, let them say what they will concerning their love to Christ, their practice confutes their sayings.

Use 3. This engages us to live unto Christ, not to others, not to ourselves. This was the end of his death, and we are as much concerned to live unto him, as we are not to defeat his design in dying, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. He 'died that we might live.' Therefore we owe our life to him, it is his, and should be employed for him. We were sentenced to die, he ransomed us from death. His blood, his death was the price which bought and purchased our life. Therefore we and our lives are his, as that which he has bought and paid for, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

CHRIST TOUCHED WITH THE FEELING OF OUR INFIRMITIES For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, &c.—Hebrews 4:15. The apostle's design, in this epistle, is to establish the Hebrews who professed Christ in that profession; so as they should neither quit it, nor abate anything of it, for the love of the Mosaical rites, or fear of persecution. In order to that end he displays before them the excellencies of Christ, and shews how far he transcends the angels, Hebrews 1:2; how far Moses, chap. 3; how far the high priest. Afterwards he enters upon the comparison betwixt Christ and the high priest, chap. 4:14. He proposes his main design, that which he pursues all along.

Let us hold fast. Let us neither quite relinquish it, nor hold it loose, by lukewarmness or indifferency, remitting anything of our zeal and stedfastness therein: since there is more encouragement to stick to this, than the former legal administration; since we have a greater high priest, and one from whom we may expect far greater advantages.

He calls Christ a high priest, because he did that really which the legal high priest did typically. He makes reconciliation, and he makes intercession for the people.

He calls him a great high priest, insinuating that the other high priesthood was little, and of small value, in comparison of Christ's. What Aaron and his successors did but in figure and shadow, Christ does really and effectually; whatever they did by sacrifice, or interceding for the people, had no virtue or efficacy, but what depended on, and was derived from, the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, the great high priest indeed.

He says, he is 'passed into the heavens;' intimating, that what he does there, is as far to be preferred before what the high priest did in the most holy place, as heaven is above earth, or that lower tabernacle or temple on earth. The high priest, on the day of expiation, after he had offered sacrifice, took the blood of it, and with it passed into the most holy place; this was but a shadow of what Christ did, and is now doing for us. After he had offered himself a sacrifice on earth, he, with the virtue of his blood, is passed into the heavens, there to carry on and accomplish the remainder of his office, as he is our great high priest. And so he calls him Jesus a Saviour; one who, by virtue of his office, and his executing of it in earth and heaven, can save his people from their sins, which the other high priest could not do.

He calls him 'the Son of God.' He was not a mere man, as the other high priest, but God as well as man. The Son of God, not for his conception, or unction, or resurrection, or exaltation; but his Son by eternal generation; being begotten of the substance of the Father, and so of the same nature and essence with him. Equal in power, glory, and all excellencies; and therefore a perfect and

all-sufficient Saviour, ‘able to save to the uttermost all that come,’ &c. And hereby in such a height of exaltation, as the other high priest cannot come into any competition with him in the least wise. Yea, one who is not only able, but willing, to save; being not only the all-glorious, almighty, and all-sufficient God, but also gracious, merciful, and compassionate: ‘For we have not,’ Hebrews 4:15.

We need not to be discouraged that we have an high priest that is so transcendently excellent; who is so great, as there was none in the world ever like him; who is so far beyond us, so remote from us, passed into the heavens, yea, higher than the heavens; who is infinitely above us, being the Son of God, when we are but the children of men, dust and ashes. Since, as he is great, and high, and glorious, he is also gracious, merciful, and compassionate; no weakness of ours, wherein he does not shew himself so: ‘For we have not,’ &c.

Obs. Christ our high priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. For the explaining of this let me shew, 1, what it is to be our high priest; 2, what those infirmities are, with the feeling of which he is touched; 3, what it is to be touched with the feeling of them.

1. For the first, his office, as high priest, may be best known by the acts of it. The acts of his office are principally two.

(1.) Sacrificing for us to make reconciliation, Hebrews 2:17. Reconciliation was made by offering sacrifice; this the high priest did under the law, Hebrews 5:1. Thus did Christ, our high priest, he offered sacrifice for sin, for the expiating and removing the guilt of it. A ‘better sacrifice,’ Hebrews 9:23; a wonderful sacrifice, Isaiah 53:1-12. ‘His soul;’ yea, soul and body, himself, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 9:26.

(2.) By interceding. The typical high priest, on the day of expiation, after he had offered the appointed sacrifice, took the blood of it with him into the most holy place, and there, burning incense withal, sprinkled it upon the mercy-seat, Leviticus 16:14.

Hebrews 9:7, Hebrews 9:25, Thus the high priest under the law appeared for the people; and this was a shadow of Christ’s interceding in heaven for us, Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 11:24.

He appears for us in our nature: as one who has shed his blood to expiate and cleanse us. The virtue of that blood is as fresh as if it were there poured out and presented, it cries. And he appears as one whose will and desire it is, that all the advantages of his purchase may be bestowed on his people. This is more than if, as man, he should offer up strong cries with tears, as he did, Hebrews 5:7. Thus he intercedes, Hebrews 7:26, and acts as our high priest, Hebrews 7:26.

2. What those infirmities are, with the feeling of which he is touched.

Infirmities here, are whatever our weak and frail condition makes us subject to suffer by. The apostle takes infirmities in this latitude, 2 Cor., latter part of the 11 and the former part of the 12 chapter, comprising his wants, weaknesses, inward and outward; his perils and dangers, his temptations and trials, his afflictions and sufferings, under the notion of infirmities.

All that our Lord Jesus, taking our frail nature upon him, was exposed to, or exercised with; particularly, either such as concern the outward man, as want, or poverty, hunger, cold,

nakedness, weariness, vide2 Corinthians 11:27; also pain, sickness, or death itself. Not only such as are natural, but adventitious, through the injustice, cruelty, or other sin of men; as contempt, disgrace, reproach, slander, hatred, opposition, exile, imprisonment; or that which sometimes more troubles us, the unkindness, unfaithfulness, unaffectionateness, desertion of friends and relations.

Or, 2, such as concern the soul, viz. grief and anguish, trouble and perplexity, fear and terror, spiritual desertion, sense of God's displeasure or wrath, temptations from Satan, and horrid suggestions. All these, and such like, we may understand by infirmities. All these in a manner was Christ exercised with, or exposed to; and he is touched with the feeling of all and every of these, when his people are under them. But,

3. What is it to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities? The word is συμπαθ■σαι, which signifies to condole with one, or to suffer with him. As one member is in pain or distress, the other members suffer with it, which the apostle expresseth by the same word, 1 Corinthians 12:26. But this requires a more distinct and particular account. Take it thus,

(1.) He knows all our infirmities. He knows them actually, he sees them. He knows them all, none of them escape his notice. There is none of them so small, as that he should think them not worth his notice. None of them so great, as that he will be loath to concern himself therein. That is true still which David speaks of the Lord, before our nature was assumed, Psalms 56:8. All his troublesome motions, when he was forced from home, and in a sad wandering condition, the Lord took a particular account of it; he had them in numeration, as we have things which we count or tell one by one. We may think our afflictive infirmities more than we can number; but he counts them exactly, and has the account always in his eye. He takes not less notice of them, since he took our natures and infirmities, than he did before. As he is God, he is no less able. As he is man, we cannot imagine him less willing to do it; he is now doubly willing, both as he is God and man too.

(2.) He knows them experimentally. For he has tried what they are, he has himself been exercised with them. For tempted, in the latter end of this verse, some copies have πεπειρ■σμενον. He found by experience what they are, Matthew 7:18. He took our infirmities, and bare them; and so knows how heavy they are by his own feeling. He knows what weight, or smart, or trouble, or afflictiveness there is in any of our infirmities, for he himself hath felt it all; he himself was under, and perfectly remembers what he suffered by it, and so he knows feelingly and to the life what we suffer by any of them. He does not only know what it is to be poor, in want and necessities, as one who having always lived in plenty himself, has an account of the poor and necessitous condition of others, but he himself was poor, 2 Corinthians 8:9.

He knows by experience what it is to be in such necessities, as not to have whereon to ride, whereon to feed, whereon to lay his head, Matthew 8:20.

He knows what it is to be in pain, not only as one who having been at ease all his days, hears but others complain of it, but as one who himself has felt it, and that in extremity.

He knows what it is to be despised and set at nought, to be abused and reproached, to be hated, and persecuted, and despitefully used. He knows the sorrows of life, and the pangs of death; not as the angels know them, by sufferings of others, but by his own experience, as one that has suffered all these himself.

He knows what it is to be tempted to sin, troubled with horrid suggestions from Satan; what it is to be deserted of friends, of all men; yea, what it is (as to sense) to be forsaken of God. For this was his own case, he himself was thus tempted and tried, thus deserted and forsaken. All his disciples forsook him and fled; yea, the sense of his Father's love was withdrawn from him, when he cried out, 'My God,' &c. He knows all this by his own sense and suffering; he knows how grievous and afflictive this is, and what pity it calls for, and what succour and relief it stands in need of. He became like us in all these, that he might know this by experience, as Hebrews 2:17-18.

(3.) He is affected with our infirmities, he feels them, he is touched with the feeling of them. He has a sense thereof which touches his soul, and makes some impression on it; as one who not only has suffered what others feel, but suffers with them in what they feel. As when one member is under some grievance, not only the other members suffer with it, but the soul is affected therewith; affected with grief arising out of love, attended with desire to give or get relief, and anger and indignation against that which brought the grievance, or continues it, and hinders relief. In like manner is Christ affected with the infirmities of his people.

[1.] He pities, has compassion on them. This the word here used signifies, and may be read thus, We have not an high priest which cannot have compassion, &c. The same word is used, Hebrews 10:34. Though they were not in bonds with the apostle, yet they suffered with him, being touched with a compassionate sense of his sufferings and bonds, as if they had been bound with him. So, though Christ labour not under these infirmities, as once he did, yet he is not without sense thereof; it touches his soul, so that he does συμπαθ■σαι, suffer with us therein, having a compassionate sense of what we thereby suffer.

[2.] And this pity and compassion, it is not without the motions and acts of love. Indeed, this is the rise of it. It is out of such a love as made him willing to humble himself so low as to take our weaknesses and infirmities upon him. He would know what they were, and what it was to labour under them, by his own feeling and experience, that he might know the better how to pity those that are encompassed with them. He would in all things, in all soul-infirmities, be made like to us, that he might be, with more advantage, a merciful, a compassionate high priest, Hebrews 2:17-18. This was out of a wonderful and astonishing love; this fitted him for compassionateness, and excites it.

[3.] This is attended with desire, accompanied with an inclination to succour, relieve such, whose condition is to be pitied; to do that which is best for them in such a condition. That which wants this is no pity indeed. It is that which is most advantageous and desirable in this affection; it is all that we must understand by compassion, when the Scripture ascribes it to the Lord; and when we conceive it to be in Christ as God, in the divine nature, it is not in him a troublesome or passionate grief. That is an imperfection not to be ascribed to him; nor would it be any advantage to us if he were liable to it. But it is a willingness in him to help and succour those whose state calls for pity or commiseration. It is an inclination to do that which is good, which is best for us under our infirmities, Mark 1:41, Mark 9:22.

[4.] This is accompanied with zeal and anger, or indignation, against those who occasion the grievance, or would make it worse and heavier. Christ hath left us an instance of this before he took our nature and infirmities, Zechariah 3:1-2. Joshua, and those whom he represented, had infirmities enough, were covered, clothed with them, Zechariah 3:3. Satan makes use of them as

matter of accusation, would have had the Lord severe against them, instead of pitying and relieving them. Hereupon Christ is moved with zeal and indignation against him, and expresses it, Zechariah 3:2; and has such a sense of his people's infirmities as raises his zeal and indignation against those who will have no compassion for them while they are under infirmities.

[4.] He is affected with our infirmities as a man; for he is not only God, but man. Herein the comparison holds betwixt Christ and the Levitical high priest, as the apostle expresseth it, Hebrews 5:1-14, and Hebrews 2:14. He assumed our nature, and so our affections; as he has a human nature, so he has human affections. He has such love, pity, compassion for his people in their infirmities, as are in the hearts of the children of men, the weaknesses excepted. They are in him properly, and not as they are attributed to God, to whom such affections are only ascribed metaphorically. When Scripture says, the Lord loves and pities, we must not conclude that he is affected as we are, but such acts and motions as we feel are ascribed to God from some little resemblance, a very remote likeness, whereas the difference is infinite. And we know no more what they are in God than the brutes know what these affections are in us; the distance is incomprehensibly greater. They do no more properly belong to God than a human soul, or the members of a body, belong to him, which yet are spoken of him in Scripture. But what is spoken after the manner of men must be understood in a way suitable to the excellency and perfection of God. But these affections are not only ascribed to Christ after the manner of men, but they are truly and properly in him as he is man. He has truly and properly the heart and affections of a man; a heart that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, even as you feel your hearts affected with the sufferings of a very dear friend. He has such compassion as a parent has for the weaknesses of a beloved child, Psalms 103:13, Judges 10:16, Jeremiah 31:20. This is ascribed to God very improperly; but it is true of Christ as he is man, in a most proper sense. There is no such grief and pity in God as there is in us, he is infinitely above them, &c.

It may be said that there is a great difference betwixt these affections as they are in Christ, and as they are in us, both in respect of the personal union of the human nature with the Godhead, and because of his now perfect and glorified state.

It must be confessed there is a difference upon these accounts, but it is such a difference as does nothing lessen the advantage, or abate the comfort, we may have from this particular.

First, For as [to] the personal union, this is not inconsistent with such affections as are in us, no, nor the sinless weakness of them; for Christ had and expressed such affections while he was on earth; and yet that union was then the same that it has been since, and will be for ever. To instance but in one, his compassion; that which is most pertinent, and which seems to import more weakness than some other affections, as love, joy, desire. We find him shewing his compassions frequently, upon all occasions offered, Matthew 9:36, and Matthew 14:14, and Matthew 15:32, Mark 1:41, Luke 7:13; yea, such was the tenderness of his compassions, as he often expressed it in tears. The motion of this affection was not confined to his soul, but wrought upon the body also; and made more impression there, than it will do upon every temper, Luke 9:41-42, John 11:33, John 11:35, Hebrews 5:7. So that though he was God-man, yet his affections were like those of a mere man, only without sin. This affection did not prevent reason or disturb it, or hunger him into any irregularities, as inordinate passions do sinful men. And such calm, untainted affections in him, are of far more advantage and comfort to us than turbulent and excessive passions would be.

Secondly, As to his glorified state, the difference as to his affections is this, that they are perfected, freed from some weakness and imperfections, which, though they were in him without sin, yet were the effects of man's sin, and by the sin of man brought upon man's nature; which nature, so weakened, the Lord our Redeemer assumed, and continued under those innocent weaknesses during the state of his humiliation. But now being exalted to the height of perfection and glory, he is freed from those weaknesses, and all shadow of imperfection is vanished. There is no inward disquiet of his soul by grief or pity, as John 11:33; no outward disturbing commotion of humours or spirits in his glorified body; no tears or weeping, as in the days of his flesh, which may be included in his being made perfect, Hebrews 5:9; nothing remains which imports weakness, or suffering, or imperfection, 2 Corinthians 5:16. But we lose nothing by this alteration in his state and in his affections. The difference seems but to be this, now he has perfect affectionateness to his people in their infirmities; he perfectly pities and sympathises with them; his compassion and sympathy is without weakness or imperfection; not only without sinful weakness, which he never had, but without innocent weakness, which attended him in his love and suffering condition. So that he still hath human affections to us, retaining still the human nature; he still has love, pity, compassion for us, not only such as are ascribed unto God, but such as are in the heart of a man (which we being better acquainted with, are more familiar and obvious encouragements and supports to us), only they are more perfect affections than are in the heart of any other man on earth or in heaven. There is less weakness in them; he more perfectly loves and pities us, and is more perfectly touched with the feeling of our infirmities, as man, now that he is in heaven, than when he was upon earth.

[5.] Christ is affected with our infirmities, as one concerned in us very much and nearly. A good man, when he sees another in wants, distress, misery, will be moved with it, though he be a stranger to him. Oh, but if he be one in whom he is concerned, one who is nearly related or much endeared to him, he will be much more affected, and more feelingly touched with his condition, Luke 10:30, Luke 10:33. He did this for a stranger, what for a friend, brother, child? Christ is not affected with the infirmities of his people, as if they were strangers to him, and he no otherwise concerned in them than a stranger; but as one that has interest in them, that is related to them, that counts himself one with them and them one with him.

He is touched with the sense of our grievances, as one that has interest in us and we interested in him. This is intimated in the text; we have an high priest, he is ours and we are his; so that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, not as of those who belong not to him, but of those who are his own. Christ himself requires that we should have bowels of compassion for those who belong not to us, when their condition requires it; much more for those that are our own; and he himself will perfectly answer what he enjoins us in this particular. As one related to us, nearly and many ways related, by all sorts of relations, those that are most endearing, and most oblige the heart to affectionateness and sympathy. As a friend, John 15:14-15. Now, Job 6:14, pity should be shewed to a friend; pity should be shewed to a servant, to a stranger, much more to a friend. Christ shewed great compassion to his enemies, what has he then for his friends, those that were dearer to him than his life? As a brother, Hebrews 12:11-12; Joseph's brethren, Genesis 42:21. As a father with the grievances of his children, Hebrews 2:13. Christ as a father presents himself and his little ones to the Lord as a pleasant sight. Now what a quick sense has a parent of the pain or wants of a dear child? Jeremiah 31:20. As a husband with the wants or sufferings of the wife of his

own bosom, 2 Corinthians 11:1-332 Corinthians 11:2. The covenant wherewith he married them to himself, is founded in his own blood; they were dearer to him than his own heart blood. How would a husband of such love (if there were any had such love) be touched with the feeling of what is grievous to his wife? So is Christ touched with the sense of his people's infirmities; he is not affected with them as though they were aliens, but as those whom he owns in the nearest and most obliging relations.

Yea, he is touched, &c., as one united to us, as counting himself one with us. The nearness of this union is expressed by that of head and members, Ephesians 1:22-23; and this is laid down as the ground and reason of the sympathy, 1 Corinthians 12:26-27. When one member suffers, all the rest are sensible; but especially the head, which is the foundation of sense. Christ being the head, from whence spiritual sense is derived from its members, by which they sympathise with one another, he himself is sensible of what is grievous to the members in particular; on this account, in all their afflictions he is afflicted.

He being one with them, he counts their sufferings his; he is afflicted with their want, pain, suffering, as if it were his own. The troubles which Saul gave the primitive saints, he resents it as a persecuting of himself, Acts 9:5; he that touches them, touches the apple of his eye; yea, any neglect to relieve the least of them in their infirmities, he is sensible of it as a neglect of himself, Matthew 25:1-46. He is affected with their infirmities, as one greatly concerned, no less than if it were his own concernment.

[6.] He is affected with them really and to purpose; he is touched with the feeling of them effectually. It is not an ineffectual sympathy, a fruitless pity, like that censured by the apostle, James 2:15-16; but it is active, that which is really advantageous to us every way: to give what we want, to secure us from what we fear, to ease us of what is grievous, or to do for us that which is as good or better.

It includes a readiness in Christ to accommodate himself to all our infirmities, according to the exigence of them, so as to give ease, relief, supply, deliverance; so far as is needful, as soon as it is seasonable, whenever it will be good for us.

It makes him ready to shew mercy and grace in time of need; so ready, as we may be confident of it. It is the ground of what is held forth in the next verse; 'in that he is touched with the feeling,' &c. We may have help and relief under all infirmities; we may have whatever of this nature will be a mercy to us; all that is mercy we may obtain, and this is all that is desirable. We may have it freely, from grace; we may find grace, which gives without money or price; we need but come to find it, we need but ask to obtain it. We may have it in abundance from' him who sits upon the throne to shew himself gracious; whose glory it is to give like himself, the King of kings; to give royally, liberally, bountifully. We may have it all whenever we need it, whenever it will be seasonable; and we may be confident of all this, because he has such a sense of our infirmities; this leaves us no occasion in the least to doubt of it. We may have all that heart can reasonably desire, in such kind, in such way, in such measure, and at such times, as is most desirable. We may be sure, because he is touched with the feeling, &c. He has a more effectual sense of them than any other, men or angels, yea, or we ourselves have; for he has such a sense thereof as will assuredly bring relief, which neither we ourselves, nor men or angels for us, can do in many cases.

[7.] It is an extensive sympathy, it reaches all our infirmities. He has compassion on us in all our weaknesses, all that we suffer by, in all that has anything of misery or activeness in it. This is plain by the latter end of this verse: he ‘was in all points tempted,’ &c. He is touched with the feeling of all those infirmities wherewith himself was tempted or exercised; but he was exercised in all points with all our weaknesses, but those that are without sin.

Oh, but it may be said, this exception does exclude the greatest part of our infirmities from this sympathy, and us from the comfort and advantage of it, in those points too which stand in most need of it; for those infirmities which proceed from sin, or are mixed with it, and sin itself especially, are our greatest misery, make our present state most lamentable, and so stand in most need of pity and relief. If Christ be not touched with the feeling of these (which are worst of all), so as to have compassion on us, and be ready to succour us, we are to seek in our greatest pressures and grievances, where we have most necessity of relief and pity; as e. g.,

1. In those infirmities which are from sin, the effects of sin, which are many and great, is he not touched with the feeling, &c.?

I answer, Yes, he is touched, &c. These are not excluded by the expression. He himself laboured under these; for such infirmities as are from sin may be sinless, though they be the effects of sin, yet they may be innocent in themselves, and without sin; and all that are without sin he himself was exercised with. He was tempted in all points, exercised with all infirmities, even those which are the effects of sin, as we are; only they were in him without sin, as they are not in us. For,

Let it be observed, that Christ took not our nature, as it is now in the glorified saints, who are not only freed from sin, but from all the sad effects of it; nor as it was in our first parents, in the state of innocency, before they had sinned, and before sin had made any breach upon human nature, and brought those weaknesses and infirmities upon it which they afterward and we now suffer under. But he took the nature of fallen man, as it was bruised and rendered infirm by the fall; he took our nature as weakened by sin, though not as defiled by it; there was no sin in his human nature, but there was those weaknesses and infirmities which were the sad issues of sin. These he laboured under, and so knows how to pity and sympathise effectually with those that are yet under them. He was not exempted from those infirmities which are part of the curse brought upon our nature by sin, but only exempted from what was sinful in them, Romans 8:3, where likeness refers not only to flesh (for that in him was not only like, but the same with ours), but to sinful flesh. He assumed our nature, not as it is glorified, or as it was innocent, but as it is sinful, as it is under the effects of sin. The meaning is, he had a human nature just such as that of sinful man; as frail, as infirm, as mortal, as corruptible as that of sinful man, altogether like it in those infirmities which are the effects of sin, but without sin in him.

Obj. It may be said, there are some infirmities in us which are the effects of sin, which Christ was not exercised with, as painful distempers and sicknesses; yet these are grievous and afflictive to us, and so need his compassions and relief. But how can he be touched with the feeling of them, since he never felt them, never was tempted or exercised with them?

Ans. Those infirmities (the issues of sin) which Christ took on him, were such as are natural, common to the nature of man and all mankind; not such as are personal and proper to some only, as those be which are instanced in; but though he did not suffer by these, yet the grievance and

afflictiveness that is in them he suffered. He endured as much trouble, and more, than any fever can afflict us with, in that agony, which forced from him a bloody sweat; he endured as much pain as any man in the most acute sickness or distemper, when nails were driven through his hands and feet. And so he knows by experience what pity and relief such anguish and pain calls for, and thereby is disposed to sympathise with his people therein, as effectually as if himself had been exercised with those particular and personal distempers which are so afflictive to nature. That, Matthew 8:17, holds true in respect of his effectual sympathy with us, in sickness and painful distempers. The grounds which may assure us of the truth of this are such as these:

(1.) This was one end why he took our nature, and became man. It was not only that he might suffer for us, but also that he might suffer with us, by a compassionate feeling of what we suffer. He was to be like the Levitical high priest, Hebrews 5:1, taken from among men. And why so? Hebrews 5:2, that he might be the more disposed to have compassion on his people in their infirmities; even those that are sinful, and are so less or more, Hebrews 2:16-17. He took man's very nature, the seed of Abraham, and was made in all things like unto us in our nature, in its parts, properties, infirmities, in all. Wherefore? Why, that he might be merciful; that he might have the mercies and compassions, not only of God, but of a man also. Such mercies and compassions as angels have not for us, yea, such as God alone could not have had for us; not only those of God, but those of man too. He might have had the mercies of angels for us, if he had taken the nature of angels; he might have had the mercies of God for us, if he had not taken our nature; but he could not have the mercies and compassions both of God and also of man for us, unless he had become man; and therefore it behoved him to be made like us, that there might be in him a concurrence both of the mercies of God and of man also; that he might not only be merciful to us as God, but compassionate us as one man does another; and that he might pity us too out of experience, as one that had been exercised with the feeling of the very same weaknesses and grievances that we feel, ver. 18. He became man, that he might be exercised with such weaknesses and grievances as the children of men are; and was actually tempted or exercised with them, that his own experience might render him ready and forward to pity and succour us under them.

Now, this being the end why he became man, it is no more to be doubted of than that he took our nature. As sure as he was taken from among men; as sure as he was born of a woman; as sure as he is the man Christ Jesus; as sure as he has the nature, the soul of a man; as sure as he has the affections of a human soul: so sure it is that he is touched with the feeling, &c.; with such a feeling as is collected from Scripture.

(2.) This was the end of his sufferings, Hebrews 2:18. All that he suffered, by our weaknesses, our sins, was that he might succour those that suffer by them, that he might be touched effectually with the sense of what we are exercised with. As by his sufferings he learned obedience, Hebrews 5:8, so thereby he learned compassionateness to his people. Indeed, this was one part of that obedience which he was to learn thereby. The Father would have him to be a compassionate high priest; and himself suffering by our infirmities, and for our sins, he learnt by experience how to pity those that suffer.

Now, this being the end of his sufferings, as sure as he would not suffer so many things in vain, as sure as he would not lose the end of his suffering, so sure it is that he is touched, &c.

(3.) It is his office, as he is high priest. This office required it. He being called to this office, must be faithful in the discharge of it. He could not have been faithful herein if he had not been merciful. These are conjoined by the apostle, Hebrews 2:17. Compassionateness was required in the Levitical high priest to the faithful discharge of his office, Hebrews 5:1-2. Two things are necessary in every one who has this office: one in reference to God, to offer sacrifice for reconciling him; the other in reference to the people, that he can have compassion on them, that he be touched with the compassionate sense of their infirmities, as one who himself has suffered by and under them.

Now, Christ far excelled all other high priests in both these; as in the former, so in the latter. He answered the office herein perfectly, as none else could. It behoved him so to do, Hebrews 5:8-9. Made perfect, how? 'By the things which he suffered,' Hebrews 5:8; 'by sufferings,' Hebrews 2:10. Though he had all perfection in his person, yet he could not be made perfect in his office without suffering. For his office was both to satisfy God, and to have compassion on man; and by suffering he came to do both perfectly. Thereby he satisfied divine justice, and thereby he learnt experimentally compassions to his people. So that, without this latter, a compassionate feeling of his people's infirmities, he had not been perfect in his office. As sure as Christ is faithful, as sure as he perfectly discharged his office, so sure is he touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

2. But in sinful infirmities, what relief is there hereby for them? Christ was not touched with any that were sinful, and how can he be touched with the feeling of them? e. g. the people of Christ have much ignorance and darkness, and many spiritual wants; they are sinfully defective, both in knowledge and holiness; and these are in themselves, and to those that are duly sensible of them, greater miseries than poverty, or sickness, or other outward afflictions and sufferings.

I answer, Christ had something of these, though nothing of the sinfulness of them; so much of these, as that he can sympathise with his people under them.

He wanted much knowledge of many things; he wanted some spiritual gifts, yea, and some exercise of grace, in some parts of his life, while he was upon earth. He came not to perfection in these, but by degrees, and till then was under some defect and imperfection, though not any that was sinful. For he wanted none that he ought to have had, or that his present state was capable of; yet, wants, defects, and inward weaknesses, without sin, he was really under, Luke 2:40, Luke 2:52. Hereby it seems plain, that he had not at first that measure of knowledge, and of the Holy Ghost, as afterwards. He knew not so much, nor had that exercise of grace in his infancy or childhood, as at perfect age. His faculties were not capable of full perfection herein till they came to full maturity; he grew but up herein by degrees, as he grew in stature, and consequently was without some degrees of what he after attained; and till then, under defects and wants, though sinless. So that he knows by experience what it is to be under defects and wants, and so knows how to pity those who labour under them. In this the comparison holds betwixt him and the Levitical high priest, Hebrews 5:2.

3. Oh, but he was never touched with sin, Hebrews 4:15, and this is our greatest misery, the sting of all grievances, that which makes all other to be heavy and grievous. If he be not touched with the feeling of our sin, we are at a loss where we have most need.

I answer, There are four things considerable about sin, the offence, temptation to it, guilt of it, punishment for it. Now there are none of these but Christ was touched with them, but the first only.

He was without fault; there was nothing in him, nor acted by him, which was an offence to God, 1 Peter 2:23. He was perfectly innocent; and if he had not been so, he had not been capable of bringing us any relief as to sin; he could neither have been a high priest nor a sacrifice for sin. But (1.) he was tempted to sin; tempted much and long by Satan, and to the most horrid sin, Hebrews 2:18. In that he was tempted, he is disposed, he is both able and willing to, &c.; in that he 'suffered by being tempted,' he can pity, and so is ready to succour those that suffer by temptation. He was not overcome when tempted, though he suffered by it, but he knows hereby what it is to be overcome; for the sense of that kept him from yielding, and so he knows how to have compassion on those that are overcome by temptation.

(2.) The guilt of sin, of our sin, was upon him, 2 Corinthians 5:21. Sin was imputed to him; he was by imputation a sinner, though he never sinned personally. Our guilt was laid on him. Guilt is an obligation to the penalty. Christ came under this obligation, and so under guilt; not by his own sin, but by his own consent he became our surety, and so was bound to pay the debt. Guilty so far, as to be bound to endure what sin had deserved, and sinners were worthy to suffer. So far he was touched with the guilt of sin; so far he knows what it is to be under guilt, and so knows what pity and relief they need who are under it. So far he is touched with the sense of their condition who are guilty, Hebrews 5:2.

(3.) As to the punishment of sin, he was not only exposed to it, and bound to bear it, but actually endured it, Isaiah 53:4-6. 'The iniquities,' i. e. the punishment of them, all the punishment that was due to all; the whole curse was inflicted on him, so he is said to be 'made a curse,' Galatians 3:13. So that he had a greater sense of sin than any of his people ever had. We may hear him cry out under the weight of it, Lamentations 1:12. The whole penalty and curse was upon him, part of which made his soul heavy unto death. So that, though he was without sin, yet he was touched, or rather oppressed with such a sense of sin, as is enough abundantly to move him to all compassionateness to any of his people under the burden. It is an extensive sympathy; such as reaches not only infirmities that have no respect to sin, but those that are from sin, as its effects, and those that are sinful formally, yea, sin itself; he is touched with the feeling of all.

[8.] It is a proportionable sympathy; a compassion which is exactly answerable to the nature and quality of every infirmity; fully commensurable to it, whatever it be. As it is not more than it needs, so it is not less than it requires, how much compassion and relief soever it calls for. This is express, Hebrews 5:2, δυν■μενος μετριοπαθε■ν, rendered 'who can have compassion;' but the word signifies, a compassion or sympathy answerable to the occasion. Quantum satis est, so much as is sufficient for it. Not only when the grievance of it is less, but when it is more; proportionable to the actual afflictiveness of it at present, and the danger of it for the future; to what we do suffer by it, or what we may suffer. This was the duty of the Levitical high priest, with whom Christ is there compared. He did thus sympathise with the people in their infirmities, in proportion to their ignorances and wanderings, when he was faithful in answering his office. But Christ herein excelled him, as the apostle shews, Hebrews 5:7. He shewed his compassions in strong cries and tears, and does it still; though not in such expressions, yet as effectually, and more perfectly. We may be apt to measure Christ by ourselves, and to think that small grievances he will overlook and pass by without regard or resentment, and that he will not trouble himself with those that are greater, according to the exigence of them. But he has a sense of every infirmity, proportionable to the grievance or danger of it. The least he slights not, the greatest he waives not; turns not aside,

as the priest and Levite did, as if a resentment answerable to it would be troublesome to him. He is not like us, who have no sense of others' grievances when but small, or but little sense of them when they are great. But he has a compassion for all, and more for those which need and require more. He has a due sense of all, and that which is sufficient for our relief and comfort; not only in the least, but the greatest.

9. A constant and perpetual sympathy. It continues without any intermission so long as he is high priest, or so long as our infirmities continue; so long as we are under any weakness, inward or outward; so long as we are in any danger or peril; so long as we are exposed to any trouble or suffering. This is one thing wherein the faithful discharge of his priestly office consists. And he is a priest for ever, Psalms 110:4, repeated often in this epistle, Hebrews 5:6, and Hebrews 7:17, Hebrews 7:21.

It is true, one principal part of his office, as priest, the offering himself as a sacrifice as priest, the offering himself as a sacrifice for sin, is already finished and discharged. And sin being fully expiated by that once offering of himself, there is no need of repeating it. But this efficacy of it does still continue; and in the virtue of it his intercession (the other part of his office as priest) is still effectual, and will be for ever, Hebrews 7:25. There will be some alteration also as to this part of his office. Now he intercedes for relief and comfort to his people under infirmities, and for deliverance from them. And when full deliverance is obtained, there will be no need, no occasion to intercede either for succour in, or freedom from, them; but even then he will intercede for the continuance of that happy deliverance. And both his sacrifice and intercession will have an influence upon, and be effectual for the everlasting continuance of that blessed freedom. So that, though there be some change in the acts, yet the office of Christ as high priest continues for ever; and is, and will be exercised in acts suitable to the state of his people.

Now, while his people are compassed with infirmities, he shews himself a merciful and faithful high priest, in effectual pity and compassionate sympathy. And so he will continue while they are under weaknesses, i. e. so long as ever there is any occasion for it, and his people have any need thereof. But when they are fully delivered, and their weaknesses end in perfection, then joy will succeed compassion, and the conflict, with the succour therein, will end in an everlasting triumph.

Thus much to explain this truth. Something should be added for confirmation of it. It is so great and wonderful a condescension in Christ to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that some may be apt to question it, very ready to doubt of it, too slow to deliver* it. Faith may want some grounds to support it, and encourage it in the belief of a truth so strange to reason, so far above all expectation, beyond all we could ask or think. And there are grounds for it sure and stedfast, which the apostle lays down in this epistle.

Use 1. For instruction. This truth leads the people of Christ to many duties, and strongly obliges to the performance of them.

1. To admire Christ; to employ your minds in high, adoring, admiring thoughts of Christ. He is wonderful; it is his attribute, Isaiah 9:1-21. Wonderful every way, in his person, natures, offices, and the execution of them; but especially wonderful in this, that he would be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And this will appear wonderful in our eyes, if we consider who he is that is thus touched, and what was required that he might be capable of this sense, &c., and what such a

sense thereof imports. For the first, Christ, as to his divine nature, is God; the great, blessed, glorious, and all sufficient God, infinite in happiness and all excellencies; farther above us, and the noblest piece of the creation, unconceivably farther above the highest, than the most excellent creatures are above the vilest thing on earth, the meanest thing imaginable. He could expect nothing from us, no advantage by us; not the least degree of glory or happiness, being in the perfect possession of infinite glory and happiness without us. He had lost nothing if we had perished in our sin without pity, and sunk under the weight of our infirmities. We had nothing to oblige him to concern himself in our weaknesses and miseries; why then would he bring himself under the sense of them? How wonderful it is that he would do it!

2. That he might be capable of the sense of our infirmities, he was to take upon him both our nature and our infirmities, and it is highly wonderful that he would meddle with either.

It was requisite that he should assume a created nature. And if this nature had been that of the angels, this had been a wonderful condescension; infinitely more wonderful than if the most glorious angel should have been willing to take the form of the vilest creeping thing; for the distance is infinitely greater betwixt God and such an angel, than betwixt such an angel and any creeping thing we tread on. But he was to take the nature of man, so much lower than that of the angels; more wonderful than if the most glorious potentate on earth should be willing to live in the form of a beast, or to take the shape of a worm; the glorious God stooped lower when he took the nature of man.

Yea, he was to take the nature of sinful man. The ‘likeness of sinful flesh,’ Romans 8:3. As if a man should be willing not only to take the likeness of a worm, but the likeness of a toad, though without poison, for which our nature has a greater averseness and abhorrence. This would be an astonishment. Oh, but the infinitely holy God had a greater averseness to sinful flesh than we have to a toad, and yet took the likeness of sinful flesh; he assumed it as it was abased by sin, as the effects of the venom and poison of sin was upon it, though without the sin of it. How wonderful is this!

Yea, he was to take our infirmities also. Not only the excellencies in our natures singled out for him, as divers there were wherein we excelled the inferior creatures, but the weaknesses, the blemishes, the debasements of our nature, as it was sullied, and bruised, and crazed by the fall; under all the defects, and maims, and disadvantages it had suffered by sin, sin itself only excepted, he declined none else. He took, he bare all, he laboured under all, that [he might] have a compassionate sense of all, the vilest, the worst of all, by his own feeling. It may well seem a debasement of such a glory to unite our nature to him in its best state, as it was innocent, or as it is glorified. How wonderful is it that he would assume it when it was at worst, with all its specks, and flaws, and cracks, all its rags and vileness, all its bruises and weaknesses; nothing excluded, not the effects of sin, but only sin itself!

It is infinitely below that glorious majesty of God, to be clothed with the sun, as he was clothed with flesh. What a wonderful condescension would it be for him to be covered over with clay, with mud! We would think it so in a person of honour, though the mud were without stench; and yet our nature was viler to Christ, as he is the God of glory, than any clay or mud is to us. Oh that he, the King of glory, should clothe himself with so vile a thing, should appear and live in such a covering that he might learn to pity us! What an astonishment is it! If our minds were duly exercised with the

thoughts of these things, how would they strike our souls with wonder and admiration!

3. For the import of it, this being touched with the feeling, &c., is a kind of suffering with us. It includes compassion, a motion of the heart which is taken to have more weakness in it than other affections.

Now, that the God of glory should have such respect to contemptible creatures, as not only to suffer for, but also to suffer with them;— That he should have compassions on us in infirmities, which are the effects of sin, or in themselves sinful, and shew compassion and tenderness where there is just and proper occasion for his anger, indignation, and severity;— That he should concern himself, not only in those cases where common friends will stand by us, but in our weaknesses, where others will be ashamed of us; in dangers and sufferings, where others will be afraid; in the sad circumstances of our lives, when others withdraw, and where his own best friends on earth deserted him;— That he should have such regard for those who are infinitely below him, and whom he might pass by with as much disregard as we do flies or grasshoppers; for we are incomparably less to him than these are to us;—

If these things were in our thoughts, what occasion of wonder will they offer to us! How admirable is Christ hereby represented to us! how worthy of all admiration, both from heaven and earth, both now and everlastingly!

2. To love Christ. There is no greater attractive of love to an ingenious temper than love. Now in that Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, you have a most evident demonstration that he loves you; and with such a love as is most obliging, such as is most proper and powerful to command, excite, and draw out your affections to him. For hereby it is very clear what his love to you is.

(1.) A great love, and most extensive; that can reach all conditions and circumstances which you are or may be in, even such as the love of others will not touch, will not come near: a love that will shew itself in all cases, even where it could be least expected; a love that will surmount and overflow all discouragements. No want, no weakness, no hazard, no suffering, is able to quell or stop it. It breaks forth in all, for he is touched with an affectionate sense of all these.

(2.) A free love. This is an evidence he can love freely; he can love those who are all made up of defects and imperfections, who are covered with specks and blemishes, who are compassed with infirmities; not only with those that are sinless, which might move him to despise us, but those that are siuful, which might provoke him to hate us. He is affectionately touched with the feeling of all.

He can love those souls that are crazy and sickly, that are lame and maimed, that labour under many weaknesses and infirmities, such as hinder them from being duly serviceable to all,* and honouring him in the world, or expressing any love to him answerable to his. Though they be poor and in want, though their parts be low, though graces be weak, and their affection to him small, very small in comparison of what they owe, yea, nothing in comparison of what he deserves; though they can do little for him, and suffer less, this is so far from withholding his love, that it runs out the more in a compassionate sense of their weaknesses.

He can love his people, though they have nothing to oblige him to do it; yea, though there is little in them but what might disoblige him. Their infirmities of all sorts, which might estrange him, meet

with a tender resentment, in that he is affectionately touched with the feeling of them.

(3.) A lasting, a constant love, such as all the waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown. It cannot be nonplussed, it abides the sorest trials. When his people are low and weak, when poor and despised, when reproached and hated, when cast off by all, when overwhelmed with all that extinguish love amongst men, it abides the same, not in the least cooled: 'Who can separate,' &c., Romans 8:1-39. All these are comprised in the notion of those infirmities wherewith Christ is affectionately touched. His love flames forth even in the waters, which quench the love of others. Instead of withdrawing his affection in such cases, he expresseth it more, and suffers with them, being touched with the feeling of those infirmities by which they suffer.

(4.) A peerless love. It cannot be matched. There is no such thing to be found in heaven or earth, but in Christ only. The text shews that, as he is high priest, he is touched with the feeling, &c. Therein his love appears. Now, as he is high priest, he is both God and man; and so his love to us is both the love of God and also the love of man in one person. No instance of such a love can be given in the whole world. There is no such love in the angels, how much soever they affect the people of Christ, for theirs is neither the love of God nor the love of men. There had been no such love in God alone; his was the love of God only, not of man. But Christ's affection to us is both the love of God and the love of man in one person.

Look over heaven and earth, and you will never find two springs of love in one subject, whether it be finite or infinite. There is but one in an angel, there is but one in man, there is but one in God. The angel has but one nature, man has but one heart, God has but one will, each of these a single spring. Oh, but in Christ, and in him alone, there is a double fountain of love, each sending forth its proper streams, both meeting upon his people. The divine nature is one fountain; there springs the love of God to us. The human nature is another; there springs the love of man to us; and both these in one person, in one Christ.

It is true, the love of God alone is infinite, too much for us, or the most excellent creatures. There is infiniteness and incomprehensibleness init, that which may astonish and transport us eternally; but there is not that suitableness in it to our natures or apprehensions, as there is in man's love (not through any defect in it, but through our weakness); and though we should be more taken with it, because it is so much as we cannot apprehend, yet we are subject to be less moved with that which we apprehend not, or are less acquainted with. Whereas human love, such as is in the heart of man, is both co-natural to us, and we are well acquainted with it. We know not by experience what it is to love as God loves; such a love was never seated, nor ever moved in the heart of man; but we know by experience what it is to love as men do; we have felt the motions of such a love in our own breasts.

Now such is the love of Christ to his people, in that he is touched with the feeling of their infirmities. Hereby it appears that he has the love, pity, compassions of a man for us, not that love of God only. There is both infiniteness, incomprehensibleness in his love, and likewise suitableness, co-naturalness also; that which may not only transport us, but make the most impression on our hearts, and move our affections in the most suitable and kindly way. The love of God is hereby brought down to our capacity, to our experience, to our feeling; in that he who is God would not only love us like himself, with the love of God, but as man also, with such a love as is in the heart of a man.

Oh what a way has he made for our love to him! He loved us as God; and if that be above us, if that will not prevail with us as it should do, this love made him become man, that he might love us with such a love as most suits us, and we are most apprehensive of, not only with the love of God, but of man also. Herein his love is matchless; and so will our stupidness and ungratefulness be, if we love him not again.

Moreover, it is peerless love upon another account; not only because the love of God and the love of man meet in one person, but also because the love of all relations meet in his human nature, and that to each of his people. Not as it is with us, who have but the love of one relation for one, and of another for another, but not the love of all for any one. But Christ has the love of all relations, as much as all require, for every one that belongs to him. Jonathan had the love of a friend for David, and Joseph of a brother for Benjamin, and Jacob that of a father for Joseph, and Abraham that of a husband for Sarah, and Rachel that of a mother for her children; but none of them had the love of all these for any one. If these several streams which did run in divers channels had been united, and run in one current towards any one, it had been a matchless love, such as could not be paralleled on earth.

Now such is the love of Christ. He has the love of a friend, a brother, a father, a husband, of all relations, for every one of his people, Matthew 12:48-50. He owns such in all relations, and thereby declares himself obliged to have the love of all relations for every of them. And his sympathy, his pity, and compassions, which proceed from this love, are answerable to it. He is as affectionately and as effectually touched with the feeling of his people's infirmities as if every one of them were every way related to him; as if they were both his friends, his brethren, his sisters, his mother, his children, and his spouse. He has the compassions, and so the love, not only of one relation for one, and another relation for another, but of all relations together for every one of his.

(5.) It is a cordial love, not in show or appearance only, not in outward acts and expressions, but such as springs from his heart, and affects that. He is touched, i. e. his heart is touched with the concerns of his people; he is touched with the feeling of their infirmities, i. e. his heart feels. It is his love that makes him inwardly, feelingly, heartily sensible of what they suffer. This excites inward motions, stirs up compassions, and all affections that depend thereon; not only delight, which is an affection of enjoyment, to which therefore the nature of man is more inclinable, but pity and compassion, which (as I said before) is some kind of suffering to which our nature is more averse. His glorified body is now above suffering, but his heart suffers still, so far as perfect compassionateness is a suffering. His love is such that the grievances of his people touch his heart as if they were his own. Paul calls his suffering the 'filling up of that which remains of the afflictions of Christ,' Colossians 1:24. The afflictions of his mystical body are resented by his love as if they were his own. Paul learnt this of Christ before; he expressed such a heart-resentment of his people's grievances when he suffered by Saul, Acts 9:4-5. Saul trod but on the feet, and the head complains. He would not have complained that himself was persecuted, but that himself some way suffered. His glorified body suffered not; this was above the reach of persecution. What then suffered? Why, his heart. The injuries reached not his body, but they touched his heart. This was touched, not with a painful but with a compassionate sense, which is the touch in the text, and is expressed by συμπαθ■σαι, a co-suffering, a suffering in mind or heart with those who suffer otherwise.

You will say he loves you heartily, whose heart and soul suffers with you, when his body cannot. Such is the love of Christ; hereby it appears to be such, in that his heart is touched with the feeling, &c. He lays to heart the wants, weaknesses, dangers, grievances of his people. His heart is on them, or else that which touches them would not reach his heart.

(6.) An all-sufficient love. That which is sufficient for us whenever our condition is exigent, and in any need, and sufficient for all that we need or can reasonably desire in such a condition, is all-sufficient.

Now, such is the love of Christ, and such it is represented to be in the text. This love shews itself in all our infirmities, and these comprise all the exigencies of our present condition in this world. Therein are included our weaknesses, our wants, our dangers, our troubles, whether inward or outward. This is the sum of all that our frail condition is subject to or labours under. Now, the love of Christ reaches all these, and us in and under them all, in that he has an affectionate sense of all our infirmities. And it is sufficient for all that our condition requires in all or any of these, for all that we need desire under them is but pity and relief. These two comprise all that is needful or desirable for us, and the love of Christ affords both, assures us both in that he is touched with the feeling of our condition. For that which the text gives us in these terms here is expressed by compassion and succour in this epistle; by compassion, Hebrews 5:2; by succour, Hebrews 2:18; and both together in the verse after the text. That is an all-sufficient love which will let you want nothing. But when your condition is saddest and most necessitous, you want nothing but pity and help. These are abundantly enough in the greatest, in any time of need; and these the love of Christ will not let you want. He gives all assurance of it, in that he is touched with the feeling of your infirmities.

Hereby you see what love Christ has for his people, what love he has for you, if ye be his indeed. It is most evident by this truth that he has a greater love.

Now what does this call for? Deep calls to deep. The love of Christ, such a love calls aloud, calls importunately for love again. Will you deny the importunity of love, of Christ's love, of a love so obliging? No renewed heart, no ingenuous spirit, no soul that has anything of an evangelical temper, can resist it; it will kindle into love, a love that will stir and act and sparkle at the view of the love of Christ, that will be ashamed of its own weakness, coolness, unactiveness, and shew it by diligence in the use of all means to get inflamed affections to Christ.

Oh, if the love of Christ, such a love, will not constrain you to love him again, what is there in heaven or earth can have any power upon your hearts? If you can hear and believe that Christ is thus touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and this prevails not with you to love him, your hearts are stone. Shall love amongst men be judged worthy of a requital with love, and shall the love of Christ, in comparison of which all the love of the children of men is nothing, want this return?

If you return not love to him for this love of his, you are worse than publicans, Matthew 5:46. If you love those that love you, this is not thanks-worthy; it is due debt, even the publicans will pay it. If you love not Christ after such love expressed to you, ye are worse than they, worse than the most ill-natured, the most selfish, the most disingenuous, the most odious sinners; worse to Christ than these are to one another; as much worse to Christ, as the love of Christ is greater than any that is

to be found in the hearts of men.

3. Another duty which this truth calls for and engages us to is to hold fast our profession. This is the use which the apostle makes of it; this is the end why he lays down this great and comfortable truth, viz. to encourage and oblige them to continue in their profession of Christ, and hold it fast; to engage them neither to abandon it nor to abate anything of it, neither to quit it in whole nor in part: Hebrews 4:14, ‘Let us hold,’ &c. Why so? What reason, what motive, what encouragement have we to do it? Much every way, that which is abundantly sufficient, says he, for, Hebrews 4:15, ‘since we have such an high priest,’ &c. let us hold our profession of Christ, and hold it fast. Let our judgments be established in the truth we profess, else we shall not hold it. Let our hearts clasp about it and embrace the goodness of it, else we shall not hold it fast.

Let us hold it firmly, stedfastly, without wavering, else we hold it but with a palsy hand. Hold it without indifferency; not, as the Israelites of old, halting between two, 1 Kings 18:21; nor as some of the Jews in the apostle’s time, who halted between law and gospel, betwixt their former legal profession and the profession of Christ; not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, Galatians 2:14; or as others now, halting betwixt Christ and antichrist, betwixt popery and pure religion. And as those judaising Christians made a medley of law and gospel, so do these a hotchpotch of popery and true profession, in doctrine, worship, or government; shewing themselves to be indifferent, in many points, to either, and thereby tempting others to be indifferent in all, and to be determined as their interest may require. This is not to hold fast, but to be fast or loose as occasion serves; to be fast to nothing, but their carnal or worldly interest, James 1:8.

Let us hold it resolutely, without timorousness or cowardice. Not like those represented to us by the stony ground, Matthew 13:21. We had need look to it, having reason enough to expect greater and sorer trials, as to our profession, than this age has exercised us with, or that before it our ancestors. If we be found amongst the cowardly and fearful here, we shall have our place with them hereafter, Revelation 21:8, inter omnes, imo ante omnes, timidis.

Let us hold it affectionately, with zeal, delight, and love for Christ, his truths and ways, without remitting any degree of affection or fervour. He that grows cool lets go his hold, or the fastness of it. We hold not fast our profession, but when our hearts are fastened to it, and that is by affection. These are the strings and cords that fasten our hearts to it; when these are slacked, our hold is loosened.

Let us hold it openly, without fear or shame. It is not a thing of that nature that we should either be afraid or ashamed of. These make men shrink or draw back, and he that draws back sticks not fast to his profession. The apostle would not allow the Hebrews, even in the midst of the reproaches and hazards wherewith they were encompassed, to hide their heads, contenting themselves with a secret or concealed profession, and withdrawing from their assemblies, Hebrews 10:25. Those that forsook their assemblies were such as had already deserted their profession, or were not (if they yet held it) like to hold it fast.

Hold it entirely, extensively, in all the parts and acts, all the truths and duties, which belong to your profession. He that lets go any, has not fast hold of the whole. He that will hold only the safe, and cheap, and easy parts of his profession, lets go his hold where he is most tried, where it should be fastest.

Thus we should hold fast our profession. And we have great encouragement from this truth to do it; it affords that which strongly obliges us, neither to quit it of our own accord, nor to suffer anything to force it from us. It offers enough to arm us against temptations we may meet with of such a tendency. That which may tempt us, either to quit our profession or to abate anything of it, is either the difficulties in it, or the hazards of it. Now, in that Christ is touched, &c., we are secured, we are encouraged, we are fortified against both these, both as to what may seem hard or difficult in it, and what we may hazard or suffer by it.

1. As for the difficulties. There are some acts, some duties of our profession, are too hard for us. Our infirmities and weaknesses cannot reach them, or make us drive on heavily in them. This may make us weary, or tempt some to give over. But against this, in that Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we have these encouragements.

(1.) Christ expects not that from his people, which their infirmities and weaknesses cannot reach. He is our high priest; ours by virtue of an office which requires all tenderness and compassionateness. He expressed it, and perfectly answers it, in being touched with the feeling of our infirmities. A master that is merciful will not press that upon a sickly servant which his distemper will not suffer him to do. If he be careless and slothful, indeed he may be angry; but in that which he falls short of, merely because he is sick, he will shew pity rather than rigour.

Christ is a merciful high priest. He knows that weaknesses and inward distempers are the sickliness of the soul. He would not have us slothful, indulgent to carnal ease; that will displease him. But he looks not for more than a sickly temper can afford. ‘If there be a willing mind,’ 2 Corinthians 8:12; if he see there is really a willing mind to do more and better, that which we cannot do will not be expected. That which we do, though it fall far short of what is due, will be accepted. A parent that has any tenderness will not look for that from an infant, or weak child, that he expects from another. He will be pleased with a little done by a weakling, out of affection and sense of duty. What cannot be done through weakness, will be passed by with pity.

We have a high priest that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who has the compassions of God, of man, of a father, of all relations: Psalms 103:13-14, ‘He knows our frame,’ of what a frail and infirm composition it is; he knows it by experience, and learned compassionateness thereby. And in that he is touched with the compassionate sense of our weaknesses, he will not rigorously exact what through infirmity we cannot reach.

(2.) He will not be severe for failings, such as are the issue of our infirmities. He has a tender sense of our weaknesses, pities us under them; and such a compassionate tenderness excludes severity, leaves no occasion to fear it. We have a pregnant instance hereof in the days of his flesh, Matthew 26:37-41. His soul was under great affliction; he desires his disciples to watch with him a little while; they, instead thereof, fall asleep. He might have resented this heinously, that they would not attend him watchfully for one hour, for so little a while, and that too when he was in so great extremity, when his soul was so exceeding sorrowful even unto death. They could not but condemn themselves for this; but he, instead of condemning them, or making any severe or sharp reflection upon them for it, finds out an excuse for them, ‘The spirit is willing,’ &c. He takes gracious notice of a willingness within, when no such thing appears without, when it was quite overpowered with weakness, and gives the weakness itself a merciful allowance.

(3.) He will succour you. In that he is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, you may be sure he is ready and willing to do this to relieve you, either by lessening the difficulty or the infirmity; either by making the burden less, or healing the sore which makes it uneasy. In that he has such a sense of our infirmities, we may conclude, as the apostle does, that we shall 'find grace to help in time of need,' as much as is sufficient. He assures him of it, 2 Corinthians 12:9. The perfection of his strength appears most in the weak. This made Paul bear up under all difficulties, to such a height, as he could rejoice, yea, glory, in the hardest circumstances that encountered him, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Nor was this a privilege peculiar to the apostle; there is a promise offering it to all Christ's people, Isaiah 40:31. Since Christ has such a feeling of our infirmities, we might be sure he would relieve and strengthen, though he had not promised it. It is some ease to those who do but suffer with others, by way of sympathy and fellow-feeling, to have them eased. Christ himself some way suffers, till his people be relieved. It is through him, and mercy through him, that the promise is made. Now that it is promised, both his faithfulness and compassionateness insure the performance.

If Christ have such a sense of the difficulties we labour under, they need not discourage us; he will take care we shall not sink under them. He himself is concerned in the pressure, and has a feeling of it.

2. As for dangers and sufferings which attend the profession of Christ, they need be no discouragement. For in that Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (sufferings amongst the rest), he suffers with his people therein; and so they are upon this account (as they are upon others also) his sufferings; therefore he will order them as his own. Hence we may conclude they will do us no hurt, they shall do us good.

Christ will take care they shall not hurt us; he will secure us from the evil of them; and being secured from the evil of them, there is nothing in them to be feared; nothing to fright us from our profession, any part or degree of it; nothing to discourage us from persisting in it, and holding it fast.

There is a threefold evil in sufferings: legal, moral, natural.

(1.) A legal evil, and that is the curse. Afflictions, that which we suffer by since the fall, were deserved by sin, threatened by the law, executed by divine justice, to satisfy for the injury sin had done him; so they become a curse. Christ has freed his people from the curse, by suffering for them, Galatians 3:13; and even those that are chastisements, are now freed, from the curse. They are not destructive penalties, they are not from vindictive wrath, they are not to satisfy justice; and if sufferings for sin be secured from this dreadful evil, sufferings for the profession of Christ are at far further distance from it.

(2.) A moral evil. And that is the sin that sufferings expose us to, which may be occasioned thereby, which those are usually tempted to who are under sufferings.

Now Christ himself, in the days of his suffering, was tempted to sin; that was one of those infirmities he laboured under, and was exposed to, for our sakes; and for this end, that he might be touched with the feeling of their condition who are tempted, that he might sympathise with them in the hour of temptation, that he might know by experience their danger and distress, and so both pity and relieve them, Hebrews 2:18. He is hereby every way sufficient, both able and willing to

succour the tempted.

He shewed a compassionate sense of their danger of sin under sufferings, and how desirous he is to have them secured from it, by his prayer on earth. It was his petition a little before his death, John 17:15. He would not have them taken out of the world, nor freed quite from troubles and sufferings in it; but freed from the evil, that is, the sin of them. Though troubles continue, though this serpent will live, and be upon us now and then while we are on earth; yet he takes care that it be disarmed, that the sting be pulled out, that the mortal venom of it may not seize on his suffering saints; and then there is nothing in it to discourage or make them afraid.

(3.) A natural evil. And that is the smart, the grievance, the pain, and afflictiveness of it to the flesh. This nature is most afraid of; but the fear and discouragement of this may be quite overcome by a due consideration and belief of this truth. Christ himself suffered this; he knows by experience what the pain and afflictiveness of sufferings is. He would feel it himself, that he might be touched with the feeling of what his people suffer by it. He knows what relief and compassion it calls for; and as he would not have been denied it when the case was his, so he will not deny it to his people. Indeed, the case is still his in some sense, seeing he suffers with them, not by a painful, but by a compassionate feeling of their sufferings. Hence we may conclude,

[1.] He will let no more befall us than is tolerable, than we may well endure. He knows the weight and grievance of sufferings; himself bore it. He knows our weakness and infirmity; himself was under our weaknesses. He has experience of both, so he knows what degree of pain or grievance would be too much or too heavy; and since he is touched with the feeling hereof, to be sure he will not suffer us to feel more than we can bear. His compassions are too great to let any grievance be too heavy. If he were not, as we may say, a fellow-sufferer with us, if he had not the compassions of a man for us, yet his faithfulness as God would prevent this, 1 Corinthians 10:13. But there is a concurrence of both; he is both a merciful and faithful high priest.

[2.] He will make what befalls us comfortable. He that cannot fail to pity us will not fail to comfort us. It is so amongst men. He that is heartily touched with the feeling of another's grievances, and really pities his condition, will comfort him if he can. Now Christ, who has such a feeling of his people's pressures, and has such transcendent compassions for them, he can accordingly comfort them. When sufferings most abound, he can make comforts superabound, 2 Corinthians 1:5. He can pour in such comforts as will drown the sense of what is most sharp and afflictive in outward sufferings, 1 Corinthians 7:4; such as will make what is otherwise grievous to the flesh to be exceeding joyous, occasion of more joy than the greatest occasions of rejoicing in the whole world, Romans 8:35, Romans 8:37. What joy like that of a conqueror in the day of his victory or of his triumph? Even in the worst of sufferings, &c., Christ affords more joy than that of conquerors; he makes his suffering people more than conquerors, and so gives more occasion of joy and triumph; they have it through Christ that loves them, that has an affectionate sense of their sufferings.

[3.] He will make what befalls them profitable, highly advantageous. That shall be the issue of the smart and grievance of outward sufferings. This also we may be assured of, in that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is, as I shewed, touched effectually with the feeling. Now such an effectual sense will afford the best relief, the most advantageous, such as is expressed by riches of grace and glory, and what is most desirable, advantage every way.

First. Temporal, Mark 10:30. In this time he shall have an hundredfold advantage; in kind, if that be best for him; or else what is better.

Secondly. Spiritual advantage. The increase of holiness, and the fruits of it, which is more precious than gold, Hebrews 12:10. That we might more richly partake of his holiness, than without sufferings we would do, that we might be more filled with the fruits of it, Hebrews 4:11. The apostle found it true by experience, 2 Corinthians 4:16. Holiness was daily increased in his soul by daily sufferings, such as threatened the ruin of the outward man.

Thirdly. Eternal advantage, 2 Corinthians 4:17. For affliction, glory; as if one for bearing a cross word patiently should be crowned a king. For light affliction, a weight of glory; as if one, for the loss of a farthing, should have millions of gold. For a moment's affliction, eternal glory; as if one, for the pain of a minute, should have all prosperity and happiness imaginable for thousands and thousands of ages, for ages without end, and that without intermission. But no comparison can reach it. It is ■περβαλλον, &c., exceeding more, far more exceeding. Put them together in the balance, and that scale wherein the weight of glory is will make the other fly up, as if there were nothing at all in it. The heaviest afflictions are no more a counterpoise to this weight of glory, than the small dust of the balance is to an hundred thousand weight. Christ's feeling of his people's sufferings for their profession, gives assurance of such weighty and rich advantages by the worst they can suffer for holding it fast.

What encouragement then is here to hold fast our profession! No difficulties or sufferings can be any just occasion for discouraging us. Nothing can be pretended but the evil of them; and Christ is ready, not only to secure his people from all kind of evil, but to turn it into good; not only to render it tolerable, but very comfortable, richly advantageous, with the highest advantages that earth or heaven, time or eternity, can afford. All this we may be assured of, in that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

4. Another duty which this truth calls and obliges us to, is to sympathise with one another. If Christ be thus touched with the feeling of our infirmities, then ought we to be touched with the sense of our brethren's infirmities. If the head be thus sensible, shall the members have no sense? 1 John 4:11, 'If Christ so loved us,' &c. This is propounded not only for our comfort and encouragement, but also for our imitation, 1 John 1:7. We have not fellowship with one another, as Christ has with us, unless we have a fellow-feeling of what others suffer.

It is due upon this account, and frequently called for: 1 Peter 3:8, ■μ■φρονες. There should be an union of souls amongst those who are one in Christ. They should be compassionate, συμπαθε■ς, should sympathise together; feel what lies heavy on others, and suffer by compassion what others suffer otherwise. Else they are not φιλ■δελφοι; they have not that love for their brethren, which the love of Christ obliges them to have. They should be pitiful, ■υσπλαγχνοι; their bowels should be troubled for that which troubles them, and shew it by being φιλ■φρονες, ready to relieve. The same word, Acts 28:7, such sympathy, with the acts or parts of it (pity and readiness to succour); and this out of love, as those that are concerned, as being all one, of one mind and soul, we should have for one another, because Christ has it for us, Colossians 3:12-13. We should sympathise with them in all infirmities; so does he with us.

(1.) In outward infirmities, weaknesses, wants, dangers, sufferings. We should be touched with what others feel herein, 2 Corinthians 11:29. He calls Timothy to partake with him in his danger and restraint, 2 Timothy 1:8. The Hebrews sympathised with him in his bonds. Hebrews 10:34, συνεπαθ■σατε, ye suffered with me, &c. He would have them (and us in them) so to suffer with all the members of Christ, Hebrews 13:3, have that sense of their condition as if it were your own, such a sense as you would others have if the case were yours; and this not only for bonds, but any adversity, 1 Corinthians 12:25-26. If the foot be in pain, the head feels it; if the back be naked, the breast will be sensible of it; if the belly be pinched with want, or the stomach be sick, the other parts will feel it. So should it be with the members of the mystical body. We shall want one main evidence that we are parts of that body whereof Christ is head, if there be not some sense in us of what fellow-members feel. It is schism; you divide yourselves from the rest of the body when you have not a joint sense of what other members suffer. This is to be schismatics in the apostle's sense.

(2.) Inward infirmities. When they are tempted, sympathise with them, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted. When dejected, 1 Thessalonians 5:14. And those that are weak, ready to fall; not only bear with them, but bear them up, take part of the pressure upon yourselves, that they may not sink under it. So does Christ for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. When weak in judgment, Romans 15:1, Romans 15:3. Ye that understand the doctrine of Christ, that in particular concerning Christian liberty, ought to bear the weakness of those who are not so apprehensive of it; and not to please yourselves with reflecting upon the strength of your own judgment, or clearness of your own apprehensions. And so imitate Christ, ver. 3, counting their concernments yours; as he did the concerns of his Father, was as tender of what reflected on him, as if it had fallen on himself.

(3.) In sinful infirmities, 2 Corinthians 11:29. 'Who is offended,' i. e. who falls into sin; for that is the true notion of being offended in the New Testament. So giving of offence is explained, Romans 14:13. Who falls into sin, 'and I burn not,' says he. Such falls were grievous to him, he had a quick and painful feeling thereof; he both suffered by, and with such. Falling into sin is like falling into the fire; not only the offenders, but the apostle, was scorched thereby. So should it be with us, Galatians 6:1-2. Do not burden him more, by censuring and aggravating his fault; but ease him, by suffering with him, counting his fall your own burden.

We should sympathise with out brethren, even in infirmities that are not without sin; whether they be apprehensions or acts, opinions or practices (being but weaknesses incident to those whom Christ owns, and sympathises with); we should learn of him to have compassion on them, and affectionately endeavour to succour them. The consideration of this, that Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, is enough to remove whatever may hinder us from a compassionate sense of others' infirmities.

Obj. 1. It is a plain truth wherein he differs from me; it is evident to me, and seems clear as the light, yet he will not yield to me. If it was obscure and difficult, if it were doubtful and disputable, and had probable reasons both for it and against it, such as might puzzle a common understanding, then I might pity and bear with him.

Ans. It seems clear to thee, but is it so in itself, or so to him? If it were plain to him, it would be rather wilfulness than infirmity in him not to yield. But is it not possible that you may be mistaken as

well as he? Are you infallible? Have you not found by experience, that what once you have judged a clear truth, you have afterwards discerned to be a mistake and error? Who is there that makes any diligent inquiry after truth, that has not found this by experience? Now, were not you to be pitied in those misapprehensions, wherein you now discover a pitiful weakness? What if the world had agreed with you, yielded to you in this, in those first opinions, wherein you now see reason to differ from yourselves? Did you not need Christ's compassions in such weaknesses? And will you have no tenderness for others, in such cases where you need it yourselves.

But, further, Do not you differ in some points from Christ himself? Are your judgments perfectly conformable to his in all things? May there not be some particulars, which to you seem clear truths, which yet he knows infallibly to be mistakes and erroneous apprehensions? It would argue intolerable pride, and unacquaintedness with the darkness and weakness of our own understanding to question this. Now, would you not have Christ to pity and bear with you, in points wherein you dissent from him? Would you not have Christ to judge, that in all things where you are not of his mind (which yet are clear to him beyond all possibility of mistake), your mistake is out of wilfulness, not infirmity, and so should have no pity for you? Oh, if he did so, you were undone! Miserable must we all be, if Christ were not touched compassionately with the feeling of our weakness, in varying from his judgment as to those things that are most clear and certain truths to him. And do we expect compassion from him, where we have no forbearance for others? Are we disciples of Christ, and will not learn of him?

Obj. 2. But it is not a few things wherein he crosses my persuasion. If he differed but from me in one or two points, it might be borne; but he runs counter to my way and judgment in many.

Ans. But does he differ from you in more, or as many particulars, as you dissent from Christ in? I am much mistaken if this be not true; that even the sincere lovers of Christ and his truth differ in far more points from Christ, than they differ one from another. This leads me to judge so; there are many things that we know not; the best, most knowing, are ignorant of far more than they understand; and those things that we have any knowledge of, we know but in part, 1 Corinthians 13:12, and 1 Corinthians 8:2; we partly know it, and partly are ignorant of it, 1 Corinthians 13:12; we see but darkly, i. e. we know but ignorantly, as children do, 1 Corinthians 8:11.

Now, where there is ignorance (if the mind come to any positive judgment), there will be error and mistake; so that, being wholly ignorant of many things, and partly ignorant of all, we are subject to err more or less in all things. Hence it comes to pass, that the errors of our minds are like those of our ways for multitude: Psalms 19:12, 'They are so many, we cannot know them. Our mistakes are in number like the hairs of our heads.

Now, so many ways as we mistake and err, so many ways do we dissent from Christ, and run cross to his judgment and persuasion. And has Christ compassion on thee and all these? Is he touched with the feeling of thy weakness in all? And wilt thou not forbear thy brother in some differences? What though they seem many, they are but few really, in comparison of those wherein thou dissentest from Christ; and wherein, if thou meetest not with pity and succour from him, thou art lost.

Obj. 3. But those opinions wherein he differs from me are of very ill consequence. They are not mere notions, or speculative errors, but practical mistakes, such as lead him out of the way

wherein I walk, and Christ would have him walk; and may mislead others into wanderings and bypaths. And though they be not paths pernicious and destructive, but such as those who, for the main, are under the conduct of the Spirit of Christ, may slip into, yet they are not without some sin and great danger. Erroneous speculations may be better borne with than practical errors.

Ans. Christ has compassions for those who not only err notionally, but practically, so as to step out of the way, and wander too. Herein he is compared with the Levitical high priest, of whom it was required, Hebrews 5:2. Christ herein transcends him. He can more pity, both ■γνοο■σι and πλανωμ■νοις; both those who are in the dark, and apt to wander, not discerning betwixt light and darkness in their notions; and those also who mistake their way, turn aside, and are actually wandering out of the path.

Now, does Christ compassionately sympathise with thee and others, when out of the way by practical mistakes; and wilt thou have no tenderness, no forbearance for thy brother in the like case? Shall he have compassionate sympathy, proportionable to the wandering (so the word there signifies) as great as the mistake is; and wilt thou think it too great for thine? What if Christ should measure to thee what thou metest to others?

Obj. 4. But he is sour, cross, froward, peevish, wilful, puts a bad construction upon my forbearance and condescensions, makes ill returns, gives great provocations when I give him no occasion, and every way disobliges me. This calls for severeness, or rougher passions than pity. Who can affectionately sympathise with such a one? Who can shew compassionate tenderness towards him? It is unreasonable to expect it, it is impossible to do it; who ever did, who can do it?

Ans. Who can do it? dost, thou ask. Why, Christ does it for thee.

(1.) When thou carriest thyself worse towards him than thy brother does to thee. There is not any one in the world shews himself so sour, cross, &c., so disingenuous, so provoking, so ungrateful, so every way disobliging, as thou hast shewed thyself to Christ. There is not the most perverse, the most cross-grained person, that ever thou hadst anything to do with, that has demeaned himself worse to thee, than thou hast done to Christ. Thou art wofully blinded by self-love; thou art one of no consideration, of no sense, if not sensible of this. Thou knowest not Christ, thou knowest not thyself, thine own heart and ways, if thou wilt not acknowledge this.

(2.) Yea, take them altogether, that ever dealt ill with thee, all that ever thou hast had any occasion to complain of; and thou alone hast dealt worse with Christ, and done more against him, than all of them together have done against thee.

(3.) Where thou hast had one provocation from any, Christ has had an hundred from thee. You disoblige Christ more in one day, than others do you in a whole year.

(4.) And provocations of Christ are not only more in number, but greater, and of a higher nature; as much higher as the heavens are above the earth; as much greater, as God is greater than man; for the height of the provocation rises from the transcendency of the person provoked. He that provokes you is but a man like yourselves, but Christ is not only man, but God, and we are less to him than flies and gnats are to us. And the less we are in his eye, the greater and more insufferable is every provocation from us.

(5.) And all this thou doest when he gives thee not the least occasion to deal ill with him, when all his ways are mercy, when he is every moment obliging thee, and does so much to oblige thee as no creature in the world can or will do.

Now, put all these together. Have you been worse to him than any other has been to you? Have you more disobliged him than you have been disobliged by all the persons in the world put together? Has he had a thousand provocations from you for one you have had from any? Are your provocations incomparably greater and higher than any you have met with from others? And do you provoke him without a cause, when he gives you not the least occasion imaginable to do it? And yet notwithstanding all this, does he not only bear with you, but pity you? Has he tender affections, when he has so much occasion for indignation and severity? Is he touched with the feeling of your infirmities? Has he a compassionate tenderness for you after all this? And will you not have sympathy and tenderness for your brethren? Oh this example of Christ will leave us without excuse herein; we have nothing to plead, but this will silence us. Nothing at all left us, I say not to justify, but in any degree to extenuate, the sinfulness of this neglect.

You see all that may hinder us from sympathising with our brethren is quite removed by Christ's own example, here set down before us in the text. Let us see what it affords to enforce this duty on us further.

(1.) Hereby you will be like to Christ, and to be like to Christ is the highest excellency we can attain; it is the sum of all our duty, and so should be the end and scope of all our endeavours, the great design and business of our whole life.

What higher excellency can we aspire to than a likeness to Christ? Revenge is that indeed wherein the world glories, to do evil for evil, and come even with those who affront or wrong them; but this they learn of the devil, not of Christ. It is a devilish deformity; they have it of their father, and are herein as like him as they can look. But the glory of a Christian is to do good for evil, to pity those they suffer by, and to sympathise with such as disoblige them. This is glorious indeed; this is to be like to Christ himself; it is his glory, and shines in the text; it is the excellency of his office, as he is High Priest, Php 2:5. While the same mind is in others that is in the world, that is in the devil, it will be our glory to have 'the same mind in us that was in Christ,' by having a sense of others' wants, weaknesses, dangers, sufferings, as Christ has of ours.

It is our great duty also. Christ calls us to it: Matthew 11:1-30, 'Learn of me.' It is essential to a disciple of Christ to learn of him; if we refuse it, whatever we pretend to, we really disclaim, renounce our relation to him, Matthew 16:24. If we will be his disciples, we must follow him; we must imitate him, follow his example, for he has left us his example on purpose, 1 Peter 2:21. This is one of the paths wherein he went before us. We see in the text the steps which we must follow: Ephesians 4:32 and Ephesians 5:1-2, 'tender-hearted,' ■υσπλαγχνος. That is the compassionateness the text calls for; shew it in such acts as he has done. Be ye followers, imitators of him herein; walk in love. How? Even as Christ. Christ shews his love in being touched, &c.; so do ye. This is to follow God; this is to learn of Christ effectually. So he begins the exhortation to the duties following, and this particularly, Ephesians 4:20-21. Ye have not so learned Christ; ye do not follow him, ye are not like him, if ye do not this; ye have not put on the new man, which is Christ's resemblance, Ephesians 4:24. If this be wholly wanting, Colossians 3:12-13, put on σπλ■γχνα ■ικτιρο■, bowels of compassion. Shew it as Christ did; let him be your

example; let no μομφ■, nothing that you can blame or find fault with in those who want your compassion, hinder you, ver. 14. Love to others, founded in the love of Christ to you, is the bond of perfectness; the most perfect bond, that which most strongly binds and obliges you to this; to all mercifulness and compassionateness, in imitation of Christ.

Use 2. For comfort to the people of Christ. Here is ground of great consolation in every condition; in the worst, the most grievous circumstances that you can be compassed with in this world. All grievances whatsoever are comprised under infirmities; and this affords comfort as to everything that can be a grievance to you, especially taking in the ground of it in the next words, 'But was in all things tempted,' or exercised, like unto us.

Art thou poor, wantest conveniences, and sometimes (it may be) necessaries? Why, Christ is touched with the feeling of a poor condition; it was once his own case, 2 Corinthians 8:9; poor in relations, Php 2:7. As to friends, a few fishermen; as to estate, he had not wherewith to pay a small tribute, but what he got by miracle; as to accommodations, worse provided for than the inferior creatures, Matthew 8:20. Christ is touched with the sense of thy poor condition, for he himself felt it; he will relieve thee, for therefore did he feel it, that he might be ready to do it.

Art thou tempted to sin, buffeted by Satan, afflicted with horrid suggestions? Christ is touched with the feeling of a tempted soul; he himself was exercised with temptation. Satan assaulted him both invisibly and visibly; he tried him with variety of temptations. And what more horrid suggestion than that, to fall down and worship the devil? Matthew 4:1-25. Yea, Christ was so far in his power, and at his disposal, in the hour of temptation, that Satan carried him from place to place in the air, from the wilderness to the temple at Jerusalem, and from thence into a high mountain, Matthew 4:1, Matthew 4:5, Matthew 4:8.

Art thou despised, hated, reproached, despitefully used? He is touched with the sense of this; it was his own case. He was reviled as a glutton, a wine-bibber, an impostor, a blasphemer, and one that dealt with the devil. He knows what it is to be overwhelmed with shame and reproach, his own experience makes him sensible of it. Is this world a vale of trouble and tears to thee? Is thy life a life of sorrows and sufferings? Dost thou suffer from all sorts, not only from professed enemies, but those whom thou seekest most to oblige? Art thou in anguish of spirit, heaviness of soul, forsaken of men, and to sense deserted of God? Why, thus it was with him, he himself felt all this. So there is no doubt but he is touched with the feeling of it. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with griefs, with all sorts of grief. He suffered from all sorts; not only his enemies, but his friends, were a trouble to him. Even his disciples forsook him in his greatest distress. He was afflicted with outward pain and soul-trouble both at once; his soul was heavy, exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; and when he was in the hands of cruel and bloody men, he cries out in the anguish of his soul, as one forsaken of God.

Briefly, whatever thy trouble or grievance be, here is a spring, a well of comfort opened to thee in the text, from whence thou mayest draw streams of joy and refreshment in all the sad circumstances of thy life, for hence thou hast ground to conclude assuredly,

(1.) That the Lord delights not in your grievances. He takes no pleasure to afflict you, or to let others do it; he 'afflicts not willingly,' Lamentations 3:33; he delights not in that which he has such a compassionate sense of; he takes no pleasure in that which is afflictive to you, for he himself

feels it.

How comes it then to pass that the troubles of the righteous are so many? Why, there is some necessity for it; it is not but ‘if need be,’ 1 Peter 1:1-25; there is some great advantage to be had by it, and this is the method which infinite wisdom counts best for the attaining of it. Otherwise, if it were not necessary, if it were not good, he would not suffer it, since he some way suffers by it; it is not the suffering that pleases him, the same thing cannot in the same respect be the object both of delight and commiseration. Christ has compassions on you herein, so far as he suffers with you. He takes no pleasure in what is grievous to you, for himself feels it. Acts 7:34, ‘I have seen, I have seen,’ says the Lord; I have felt, I have felt, says Christ, the affliction, &c.

(2.) You are not alone in any condition, in any grievance, be it want or weakness, danger or suffering; you will always have one by you to sympathise with you, one who stands for more than all the world. This was the comfort wherewith Christ comforted himself, when he was like to be left destitute of all outward comforts and comforters, John 16:32. This is it which will secure you against the evil of any want, or weakness, or trouble, how great soever; yea, against all fear of it, Psalms 23:4, Isaiah 41:10, &c. That which need not be your fear need not be your trouble. You need fear nothing if Christ be with you. And this the text assures you of, he will be with you; not only as a spectator, but as a co-sufferer; as one that not only will see, but will feel, what you want, or what you endure. Oh what comfort is it to consider this! While I am in want, in pain, in distress, labouring under weaknesses, or conflicting with outward troubles, inward temptation; while I am complaining and bemoaning myself, Christ is pitying me. His bowels yearn towards me, he feels what pinches me, he is affectionately touched with the feeling of it.

(3.) You shall have his affection in every state, under all infirmities. The mind and heart of Christ will be upon you in every condition, under all weaknesses, in all wants, in all grievances. For this is a proposition of eternal truth, Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. This will hold true in every moment of your lives, Christ’s compassions fail not; and while he has compassions, he has love, and all the affections that depend on love. So that, whatever you want, Christ will never want love for you; you will never want his love. And what need you more? What want is there in the world that his love will not make up? Whatever you suffer, you will not lose his love; and there is enough in his compassion, in his love, to make any grievance better than freedom from it; to make any condition, how necessitous, weak, afflictive soever, more comfortable, more advantageous, more desirable, than any exemption from it, when this is not from love. Will he love you less, because you are compassed with infirmities? Will he not shew more love? The more compassion is shewed, the more love appears. And he shews most compassion where there is most need; and who need more than they that labour under most infirmities?

4. You shall have that which is best for you in your infirmities; and nothing can be more comfortable than to be assured of what is best for you. If it be best to have your infirmities, the burdened lessened, he will do it. If it be best that they be continued, with support under them, you shall have that. If it be better to have a holy and fruitful improvement of them, than to be freed from them, you shall have that. If it be best to have deliverance from them, he will work it; as soon as it is so, he will not delay it. This you may be sure of, because he is touched, &c. For this is not the pity of a weak man, who may wish well to him he pities, but cannot help; may be willing to do what is best for him, but is not able; but it is the compassion of him, who is the mighty God. Indeed, he

is both God and man, who is thus touched with the sense of our condition. And so it is the compassion of a man, for the tenderness of it, but the compassion of God, for the mighty power and efficacy of it. This assures us that he is both able and willing to afford the best relief, and this is by doing that which is best for us. OF COMING BOLDLY UNTO THE THRONE OF GRACE

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.—Hebrews 4:16.

These words are a most comfortable conclusion drawn from what is premised in the former verse. Since we have an high priest, one who has reconciled us to God, and does intercede for [us]; such an high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; one who is so compassionate to us, and so ready to relieve us under all infirmities whatever; therefore let us come boldly. To open the words a little. Here is an act or motion, with the manner, and term, and end of it.

Let us. This may denote, it is both our privilege and duty to come, and thus to come. We may do it, it is our privilege, our happiness. We ought to do it, it is our duty. We have not only leave to do thus, but it is enjoined us; the Lord has made that our duty, which is our happiness. Indeed, he enjoins us nothing but what tends to make us happy. Such a Lord we have, as requires nothing of us, but in order to our own happiness. This is true in all the instances of our duty, though it do not so plainly appear in some of them; but in this before us it is both true and evident; it is clearly our happiness, a most blessed privilege, to do that which he calls for.

Come. Let us make our addresses to him. Let us apply ourselves to the Lord in all the ways he has appointed, in all his ordinances, all acts of worship, and prayer particularly.

Boldly. Here is the manner of the address, μετ■ πα■■ησ■ας. A word frequently used, and denotes several things. Let us take notice of such as may be here pertinent. It signifies,

1. Liberty without restraint. You may be free, as those that are assuredly welcome. You may use freedom of speech. So used, Acts 2:29, and Acts 4:13. You have liberty to speak your minds freely, to speak all your heart; to declare all your ails, and wants, and fears, and grievances. As others should not restrain and fetter you, in speaking to God, prescribing what things you should seek, what words use, and no other; so you need not restrain yourselves, but speak all that your condition requires, freely. It is your privilege to be free, Christ has made you welcome.

(2.) Security, without fearfulness. You need not fear that you shall be slighted, or repulsed, or disappointed, John 11:54, πα■■ησ■α, as one secure. We may come openly, as those that have the greatest security, and not the least occasion to be fearful.

(3.) Authority. Without question whether this belong to us, whether we have warrant for it, so used, Hebrews 10:19. As the high priest had authority (and he alone under the law) to enter into the holiest, so has every believer warrant now to do it; he has that which will bear him out in it, his warrant is the blood of Jesus. We may come with such authority as none can question; Christ hath authorised us to do it, he will bear us out in it.

(4.) Confidence, ‘without doubting.’ Such faith as assures us of acceptance and success, 1 John 3:21, and 1 John 5:4. This includes all the former; we may come with confidence, as those who have security, liberty, authority to come. We may come, with all assurance that we shall obtain, &c. We have encouragement, sufficient ground from the premises to come in faith, with full assurance

of faith; μ■ διστ■ζοντες (says Chrysostom in loc.), not doubting. So that, to come boldly, is to come as those that have security, liberty, authority; and which is the sum of all, to come in faith, with assurance to obtain what they come for. To the throne of grace. That is the term of this notion. The Lord is represented as having two thrones: one a throne of judgment, where he shews his justice and severity; the other a throne of mercy, where he shews himself gracious and compassionate. It is a dreadful thing to appear before the throne of judgment. Sinners, when they are awakened, will think the weight of rocks and mountains more tolerable than this, Revelation 6:15-16, Daniel 7:9-10. But to be admitted to the throne of mercy is the most comfortable and happiest privilege that the children of men are here capable of, as will appear by a fuller account of it in the sequel. And this is the happiness in the text, θρ■νος χ■ριτος ■στιν, ο■ θρ■νος κρ■σεως. Not where everlasting destruction will be awarded, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12, but where mercy and grace will be obtained. This follows, That we may obtain mercy and find grace. This is the end why we are to come. The favour of God through Christ is sometimes called mercy, sometimes grace, indifferently. What difference there is betwixt them seems not to be real, but respective. Mercy respects misery in the object, as grace does unworthiness. Mercy is favour shewed to the miserable, and grace is favour to the unworthy, freely shewed to such as have no reason from themselves to expect it; nothing to deserve it, nothing to oblige the Lord, nothing to move him to vouchsafe it. To help in time of need. A general term, indefinitely laid down, but is equivalent to an universal. All kind of relief, suitable to the necessities and various circumstances of every condition. Help, as to our wants, our weaknesses, our straits, our difficulties, our dangers, our temptations, our sin and guilt, our troubles and sufferings, outward and inward; help for all, and all that will be helpful, all that can be needful. And as relief in all, so the best relief, ■υκαιρον βο■θειαν; the best help, when it will be best, when it will be most opportune, most seasonable. Help, when it comes too soon, or when it comes too late, proves not helpful; but this shall come just in its season, just in the nick of opportunity, when it will be helpful to the best advantage. The people of Christ may come to the throne of grace, with assurance to find grace and mercy for such help as this; for relief in all cases, and that when it will be best of all.

Observations.

1. There is a throne of grace, which believers may come to.

2. They may come boldly, with confidence, to this throne; they have liberty to do so, they have security in doing it, they have authority to do it, and so may do it with confidence.

3. This is the way to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

I shall handle the first of these as the doctrine, and make use of the other by way of application. To proceed with the former clearly and profitably, I will endeavour to shew what a throne of grace here imports and signifies; what it declares to us concerning the Lord, whom we may approach as upon such a throne. Now I do not find that a throne of grace is anywhere else mentioned in the New Testament; but that which is equivalent to it in the Old Testament very frequently. The apostle, speaking of the throne of grace, alludes to the mercy-seat in the tabernacle and temple. The Lord's throne of grace, and his mercy-seat, differ not in sense, but in sound. A seat and a throne, referred to God, are both one; and grace and mercy differ very little. The mercy-seat (as you may see, Exodus 25:17-18, Exodus 25:21) was the golden cover of the ark; at each end of it was a cherub, and between the cherubims is the Lord said to sit, and so is represented as sitting,

or residing on the mercy-seat as on a throne. This was the throne of grace under the law. And in allusion to this does the apostle speak of him as upon a throne of grace under the gospel. So that by understanding what the mercy-seat signified concerning God, we may come to understand what the throne of grace imports concerning God, both what he is to himself and what he is to his people, what apprehensions of him we are led to when we are to come to the throne of grace.

1. Let us see what it declares the Lord to be in himself. His throne of grace signifies these severals—

(1.) That he is a God of glory, of a glorious majesty. Here was the most glorious and majestic appearance of God amongst his people of old. Upon the mercy-seat he appeared in glory. The ark, whereof this very mercy-seat was a part, the most rich and splendid part, is called his glory, Psalms 78:61. Here he vouchsafed his special presence, as upon his throne. When they were deprived of this by the Philistines, the glory was departed, 1 Samuel 4:22. The cherubims, which were part of the mercy-seat in the tabernacle, are called ‘cherubims of glory,’ Hebrews 9:5. As it is a throne, it speaks him glorious, 1 Samuel 2:8. Thrones are for persons of great glory on earth, and so is ascribed to him who is the most glorious majesty of the world. When the prophet represents him upon a throne, Isaiah 6:1, it is said, Isaiah 6:3, ‘One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.’ Thus we should approach the Lord, thus we should apprehend him when we come to the throne of grace; the notion of a throne obliges us to it.

(2.) That he is a God of dominion and sovereignty, that he rules and reigns and is supreme governor, Psalms 99:1-2. He reigns, that appears by his throne. He sits between the cherubims. As so represented, the mercy-seat was his throne. Upon this account, greatness, supremacy is ascribed to him, Psalms 99:2, and from hence Hezekiah declares his sovereignty over all kingdoms, 2 Kings 19:15. Thou art placed upon the mercy-seat as a throne, &c. From the mercy-seat, as his throne, he gave law to his subjects (and legislation is the chief act of sovereignty); he appoints Moses to expect his laws from thence, Exodus 25:22; and accordingly, here he exercised his legislative power, Numbers 7:8-9. The particular laws here enacted are in the chapter following. And without reference to the type, a throne denotes sovereignty. Thrones are for sovereign rulers, Job 36:7, 1 Samuel 2:8; so it is applied to the Lord, who not only makes laws, but passes judgment, Psalms 94:7-8. His throne is terrible to wicked men, a throne of justice; so it is a comfort and relief to his people, a throne of mercy, Psalms 94:9. Very frequently in Scripture throne is used for sovereign government, Genesis 41:40, 2 Samuel 7:13, 2 Samuel 7:16, and applied to God, Psalms 103:19.

Thus we should draw near to God with such apprehensions of him as sovereign Lord of the world, as King of kings and Lord of lords, supreme governor of all kingdoms, who has all creatures in heaven and earth under him as his subjects, gives law, passes judgment, does execution as he sees cause. The mention of a throne minds us of this.

(3.) That he is a God of power and might, of almighty power. When he is spoken of as upon his throne, the mercy-seat, he is called the Lord of hosts, one who has all the power in the world, 1 Samuel 4:4, 2 Samuel 6:2. And the ark, whereof the mercy-seat was a principal part, is called the strength of God, Psalms 78:61, and Psalms 132:8; because, as it was a testimony of his presence, so a symbol of his strength and power, ready to be engaged for his people. Hence the church,

having addressed herself to the Lord, as upon the mercy-seat between the cherubims, Psalms 80:1, adds, Psalms 80:2, ‘Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us.’ The expression has reference to the form of the Israelites encamping about the ark (the throne of God) in their marches toward Canaan. They were disposed in four squadrons, under four principal standards. This of Ephraim, with Benjamin and Manasseh, encamped on the west behind the tabernacle. Judah, with other two tribes under his standard, encamped on the east, and had the front, Numbers 2:3, Numbers 2:18, Numbers 10:25. So that when the ark was taken up in order to a march, it was before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. In allusion to which they pray, ‘Stir up thy strength,’ i. e. the ark (with the mercy-seat on it, the throne of God in that representation) being a sign of God’s power or strength engaged for them. It is like that prayer which they used when the ark set forward, Numbers 10:35. Answerable to which is David’s prayer at the removal of the ark, Psalms 132:8. Hence that petition, Psalms 20:2, ‘Send the help from the sanctuary,’ which is all one as if he had said, Send the help from the mercy-seat, or from the throne of grace. Thus should we come to the throne of grace, with apprehensions of his almighty power.

(4.) That he is a God of holiness, Psalms 99:5. To worship at his footstool is to worship towards the mercy-seat, ver. 1, between the cherubims. That was a symbol of his special presence. There he resided as a God of holiness. And upon that account every part of the temple, yea, the hill where it was seated, was counted holy, Psalms 99:9. But above all, that part where the mercy-seat was, that was the most holy place, or, as it is in Hebrew, the holiness of holinesses, Exodus 26:34. The mercy-seat was the throne of his holiness, Psalms 47:8; and giving oracles from thence, it is called the oracle of holiness, Psalms 28:2. So the throne of grace is the throne of holiness. Thus we should come to the throne of grace with apprehensions of the holiness of God, that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, that he is holy in himself, and will be sanctified of all that draw near him.

(5.) That he is a God of wisdom, who sees and knows all things, to whom nothing is hid, or obscure, or difficult. From the mercy-seat he gave oracles; he made discoveries to his people of such things, which otherwise they could not come to the knowledge of. They were to inquire here of him for resolution in their most intricate doubts, and greatest difficulties, and weightiest undertakings, Exodus 25:22. Thus they were directed to do, and thus they were wont to do, when they were at a loss and wanted the conduct of divine wisdom, Judges 20:27-28, 1 Chronicles 13:3. This was the oracle they consulted with, the oracle of God, 2 Samuel 16:23. Hence the place of the mercy-seat, from whence the Lord gave those divine discoveries of his wisdom and testifications of his will, is called the oracle, 1 Kings 6:5, 1 Kings 6:16, 1 Kings 6:19. The word is ■■■■ from ■■■, to speak, because the Lord from hence gave divine answers when they inquired of him. Symmachus and Aquila read it χρησματιστ■ριον, as an oracle was called amongst the gentiles, the place from whence they expected divine answers. And with the apostle χρησματισμ■ς is the answer of God, Romans 11:4. And as the place, so the answers of God are called oracles, Romans 3:2; oracles, i. e. divine revelations and directions proceeding from infinite wisdom, and so of the greatest certainty, truth, and authority. Such oracles did the Lord give from the mercy-seat, and so he declared himself to be the God of wisdom. But this is not all. In that representation of the Lord upon the mercy-seat was wrapped up the manifold wisdom of God in a mystery, those riches, those wonders of mercy which are now unfolded in the gospel, where he

appears upon this throne of grace, and which the angels learn and are instructed in by the discoveries made thereof to the church, Ephesians 3:10. And while it was hid in a mystery, they were prying into it then, 1 Peter 1:12. They do παρακ■ψαι, stoop, bend their faces downward, as having an object before them which they earnestly desire to take special notice of. They shew the earnestness of their desire by their posture. And where is this to be seen? Why, in the posture of the cherubims' faces towards the mercy-seat (to which we may well suppose the apostle's expression has reference), Exodus 25:20. Towards the mercy-seat! There was Christ in a type; there was the marrow of the gospel, and the sum of the riches of divine wisdom and goodness in a mystery; and the faces of the cherubims were towards it, as Mary's face was towards the sepulchre when she looked for Christ there, John 20:11, παρ■κυψεν; the same word which the apostle useth to express how the angels look into this gospel mystery.

It was then a mystery hidden and kept secret, while the mercy-seat was a representation of it, for there was no ark, no mercy-seat in the second temple, and in the first temple it was reserved in the most secret part of it; none was to see it but the high priest only, and he but once a year. But now the throne of grace is openly exposed, all the people of Christ have access to it, for the temple is opened, and the ark, and so the mercy-seat, is seen, Revelation 11:19. If the temple had been opened, yet there was a veil betwixt the holy place and the ark, which hindered the sight of the mercy-seat. But now the veil also is rent, Matthew 27:51, so that we all with open face may behold the glory, both of the goodness and wisdom of God. There is no veil now before the throne of grace; Christ the mercy-seat (■λαστ■ριον the apostle calls him, Romans 3:25) is set forth openly, and in him all riches of grace and wisdom.

(6.) In fine, the mention of the throne of grace minds us of the wisdom of God, that we should draw near him as one that knows our state, yea, our hearts, and understands all the ways and means how to help us, and do us good; as one that knows all our doubts and fears, how to satisfy them; all our perplexities of spirit, how to unravel them; all our wants, how to supply them; all our weaknesses and distempers, how to cure them; all our corruptions, how to subdue them; all our afflictions and troubles, how to deliver us. He whose wisdom could find out a way to save and deliver us, when his truth and justice was engaged to destroy us, his wisdom can never be nonplussed. And this is that depth which was held forth by the mercy-seat as in a type of mystery, but now by the throne of grace more clearly and conspicuously, which will appear with more evidence by the

2nd Head, What the throne of grace declares the Lord to be unto us. Take it in these particulars. It signifies and offers him to us, as the mercy-seat did of old (for that which the apostle alludes to, we shall still make use of to direct us all along).

(1.) As a God in Christ. Since sin entered into the world, God is not to be approached by the children of men, with any acceptance, with any success, with any hopes of either, but in and through Christ. Sin has made man miserable, his misery is his separation from God. He cannot be happy but by access to God again. There is no access to God for sinners but by a mediator. No other mediator could be sufficient, but such an one as was both God and man as to his natures, and both prophet, king, and priest by office. Such a mediator is Christ, and he only. The Lord upon the mercy-seat, and so upon the throne of grace, offers himself to us in Christ as such a mediator. The mercy-seat shews forth both natures and offices of Christ, and so represents to us God in

Christ, as in an all-sufficient mediator. God is said to dwell or reside upon the mercy-seat, and the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, Colossians 2:9, John 1:14. The Word was made flesh, there is both his natures, and dwelt amongst us; ■σκ■νωσε, a word not much differing from the Hebrew word ■■■■■, by which they express the glory of God appearing or dwelling on the mercy-seat. God dwelt there as in shadow, but in Christ bodily, substantially. The Lord spake and declared his mind from the mercy-seat. He speaks to us by his Son, and by him gives divine revelations and directions. There is his prophetical office, Hebrews 1:1. God sits on the mercy-seat, as a king on his throne. This, as the throne of grace, θρ■νος βασιλικος, with Chrysostom. He rules his people by Christ, whom he has appointed king of his people: Psalms 2:6, 'Yet have I set my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness.' The holiness of that, and of the whole temple, was from the residence of God upon the mercy-seat: and this is spoken in reference to David's bringing the ark thither; and his residing there, is, with Theodoret, δυνατ■ς βασιλ■υειν, to reign potentially. The throne of grace is 'the throne of God and of the Lamb,' Revelation 22:3. The throne of God alone is not to be approached by us; but the throne of God and the Lamb is the seat of mercy, the throne of grace. He not only gives law to his people, but makes provision for them, that their souls may have plenty, Revelation 22:1 with Ezekiel 47:1-23, and he protects his subjects too. As the wings of the cherubims (parts of the mercy-seat) overshadowed and covered the holy things, so does he cover and overshadow his holy ones. His priestly office is likewise held forth by the mercy-seat. The very name of it denotes this. It is the propitiatory, and that speaks satisfaction, one chief act of his priesthood. And this satisfaction was made by his blood, which was typified by the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat, Leviticus 16:14. As his intercession, the other act of his priesthood, was foreshadowed by the cloud of incense which was to cover the mercy-seat, ver. 13. That this was a figure of his intercession, we learn, Revelation 8:3-4. So that to come to the throne of grace, is to come to God in Christ, to apply ourselves to the Lord through the mediation of Christ. Otherwise there is a throne of God indeed, but none that sinners can or dare approach to, unless they will venture to rush upon a consuming fire. There is no throne of grace, but through Christ; no mercy-seat for us, but by his mediation. The throne of God in Christ is the throne of God and the Lamb, so it is a throne of grace indeed. The throne of God alone is like his appearance on mount Sinai, Hebrews 12:18. There is no other throne for sinners without Christ but that of justice, shadowed out by the burning mount; all black and dark, all dreadful and terrible, as smoke, and storm, and fire, and death, can render it. If you will find a throne of grace, you must seek it in Christ; approach to God through him, and come, as Hebrews 12:24, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

(2.) As a God reconciled. It signifies that his justice is satisfied, his wrath appeased: not now incensed against his people, but well pleased and propitious. The name of the mercy-seat declares this. It is ■λαστ■ριον, a propitiatory. So it is called by the Seventy in the Old Testament; and so it is called by the apostle in the New Testament, Hebrews 9:5. And Christ being that which was prefigured in the mercy-seat, he has this very name given him by the apostle, Romans 3:25. The word is ■λαστ■ριον, it is rendered propitiation, because it is Christ by whom the Lord becomes propitious or reconciled. But how was this offered? By his blood, he made his soul an offering for sin, he offered up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice. His blood was shed for the satisfying of justice: and so the Lord became satisfied, well pleased, reconciled, propitious, through his blood. And this was shadowed forth by the mercy-seat of old, as I intimated before from Leviticus 16:14. The blood of the sin-offering was to be sprinkled upon the mercy-seat seven

times, signifying, that by the blood of Christ the justice of God was fully and perfectly satisfied. And blood upon the mercy-seat denotes a meeting, a reconcilement of justice and mercy; justice will not now hinder, but that the Lord may be propitious to his people. So that this is it which the throne of grace signifies to us, that the Lord through the blood of Christ is atoned, sin is expiated, wrath appeased, justice satisfied, mercy glorified, the sinner reconciled, and the Lord every way well pleased. The Lord's voice from the throne of grace is, I am appeased, I am satisfied, 'Fury is not in me;' I am at peace with you, I am reconciled.

(3.) As a God of forgiveness. As graciously pardoning the sins of his people. When he is represented to us upon the mercy-seat, he is set forth as a God that has found out a way to hide our sins out of his sight (which in Scripture phrase is to pardon them), for observe, in Exodus 25:1-40, the tables of the law were in the ark, Exodus 25:16, Exodus 25:21, and Hebrews 9:1-28. And these are called the tables of the testimony, because they testify against those who do not keep the law, Deuteronomy 31:26, Deuteronomy 31:28. It being evidence against transgressors, as those that are guilty, and so should be condemned and proceeded against, as those that break the laws of God, and will not demean themselves as his subjects. But now this dreadful testimony, that bears witness of our sin and guilt, it is put into the ark, and there covered by the mercy-seat, Exodus 25:21. By the Lord's gracious appointment, there is a mercy-seat upon it, to hide and cover it. There is a mercy-seat between him and the condemning law, between him and our guilt. So that in this posture, wherein the Lord would have himself represented to us, our sins are hid and covered out of his sight, i. e. pardoned. That of the psalmist, probably, has reference hereto, Psalms 32:1, Psalms 85:2. It is a blessed state to have sin covered, i. e. pardoned, so as they shall not appear for our condemnation; but a woful condition not to have them covered, Nehemiah 4:5.

Observe that expression: Psalms 65:3, 'As for our iniquities, thou shalt purge them away.' The ■■■, the same which is rendered to cover in the fore-cited places. And hence that very word, which is translated the mercy-seat, ■■■■, of very near affinity with our English word covereth. So that when the Lord is set forth to us as on the mercy-seat, or the throne of grace, mercy is between him and our sins, Christ is between him and our guilt (for the mercy-seat was Christ in a type) there is a mediator between him and the condemning law. He looks not upon the guilt of his people, and the accusation of the law, but through mercy, the mercy-seat is interposed; but through a mediator, Christ, the expiation of sin is interposed. This is next his eye; sin is at a further distance, it is removed out of his sight, hid in the ark, there covered. So, no matter of provocation being in his eye, no guilt exposed to his view; we are not bound over to punishment, not liable to condemnation, but fully pardoned. If he be of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, he shews, by representing himself on the throne of grace, that he has taken a course not to behold it, so as to condemn for it, but so as to pass it by, and pardon it. Thus comfortably did the Lord set forth himself, as on the mercy-seat of old, and on the throne of grace now. And the mention of a throne of grace minds us thus to draw near him as a God covering our guilt, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, removing them out of his sight.

(4.) As a God in covenant. The ark (whereof the mercy-seat was the chief and most significant part) is called the ark of the covenant, Numbers 10:33, and Hebrews 9:4. And the apostle insinuates the reason why it is so called: in it was the tables of the covenant. This was the end and use of the ark, 1 Kings 8:4. Now the mercy-seat being the golden lid or cover of the ark, it was to

secure, it did preserve, the covenant, Exodus 25:2. But this is not all. The mercy-seat (which signified Christ) being interposed betwixt the Lord above and the covenant within the ark, may signify that he was the mediator of the covenant; as he was indeed the mediator of the covenant of grace, both in the legal administration of it under the law, and in the new administration of it under the gospel. So he is called, Hebrews 9:15, a mediator; one by whose interposal, as the covenant was first made, so it shall stand firm and be made good, for all ends and purposes to which it was designed. But how does he effect all this? By his death and blood, as the apostle shews, Hebrews 9:15-22. It was by virtue of his blood that the covenant is made, ratified, and accomplished. But what does this concern the mercy-seat? Why, the apostle has reference to the blood sprinkled upon the mercy-seat in the day of expiation, Leviticus 16:14. This signified the blood of Christ, and it is called 'the blood of the Testament,' or covenant, Hebrews 9:20-21, Hebrews 12:24; so that the mercy-seat, with this blood of sprinkling, signifies that the Lord, by virtue of the blood of Christ (the Mediator of the New Testament), is in covenant with his people, and will make good that gracious covenant in all the parts and articles, in all the promises and branches of it.

God is in covenant with his people through the mediation of Christ. This was signified by the mercy-seat. That was but a type, a shadow. The truth and reality which it shadowed out is expressed: Hebrews 8:1, The throne of the majesty in the heavens, Christ sitting there at the right hand of the Father: it is the throne of God and of the Lamb; it is the throne of grace. There Christ appears as Mediator of the covenant, as is declared, Hebrews 8:6. The administration of the covenant of grace under the law is called the first covenant, Hebrews 8:7. It was inferior to the administration of the covenant of grace under the gospel, this being more clear, more full, more free; and therefore this latter is called the better covenant, consisting of better promises. These are specified in the following verses: it promises more holiness, Hebrews 8:10, clearer light, Hebrews 8:11, and full pardon, Hebrews 8:12. The sum of all, 'I will be to them a God.' This covenant, these promises, are through Christ yea and amen; through his mediation they stand firm, and shall be made good to the full. He undertakes to see all performed, and sits on the right hand of the throne of God for this purpose. There is the throne of grace, and this it signifies. We may come to the throne of grace, we may apply ourselves to the Lord as a God in covenant. He has entered into covenant with his people, and has found out a way, notwithstanding their weakness and un-stedfastness, to secure the blessings of a gracious and everlasting covenant to them. If anything be objected against it, Christ is there ready to answer it, there to remove whatever may hinder it. The Lord's voice from the throne of grace is, I am thine, thy God, thy Father, thy portion, thy exceeding great reward. What I am in myself, I am to and for thee. I am God all-sufficient, and will be so to thee; my wisdom, power, goodness, truth, faithfulness, is all for thee, and shall be so for ever.

(5.) As a God that will have communion with his people; as one who will admit dust and ashes to have fellowship with him. He offers there to meet them, to commune with them, to discover and communicate himself to them. He admits his servants to communion with him when he vouchsafes to meet them. And the mercy-seat was the place of meeting which the Lord appointed for Moses, Exodus 30:36. He will meet with him as we meet with a friend, whom we desire and delight to converse with. He would meet his servants there to discover himself to them. The LXX render it, 'I will be known to thee from thence.' He did make known himself as a man to his friend. There he did commune with them, Exodus 25:22. It is not the special privilege of some particular persons

only to come to the mercy-seat as of old, but all the people of Christ may have access to the throne of grace. There we may meet with God; there he is willing to commune with us; there is he ready to reveal himself unto us, to cause his goodness to pass before us; there our fellowship may be with the Father and the Son. Offering himself to us on the throne of grace, he offers the greatest happiness; for communion with himself is the greatest happiness on earth or in heaven. There is a gradual difference, but the substance of it here and hereafter lies in communion with the Father and the Son. And this gracious posture offers the continuance of this communion. He was represented of old as residing constantly on the mercy-seat, as dwelling between the cherubims; not as standing, for so a passenger may do, whose business is to be gone; nor as sitting, for so a stranger may do upon occasion; nor as sojourning, as one who turns but in for a night or for a few days; but as dwelling there. It was his resting-place, 2 Chronicles 6:41, Psalms 132:8, Psalms 132:14. This is true of the throne of grace, without limitation. The mercy-seat (the shadow of it) did not continue always, but this throne is for ever, Psalms 45:6, Hebrews 1:8. It is spoken of the throne of Christ the mediator, through whom the throne of majesty in the heavens is a throne of grace, and so for ever; and so consequently offers this happy communion without intermission, without end, everlastingly.

(6.) As a God that hears prayer, and will answer the petitions and supplications of his people. The Lord gave answers from the mercy-seat; and this may be the reason why their posture of old in worshipping and praying was towards the mercy-seat, Psalms 28:2. That was the place where the mercy-seat was. Called the oracle, because the Lord from the mercy-seat gave answers; and so it is rendered by some, ‘the answering place’; so Psalms 5:7. The temple was not then built; but he means the tabernacle, and the mercy-seat in it, where the Lord hath declared himself present, ready to answer those who worshipped him. And when Solomon had built the temple, and seeking the Lord to give audience to his people, it is for prayers directed towards that place, 2 Chronicles 6:20-26, &c. And the Lord promises to answer accordingly, 2 Chronicles 7:15, ‘To the prayer of this place,’ i. e. made in or towards it. Yea, when the temple was burnt and the ark lost, yet Daniel observed this posture still, Daniel 6:10. For the place was destroyed, yet the promise was in force still. When the Lord offers himself upon the throne of grace, he gives assurance that he will hear prayer, and give gracious answers. The πα■■ησ■α, the boldness or confidence in the text, has respect to this particular. Being upon a throne of grace, we are at liberty to present all our petitions, and we may present them with confidence that we shall have gracious answers. It is the confidence which the apostle speaks of, 1 John 5:14-15. When he exhibits himself as upon a throne of grace, then is the season, the opportunity, to make our requests, and to have them granted. Those that will have their petitions to great persons succeed, observe the season which appears to be most favourable. And this is the season for us to make known all the desires of our souls unto God, such an opportunity as assuredly promises success. When he is upon the throne of justice, then he is for passing sentence, and executing judgment according to his threatenings; but when he is upon the throne of grace, that is the season for granting petitions. His voice from the throne of grace is like Solomon to Bathsheba from his throne, 1 Kings 2:20. Whatever our request be, if it be fit for him to give, if it be good for us to receive, he will not say us nay. That which is good for us is all that heart can desire. This is satisfaction to the utmost, unless we will question whether infinite wisdom know what is good for us. The season for access to Ahasuerus was when the golden sceptre was held forth. Esther comes in to him then, and the answer is, Esther 5:3, ‘What is thy request? it shall be given thee to the half of the kingdom.’ This seems a

great offer, but it is nothing to what the Lord, in his gracious posture, signifies himself ready to grant: Romans 8:32, He will give us all things. His being on the throne of grace is not in order to the executing his threatenings, but for the making good his gracious promises; and these are large and free, without restriction, larger than that of Ahasuerus. He promises all things to those who seek him. When he is on the throne of grace, he will deny nothing: his posture assures us that he will grant everything, which it becomes infinite graciousness to bestow, Matthew 21:22, John 15:7, and John 16:23-24, Matthew 7:7. When we address ourselves to the Lord on the throne of grace, it is but ask and have. We may come boldly with all confidence of this, since it is a throne of grace we come to.

(7.) As a God that is present with his people. It signifies he is a God with them. The Lord was set forth as residing on the mercy-seat; when that was with his people of old, it signified the Lord was with them. And so they bewailed the loss of the ark as the loss of God's presence, that being the symbol of it. When that was gone, the glory was departed. The signification of the mercy-seat was, God with us; as this was the name of Christ, of whom the mercy-seat was a type. The Lord speaks of himself as abiding there, and promises to shew himself there to give signs of his presence, Leviticus 16:2, so when the tabernacle (wherein was this symbol of the divine presence) was with that people, the Lord is said to be with them, Ezekiel 37:26-27, 'I will be their God,' i. e. a God with them; so it is represented, Revelation 21:3; so the throne of grace signifies. The Lord is with his people, he is very near them; so near, as they may have access to him, and so may be with him whenever they will. He is still to be found on the throne of grace, still present.

More particularly, this denotes,

[1.] An intimate presence. He is in the midst of his people. So he was while he was on the mercy-seat, so he will be while that remains, which this did but typify; while the throne of grace, while the mediation of Christ continues, who is king and priest for ever. How can he be more intimately present than by residing in the midst of his people? And thus he is represented. The tabernacle was in the midst of the camp, Numbers 2:17, and the ark was in the midst of the tabernacle, 2 Samuel 6:17; and the cherubims being at each end of the mercy-seat, and the Lord between them, he is set forth in the mercy-seat as in the midst of the ark. And so the Lord shewed himself to be in the midst of Israel, Numbers 5:3; and to walk in the midst of them (to be active), Deuteronomy 23:14. This shews the Lord will be intimate with his people, intimately present; even within them, in the midst of them.

[2.] A special, a gracious presence. He was not present here only as he is in the rest of the world, but in a more special way, as upon a mercy-seat, from which others were far removed, so as they could have no access to the propitiatory, no advantages by it. Thus, when he exhibits himself as on a throne of grace, he shews he is in the midst of his people in a gracious manner; present with them through Christ's mediation and interposal, that is a gracious, a special presence.

[3.] A glorious presence. As the mercy-seat upon which the Lord appears is a throne of grace, so is it a throne of glory: Jeremiah 17:12, and Jeremiah 14:21, 'Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory.' As if they had said, Suffer not the ark, the mercy-seat (whereon thou art set forth as gloriously enthroned), to be disgracefully used. The Lord residing there, as a glorious king on his throne, is said to be the glory of his people in the midst of them, Zechariah 2:5, as the presence of the sun is the glory of the firmament.

[4.] An all-sufficient presence. Sufficient to secure them from all things dreadful, and to supply them with all things desirable. This is the security of his people, Psalms 46:5, ‘God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.’ The Lord upon the mercy-seat, and so upon the throne of grace, is in the midst of his people; this is their safety and establishment, therefore they shall not be moved.

It is all-sufficient also to help us to all things desirable. The waters, in Ezekiel 47:1-23, issuing out of the temple, are described to be plentiful for their measure, ver. 2–5, and for their virtue to be quickening and healing, ver. 9, and fructifying, ver. 10. Those waters, Revelation 22:1, are said to proceed ‘from the throne of God and the Lamb.’ The throne of God in the temple was the mercy-seat; the throne of God and of the Lamb is the throne of grace. The influences which flow and stream from the presence of God with his people are quickening, healing, and fructifying influences; they stream forth in such plenty as is sufficient abundantly to refresh and satisfy them to the utmost. There is a ‘river of pleasure,’ Psalms 46:4; ‘in thy presence is fulness of joy,’ Psalms 16:11.

[5.] A continuing presence. He is said to dwell on the mercy-seat. In reference thereto is his promise, 1 Kings 6:13, ‘I will dwell among the children of Israel.’ The throne of grace denotes no less: Revelation 7:15, ‘He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.’ Here he is, and here he abides. We need never suffer through his absence. Have recourse to him on the throne of grace, and we need never be at a loss. He is always here to be found, here he dwells; here we may find him whenever we have occasion; here he is always as a ‘very present help in time of trouble,’ as a very present supply in time of want, as a very present security in time of fear, as an all-sufficient portion; one who is all in all to his people, and always present for his purpose.

[6.] As a God that will shew himself merciful and gracious to his people, that will deal mercifully and graciously with them. Now, when he thus represents himself, they may find grace and mercy. We need go no further for this than the text, and it is so plainly there held forth, that we must not pass it by. Since he is upon a throne of grace, we may find mercy and grace to help in time of need. Take the import hereof more distinctly in these particulars.

First, He is ready to shew mercy and grace. He is willing to shew himself gracious and merciful. When he shews himself on the mercy-seat, he shews he is ready for acts of mercy; when he is upon the throne of grace, he declares that he is ready for acts of grace. His posture declares that he is now willing to let his people find that he is indeed merciful and gracious. When may grace be expected from him, when is he willing, ready for acts of grace, if not when he offers himself as upon a throne of grace, a seat of mercy?

If he presented himself upon a judgment-seat, a tribunal of justice, we might conclude he was ready to do justice, willing to execute judgment; the seat and posture would be a plain signification of it. And therefore when he presents himself upon a throne of grace, we may conclude he is ready for acts of grace, willing to shew mercy. This is a plain signification of it, and the Lord gives us no signs that are fallacious, that will deceive us. When he signifies anything to us, the sign will be answered with a reality, he will not delude us; when he appears in a gracious posture (as he does upon a throne of grace), he is ready for acts of grace. He would not appear to be willing if he were not so really; he would make no show of grace or mercy if he were not willing to act accordingly. If he was backward, and not inclined to acts of grace, he would not set forth himself in a gracious posture.

Secondly, He will certainly shew mercy and grace. His people shall surely find it so. There is not only some probability, but a certainty for it. It is not only probable that he may, or more likely that he will, than that he will not; but it is certain that he will shew mercy, we may be sure of it. The apostle would have the people of Christ bold and confident herein, 'Let us come boldly,' &c., i. e. with confidence and assurance that we shall obtain mercy, &c. He is a God gracious and merciful in himself, essentially, infinitely so; but he is at liberty when and how he will express his mercy and grace, till he oblige himself by declaring it; but when he offers himself as on a throne of grace, he declares, and so obliges himself to express it now at this season, and shew it thus in this way. Now, if ever, will he shew that he is actually gracious; in this way, in this posture coming to him, they shall surely have mercy. Grace and mercy is to be found, that is certain; but it will never be found if not when he is on the throne of grace, therefore now, when he thus presents himself, we may be sure and confident of it. If we should fall short of his grace here, if his mercy should fail us now, if we should not find and obtain it at the throne of grace, if he should not vouchsafe it when he presents himself to us on that throne, the Lord would prove otherwise than he has declared himself to be; we should not find him such a one as he has obliged himself to be found; his throne would not prove what he calls it, it would not be what the Lord has said it is, a throne of grace.

Thirdly, He will shew this in all variety, in all acts of favour; both mercy and grace, as is express in the text. All the acts of divine love and goodness run in these two streams, mercy and grace; and these streams will meet upon us when we come to the throne of grace. There we shall meet with both, they both flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The throne of grace is the fountain, the spring-head wherein they issue, where they break out; there these sweet currents encompass those who have access to the Lord on this throne.

All that we can expect from infinite goodness is to free us from misery, and to make us happy. And here is both offered and ensured to us; both mercy to free us from misery, and grace to advance us to the height of happiness. Mercy will deliver us, but grace will exalt us; not only lift us out of the pit, but advance us to the throne; not only deliver us from the wrath to come, and then leave us in a middle state, but crown us too with glory. Mercy will not suffer us to be ruined, but grace will have a triumph for us. This assures us we shall not only obtain mercy to help us out of misery, but find grace to help us far above it.

Fourthly, He will do this affectionately. The mercy in the text speaks this also. Mercy is love shewed to the miserable; so mercy is love in the rise of it, and it is compassion in the workings of it towards a pitied object. When Christ would give an instance of such love as he requires, he does it in the Samaritan, Luke 10:1-42, who had mercy on the spoiled and wounded man, ver. 37; and that is expressed by having compassion on him, ver. 33. There is both love and compassion in mercy, and these are the sum of all affectionateness; and this the Lord assures us of, by setting forth himself as on a throne of grace. We shall find mercy from him, and love and compassions, and so all affectionateness. Here is love offered to us, the love of God in Christ; a peculiar love, a transcendent love, such as passeth knowledge; the acts, expressions, embraces of such a love. Here is compassion insured to us, the compassions of God, which as far transcend those of the best and sweetest tempered men, (for the efficacy thereof, though there be no compassionateness therein), as the heavens are above the earth.

Here is tender love. For such is mercy, it is love which is compassionate, called ‘tender mercy,’ Psalms 79:8, James 5:11; ‘bowels of compassion,’ Isaiah 63:15, Jeremiah 31:20. The Lord presenting himself on a throne of grace, offers to meet us there with such affectionateness; without the weakness of affections in us, but with infinite more virtue and advantage. There we may find mercy, such mercy, and all the expressions which so great, so tender a mercy can afford. He that sits upon this throne is the God of love, the Father of mercies; whose being is goodness, whose nature and essence is mercy, whose bowels are compassion, and whose glory it is to shew mercy, and express love to such as have access to his throne. It is the glory of his throne that it is a mercy-seat.

Fifthly, He will do it freely. It is a throne of grace that we come to. It is grace that is offered, grace that we find there. And grace is free goodness, that which puts forth all acts and expressions freely; that which looks for no desert, overlooks all unworthiness; that which stays not till it be obliged, but engages itself, and will not be hindered by that which is most disobliging; that which moves, when it has nothing to move it but itself; this is grace. When the Lord is on the throne of grace, he gives, he does not owe; it is grace, not debt. These are opposite, Romans 4:1-25. He gives, we do not purchase. There was a purchase, indeed, but we who have the possession had no hand in it. We have it freely; we have all for nothing; we have it for coming for, though we come without money and without price; it costs us nothing but the acceptance, Isaiah 55:1. Upon these terms we may come and be welcome to the throne of grace; so we may come, and so freely. We may have all the riches of grace; we come not to a market where we must pay for what we have, but to a throne of grace; and it is the glory of him that sits on this throne, that all we have of him is free gift. All his acts are acts of grace; he gives, looking for nothing again; he knows that all we return will be as good as nothing; he will not be one jot the better for it all, either in point of glory or happiness. Not the least scruple, the least degree, can be added to either, by all that men or angels can return. Our sinfulness, unworthiness, weakness, nothingness, need be no discouragement; for we come to a throne of grace, a throne where grace rules and is sovereign, where grace is enthroned, and is, and will be, all and all; before which angels and saints should cast their crowns, and cry, Grace, grace; giving the glory of all they have received, of all they enjoy, unto that to which they owe it all, and from which they had it freely.

Sixthly, He will do this royally, magnificently, as becomes him who sits on the throne. His throne speaks him a king, and he is a great king, Psalms 47:2, and 95:3, and he will do for his people accordingly. When he exhibits himself upon a throne, he would have us with confidence expect from him what is correspondent to his greatness. He encourages us to look for great things from his hand, and much of them, in great quantity, 2 Samuel 24:23. Since he sets forth himself on a throne, and is represented as a king, and would have us come to him as on his seat of majesty, he assures us he will give like a king; not so few, nor small things, as other persons, but such as are answerable to his greatness and magnificence. Those that have thrones, shew their greatness and magnificence by their gifts, presents, rewards; it is a disparagement to them not to act herein like themselves. Hiram gives to Solomon, 1 Kings 9:14, and the queen of Sheba, 1 Kings 10:10. The value of the gold alone is reckoned at four hundred and fifty thousand pounds in our accounts; a great sum, if gold was so much scarcer in those times than it is now, as is commonly thought. Such gifts are for enthroned persons. They give such things as others cannot, either for value or excellency, or greatness and quantity. The Lord has a throne, and he will have us come to him

there, as on his throne; this intimates he has a design to shew his greatness. He will have those that come to him here, expect what is answerable to his throne and dignity. This Chysostom observes, φιλοτιμ■α γ■ρ πρ■γμα ■στ■ κα■ δωρε■ βασιλικ■. The Lord will shew his magnificence; he will give royally. The honour of his throne is concerned. We disparage him, if we be not confident to have that of him which will be answerable to such a majesty; that which none else can give, things of greater value, and those of greater quantity, Psalms 84:11. Grace, the least dram of it is of greater value than all the gold in the world; and glory, that is a kingdom, in comparison of which all the kingdoms of the earth are but mole-hills. But this is not all, 'No good thing will he withhold,' &c. He would have us expect from him no less than all that is good, no less than all that heart can desire; he assures us of no less than all this, Romans 8:32, 1 Corinthians 3:21-22, Revelation 21:7, Matthew 6:33. The Lord will deal royally with his people; we dishonour him if we do not expect it; it is the glory of his throne to do it. We may be confident he will do for us. what becomes so great a king, when it his design to shew his greatness, when he sets forth himself as upon his throne.

Seventhly. He will do it effectually; he will shew himself gracious and merciful, so that none shall hinder, all shall promote it. This is signified also, in that he is represented as on a throne. That tells that all are his subjects, all are at his command; he can order anything, everything, to be the instruments of his grace, and make all things serve the designs of his mercy which he has for his people: for he has the throne, all are subject to him, at his beck, he can order all to do his pleasure. Or if any would resist or hinder him in his acts of grace and mercy, he can crush them. As he is upon the throne, they are under his feet; and he can use them as his footstool, and trample on them, crash them as easily as we can crush the worms or snails that are under our feet, Zechariah 4:7. He can take a course that none shall so much as mutter against his gracious proceedings, or move a tongue in order to the hindrance thereof: Zechariah 2:13, 'Be silent before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.' By holy habitation, some understand the temple, and it was a shadow of heaven, the other habitation of his holiness. It is called his habitation, because he was there set forth on the mercy-seat as on a throne. When he is said to sit there, it signifies his presence; when he is said to rise up, it denotes his readiness to exercise his power and authority. The power and authority of him who sits on the throne, when exercised, is enough to strike all flesh, all the creatures in the world, mute; this makes all hush, they shall not so much as by a word give impediment to his gracious designs expressed in the promises foregoing. And as it is enough to quash the opposition of enemies, so likewise to silence the unbelief of weaklings, as doubting that what they desire or stand in need of, is too much to be expected, or too hard to be accomplished. Is anything too much or difficult for him who sits upon the throne, and so has all things in his power? The throne is his, and so the kingdom, and glory, and power; what, then, can hinder him? What can resist him? He will do all his pleasure, all that his power and mercy will have done, and none can say unto him, What dost thou?

Thus I have opened to you the great import and pregnancy of this expression. I have stayed the longer on it, because I found it useful to clear up many passages in Scripture. And you will find it further useful practically in the application.

Use. Since there is a throne of grace for the people of Christ to come unto, let us come unto it; take this encouragement to make our addresses to him who thus exhibits himself to us. And so come to him, as we may find it to be a throne of grace to us; and that we may find it to be so, let us

come in such a manner as the import of the expression, already opened, directs us. What direction it affords us, let me shew in some particulars. I shall touch upon several, but most insist on that which is plain in the text, and principally intended by the apostle.

1. Let us come with holiness of heart and life. The mercy-seat, and so the throne of grace on which the Lord offers himself, is a throne of holiness, as was shewed before. And this calls for holiness in those that come to it, Hebrews 10:22, a place parallel to the text, they explain one another: ‘Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.’ Hearts sprinkled, &c. The mercy-seat was a throne of grace by virtue of the blood of sprinkling. Those that come to the throne of grace, and would find it so to them, must, through the efficacy of that blood, get their hearts cleansed from whatever makes the conscience evil, i. e. not only from the guilt, but the pollution of sin. And to inward purity, that of the heart, should add outward holiness, that of the life. ‘Their bodies washed with pure water,’ i. e. their conversations cleansed from blots and stains of sin by the Spirit of sanctification. The legal rite signified this. Aaron and his sons were to wash their bodies when they went into the tabernacle of meeting, Exodus 30:17-19, &c., Exodus 30:29. This was to signify the real holiness which we should labour for, that we may come to the throne of grace, that we may be capable of meeting with the Lord there. The Lord upon the mercy-seat, upon the throne of grace, shews himself to be a holy God, therefore we should approach him in holiness: ‘Holiness becomes thy house for ever,’ Psalms 93:5. Holiness becomes the presence of God; get it into a lively exercise when you draw near him. The Lord communed with Moses from between the cherubims; if you would do so, observe the Lord’s method: ‘Isaiah 1:1-31. ‘Wash ye, make ye clean,’ and then come, let us commune together. He appears here in his holiness, and will be sanctified of all that draw near him; therefore, sanctify yourselves, get mind and heart raised to a holy strain.

2. Let us come with fear and reverence. The Lord on the mercy-seat, and so on the throne of grace, appears in his glory. A glory that should make such worms as we, whose habitation is in the dust, and who are crushed before the moth, to fear before him, and approach with reverence. Those who are most holy, have most communion with God, are most after his own heart (as David was), owe him as much reverence and fear as any; and the nearer they are to God, the more will they count themselves obliged to shew this: Psalms 5:7, ‘In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.’ Their worship towards the temple was with respect to the mercy-seat. It was upon the account of the Lord’s residence there that their posture in worshipping was towards the temple, and this obliged them to fear: Psalms 99:1, ‘The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved.’ It is fit that dust and ashes should tremble before the God of glory. How was the holy prophet struck with the sense of his own vileness, when he saw the Lord upon a throne, and the seraphims above it, Isaiah 6:2-3. Though the Lord do not present himself there to our eyes, yet our faith may always have such a vision of God; yea, he is thus presented to our sense; we hear, though we do not see, that the Lord sits upon ‘a throne, high and lifted up,’ between the cherubims, yea, with thousands of seraphims about him. And will neither faith nor sense strike us with the trembling sense of our own vileness? The Lord expects it, and encourages us to it. He that dwells between the cherubims of glory, will dwell also in that heart that trembles at his word. He looks that we should tremble, not only when we see him, but when we hear of him, Isaiah 57:15, 16: ‘Wherefore,’ as the apostle advises, Hebrews 12:28, ‘let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.’

3. Let us come with sincerity. The Lord upon the mercy-seat shewed himself to be a God that knows all things, all secrets, and so the secrets of hearts. When they were concerned to know those secrets (as David was to know the inward inclinations of the men of Keilah), here they inquired, as is before shewed. He hereby declares that there is nothing secret to, nothing hid from, him, with whom we have to do. This obliges us to deal uprightly with him, and to come before him with sincere hearts. The apostle, shewing how we should draw near to the throne of grace, requires this particularly: Hebrews 10:22, 'Let us draw nigh with a true heart,' &c. He loves truth in the inward parts, and hates the contrary, and knows whether it be there or no. It is madness to dissemble with him who knows all things, and hereby declares it; he 'searches the heart,' &c. It is madness to make a shew of the good that is not in us, or to go about to hide any evil that is in us. The apostle warns us of this, before he advises us to come to the throne of grace: Hebrews 4:13, there is nothing good or evil, how secret soever we may think it, but is manifest in his sight. Whatever is covered, and shut up close from the eyes of others, is naked and open to him. He, with whom we have to do at the throne of grace, is a discoverer of the thoughts and intents, ver. 12; and, therefore, when we come to the throne of grace, let us be careful to bring nothing, no, not in the secrets of our minds and hearts, but what we would have him to see. Let us bring no thought nor motion, no disposition nor inclination, no aim or end, no desire or intention, but what we would have exposed to the eye of him that sits on the throne. When we are before him, his eye penetrates the inwards of our minds and hearts as if they were a globe of crystal; they are more transparent to him than crystal is to the sunbeams. Oh take care that the posture of our souls be upright before him, that it be not crooked and sinister; but without carnal aims, worldly designs, selfish reflections; that, though we cannot get rid of all iniquity, yet we may regard none in our heart; that, though he see us far short of perfection, yet we may be sincere in his sight,

4. Let us come with subjection. When he is set forth as upon a throne, this signifies that he is sovereign, and we are subjects; he is, though a gracious, yet an absolute sovereign, and we must come to him, as those who are wholly subjected to him, and resolved to shew ourselves absolutely subject, ready to be ordered by his wisdom, and ruled by his will, and subservient to his interest, and to have what we are, and what we have, and what we desire or hope for, disposed of as he thinks fit. His sovereignty and dominion calls for this, and his throne shews his dominion and sovereignty.

We must be ordered by his wisdom, not our own; when our wisdom agrees not with his, we must account it folly, and not follow its dictates, how specious soever; his will must be our will, it must be a law to us, as it is in itself; and, when it crosses our will, we must yield to it, comply with it, as holy, and just, and good; it must be observed as good, and perfect, and acceptable, even when it lies thwart to our wills and inclinations.

We must be ready to do whatever he would have us do. None of his commands should be grievous; we should have respect to them all, else we may be ashamed to profess ourselves his subjects, or approach his throne, Psalms 119:6; willing to forsake whatever he would have us to abandon, even every false way, Psalms 119:104; every way of sin, how pleasant or advantageous soever it seem; willing to resist whatever he would have us oppose; not only temptations from without, but our own humours, appetites, passions, inclinations, so far as they please not him; willing to part with what he would have us to lose, though it be endeared relations and enjoyments, Luke 14:33; willing to suffer what he would have us endure, though it be that which flesh and blood

thinks grievous.

If he be our sovereign, his interest must be sovereign; we must make our own and all stoop to it; we must own none, but what will serve it, and all that we have must be at the service of it; we must look upon ourselves and enjoyments as not our own, but his, and to be employed for him, when, and as he calls for it; even all, when no less will serve to uphold his interest; we must submit our desires and hopes to him, when we come to his throne; be willing to be denied in what he thinks best to deny us, and to be delayed in what he thinks fit to defer us. The throne we are to come to, minds us that we are to come resolved for such subjection.

5. Let us come with love and affectionateness. As it is a throne, it calls for subjection; as it is a throne of grace, it calls for love, and all the affections that depend thereon. The Lord offering himself to us on the throne of grace, is presented to us as the most amiable object, and in the most delightful and desirable posture; when should we draw near him with all affectionateness, but when he holds forth all affectionateness to us? and this he does, in a most rich and ample manner, on the throne of grace. When should we come to him with inflamed love, with ardent desires, with greatest delight and rejoicing, but when he displays the riches of his grace and mercies, and opens to us the treasures of his love, as he does on this throne?

(1.) When he appears on the throne of grace, then love is on the throne; mercy and grace appear in their sovereignty and exaltation, they are set forth all in their glory; and does not this call for, and oblige us to, the highest love, the most raised affection? Will some little love, some small degree of affection, be a suitable answer to such an obliging appearance? will a poor, cool affection be fit for us to meet him with, when he is ready to meet us with the riches and greatness of an enthroned love? Shall we leave so much reason for sorrow and shame, to supply the defect of better affections? Shall not his love, when it is represented to us as on a throne, in its greatest power, constrain us to love him, and love him more and more, every time we draw near him? Shall we not delight to be in a gracious presence, a presence which is gloriously gracious? Such is the presence on the throne of grace: there grace appears in its glory, and all the royalty and magnificence of the King of kings. Another throne we may dread; but this sure should be our delight and joy when we draw near it. Shall not our desires be excited and drawn out when the riches of grace and mercy offer themselves freely to those that are desirous; when the throne of God declares that he will give like a king to those that desire it? Oh, why does covetousness run so low and feed on mud, when here it might be entertained at a throne, and satisfied with royal riches?

(2.) Here all streams of goodness meet us; both mercy and grace, both compassion and love. And does not this call for all acts, all expressions of affection, when we draw near?

(3.) Here love resides; here grace reigns; here mercy keeps the throne. And this should keep up our affection; we should not be off and on, up and down. Decays and declinings should be hateful to us. Delight should be constant: love still sparkling, desire always upon the wing, when we come to the throne of grace, while we may find the Lord there; and he is never off, his people may find him ever upon his throne.

6. Let us come in faith, come believing that we shall have access, acceptance, and success; come with confidence of this, as those who may be bold to expect it; as those who have all freedom and

liberty to come, without any restraint, who have security to do it, and need not fear it; who have warrant to do it, and need make no question of it. This is plain and open in the text. It is that which the apostle expressly requires in these words. Let us come boldly with confidence, with such a faith as prevails against fears, doubts, suspicions, jealousies, and rises up to full assurance. And he calls for it afterwards in that parallel place, Hebrews 10:19-20, Hebrews 10:22, where his expressions refer to the mercy-seat, the throne of grace in a type, and, which I have shewed all along, helps us to understand what it signifies to us. 'Having boldness,' πα■■ησ■αν, the same word which we have in the text; 'into the holiest,' that was the place of the mercy-seat, the most holy part of the sanctuary; 'by the blood,' the high priest might not approach the mercy-seat without blood, which signified the blood of Jesus, ver. 20; 'through the veil:' the way to the mercy-seat was through a veil, which parted the holy and most holy place. The apostle shews there is now a way for us, we may now come to the throne of grace shadowed out by these expressions. And how we may and ought to come, he tells us, ver. 22, in full assurance of faith, ■ν πληροφορ■■ π■στεως. There is nothing to stop or retard us, we may come with full sail; there is nothing to discourage us, we may come without any distrust or doubting, with all assurance, a fulness of it. We have sufficient encouragement for such a faith, such an exercise of it.

Now this being the duty of the text, I shall insist on it the more; taking in here the usefulness of the other observations which the words afford, that I may not stay too long upon this subject.

Since it is a throne of grace we come to, here is great encouragement to come in faith, with an emboldened faith, a faith encouraged unto confidence. More distinctly, let me shew, 1, in what particulars we have this encouragement for faith and confidence; 2, how all discouragements may be hereby removed; and 3, what positive supports are hereby offered to our faith.

1. For the first; we may come in faith to the throne of grace in all cases that require help or relief. Whensoever we need help, whatever the need be, grace and mercy is to be found for help, without limitation. Particularly,

(1.) In sense of guilt. When sin troubles the soul, stings the conscience, disquiets the heart, makes us fear it will rise up before the Lord against us, that it is set in the light of his conscience, and that he will judge us for it, the throne of grace gives assurance this shall not be. When he offers himself to us upon a throne of grace, he makes it evident he is not willing to judge his people for their sins; he has no design to arraign, or condemn, or punish them for past transgressions. If he intended this, he would shew himself upon another throne; not his mercy, but his judgment-seat. The throne of grace is his mercy-seat, and that, I shewed you, signified that sin was covered, hid from his sight; so that he would not see it, nor take notice of it as a judge. The mercy-seat (signifying Christ) was betwixt the Lord and the condemning law, which bears witness of our sin and guilt. That was hid in the ark and covered, which shewed the Lord on the mercy-seat, and so on the throne of grace (shadowed out thereby) has found out a way through Christ to cover our sins, i. e. to pardon them, Psalms 85:1-3.

Oh, but though sin be covered, so as he will not take notice of it, to condemn me for it hereafter, yet he may deal severely with me for it here; I may feel the effects of his wrath in grievous afflictions, I tremble at the apprehension of that. But when sin is covered and forgiven, the wrathful effects of it cease, as the psalmist shews; when their sin was forgiven, their captivity was brought back, vers. 1, 2, and all wrath taken away. Though he may chastise whom he pardons, yet not as

a judge, to satisfy law and justice, but as a father, out of love and grace. The throne of grace ensures this; no afflictions for sin come from thence, but such as, whatever they seem to be, will really prove to be acts of grace, i. e. of love and mercy, not of enmity or penal wrath. Believers may be hereby assured their pardon will be both free and full: free, because it is of grace; and full, because from grace in its exaltation, when it has the throne.

(2.) In wants and necessities this assures us of supply. We come to the throne of grace for all we want, whether it concern soul or body, and be confident we shall have it; and confident because it is a throne of grace we come to. For he that sits upon the throne can supply all our wants. The throne signifies he has all things in his power, and at his disposing. There is no doubt but this great King can supply the poorest body, the poorest soul that belongs to him. And that he is ready to do it, we may be sure, because it is a throne of grace where he offers himself, and to which we are invited. This declares him gracious, ready to supply our necessities, and that freely, Revelation 7:15-16; by hunger and thirst, all wants whatever are signified. Here is assurance that all wants shall be supplied, and the ground of it expressed, ver. 16. The throne of God, through the Lamb in the midst of it, becomes a throne of grace; hence flow all supplies to the people of Christ, in heaven and on earth. They shall not hunger, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, he feeds them; they shall not thirst, he leads them to living fountains. Here is a free, a full, a lasting and continuing supply, as from a fountain that runs freely, that affords not drops or draughts, but streams, many streams, and that continually. It is not a vessel or a cistern, but a fountain, a spring; a spring that is never dry, a living fountain; till this fail, we can never want supplies.

Obj. Oh, but do not we see many of those in want who come before this throne?

Ans. You may see many things that they have not, but nothing that they want. They that have all that is good for them, though there be many things which they have not, yet properly they want nothing. Want is something to be complained of; but none in reason can complain because he is without that which is not good for him; he wants it not, unless it may be said he wants a calamity, that which would be bad for him; that is such a want of which none but a madman would have a supply. The people of Christ may have all that they want, because they may have all that is good; the throne of grace makes them sure of this. There the Lord sets forth himself as infinitely gracious, and so ready to make good all that he has graciously promised, and he has promised all that is good, Psalms 34:9-10, and Psalms 84:11.

Obj. But I cannot think but such a thing which I have not would be good for me.

Ans. The question here is, Whether the Lord or thyself can best judge what is good for thee? yet methinks this should be no question.

(3.) In weakness, inward or outward, public or personal. Hence we are encouraged to expect strength and assistance; hence it comes, oven from the mercy-seat, from the throne of grace: Psalms 20:2, ‘Send thee help from the sanctuary.’ Why from the sanctuary, but because the Lord presented himself there as upon the mercy-seat? The sanctuary was in Zion, the mercy-seat was in the sanctuary, the Lord was in the mercy-seat, he would have himself set forth as residing there. Herein they pray, and pray in faith, for help and strength.

Thou wantest strength to subdue corruption, to resist temptation, to overcome the world, to master self, to bear the cross, to perform hard duties, to improve ordinances and gracious opportunities,

to walk exemplarily, to live serviceably, to persevere thus doing. Alas! says the soul, sensible of its own weaknesses, where shall I have strength for all this? Where? why at the throne. If he that sits on the throne will strengthen and assist thee, nothing will be too hard for thee, Php 4:13. And he is ready to do it, for he that has all power, as being upon the throne, is all gracious, as being upon the throne of grace.

Then as to the public, where shall there be help, when all seems running to ruin, when the interest of Christ seems sinking in all countries round about us, where it is not sunk already; when it is sinking in the midst of us? What help can stay it, or be any support to it, when we see it pushed headlong? What strength can raise it, when it seems so low, so like to be buried, beyond hopes of a resurrection; when all that look about them, and have a due sense of such concerns, find their hearts failing them for fear, and for 'looking after those things that are coming on the earth,' Luke 21:26; when they say with trembling hearts, By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? What help or strength shall secure the gospel, and the interest of Christ (which depends on it) to these parts of the world, ready to be over-run with antichristian darkness and violence? What hope in such circumstances that seem hopeless? Why, this: the Lord reigns, he has the throne still; there is help and strength enough there. Oh, but what is that to those who have utterly disobliged him, who have forfeited the gospel, as much as any that ever lost it? Why, the Lord here shews himself gracious, and who knows but the unworthiest may find him so? As it is a throne of power, so a throne of grace we come to; and grace acts freely, and may appear for the relief of those who have no reason from themselves to look for any such thing. If the throne of grace were duly plied by those who have interest there, there might be hope concerning this thing; there, and there only, is help to be found in such a time of need. There is no need so great, but help for it may be had at this throne; none so unworthy but may meet with it freely, for it is a throne of grace.

(4.) In fears and dangers, here you may have security, Psalms 27:5, Psalms 31:20. The secret of the tabernacle was the holy of holies, the place of the mercy-seat. And this is called the secret of his presence, because he exhibited his presence on the mercy-seat. Thus David was confident to be secured, as if he had been hid with God, as if he had been covered with the wings of the cherubims, which overshadowed the mercy-seat, and so made it the secret of the divine presence. To come to the throne of grace is the way to get into the secret of the Lord's presence. For any to assault you there will be to offer violence to the throne of God; he that sits upon the throne will never endure it. If you take sanctuary here, you are safe. You are invited to come, to fly to it in time of danger. He that offers his own throne for a sanctuary will not suffer it to be violated. He that touches you there touches the apple of his eye, for it is the secret of his face. So the words signify which are translated the secret of his presence, Psalms 31:20, ■■■ ■■■■, the secret or covering of thy countenance. What will become of those who will venture to strike at the face of God? How safe are they that are hid under this covering, who are secured in the secret of his countenance! This is the security which the throne of grace offers you. The horns of the altar were nothing to such a sanctuary. Joab was plucked from thence, but none can reach you here. It is the throne of God, he can secure you; and a throne of grace, he will do it. It was the ground of that confidence, Psalms 27:1-14.

(5.) In troubles and calamities this is the surest way to deliverance. In the great calamity and desolation of the church, lamented Psalms 80:1-19, she applies herself to the Lord as dwelling on the mercy-seat, ver. 1, 2. So did Hezekiah, when he and all the people of God were in great

distress, ready to be overcome and ruined by Sennacherib: 2 Kings 19:15, ‘Thou residest on the mercy-seat,’ &c. The throne of grace is now our mercy-seat, there we may be sure to find deliverance, ■υκαιρον βο■θειαν, ‘relief in season;’ deliverance whenever it will be, as soon as ever it is seasonable. Oh but we may stay long first, have not many done so? You shall stay no longer for it than yourselves desire, for you will not desire it till it be good’; and it will not be good till it be seasonable. If it come too soon, it is as bad as if it come too late. It is never good, never desirable, but when it is in season; and when it will be seasonable, the throne of grace in the text assures you of it. Whenever deliverance will be a mercy, whenever it will be an act of grace, you shall have it assuredly; and it is madness to wish it before. The text bids you be confident of it; anything that is mercy, you may find; whatever will be an act of grace, you may obtain. You may be sure of it, because it is a throne of grace you come to, Psalms 57:1, Psalms 63:4.

I might add many other particulars. In straits and perplexities you may have direction here, as from an oracle; in grievances you may have ease and support: what sweeter and stronger support than the throne of grace? In desertion and despondency, you may have comfort; it is from this throne the Lord will shew himself so gracious as to wipe all tears from his people’s eyes, Revelation 7:17. In distance and estrangement from God, by coming to his throne you get near him, Psalms 91:1.

2. The next thing propounded is to shew how all discouragements to faith may be hereby removed. And indeed there is scarce anything that tends to discourage faith, or to puzzle it with doubts and fears, or to weaken it in its actings and exercise, but may be hereby dispelled. There is no objection that unbelief can make, or a distrustful heart suggest, but may be taken off by eyeing God as represented on the throne of grace, and viewing those perfections and excellencies which he holds forth to us in this posture. To instance in some particulars.

(1.) The difficulty of what we need, of what we would have, sometimes puzzles faith. So it did not only, 2 Kings 7:19, but in Moses, otherwise strong in faith: Numbers 11:21, ‘The people are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh that they may eat a whole month.’ So it did in Martha: John 11:39, ‘By this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.’ As though time might prescribe to the Lord, or as if the grave would not deliver up one so long detained, at the word of Christ’s power. Faith often staggers here. How can such a danger, such a calamity, be prevented? How shall antichristianism, coming in upon these parts of the world as a mighty flood, be stopped, when all things in view threaten, all seem to conspire to make way for it, and no means visible to divert it? How can such an evil, hanging over person or family, be repelled? How can such a loss be made up, such a relation, such a comfort? How can such a lust be subdued, which I have been struggling so long with to so little purpose; that which is rooted in my temper and constitution, and has revived so often when I have looked on it as subdued and suppressed? What escape out of such a strait, when no way visible to escape, no passage, no chink, to let out of it? How shall the gospel, our liberties, comforts, be secured to us, when no wisdom, no power of man, appears for the effecting of it?

Yea, but consider, the Lord appears here as a God almighty. So he did on the mercy-seat, so he does on the throne of grace, as before. And is anything too hard for God? Is anything too difficult for him that sits on the throne, to whom those things that seem utterly impossible to us are things of greatest ease? ‘Is the Lord’s hand shortened?’ So he answers Moses, Numbers 11:23.

What does the throne here mentioned signify?

[1.] He rules and reigns over the world. All creatures, from the highest to the lowest, are absolutely subject to him. He can order all the creatures in the lower world, whatever is on the earth, or in the sea, or in the air; yea, the stars in the firmament, and all the angels in heaven, to do whatever he pleases. He can bring them in altogether for the help of his servants, will force the meanest of them rather than fail. If all the hosts of the lower world were not sufficient, he has innumerable legions of angels, many and many myriads of them at his beck. They are about his throne, and stand there as the attendants of this great King, ready to receive his orders, and to execute them in the behalf of his people, the weakest of them, the little ones, Matthew 18:10. What cannot he do for you, whose throne declares that he can raise all the powers of the world to do his pleasure?

[2.] But there is no need of all this. Since he has the throne, he can empower any one thing to do for you whatever you need; since he has the throne, he has the power, all power is at his disposing. He is the God, the king of power. Since the kingdom is his (which a throne signifies), the power is his, 1 Chronicles 29:11, Matthew 6:13, Revelation 5:13. All creatures ascribe all power to him that is on the throne. And he that has dispersed this power unto several creatures, he can unite it all in one; or as much of it in any one as will be enough for your relief, whatever your case be. He can convey power into any ordinance to comfort, quicken, or strengthen you; so as you may prevail against any lust, resist any temptation, bear any cross whatsoever. He can enable any creature to supply any want, make up any loss or breach, even such as you are apt to think can never be repaired. He can empower any instrument, how crooked, or weak, or broken, or insufficient soever it seem, to do that for you which you see no means or instruments able to do. He has the throne, the power is his; he can dispose of it as he pleases; he can convey so much of it into anything as will serve your turn, and answer your need, whatever it be.

[3.] If there were no creature, no instrument in the world to help, yet would you not be at a loss in time of need; for he that is on the throne could do it alone. He can do all that ever you need, without any means or instruments. His bare word is sufficient, all-sufficient, for it, whatever it be, how great, how difficult, how impossible soever it seem. Such a power there is even in the word of the great King, Psalms 44:4. There needs no more to deliver you, to deliver his people anywhere, how deep soever plunged; but only the command of him that sits on the throne. If the gospel, the interests of Christ, in these parts of the world, and the dear concerns of our souls, and the souls of posterity, were all as dry bones, in a more forlorn and hopeless condition than they are, he could make all live with a word. He that is our king, that sits upon the throne, can command life into that which seems as far from living as a dry bone. While he keeps the throne, it is a senseless heart that fails through distrust of power, even when all visible power and help fails.

(2.) Some may say, The Lord is able enough; I do not doubt of his power; but is he willing to help, to strengthen, to deliver me from inward or outward dangers? Here faith is often at a stand: Matthew 8:2, ‘If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.’ The leper did not question Christ’s power to cleanse him, but his willingness. Many who believe his power, yet question his will. Here it usually sticks: Is he willing?

Why, yes. The Lord upon the mercy-seat appeared as a God of mercy. And what is mercy, but a willingness, a readiness to pity and help. When will the Lord shew mercy, if not here, if not now, when he exhibits himself as on the mercy-seat? When the Lord offers himself on a throne of grace, this gives assurance that grace is then to be found. He bids us now come with confidence to find

grace; and when he bids us be confident, can there be any doubt that he will fail us? Will he let those whom he bids trust in him for this thing be ashamed and miss of it? An ingenuous man will not do so, much less the gracious God. Upon this throne he appears gracious in a solemn, a glorious manner. He will not frustrate the expectation that such an appearance, such a manifestation of himself, raises. It is not for his honour to defeat those hopes that himself hereby excites and encourages in such a manner. It would be a blot, a great disparagement to this throne, if it should not prove what himself styles it. His throne is a pledge that he is willing. You have a pledge no less considerable than the throne of God to assure you that you shall find him gracious; and to be gracious, is to be freely willing.

(3.) It is true, you may say, the Lord is gracious and merciful, and so he may be willing to help and pity others, and freely so; but how does it appear that he is willing to do it for me? Faith is here often at a stand.

Why, consider the Lord on the mercy-seat, and so on the throne of grace, is a God under promise, as I shewed before. And promises are for particular application; they speak the Lord willing to do this, and the other; and, in a word, whatever thou needest, whatsoever is good to thee; they offer all the great and precious things which are the contents of these great and precious promises to thee in particular. To go no further, the words of the text, though propounded in form of an exhortation, yet they are indeed a promise virtually, and so to all effects and purposes, as many other expressions are in Scripture, so that a great part of Scripture are promises in effect, though not so taken notice of. This here may be resolved (as there is good ground to resolve it) into this form: Those that come to the throne of grace shall find mercy, &c. And then, you see, it is a most gracious promise; and to whom is it made? To the people of Christ that are in need; and so it belongs to thee if thou pertain to Christ, and art in need. If it be a time of need with thee, either as to inward or outward state, here is mercy and grace for thee in particular; thou hast a promise of it, which thou mayest apply particularly to thyself.

(4.) Oh, but though I may apply this or that promise, yet there are many promises that I think are not fit or proper, or intended for me. Many seem particular to some eminent saints, and divers of them were made upon special occasions, which restrains them from me; and, which concerns the matter before us, those in particular which were made to Moses and his successors, touching the Lord’s meeting them, and communing with them from the mercy-seat. And this in the text, it is for those that can come with confidence and assurance. In answer to this, consider: the Lord upon the mercy-seat, or the throne of grace, appears a God in covenant, as I shewed in the application. Now, all the promises are but several articles of that covenant. He that is in covenant with God is included in all the articles of it; every promise belongs to him, so far as his condition makes him capable, and requires it. The Lord upon the throne of grace is a God to us in Christ. Now, in Christ all the promises are yea and amen. He being the mediator of this covenant, and all the promises being ratified and confirmed by his blood, they are yea and amen in him; and that constantly; not yea to his people formerly and nay to his people now, but yea always. And they are all so in Christ, 2 Corinthians 1:20, true and firm. The covenant is as a cluster of grapes, the several promises are as particular grapes in that cluster, Christ is as the branch or stalk that holds them all. He that lays hold on Christ hath the stalk in his hand, and so holds the whole cluster, and every particular grape. If Christ be thine, thou hast laid hold on the covenant; the whole cluster of promises is in thine hand. The Lord here offers grace and mercy; he is upon the throne for this purpose. It is

therefore called a throne of grace. Now, he who has grace and mercy offered has all the promises made over to him; for mercy and grace is the sum of them all; all that they contain or hold forth is mercy or grace. And as for promises made upon special occasion, we find the Holy Ghost applying them to others afterward, upon occasions far differing from those upon which they were first made, e. g. that promise, Joshua 1:5, 'I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.' It was made to Joshua in particular, and upon a special occasion, when he was going to conquer Canaan, and to get possession of another land. And yet this the Holy Ghost applies to the faithful in common, and that as a motive to be contented with their present condition and enjoyments; an occasion very different, if not opposite, to that which was its first rise, Hebrews 13:5.

If we be not in the same circumstances with Moses, when the Lord made those promises to him, there may be some circumstantial difference as to the performing of them to us, but the substance of them will be made good to his people in all ages. Though he will not speak to his servants now, and commune with them now in an audible voice, as he did with Moses from the mercy-seat, yet he will meet his people at the throne of grace, and admit them to communion with him, and give them divine answers in a way suitable to gospel times; and for this may these promises now be made use of.

(5.) Oh, but I fear I want the condition of the promise, and then what encouragement can there be for me to apply the promise for this? I intend no encouragement but for believers; for it is faith that the text leads me to encourage; and where there is faith, here is great encouragement, though there be great weaknesses and defects as to other qualifications. For when the high priest appeared before the Lord, presenting himself upon the mercy-seat, what was he required to bring into the most holy place? Why, only incense and the blood of sprinkling, Leviticus 16:12-14. These signified the intercession and satisfaction of Christ. Now, these are already prepared to thy hand, and held forth to thee by the throne of grace; for by virtue hereof it is a throne of grace. If, therefore, faith lay hold on these, that will give thee access to the mercy-seat, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant; to the covenant of promise, and to all the promises of the covenant; and to him who is upon the throne of grace, as a God in covenant.

(6.) Oh, but if I have faith, it is very weak; so weak as I know not whether it be alive in me; I doubt whether it have a being there. And it is a strong faith that the text calls for, such as is strengthened into confidence, and rises up to assurance. Those that are to come are such as can come boldly. The apostle does not say that none may come before this throne but those that can come with assurance and confidence. But the design of this expression is to shew that all the people of Christ, even the poorest weaklings, such whose faith is weakest, have encouragement to come boldly. Here is enough in this representation to strengthen the weak hands and the feeble knees, to put spirits and strength into a fainting, a languishing faith; enough to quash its fears, satisfy its doubts, scatter all jealousies, and support it in its tremblings. So that here is no reason at all to stay away, because you are weak; but the rather to come, that you may be strong in faith; for the throne of grace offers grace and mercy, is a ground of assured hope that you may obtain mercy, &c. Now, what is the property, the office of mercy, but to pity weaknesses and relieve them? And what does grace import, but that the Lord upon this throne will do it freely? If it were not so, grace were no grace; it would be a throne of something else, not of grace. Both grace and mercy are for help, says the text, and for help in time of need; and so they are most for those who are in most need. And those who are weakest are in most need; and therefore weaklings have as much

encouragement as any to come boldly. Mercy and grace is as much designed for thee as (if not more for thee than) any, and offered here to answer all thy needs, supply defects, strengthen thee in weaknesses, and out of weaknesses to make thee strong.

(7.) Oh but I have more to discourage me than mere weakness! I have sinned, I have disobliged the Lord who sits upon the throne, and have dealt too unfaithfully in the covenant.

I suppose thou dost not allow thyself in any evil way, in any known sin; thou bewailest thy proneness to sin; thou watchest and resistest, and strivest against it. If this be thy case, here wants not encouragement; sin in such circumstances does not disoblige the Lord, so as he will not remember his covenant. Remember what I said in the opening of the point in hand. The Lord is upon the mercy-seat; and consequently, as upon the throne of grace, is a God reconciled, a God pardoning sin, covering it out of his sight. Christ, the covering, the mercy-seat, is interposed betwixt him and the condemning, the accusing law, to hide sin and guilt from his eye. As he is upon the throne of grace, he 'sees no iniquity in Jacob,' &c; he will not take notice of it so as to be disobliged. The Lamb is said to be 'in the midst of the throne,' Revelation 5:6, and Revelation 7:17. It is through him that it is a throne of grace, and it is that Lamb that takes away the sin; so that coming to the throne of grace, there you may see the Lamb in the midst of it, and so may conclude sin taken away. It is gone, it cannot disannul the covenant. You may see that in the throne of grace, which declares the Lord has taken a course to make the covenant everlasting; though it be made with sinners, the mediation and interposal of Christ, who is in the midst of the throne, will secure it.

(8.) But the Lord is long ere he perform his promise. I want help, and it comes not. I cry unto him for it, and he answers not. He delays; my soul fails in waiting for him.

Ans. There may be mistakes here. Either he performs his promise and answers your desires, and you observe it not, or else it is not best for you that he should do it yet. The throne of grace holds forth ground of assurance that you shall have help as soon as you can reasonably desire it (and what would you have more?). You cannot reasonably desire it but when it will be best for you; it will not be best for you but when it is seasonable, and when it is seasonable you are here assured of it. This is expressly in the text; coming to the throne you shall obtain mercy, and find grace for seasonable help, ■ις ■υκαιρον βο■θειαν, for help when it is seasonable. It is not good till then, and so till then you cannot in reason desire it. As soon as the finding of it will be a mercy, as soon as the obtaining of it will be an act of grace (and before, it cannot be in season, it is not to be desired). 'He that shall come will come, and will not tarry;' he will not stay one jot longer. His posture upon the mercy-seat (to which the throne of grace answers) signifies all speed and celerity, when the wisdom of him who charges the angels with folly can see fit and good for you. He was upon the mercy-seat as his chariot; there he was presented as sitting between the cherubims. The word Cherub is most probably derived from Rechab, a chariot. That of the psalmist refers to this representation: Psalms 86:17, 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand, thousands of angels multiplied.' The two cherubims upon the mercy-seat were an emblem of these two myriads. 'The Lord is among them; as in Sinai, so in the holy place.' These signified his special presence in both. Here he sets forth himself as on a throne, or in a chariot. It is called the 'chariot of the cherubims,' 1 Chronicles 28:18. The Lord will be as quick and speedy in bringing help to his people when it is good and seasonable and desirable, as if he came in a chariot drawn

with cherubims, Psalms 18:10; and this chariot is swifter than the wings of the wind. So he came for David's deliverance; so he will come for yours when it is seasonable. You cannot desire it sooner, unless you would have it before it be good, before it is to be desired.

3. The last thing propounded is to shew what positive supports are hereby offered to our faith. Having set before you how our eyeing the Lord as on the mercy-seat, as on the throne of grace, serves to remove all discouragements that faith may meet with, I shall now let you see positively how the Lord, thus represented to us, affords all encouragement that is requisite to strengthen and support our faith in all addresses. The Lord here shews himself both able and willing to be unto his people whatever they can desire, and to do for them whatever they need. And whore the Lord declares himself both able and willing, there faith hath all the encouragement that it can possibly have to strengthen and embolden it. The Lord is not hindered or disabled by any of those defects which may disable others from helping us, for he appears here as always present, as unconceivably wise and infinitely powerful.

(1.) This may persuade us, assure us of his presence. I shewed you in the explication how the Lord in the mercy-seat, and consequently on the throne of grace, offers his presence to his people, and what a presence it is that is here exhibited in divers particulars. Let me but add one text wherein we have them all together, Ezekiel 43:7.

[1.] Here is an intimate presence. He will be not near them or with them only, but in them, in the midst of them.

[2.] A special presence. He will be in them, not only as he is in the rest of the world, but in a more peculiar manner, with a gracious presence, such as the mercy-seat held forth there and the throne of grace now; present in a way of mercy, in a gracious manner.

[3.] A glorious presence. He will be with them as on his throne, where he appears in his glory and majesty. See ver. 5.

[4.] An all-sufficient presence. To secure them from what they fear, and give what they desire. 'My holy name shall they no more defile.' His presence shall keep them from sinning against him; and that which keeps us from sin secures us from all that is dreadful, for there is nothing dreadful but sin and the effects of it. There will be no more effects of sin when they no more defile his name; and so far as they are kept from sin, so far the way is open for all good things, all we can desire, for it is sin only that stops the way and withholds good things from us.

[5.] A continuing presence. It is not, I will come to them, I will visit them, I will stay with them for a while, but 'I will dwell with them.' That denotes a settled, a constant abode. And 'dwell with them for ever.' Thus will the Lord be present with his people when the place of his throne is amongst them. Such a presence the throne of grace imports. It is true, the Lord's throne is said to be in heaven, because his glory in a peculiar manner appears there. But throne is a figurative expression, and denotes his reign or empire; and so, wherever the Lord reigns and rules, there is his throne, Psalms 103:19, 'His kingdom ruleth over all.' He rules everywhere. His throne is where his kingdom is, and that is, as over all, so within his people: Luke 17:21, 'The kingdom of God is within you.' There is an intimate presence. And as his throne is everywhere, so it is everywhere a throne of grace to his people; and so, wherever they are, they have his gracious presence. And though he appear most glorious in heaven, yet wherever he is, wherever his throne is, he is

glorious; so that, being in the midst of his people, he is the glory in the midst of them. It is a glorious presence. And it will afford help in need; all help that is needful, and that is as much as we need desire; help in season, and that is as good as we can wish. So far it is an all-sufficient presence, and it will continue while his grace continues, and that is for ever. It will be a throne of grace while his grace and mercy endures, and this endures for ever. So that upon the whole, there is not the least occasion of distrust or doubt that we shall suffer by reason of his distance from us, that he will fail us any moment by reason of his absence, since the throne of grace insures his presence with his people, and such a presence as is most desirable.

(2.) This may persuade us of his wisdom; for from the mercy-seat did the Lord manifiest his infinite wisdom by giving them a resolution of their greatest difficulties, such as were too hard for any created understanding. Here they asked counsel of the Lord, and he answered them according to the judgment of Urim:Numbers 27:21, ‘Before the Lord,’ i. e. with their faces towards him, as presenting himself on the mercy-seat; for when they were to ask counsel, the priest, putting on the breast-plate of Urim and Thummim, set his face towards the mercy-seat, and the Lord from thence gave him answers, either by an audible voice or by secret inspiration, which answers when the priest had declared to the people, the stones and letters in the breast-plate shined (as is conceived) with some extraordinary lustre and brightness. and thereby the people had assurance that the answer was from the Lord. And the priest being herein a type of Christ, who carries his people in his heart before the Lord, as the priest did the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast. To the brightness shining in the breast-plate that expression of the apostle may have reference: 2 Corinthians 4:6, ‘God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.’ However, in this representation of the Lord upon a throne of grace, the light of the glorious knowledge of God does appear shining in the face of Christ, with a brighter and more conspicuous lustre. Here we may see with open face, without any veil interposed, without any shadow of obscure types, that πολυποικιλ■ς σοφ■α, as the apostle calls it, Ephesians 3:10, that admirable variety of infinitely wise contrivances and dispensations for the saving of Jew and gentile, the depths of which the angels cannot sound, though they do their endeavour, diving into it with earnest desire of fuller discoveries, and great admiration of what they see.

Here he shews men and angels that his wisdom has found out a way to reconcile justice and mercy, through the mediation and interposal of Christ, the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne. Here we have a view of that wisdom which could find out a way to shew mercy to sinners, when his justice had condemned them, and was obliged to do severe execution upon them. All the wisdom of men and angels could never have found out an expedient for this difficulty; they had been to seek (as we had been lost) eternally, if anything but infinite wisdom had been put upon this discovery. And is he not able, in point of wisdom, to do anything, to do everything for us; to find out ways and means to relieve us in any case or exigent whatsoever, whose wisdom could find out a way to do that which was too hard for the wisdom of angels to discern how it could be done?

(3.) This may persuade us of his power. Faith may hence grow confident that he is not disabled, cannot fail his people, for want of power. For he appears on the throne as one that has all power, which I made clear to you before. Let me but add one expression, frequently used in Scripture, and very pregnant for this purpose. The Lord’s appearing from the mercy-seat, for the help of his

people, is expressed by shining: Psalms 80:1, ‘Thou that dwellest on the mercy-seat, shine forth.’ The greatest works that ever the Lord did for his people are thus set forth. It is deliverance from the captivity that they pray for here in these terms. And their deliverance out of Egypt is thus expressed: Deuteronomy 33:2, ‘The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran,’ &c. And the same expression is used with respect (as is probably conceived) to the great work of redemption by Christ, Psalms 50:2. The words in the original run thus: From Sion, from the perfection of beauty, the Lord will shine. As the Lord shined from the mercy-seat, which was seated in mount Sion, and where the Lord most perfectly manifested his beauty or glory, so in Sion the true light, the Messias, appeared, and from thence diffused the true light of the gospel through the world. All the Lord’s most signal works are thus set forth by shining. And the Lord upon the throne of grace is represented as shining; for there he appears in the greatness and exaltation of his grace and mercy; and the lustre of these appearing is his shining forth, his manifesting himself on the throne of grace, where the glory of his throne, the beams of his majesty, are mercy and grace; this is shining forth. And by this expression, faith may discover how able he is, who sits upon the throne, to do whatever we stand in need of. Hence it appears he can do all things for the help of his people, easily, instantly, irresistibly, and advantageously. He is able to do anything, everything, for our relief.

[1.] Easily. Without any toil or trouble. It costs him no more pains to do all you need or can desire, than it costs the sun to shine forth. He can supply all wants, resolve all doubts, subdue all corruptions, secure from all calamities, those which most threaten us, as easily as the sun can shine. He can as easily scatter all your doubts, fears, dangers, lusts, as the sun can scatter the thinnest cloud; it is no more to him than shining forth.

He can as easily do all you can think or desire, as you can turn an eye, or move a hand, or speak a word; for with as much ease does the sun dart forth his light and beams; and it is no more for the Lord to put forth his power, than to shine forth. If that which you desire would put the Lord to any pains, or toil, or trouble, you might doubt whether it would be done; but here is the encouragement of faith, the Lord can do all with the greatest ease; let him but shine forth, and it is done.

[2.] Instantly. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, as soon as the light diffuses itself through the air: Matthew 24:27, ‘As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.’ The lightning is so quick in its motion, that it is in the east and west at once, and in a moment. So quickly can the Lord do all you can desire; he can make the outgoings of his power like the goings forth of the light; let him but shine forth, and it is done. Those lusts that you have been wrestling and tugging with for many years, he can subdue in a moment. Those doubts, obscurities, perplexities that have puzzled you so long, and through which your understandings cannot make their way, he can clear up in a moment. Those clouds of antichristian darkness that are gathering thick about us, he can quickly scatter; let him but shine forth, and they will vanish. If what you need or desire would cost the Lord any expense, or time, or prove tedious to him, you might doubt whether it would be done; but he can do all with as quick a motion as that of the light, all in an instant.

[3.] Irresistibly. Nothing can stop him or give him any impediment. Men and devils can no more obstruct what his power is engaged in, than you can hinder the sun from rising with your hand, or stop it from going forth in its strength and lustre when it is risen. If the Lord could be hindered, faith

might be at a stand. But here is the encouragement of faith, he can do what you would have him, irresistibly, and break through all impediments, as the light passes through the clear air, without the least stop or stay.

[4.] Advantageously. Without any loss or prejudice to himself; nay, with advantage as to his own glory. The sun loses nothing by shining forth; nay, the more it shines, the more does it display its beauty and glory. The Lord loses nothing by employing his power for his people; nay, the more he puts it forth, the more glorious he appears. When the sun goes forth in its full strength, it goes forth in the brightness of its glory; so when the Lord puts forth the greatness of his power for his people, he shines forth in the brightness of his glory. If the Lord suffered any loss, or prejudice, or disadvantage, by doing for you what you stand in need of, you might doubt that it would not be done; but this is faith's encouragement, the Lord gains glory by employing his power for you; the more he doth, the more his glory shines forth. His appearing for you from between the cherubims is a shining forth. So you see that faith may here discern that the Lord is able, and thus able, to do whatever you need or desire. And that is one of the two principal supports and encouragements that faith has in all its actings. Now if we may be assured that he is willing too, then faith has all the encouragement that we can wish. And herein, in the

Second place, we may be persuaded that he is willing likewise. When faith can have assurance that the Lord is not only able, but willing to help in time of need, to give all relief that is needful, then there is no place left for the least distrustful fears or doubts. Faith, by these two supports, may raise itself up to the height of confidence; and so may come boldly to the throne of grace, without any question or scruple, but that whatever is needful or desirable will be obtained, will be granted by him who sits upon the throne.

If the Lord be both able and willing to vouchsafe it, there is nothing imaginable can hinder it. Now the Lord, as offering himself to us on the throne of grace, appears willing; and faith has from hence sufficient ground to conclude he is so. I shall endeavour to discover this, both positively and comparatively. That this shews him positively willing, I have hinted something before; but now take it more fully and distinctly in these particulars.

1. He appears to be willing when he appears on the throne of grace. His manifesting himself there is a glorious appearance of his willingness. And will he appear to be what he is not? He is far from being like deceitful men; he will not delude us with vain shows, such as have no reality answering them. He would never seem willing, if he were not so indeed. All that the psalmist desired for the support of his faith was 'a token for good,' Psalms 86:17. Here is a token for good; the throne of grace is a sign, a glorious signification, that he is willing to do us all the good, to give us all the help we stand in need of.

2. He bids us be confident when we come to the throne of grace; he would have us come boldly. Now he would not bid us do this if we had no ground for it; he would not encourage us unto a rash and groundless confidence. But we have no ground for it to come with boldness and confidence, if he be not willing to let us have what we come for. Would he bid us be confident of help from him, if he were not willing to let us have it? He will not so abuse poor creatures; he is infinitely further from it than the best of men. An honest, ingenuous man would never bid us be confident in him, come boldly to him, for that which he has no mind, no will to do, which he never means to do for us. And can we think the Lord would do it? He raises our confidence by offering himself on a

throne of grace; and will he dash that which himself raises, and make that ashamed which himself encourageth? Will he bid us come boldly, and then send us away disappointed? What would you think of a man like yourselves that should serve you so? Such unworthy thoughts you must have of him who sits on the throne, if this do not persuade you of his willingness. However men may serve us, those that trust in the Lord shall not be ashamed, never disappointed, Proverbs 10:25. But they would be disappointed, and sent away with shame from the throne of grace, if they should not find the Lord willing to do that which he encourages them to trust him for.

3. His honour is engaged. It is the glory of his throne, that it is a throne of grace. It would not be a throne of grace, nor would he that sits on it be gracious, if he were not willing to do his people good, to help them when it is good, when needful. So that you have the throne of God, the glory of him who thus represents himself, engaged for his willingness. What greater engagement can you wish, or possibly have, than the throne of God? Can you have any security more considerable than heaven or earth? Can you have anything greater for your assurance herein than the throne of God, the glory of the Most High? This you have here in the text, and what need you more? What greater security can you have, since the Lord engages his own throne? If a man should engage his whole estate that he would be willing to help you, you would not doubt but he would be willing to do it. And will you doubt of the Lord's willingness when his throne is engaged for it?

4. He appears here as a God of mercy and grace, as I shewed you in the explication, and it is express in the text. And to be a God of grace and mercy, is to be a God willing to do good freely, willing to help in time of need. He is essentially merciful and gracious, and so essentially willing to do his people good. It is his nature, and here he displays it; it shines forth from the throne of grace. Now may faith say, Though I have deserved that the Lord should deny me, yet he cannot deny himself; though he has just reason to cast me off, yet he cannot lay aside his own nature and goodness; and that inclines him to be willing, freely willing.

5. He appears here in a willing posture. He is here upon the throne of grace, upon the mercy-seat: and why represented in such a posture, but to signify he is ready for acts of grace and mercy? We may now find grace, and obtain mercy. And what is mercy, but a willingness to pity and relieve? And what is grace, but a willingness to do it freely, a free willingness? That which is the mercy-seat in the Old Testament, is the throne of grace in the New Testament. And this throne is established for ever, he is willing, and freely willing for ever, to do his people good, to help and relieve in need. The golden sceptre will be always held forth, while the Lord is on this throne; and as the throne, so the sceptre is an everlasting sceptre. The Lord shews himself always willing that his people should have access to him; yet never willing that they should go out of his presence sad and dejected, as though they could not obtain mercy, &c. This throne is established in mercy, Isaiah 16:5. That of Solomon may be applied to it, Proverbs 20:28, 'His throne is upholden by mercy.' The Lord would have no throne, no kingdom amongst his people, were it not upheld by mercy, were he not willing to pity and help. You may as well doubt whether the Lord will still have a mercy-seat, whether he will still have a throne or no; as doubt whether he be willing to help in time of need. You may as well say that now there is no mercy-seat, no throne of grace, i. e. that Christ is not in heaven, that you have no mediator there, that the Lamb is not in the midst of the throne; as that the Lord is unwilling to hear and help.

6. He here shews that he has given us Christ, and thereby assures us that he cannot be unwilling to give us anything. The Lord had not set forth himself to us on the throne of grace, but that he had set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, Romans 3:25. We have now no ■λαστ■ριον, no mercy-seat but Christ. That under the law was but a shadow of him. Christ was then hid in that shadow, but now set forth. Now not typified as to be given hereafter, but actually exhibited as given already. He has actually shed his blood for this purpose, that through his mediation the Lord might be propitious, merciful, willing to relieve us under all our guilt, and help in all our needs. It is through the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the Lamb slain, that the throne of God is to us a throne of grace. It is so through him who was slain, who was given for this end. Now he that was willing to give us Christ (as the throne of grace manifests he has already given him), assures us hereby, that he is freely willing to give all, Romans 8:32.

7. He appears here under obligations to be willing. The Lord on the throne of grace represents himself to us as a God under promise, a God in covenant, as I shewed in opening the point. Now what are the promises, but declarations what the Lord is willing to do for his people; gracious expressions of his willingness to do us all the good we need or can desire? Let me add, that the Hebrew doctors express a proselyte's or convert's entering into covenant with God, by being gathered under the wings of the divine presence. And the Lord's appearing on the mercy-seat, shadowed with the wings of the cherubims, they called peculiarly ■■■■■, the divine presence. To enter into covenant with God, is to be gathered under these wings. To which some conceive that expression of Christ has reference, Matthew 23:1-39 he would have 'gathered them under his wings,' i. e. he would have brought them into the new covenant. The Lord upon the mercy-seat, and so on the throne of grace, appears as a God in covenant. Now what are the contents of this covenant but sure mercies, Acts 13:34; mercies insured to believers through Christ; acts of grace and favour made sure by an everlasting covenant? The Lord hereby shews himself obliged to be everlastingly willing to help in time of need. He is as surely willing, as he is sure to be true and faithful, as he is sure to be like himself, as he is sure not to deal falsely in the covenant.

8. He appears here as having removed all impediments that might hinder him from being willing. For what can hinder, but either incensed justice, or the condemning law, or the provokings of sin? But the Lord, as offering himself on the throne of grace, shews that he has taken a course that none of these shall be any impediment to him. Not incensed justice, for the Lord here shews himself upon the propitiatory. He is now propitious, as one reconciled, and that shews that wrath is appeased and justice satisfied. Not the accusing law: for the mercy-seat is betwixt the Lord and the condemning law; the accusations of the law are all silenced through the mediation of Christ, the pleadings of the law will not be heard or admitted at this throne. Not the provokings of sin: for here sin is covered. This is a throne for pardons and free forgivenesses. So that nothing is left to hinder him from being willing. And if the Lord appears willing, bids us be confident of it, shews himself in a willing posture, and his promise, his honour, his throne, his Son, engage him, and there be nothing to hinder him, what remains, but that believers should be confident of his readiness, his willingness, to hear and help, to pity and relieve, and give them all their heart's desire? What remains, but to 'come boldly,' &c.

Thus it is manifest positively that the Lord is willing. Let me shew it comparatively also, but very briefly.

1. He shews himself more willing than he did of old under the law; yet then his people found him ready to help, relieve, supply. He shews it now more openly on the throne of grace; whereas in the mercy-seat it was but held forth obscurely, as in a shadow, a typical and mysterious representation: now there is no veil interposed, now we may with open face behold the Lord's good-will towards men, shining in the face of Christ. This he shews continually on the throne of grace, to which all may have access every moment; whereas the people were admitted to the mercy-seat, only in the high priest, and that but once a year. The blood and incense, without which the mercy-seat was not to be approached, did but shadow forth the sufferings and intercession of Christ, and these are now not prefigured, but really exhibited. The throne of grace is now said to be the throne of God and of the Lamb; of the Lamb slain and already sacrificed, so he has made satisfaction; of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, there making intercession. So that, though he appeared willing before, yet now he manifests it in a way which gives much more assurance to faith; he shews it clearly, fully, effectually, continually.

2. He is more willing to help us, than we are to help one another, than those amongst us that are most so. The throne of grace shews us mercy and grace upon the throne; there this willingness appears in the highest exaltation and glory, and so sets forth the Lord to be as much more willing than we, to afford relief, as he is higher than we. As his other thoughts are not as ours, so his thoughts of grace and mercy, for the relief and supply of his people, and the ways wherein he is willing to help us, are far above ours, even as the heavens are high above the earth, Isaiah 55:9. Even as his highest throne is above his footstool, Hebrews 8:1. Who more willing to relieve a child in want or distress, than an affectionate father? yet that willingness comes short of his: Luke 11:13, 'If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,' so Matthew 7:11. The gift of the Spirit is the sum of all good things; it comprises spiritual light, life, strength, treasures, comforts. And the Lord is much more willing to give all these, than any Father to supply his child.

3. He is more willing to send help, than we to have it. This is unquestionable in many cases, and those that are of most consequence to us, such as concern our souls. He that will do most for our relief, is most willing to help us; but hereby it appears that he has done more this way for us than we will do for ourselves. When we are loath to quit our own ease, to cross our own humours and inclinations, for the advantage and relief of our souls, he spared not his own Son for our sakes. It cost him more to relieve us in our lost condition, than ten thousand worlds are worth. At such a rate was he willing to appear for our help, when our state was otherwise helpless and desperate. This the throne of grace sets before us. There we may see Jesus, who by his blood has procured us access to it, and there sits on the right hand of the throne, making intercession for us. Which of us are willing to part with that for the interest of our own souls, which is as dear to us as the Son of God was to the eternal Father? His giving his Son for us is a clear demonstration he is more willing to help us than we ourselves.

Nay, further, we are not willing to have relief till he makes us so; and he that makes us so is more so himself. He encourages us, he invites us in the text, to come to the throne, that we may find grace to help. He uses means to make us willing. A plain evidence that he is more willing than we; more willing that we should have help, than we are to have it.

OF CHRIST'S MAKING INTERCESSION To make intercession.—Hebrews 7:25. The offices of Christ, the great mediator betwixt God and man, are the foundation of our hopes, and the springs of our comfort and happiness, his priestly office particularly; and of his priesthood there are two principal acts: his satisfaction, by dying for sinners, and his intercession at the right hand of God. Of the latter, I shall give you an account from the words read. The apostle, observing that the believing Hebrews were in danger to fall from the profession of Christ, by being too passionately addicted unto the Levitical ordinances, to secure them, he, through this epistle, sets before them the glory of Christ, in his person and offices, and shews how infinitely he transcends all that they affected and admired in the Levitical administration. In this chapter he proves the excellency of Christ's priesthood above the priesthood under the law, by many arguments. Only at present take notice of some from ver. 19. The law, and the priesthood under it, made nothing perfect, made no perfect satisfaction for sin, nor purchase of salvation; but Christ, then hoped for, as better than those legal rites, being the end of and thing signified by them, being brought in, did, by virtue of his priesthood, make all perfect by perfect satisfaction and purchase. And by him we have nearer access to God than was held forth in the legal administration. None but the priests were then admitted into the holy place; none but the high priest into the holy of holies, the place of God's special presence on the mercy-seat; but now there is no veil betwixt us and the mercy-seat; it was rent to make our way, and all believers may have always access unto the throne of grace, &c.

Hebrews 7:20-21. Christ's priesthood had a stronger confirmation. That under the law stood but by positive institution, the Lord leaving himself a liberty to change it when he pleased. But the priesthood of Christ is established by an oath, and rendered unchangeable for ever; as unchangeable as God himself, who cannot repent, as inviolable as the oath of God.

Hebrews 7:22. Christ is the surety of a better testament, of a covenant made up of better promises, Hebrews 8:6. The covenant of grace, in its administration under Christ, is more free, clear, full, extensive, and firm. Christ is surety of the covenant, i. e. he obliged himself to see the articles and contents of the covenant made good, removing what might hinder, and providing what might secure and promote the observance. In the same sense he is called, Hebrews 12:24, not a mediator of supplication only, as the woman of Tekoa, 2 Samuel 14:1-33, but of satisfaction, as Paul, Philemon 1:18-19. Such a mediator is a surety, binds himself to satisfy for another.

Hebrews 7:23-24. The priesthood was defective, and very imperfect. The priest, then, did need partners, one could not do all the work; and successors too, they could not live always. But Christ, our high priest, needs neither partner nor successor; he alone is sufficient for all the acts of his office; and he is so always, unchangeably; he lives ever. Hence he infers, ver. 25, ■ις τ■ παντελ■ς.

1. Perfectly; to remove whatever is an impediment to their salvation, and vouchsafe whatever is requisite to make their happiness and salvation complete.

2. Eternally, ver. 9, 'Because he ever lives.' He is able, but is he willing? Yes, that is evident by his intercession. Therefore, those that turn from sin by repentance, and come unto God by faith in Christ, shall certainly be saved to the utmost.

Obs. Christ always makes intercession for his people. For this intercession of Christ, there is all sorts of evidence in Scripture, by types, prophecies, and plain assertions. That was typified under

the law, by what the high priest is appointed to do on the day of expiation, Leviticus 16:11-15. A bullock and a goat was appointed for sin-offerings; they were to be sacrificed, and their blood shed without, at the door of the tabernacle. Then Aaron was to take part of the blood, and carry it with incense into the most holy place within the veil, and there sprinkle it upon and before the mercy-seat. Now the slaying of these sacrifices, and offering them without, at a distance from the holy place, signified the death of Christ, wherein he offered himself to God a sacrifice on earth for the expiation of his people's sins; and the presenting of the blood of those sacrifices in the most holy place, signified the intercession of Christ in heaven; and so the apostle applies it, Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:23. He entered within the veil, i. e. into heaven; and there, by virtue of his own blood, appears, i. e. intercedes, for us.

It is foretold by the prophet, Isaiah 53:1-12, where, having given an account of the sufferings and death of Christ (one main act of his priestly office, whereby he made satisfaction to justice), so plainly and punctually, that it may seem rather a relation of what was past, than a prophecy of what was to come; he concludes with the other part of that office, the intercession of Christ, ver. 12.

It is plainly asserted in the New Testament, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 9:24; how, and in what capacity he appears for us, the other apostle shews, 1 John 2:1-2. He appears as our advocate, to make our defence, to secure us in judgment, to plead for us; and his plea is grounded upon satisfaction, made by the sacrifice of himself for our expiation; ■λασμ■ς is θυσ■α ■λαστικ■, a propitiatory sacrifice. Having offered himself as such a sacrifice, sufficient to make atonement, he appears by its virtue to plead for, and obtain the effects of it; which are no less than perfect salvation, as the text comprises. For as he argues, Romans 5:10, π■λλ■ μ■λλον, much more shall we be saved, saved to the uttermost, by his life, i. e. by his living to make intercession.

It is a matter of great consequence, you see, though not much (that I can find) insisted on. Let me therefore endeavour to open it more fully and clearly, by giving you some account of the nature, efficacy, and continuance of this intercession.

1. For the nature of it. In general, it is Christ's appearance in heaven in behalf of his people; as having on earth satisfied for them, done and suffered all things which were requisite on his part to be there accomplished for their salvation, both for the removing of what might hinder it, and purchasing what might perfect it, and make it complete; or a presenting of himself, as having finished what was necessary on earth, for the saving of them to the utmost.

More particularly, it includes these severals;—

(1.) He appears in our nature, not only as God, but as man, 1 Timothy 2:5. While he is mediator, he is man. Now his intercession is a principal act of his mediation. To intercede is to mediate. He did not cast off the human nature when he left the earth, but carried it into heaven, and there retains not only the soul, but the body of a man; the same body as to the substance, though freed from corruptible qualities, such as are inconsistent with his glorious condition in the heavens. The same body which suffered, which was buried, which rose again, the same ascended into heaven. The same body that did bleed and die, that suffered and was made a sacrifice, he presents in heaven. He appears with it, and thereby it is evident that he appears for us, as Hebrews 9:24. He appears as one concerned for us, as one [who] is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. As he

assumed our nature, and took a human body for us, so he retains it in heaven, and appears there with it for us. The apostle does not say he entered into heaven, to appear there in glory and majesty, as if his appearance there had been for himself solely; but to appear in the presence of God for us. As he was born, and lived and died for us, so he ascended into heaven, and appears in our nature at the right hand of God for us. But how for us?

(2.) He appears as our advocate, to present us and our cause unto God. When Aaron was to enter the most holy place, to intercede for the people, he was to bear the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast and shoulders, Exodus 28:12, Exodus 28:29. In that Aaron was to bear the names of the tribes, may be signified that he was not to enter into the place of intercession in his own name only, but in the names of all the people. So did Christ (typified by the high priest, and so often called) appear in heaven, the place of his intercession, not in his own name, but in the name and behalf of his people.

Aaron was to bear their names on his shoulder; to denote, as is conceived, that the high priest was to bear with their weaknesses and infirmities; and such an high priest is Christ represented, Hebrews 4:15.

Aaron was to bear the names of the tribes upon his breast, when he appeared for them in the holy place; to signify he was to have such care and love for them as though they were in his heart. According to what the apostle expresseth towards the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 7:3, to be sure it is thus with Christ; he in appearing for his people as intercessor and advocate, does as it were bear them on his breast; presents them unto God as those that are in his heart, to die and to live for them. He died to make satisfaction, and lives to make intercession for them; he ever lives to appear as their advocate, 1 John 2:1; he states their cause before God as it now stands, and represents it to him in the favourable and advantageous state and circumstances to which it is brought by his obedience and sufferings for them. And so stated it cannot miscarry, when they come to trial before God’s tribunal; they need fear no charge that can be brought against them, no accusation of men or devils, they have such an advocate, as can answer, and nonplus, and silence all. Some resemblance of this you may see, Zechariah 3:1-2; Joshua, a type of the church, is charged, accused by Satan; Christ, called the Lord here, by his intercession with the Father, pleads that, instead of Joshua, his accuser may be rebuked and confounded, acquitting and justifying the accused. No charge will have better success, which is formed against those for whom Christ appears as advocate, Romans 8:34. No charge can be fixed on his chosen people, not only because Christ died and rose again, but because Christ appears at the right hand of God as their advocate, to plead, &c.

(3.) He presents his death as suffered in our stead, his blood as shed for us. The high priest (as was said) when he was to mediate for the people in the most holy place, was to bring the blood of the sacrifice and present it there; he was not to enter without it, there was no interceding but by virtue of it, Hebrews 9:7; so Christ by his own blood entered into heaven, ver. 12, thereby to make intercession for transgressors. Indeed, his intercession is but the continued virtue of his blood, and therefore is described by his presenting it, as the high priest did that of other sacrifices. Not that Christ in heaven presents his blood out of his veins, but his soul and body which was sacrificed; that body which was scourged, wounded, pierced through with nails, and made full of bloody furrows, remains in the presence and at the right hand of God, and will remain there for an eternal

memorial of his sufferings. Not that the Lord needs any memorial, and wants any helps to continue things in remembrance, or less regards, or is less mindful of things long since past; for things past, how long since soever, are as full in his all-seeing eye as if they were present; and so are things future too, at what distance soever. Hence Christ is said to be the lamb sacrificed, &c., Romans 13:8. That sacrifice of Christ was present to him, so as to procure all the advantages of it for believers under the Old Testament, many ages before it was actually offered; and so it is as present to him still, though it be many hundred years since it was offered. But such expressions, when we say Christ presents his blood, they help our weaknesses; and signify to us that the death and sufferings of Christ have the same influence with God now, as if he were still suffering, as if he were but just now crucified. That the virtue of his blood is still as fresh and efficacious as if it were but just now shed; as if the wounds were still open, and the blood now streaming out in the presence and at the right hand of God. This blood, thus presented, is said to 'speak better things than the blood of Abel,' Hebrews 12:24, Genesis 4:10; it cries for mercy as much as the blood of Abel cried for vengeance; it pleads powerfully, and has as much the virtue of interceding as if it had an articulate voice.

(4.) He presents his will and desire that his people may have all the purchase of his blood. The will of the divine nature as he is God, the desires of his human nature as he is man. Thus he is said to intercede for us, in that the Father understands that it is his will and desire, as he is God and man, that his people may be possessed of all the effects, and receive all the advantage of his obedience and sufferings for them; so that his intercession is in effect his praying for us in heaven. His intercession is by some called a prayer, and so it is rightly understood, as it imports his will and desire to the Father for us. His prayer on earth is expressed in this form, John 17:24; and his desires in heaven are called prayer, John 16:26, 'at that day,' after he had left the world and was ascended into heaven, 'I say not that I will pray,' I need not tell you that; this you may take for granted, you may be sure I will do it, some understand it. More plainly, John 14:16, when I am departed from earth, and am set at the right hand of God, I will be mindful of you, I will pray for you; so that in some sense Christ prays now that he is in heaven, and his interceding is praying for us. To clear this, it differs in some circumstances, both from our prayers, and from his own prayers on earth.

[1.] He does not desire undeserved favours as we do; so it differs from our prayers. The best of men that make any address to God, are unworthy of the mercies they pray for. But Christ wills nothing for us but what he merited; he desires to obtain nothing on our behalf but what he has deserved for us. Revelation 5:9, Revelation 5:12, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,' how unworthy soever they are for whom he was sacrificed; he has redeemed us, laid down a price of more equal value with what he asks for us.

[2.] He does not present any petitions in the posture of a humble, dejected supplicant; he does not fall on his knees, or lie prostrate to beg anything for us; this is not agreeable to him as he is God, nor to his present glorious state as he is man. As God, he is equal with the Father, counts it no robbery; as man, he sits at the right hand of God, Hebrews 1:3, and Hebrews 8:1; he is exalted to all glory, power, and majesty, next to the Father: 'Far above,' &c. Ephesians 1:20-21.

[3.] Nor does he present any requests with cries and tears, or such expressions of passionate fervour; and so his intercession differs from his own prayers on earth, Hebrews 5:7. Then he did

as a man of sorrows, acting suitably to his condition then in the flesh, which was a state of humiliation, but is not congruous to his present state, when he is crowned with divine glory, Hebrews 2:9.

[4.] Nor does he desire anything for us by virtue of what he undertook, but has not yet performed, as he did in that divine and admirable prayer, John 17:1-26. For whatever was requisite to make way for the fulfilling of his desires in behalf of his people is already fully accomplished, John 19:30. His intercession there was by virtue of the sacrifice he was to offer; his intercession now is on account of the sacrifice already offered.

These are some accidental differences betwixt the intercession of Christ and other prayers, whether his own or ours. But then I conceive, with submission, that his intercession is a prayer.

[1.] Essentially. Though it differ from other prayers in some circumstances, yet it has the essence of a prayer, and is so truly and really. For prayer, when it is designed by what is essential to it, is a presenting of our desires unto God, Philemon 1:4; and if we add, in the name of Christ, that will make no difference here. Christ, as our intercessor, presents his desires for his people unto the Father in his own name. It is his earnest desire that his people may reap all the fruits of his purchase; he desires it for his own sake, who died for this end, and made the purchase for this purpose, that they might inherit.

[2.] It is prayer virtually. The presenting of his blood has the virtue and force of a prayer, Hebrews 12:24. The blood of Christ, called the blood of sprinkling, in reference to the blood of the sacrifices, which were to be sprinkled on, and before the mercy-seat, and by virtue of which the high priest did intercede for the people; it speaks, it cries; there is something in it equivalent to the voice of an importunate supplicant. It speaks for excellent things, κρ■ιττον, for grace, reconciliation with God, and all the comfortable effects and consequents thereto; it is a voice most powerful and prevalent, though it be not articulate. There needed no other plea, no other advocate for Abel against Cain, but the cry of his brother's blood; the Lord heard it immediately, and answered it with a curse, Genesis 4:10-11. There needs no other plea for us with the Father than the cry of Christ's blood; that prevails instantly, infallibly, for the blessings, Ephesians 1:3; it has the virtue of a most effectual prayer.

[3.] It is transcendently a prayer. It is of greater force and prevalency with God than all the prayers of all creatures together, even of those which have most power with God. If all the glorious angels, and all the saints in heaven and on earth, should prostrate themselves before God, and come together to prefer one petition to him with all fervour and importunity, you would think that a powerful prayer indeed, of great virtue and prevalency. But the intercession of Christ, as it is a representation of the will and desires of Christ, is of more force and power to prevail, of more infinitely; for it is a presenting of the will of God for us, and of the desires of him who is God-man, and so more considerable than the united requests of men and angels all together. If we should have seen Christ on earth praying with strong cries and tears, we would not have questioned but he would have been heard. His intercession now is fully as prevalent with God as such a prayer of Christ would have been; nay, he presents his will and desires now with more advantage; for, being as our intercessor at the right hand of God, his power and interest is in the highest and most glorious exaltation. Thus much for the notion of Christ's intercession, what it imports, and wherein it consists.

2. For the efficacy of it, it may partly be understood by what is said. Let me add some particulars.

(1.) The intercession of Christ is grounded upon merit, and therefore must prevail in point of justice. Christ's obedience unto death was meritorious, and did deserve for his people that which, as intercessor on their behalf, he pleads for. There are three ingredients of strict and proper merit which concur in the obedience and sufferings of Christ. That which any will merit by, 1, must be his own; 2, and that which he owes not; 3, there must be a proportion betwixt it and that which he would deserve by it. Now, as to the first, the soul and body of Christ, which he offered for us, was his own, John 10:18; and the obedience he performed for us was done by his own strength, the divine nature empowering the human, both doing and suffering; whenas otherwise his sufferings would have been unsupportable to any mere man. As to the second, that which he performed and suffered was what he owed not, not due from him. He was not obliged to it by his own voluntary undertaking and submission, being not only man, but God in one person. As to the third, his obedience and sufferings were of equal worth with the recompence which he pleads for in behalf of his people. He thereby fully satisfied the demands both of law and justice; and though it was the life and pardon of a world of condemned persons that he pleads for, yet his obedience and blood is of more worth than all this; for these are of infinite value, being the obedience and blood of God himself, Acts 20:1-38. So that Christ's obedience, active and passive, is meritorious, not only ratione pacti, by reason of the agreement betwixt the Father and him, he having performed all the conditions required in order to our redemption, but ratione pretii, by virtue of the intrinsic value of what he payed and performed.

Now, to use the apostle's expression, Romans 4:4, 'To him that thus worketh, the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt;' it is grace to us, but it is debt to Christ. And so the plea on our behalf in his intercession, being for a just debt, it cannot but be most effectual with a righteous God.

(2.) The efficacy of it appears in the acceptableness of all included in Christ's intercession unto God the Father, and his readiness to comply with the motions which it imports. Christ appears in our nature; now, that is the nature, the body which the Father prepared for him, Hebrews 10:5, prepared for Christ, that he might become a sacrifice; such a sacrifice whereby justice was fully satisfied, mercy made wonderfully conspicuous, wisdom, power, goodness, truth, righteousness, and in a manner all divine perfections transcendently glorified, and thereby this nature eternally endeared unto God, and so exalted at his right hand as an everlasting monument thereof. Though it be man's nature, yet it is now (as the Lord says in effect) a part of my beloved Son, his nature too, in whom I am well pleased.

He appears as our advocate, and he pleads nothing but what is the will of God, Hebrews 10:7-9. His will was that Christ should be a sacrifice; and it is upon the perfect fulfilling of his Father's will that his plea proceeds; that is the ground of it, therefore it must prevail. If it should not be effectual, the will of God would be ineffectual; if it should meet with a repulse, the Lord would cross his own will. It is God that justifies, so as none shall condemn. How so? It is Christ that makes intercession.

He presents his blood, his interceding is a commemoration of his sacrifice; and this is the savour of a sweet smell to God, Ephesians 5:2; he is infinitely pleased with it.

He presents his will and desires for saving of his people to the utmost; and his will is his Father's will; his desires always fulfilled, his requests ever heard and answered, Matthew 17:5. He would have him heard of all, he himself will certainly hear him, he is his beloved Son. Christ expresses his assurance of it, John 11:42, John 12:48. He can ask nothing so great but the Father will give it, Psalms 2:8. The Father says of Christ, ver. 7, 'Thou art my Son,' &c. It is spoken in reference to his resurrection from the dead (which was an evidence that he was not a mere man, but the eternal Son of God), and upon his resurrection followed his intercession; in reference to which the Lord says to him, Ask of me, and I will give thee a spiritual kingdom over all my people through the whole world, a power to rule and save them. This is the greatest thing that Christ does ask, the sum of all he intercedes for. When Esther appeared before king Ahasuerus to intercede for her people condemned to destruction, he gives her this assurance, Esther 5:3, hereby signifying that she could ask nothing so great but he would grant. Christ had this assurance of the Father before he became our advocate and intercessor actually, that there is nothing so great that he could ask but the Father would grant it. Such is the efficacy of his intercession.

(3.) By virtue of his intercession, all that he purchased by his obedience and sufferings is actually conferred. Pardon and salvation are sometimes ascribed to the death of Christ, sometimes to his life; for he made the purchase by his obedience unto death. But we have the possession by virtue of his life in heaven, by his living there to make intercession for us. He merited salvation, and all that tends to save us to the utmost, by what he performed and suffered for us on earth. But all is actually conferred on us by virtue of his appearance for us at the right hand of God. This we may understand by what he tells his disciples he would do in heaven, what he will intercede for, John 14:16-17. The Lord was willing that his people should be saved to the utmost; but then their salvation must be accomplished in a way that would glorify him, and on such terms as would be for his honour. Those terms are declared in the gospel; those that will be saved must be both justified and sanctified: justified, since none can be saved unless the sentence of condemnation passed upon all sinners be reversed; sanctified, because without holiness no man can see God. That they may be justified, they must have faith; that they may be sanctified, they must have holiness. Both these Christ purchased by his blood, but he works them by his Spirit; and that the Spirit may be given for this purpose, he prays, he intercedes. For the word rendered Comforter is of large import, and denotes not only the act of comforting, but in a manner all the offices and operations of the Holy Ghost in reference to his people; and speaks him not only a Spirit of comfort, but of truth, and faith, and holiness. Thus Christ by his Spirit puts his people into a capacity of salvation, and all that salvation to the uttermost comprises. And this is done by virtue of his intercession. That which Christ purchased by his death is not actually bestowed but through his intercession. His people would not be capable thereof, but that the Spirit works them to it. The Spirit would not be sent for this purpose, but that Christ intercedes for it, John 16:7; not come, because his coming was to be the issue of Christ's intercession; therefore said to be sent in Christ's name: John 14:26, 'In my name,' i. e. for my sake, interceding to that purpose.

(4.) Christ's intercession was effectual before he was actually an intercessor. By virtue of this, all believers from the beginning of the world were pardoned and saved. The efficacy of his intercession is as extensive as the virtue of his death, upon which it is grounded. By virtue of his death, believers were freed from guilt in the Old Testament, before he actually suffered, Hebrews 9:15. His death was effectual to expiate the transgressions under the first testament, though it was

then future; and so his future intercession was effectual to give them possession of the promised inheritance. Even as a debtor is discharged, when the surety gives sufficient security that the debt shall be paid, though he pay it not presently, 2 Timothy 1:9. Christ engaged himself, gave a sufficient security that he would offer himself a sacrifice in due time, and would present that sacrifice at God's right hand for all believers from the foundation of the world; and upon that account they were pardoned and saved, though they died many ages before he actually suffered or interceded in our nature, Romans 3:25. He was set forth as a propitiation, that which rendered God propitious, through his blood, for the forgiveness of transgressions before. The mercy-seat (which the word signifies) shewed that the Lord was reconciled, through the blood there sprinkled, which signified the blood of Christ presented in his intercession. By virtue of this transgressions were pardoned, and a way opened into heaven for those who believed in the Messias to come; though he came not, though he died not, though he interceded not, as now, till long after. In respect of the eternal purpose of God, and the undertaking of Christ, correspondent thereto, it was as sure to be, as though it had been already accomplished. And so it was as effectual before, as if it had been actually in being, 2 Timothy 1:9. That which is sure to be done, is said to be done already. He was 'the Lamb slain,' i. e. sacrificed, 'from the beginning of the world,' Revelation 13:8. The virtue of his sacrifice to be offered, and so of his sacrifice to be presented, was vigorous and efficacious in all ages, from the foundation of the world.

3. As to the continuance of this intercession, it is perpetual. The text is express for this, 'He ever lives,' &c. He intercedes while he lives, and he ever lives; he intercedes always: 1, without intermission; 2, without end. It is represented as the end why he lives, and the end of his life he pursues every moment. The high priest did but solemnly intercede for the people once in [a year]; but Christ appears for his people continually. There is not a moment wherein this act of his priesthood is intermitted. He is always at the right hand of God in our nature; he is always ready to justify our cause against all gainsayers, making a legal appearance for that purpose. He is always presenting his blood; his sacrifice is no moment out of the sight and presence of the divine majesty. He is always representing his will and desires, that those who come to God by him may be saved to the utmost. His requests are not made known now and then, as ours are to him, but without ceasing; this he does every moment. And,

(2.) Thus he will be doing for ever. His oblation was but one act, his sacrifice was finished at once; but his intercession, the other act of his priesthood, is everlasting; it continues while he lives, who ever lives, Revelation 1:18, Romans 6:9-10. He died once to expiate sin; and he did it perfectly, there was no need to repeat it, Hebrews 10:14; but there was need to present this sacrifice to God, and to apply the virtue of it to us. And for this he lives unto God, with God, at his right hand, for ever.

Upon this account, the priesthood of Christ is preferred before the Levitical, Hebrews 7:15-16. He was not made priest by a law that provides for mortality, and appoints priests in succession; but by the power which raised him to an endless life, and so made him priest for ever. So he is said to be a priest after the order of Melchisedek, of whose beginning and end we have no account; on purpose to signify that Christ's priesthood should have no end. And this the Lord, who cannot repent, confirmed by an oath, Hebrews 7:21, Hebrews 7:28.

Now, it is upon the account of his intercession that the priesthood is everlasting; for his oblation is past, and he offered himself once for all, Hebrews 9:25. So that, if he do not intercede for ever, he will not be a priest for ever; unless he can be so, without any act of the priestly office.

Obj. But it may be said, the kingdom of Christ shall cease, and therefore his priesthood and intercession may cease; for one office of Christ is not of longer continuance than another. And that there shall be an end of his kingdom, the apostle seems to declare, 1 Corinthians 15:24, 1 Corinthians 15:28.

Ans. The spiritual kingdom of Christ here on earth will cease at the end of the world, for there will be none left for the exercise of his government here. There will be no sinners to conquer, no subjects on earth to rule, no enemies to subdue. But his glorious kingdom in heaven shall not cease; he will have the same regal majesty, glory, and power, at the right hand of God, and may exercise his kingly power, though in a different manner, viz., in keeping those enemies under, whom he had before subdued; and in confirming and establishing his heavenly subjects in their glorious condition, Revelation 11:15, Luke 1:32.

Accordingly, as to his intercession, there will be some difference therein, at the end of the world, from what there was before; but no total cessation of it. The state of his intercession will be somewhat different from what it is now, because the state of his people will not then be the same, nor will there be the same occasions or necessities. He will not intercede for those that shall believe hereafter, because all will then be gathered and brought to the obedience of faith; nor for pardon of sin, or power against it, because there will be no sin to be pardoned or mortified; nor for increase of holiness, because all his people will be then come to their full growth, to the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ; nor for the acceptance of imperfect services, because then there will be no imperfection; nor for glory to come, because then it will be present.

Yet his intercession will not cease, there will be occasion and necessity for it in other respects. The virtue of it will be needful for the continuance in their state of perfection and happiness, that so hereby he may be the author of eternal salvation to them. For this he will still appear in our nature at the right hand of God, and appear as our advocate, and present his blood, that, by virtue thereof, they may have eternal redemption; for this he will still present his will and desires, and so will intercede for ever.

Use 1. This leads us to admire the loving-kindness of Christ to lost sinners, in that he lives ever to make intercession for them. His affection to his people, his condescension for them, appears herein every way admirable and astonishing. There are four severals held forth in the text, which may render this for ever wonderful in our eyes.

1. That this should be one end of his life. That he should live for us; live, to make intercession for us; live, that this should be an end and design of his life, to free us from misery, to promote our happiness and secure it; that the Son of God, infinitely happy and glorious without us, should make the concerns of men, inconceivably below him, the design of his life; and declare that he lives for this reason, and will live upon this account, to appear on their behalf. If any one, especially a person far above us, should assure us that he makes it one end of his life, and will design it while he lives, to mind our concerns, to promote all that may be for our advantage and happiness, and to appear for this on all occasions; what greater expression of love could be

expected? If one far above you, and who had no dependence on you, should declare this, it would seem just cause of wonder. How much more admirable is it, that the Son of God should give us this assurance; that though we are but as worms and grasshoppers in his sight, yet it shall be one end of his life to do us good, and he will employ himself while he lives to promote our interest, and make us happy!

It was a wonderful favour to man that this lower world should be ordered for his good; that all creatures in heaven and earth should be for his use and advantage, Psalms 8:3, Psalms 8:6-8. The consideration of this made David cry out with admiration, ver. 4. How much more wonderful is it, that the great and supreme Lord of heaven and earth should declare that he lives for man; that he lives for this end, to appear for our interest and concerns, that it should be any end of his life to intercede for us!

2. That he should live again for us; live more than once, more than one life for us. He had already lived one life for us, and had already lost one life for us; and when a new life was restored to him, he would live that life for us too. As though he had not thought it enough to live one life for us on earth, he lives another for us in heaven. He counts not two lives too much for us. Oh what manner of love was this! The whole world cannot shew anything like; amongst all the children of men, no instance of love can come near it. For a man to live a whole life for his dearest friend, to make it the business of his life sincerely to promote his true interest, would be an instance of rare love. But to die afterwards to save his life is rarer yet, and would be more wonderful. But if any one could be found that would die for his friend, yet being once dead, there is an end of his love and the expressions of it.

Oh, but Christ after he had lived one life for us; a life of so many years, a life of sorrows and sufferings; and after he had died for us such a death as no man could endure, considering the unsupportable pains and sorrows of it; yet his love survives his death, and being raised to another life, he lives that for us also, he orders that to be a continued expression of his tender care and love for his people. After he had lived for us in this world, and died for us too; he still lives in heaven to intercede for us.

3. That he lives in our nature, and appears for us, not only as God, but as man, as one of us, as nearly allied to us; as our kinsman, Job 19:25, ■ ■γχιστευς μο■, my nearest kinsman; our brother, so called on this account, Hebrews 2:11-12. It was a wonderful condescension, that he would take our nature, and unite it with the nature of God in one person; for what is man to him but a worm? It is more worthy of admiration than if the greatest monarch should take upon him the form, and live in the likeness of a worm. This was greater love and honour than he would shew the angels, Hebrews 2:16. He chose rather to be lower than the angels; for so in respect of our nature he is said to be, ver. 9. The great God of angels, upon the account of our nature, being made man, was made lower than the angels, though they be but his mere servitors.

How wonderful is it, that at his exaltation he did not cast off this rag, wherewith he was covered in his low condition; that he would retain that nature of ours, in which he had been so much humbled and debased, even to the form of a servant! Was it not enough that he lived in it, and died in it for us on earth; but will he still live in it for us in heaven; live again in our nature, have it seated at the right hand of God; and when he is in the height of his glory, then appear in our nature, as one most nearly concerned for us?

4. That he lives thus evermore, Revelation 1:18. And for what end he evermore lives, he expresses here by the apostle. This second life he lives for us is not like the first, a life of some certain years, but an endless life. He lives not for us a life of some hundreds, or some thousands, or some millions of years, but beyond all account of years, even for ever and ever. It is an everlasting life that he lives for us; it is one end and design of his life, while it lasts, to appear for us, and it lasts eternally. He ever lives in our nature; he is never weary, never ashamed of it, how mean and vile soever it be, as it is ours. He cast not off a human body, no, not when he had finished the work for which it was prepared, when he had offered himself a sacrifice; but presents the sacrifice, i. e., the soul and body that was sacrificed, for ever before God. It is placed at God's right hand, for an everlasting memorial and representation of his bloody death and sacrifice. The blood is not sprinkled once on the mercy-seat, or seven times before it, as under the law; but that sprinkling which it signified is continued for ever; the blood of sprinkling, wherewith our high priest entered into the holy place, remains there eternally.

He appears as our advocate, not only in two or three trials, or in this and that special cause; but in all trials, in all causes wherein we may be concerned, to eternity. He ever appears. He is always ready to quit us, as to every charge; to clear us as to all accusations for ever, which law or justice, which men or devils, may form against us. In his appearance and plea for us there lies an eternal challenge against all adversaries whatever. 'Who can lay anything to the charge?' &c., Romans 8:34.

He prefers not a petition for his people now and then only; he prays not for them in this or that season, as he did in the days of his flesh; but he ever intercedes. His intercession has the virtue of a continued, of an everlasting prayer. It is no less in effect, than if he were praying for them without ceasing, and that for ever. He continually, he eternally, presents his will and desires, that they may be saved to the uttermost. He is ever doing all this, he ever lives to do it; there is no end of his love, no end of these expressions of it. There should be no end of our praises, no end of our admiration, no end of our affectionate resentments of his endless love, in his everlasting intercession.

Use 2. This teaches us to live for Christ. This highly, strongly engages us to it. Shall be live for us again and again, and live eternally for us; and will not we live once, live a little while for him? The love of Christ in living ever for us should constrain us to live our whole life for him. But how? Why, after his example and method he shews us. His living for us in the text succeeded his dying for us; he was made a sacrifice before he lived to intercede for us. There is something we must die to, before we can live for him. We must sacrifice our worldly, carnal, and selfish interest; carnal and earthly designs, and affections, and inclinations, and actings, must be crucified. We must carefully observe and take notice how far they are alive, by their motions and actings, within and without. We must be sensible how pernicious their liveliness is, how dangerous, both in reference to Christ and our souls, making account they are deadly enemies both to him and us. And then proceed against them accordingly. Make it the design and business of our lives to get them put to death. Further than we are dead to these, we cannot live for Christ; these must first be made a sacrifice. And then positively, to live for him is to make it the chief end and constant design of our lives, to please him and be serviceable to him; to conform in all to his will, and employ all for his honour and interest. To aim at him in all, even in our earthly business; to consecrate all we are and have unto him; to lay out our time, strength, parts, enjoyment for him, and not for ourselves; not for the

pleasing, advancing or securing ourselves, but in such ways as he has declared to be honourable and well pleasing to him: this is to live for Christ; this is it which his living ever for us obliges us to. And none can be assured that Christ ever lives for them, but those who sincerely endeavour thus to live for him. This is it which the apostle calls importunately for, Romans 12:1-2.

Mercies. All whose mercies do most eminently appear in the death and intercession of Christ, his giving him to die and live for us. Your bodies, i. e. yourselves. Your whole persons, in the whole course of your lives. A living sacrifice. We are not to die for sin, Christ only died for the expiation of it. All that is to die in this sacrifice is our carnal and worldly lusts; the rest must live to God.

Holy. So it will be, when we consecrate all entirely unto God.

Acceptable. This will be more pleasing to him than any legal sacrifices or burnt offerings.

Reasonable service. The spiritual service which the word calls for, and calls for upon the highest and strongest reason. How this may be done, he explains, ver. 2, ‘Be not conformed to,’ imitate not the men of the world who live for themselves; but let your life be conformed to the good, &c., will of God. That is the way to live for God, therein it consists. To be living sacrifices, is to live for God. This is reasonable service, upon account of Christ’s living for us. And the apostle would have them argue themselves into it by this reason, because Christ died and lives for us, Romans 6:9-11. He died for sin to expiate it, and now lives with God to intercede for you. Therefore λογ■ζεσθε, count it reasonable, make account there is all reason you should die to sin and live for God. There is the strongest, the most cogent reason from Christ’s living for you, that you should live for him.

1. Christ is infinitely above us. It is a wonderful condescension that he will live a moment for us; he humbled himself that he might do it. But it is our greatest honour and advancement to live for him, we cannot live in a more noble and honourable capacity. It is the honour of the glorious angels to live for him; and if we live not thus, we live like slaves. The greatest persons on earth, who live for themselves, are no better; slaves to the world, slaves to Satan, the worst tyrant in the world; slaves to sin, which is worse than the devil, ver. 16; a life, a service, that you may be ashamed of, ver. 20, 21. It is a life of glory to live for Christ. The more perfectly we do it, the more gloriously we live. This is the difference betwixt earth and heaven: here we live for Christ imperfectly, there we shall live perfectly for him; that is our shame and disgrace, this will be our complete glory.

2. He does this freely. We never in the least obliged him to it; there was no engagement on him to live for us, but from his own free grace, and the good pleasure of his will. But there are infinite engagements on us to live for him. The mercies of God, which herein appear most conspicuously, engage us to it. The whole life of Christ eternally obliges us, for he lives eternally for us. His life in heaven, his death on earth, his life before that death, all were for us, all engage us to live for him. He calls not on us to live for him, till he has declared that he is living for us, and will do so for ever. He requires it not, till he have obliged us to the uttermost. It is a free favour in him, it is an absolute debt as to us. His love has so bound us, that heaven and earth may cry shame of us if we pay it not.

3. He had no need of us. He was infinitely happy and glorious without us, and might have been so eternally, if he had neither died nor lived for us. What advantage has he by us? What could he expect from such impotent, inconsiderable creatures as we are, Job 22:23, and Job 35:7-8; Psalms 16:2. The Seventy τ■ν ■γαθ■ν μο■ ο■ χρε■αν ■χεις. ‘Thou hast no need of my good

things,' but we have infinite need of, and advantage by him, and so are infinitely concerned to live for him. It is our true, our main interest to live for him, and not for ourselves; indeed, we cannot live so advantageously for ourselves any way, as by living wholly for him, for thereby we shall gain all that comfort, treasure, and happiness which he died to purchase, and which he ever lives to intercede for.

Use 3. Here is great encouragement to faith and hope. Firm ground to believe and expect salvation to the uttermost, for those that come unto God by Christ, i. e. to those that repent and believe; those that abandon sin in heart and life, i. e. in sincerity, resolution, and endeavour, and fly unto Christ for refuge, betaking themselves to him, to be ruled and saved by him. Such may have strong consolation from the intercession of Christ, Hebrews 6:18-20. Hope is an anchor fastening upon Christ within the veil, i. e. as interceding for us. That is it which is done within the veil; that is the only act of his priesthood in heaven, and upon that account he is high priest for ever. That which the high priest under the law did within the veil, was interceding. Christ's intercession makes it sure and stedfast; no waves or storms, from the justice of God, or the malice of Satan, or the weakness of such as cast anchor here, need make them lose anchor's hold, they may ride out all tempests, and be safe for ever, upon the account of Christ's living ever to make intercession.

Christ's intercession gives firm and assured hope of complete salvation; by virtue of this, whatever is a hindrance to it will be removed, whatever is requisite to begin, carry on, and finish it, will be obtained. This gives assurance, that all the riches of Christ's purchase shall be actually bestowed upon those that come, &c., for his intercession is the continued representation of his death and sacrifice, for this purpose, that the ends thereof may be accomplished, i. e. that believers may be possessed of all the fruits of his obedience and sufferings. This assures us of all the blessed and comfortable operations and workings of the Spirit in us and for us; for Christ intercedes, that the Spirit may be sent to supply his absence on earth, and to perform all those acts and offices for us, which are promised, and his titles import; to be an advocate, an intercessor in us, a comforter, an enlightening, convincing, persuading, sanctifying, and sealing Spirit. This gives assurance, that all the great and precious promises, all the articles of the covenant of grace, shall be performed to a tittle. The sum of all we have, Hebrews 8:10-12, all will be performed, because, ver. 6. Christ is mediator, he undertook for the performance, became surety for it, and so appears, ver. 1.

Let me more particularly specify some of those great and comfortable advantages, which flow from the intercession of Christ; in expectation of which it affords great encouragement to our faith and hope.

1. Pardon of sin, Zechariah 13:1. This fountain was opened in the death of Christ (it denotes the virtue of his blood shed for remission of sins); but it is kept open, and flows out continually, by virtue of his intercession. In reference to that, it is called the blood of sprinkling, the blood of the sacrifice being to be sprinkled upon, and before the mercy-seat by the high priest, when he was to intercede for the people, Hebrews 12:24. The virtue and effect whereof, is to sprinkle his people from an evil conscience, Hebrews 10:22, i. e. to cleanse the conscience from guilt.

It is not enough to do this once, when we first believe and return to God. For sin being too often repeated, and guilt renewed, the sprinkling must be renewed, there must be fresh and new application of this blood. And we have advantage and encouragement for this from Christ's

intercession. For though this blood was but once shed, at Christ's death, yet it is continually presented in his intercession, and so the virtue of it perpetually held forth for the cleansing of guilty souls, and daily sprinkling us from an evil conscience, 1 John 2:1. The children of God should be careful, above all things, above all persons, that they fall not into sin. Their sins are more heinous than those of others, being the provocations of sons and daughters. But if they be overtaken, though falling into sin should be more dreadful and grievous to them than falling into any calamity, there is gracious provision made upon their repenting and returning. If any man sin, there is an advocate, who pleads for his children. He pleads nothing but what is righteous, and what justice will admit as satisfactory, and pleads satisfaction made for their sin, and that by the sacrifice of himself. So it follows, ver. 2. A propitiatory sacrifice, offered himself for the expiation of sin, made his soul a sin-offering, and so made atonement for us, that so we might find his Father a God of forgiveness.

2. Acceptance of our services; sanctifying of them, that they may be acceptable to a holy God. This is done by virtue of Christ's intercession, and upon the account thereof faith has ground to expect it. Under the law, the priest was to bear the iniquities of the holy things of the children of Israel, that they might be accepted, Exodus 28:38, Numbers 18:1. This they did by laying those sins upon the sacrifice which was to suffer for them, Leviticus 10:17. And to signify the sacrifice was to bear the sin, the priest laid his hand on the head of it, Exodus 29:10. Herein the priests were a type of Christ; only he was both priest and sacrifice; he laid not the iniquities of our holy things upon another, but he himself bore our sins in his body, 1 Peter 2:24. He bore them, so as to carry them away; and so removes what might render them unacceptable. The high priest, when he was to intercede for the people, is appointed to carry much sweet incense into the most holy place, Leviticus 16:12-13. Christ's intercession, in reference to the holy services of his people, is represented by incense, Revelation 8:3. Christ intercedes, by presenting the merits of his obedience and sufferings; and this is the incense which he offers with the prayers and services of the saints. Herewith the mercy-seat is covered, and their services (for which they might otherwise die) offered herewith by the hand of their intercessor, become pleasing and acceptable to him who sits upon the throne; by virtue hereof they ascend as the savour of a sweet smell, Php 4:18, 1 Peter 2:5. Spiritual sacrifices, though accompanied with such failings and weakness as might render them distasteful to an holy God, become acceptable, delightful to him, by virtue of Christ's intercession.

3. Victory over our spiritual enemies, those that oppose Christ's interest, and our salvation. Sin, Satan, his wicked agents in the world, and death itself. The intercession of Christ gives us ground to expect and be confident that these shall all in due time be fully conquered and subdued, Hebrews 10:12-13. Christ our high priest having finished his oblation, his sacrifice on earth, the only act of his priesthood that remains is his intercession; this is here signified by his sitting at the right hand of God. The expression denotes that he is able to bring down these enemies, that he has all power for it, Psalms 80:17, Luke 22:69; and that he is willing too. He expects it as that which he deserves. It is the merit of his humiliation and sufferings. This he presents at the right hand of God, and so intercedes for it. Upon this account the Father is engaged to see it done, Psalms 110:2. So that how many, how powerful, how prevalent soever the enemies of Christ's interest and our happiness are now in the world, yet faith may certainly conclude from the intercession of Christ, that they shall fall. He will in due time bring them all under his feet, they shall

be made his footstool; he will put his feet upon their necks, as Joshua's captains did upon the necks of the kings of Canaan, Joshua 10:24. The intercession of Christ gives us the encouragement which is there given them, ver. 25.

Thus will the Lord do to sin particularly. That is the most dangerous, the most formidable enemy of all other. None of the rest, without this, could hurt you. It wars against your souls, but it wars against Christ too; the war is his, as well as yours; it is his enemy, not yours only. It is his interest, as well as yours, to have it subdued. It is one of those enemies that he appears against at the right hand of God. He is able and willing to have it quite vanquished; he expects till it be done; he intercedes for it as a conquest which cost him his blood. Upon this account the Father undertakes, this with the rest shall be brought under foot. Be but true to the interest of Christ and your souls in opposing it, and maintaining the conflict, and then, as sure as Christ intercedes at God's right hand, so sure will these lusts be subdued and made Christ's footstool; his intercession gives faith assurance of it, Joshua 5:13-14. Joshua had not greater encouragement, that he should prosper in the war against the Canaanites, by Christ's appearing to him on earth, than we have to prevail against sin by his appearing for us in heaven.

4. For grace and spiritual blessing, for the increase of grace, for the means of grace, the continuance and efficacy. All this he appears for, and his intercession gives great encouragement to our faith to expect them by virtue of it. For spiritual blessings, Ephesians 1:3, ■ν ■πουρανοις, some render 'in heavenly things,' i. e. blessings which belong to heaven, which come from heaven, and are appointed to lead us to it. But it is better rendered, 'in heavenly places;' for so the word is used both in this chapter, 1:20, and the next, ver. 6. And so we may read it, 'with spiritual blessings in Christ, who is in heavenly places,' as ver. 20 directs us. We have these blessings through Christ, as he is now in heaven at the right hand of God, interceding for us, i. e. presenting his will and desires that the blessings purchased by his blood may be actually conferred on us. Hereby faith may conclude that Christ is both able and willing we should be blessed with spiritual blessings. He is willing, because he intercedes for us: he is able, because he intercedes in heavenly places, at the right hand of God. For increase of grace, John 10:10. What Christ came for to earth, he intercedes for in heaven. For his intercession is in pursuit of the ends of his coming, that they may be effectually accomplished. Now he came, that his people might have spiritual life, and abundance of it; and so he appears in heaven, that they may have it more and more. Therefore in the sense of spiritual wants, weaknesses, and falling short of those degrees of grace you should attain; that strength, growth, liveliness, activeness, you should have arrived at; look up to Christ, as interceding at the right hand of God, and appearing for these ends, that your souls' wants may be supplied, that out of weakness you may be made strong, that of his fulness you may receive, &c, that the smoking flax may flame, and the bruised reed grow strong. He lives to intercede for this, John 14:19. If you had no hopes of this, but from the virtue of your own prayers, your hands might be weak. But the power of Christ's intercession is engaged for it; he lives for this end, that you may live, and have life in more abundance. For the means of grace, Psalms 68:18. It is spoken in reference to Christ. These gifts he receives as fruits of his intercession. And he receives, that he may give them. So it is in the apostle, Ephesians 4:8, &c. Christ, being ascended to the right hand of God, appears there as a conqueror. And as conquerors were wont, in their triumphs, to bestow largesses, donatives, so he gives gifts. And these gifts are officers for the ministry of the word; and they are to continue, till the mystical body of Christ, all the members, be

perfected. So that, though Satan and his agents design and endeavour to destroy the ministry, and bereave us of the means of grace, yet while Christ has any people in the world to be converted and edified, the ministry shall be continued one way or other. It is as sure as that Christ ascended, and is at God's right hand; for there he intercedes for this purpose. For the efficacy of the means, John 17:17, he prays that the word of truth may be effectual for the working and promoting of holiness. And what he prayed for on earth, he intercedes for in heaven. For his intercession in heaven is conformable to his prayer and intercession on earth. The differences that are between are for the encouragement of faith. He interceded on earth in a state of humiliation; he intercedes in heaven in a glorious condition: his power and interest, at the right hand of God, is in its highest exaltation. He interceded on earth, by virtue of the sacrifice not then offered. He intercedes in heaven, by virtue of his sacrifice already offered. He pleads for the purchase upon account of the price already paid. But as to the things interceded for, they are the same; he presents his will and desires in heaven for that which he prayed for on earth. And here we see he prayed for holiness, the growth and increase of it; for the means, and their efficacy.

Perseverance. The intercession of Christ is a sure ground of this, from whence faith may certainly conclude it. We need go no further for this than the text. He is able to save those who come to him, to the uttermost; and he is willing to save them, for he intercedes for it, and that is a presenting his will and desires for this purpose. Now they cannot be saved unless they persevere in the way to salvation. Therefore, being able and willing to save them, he is able and willing to make them persevere in the way to salvation. And what he is able and willing to have done, shall infallibly be effected. The apostle from Christ's intercession concludes, that nothing shall separate us from the love of God, Romans 8:34-35. While Christ's intercession continues, the love of God to his people will continue; and while his love continues, it will secure them from what is inconsistent with his love. This is it which Christ intercedes for in heaven, for this is it which he prayed for on earth, John 17:11.

Joy and comfort. In the day of expiation, after the high priest had been interceding with blood and incense in the most holy place, the jubilee was to be proclaimed, the time of greatest joy to the people, Leviticus 25:9. The issue and consequence of Christ's intercession is joy, matter of great joy. It is ground of everlasting consolation, 2 Thessalonians 2:16. Christ, when he was on earth, promised he would intercede in heaven for the Spirit of consolation, John 14:16. He assures his disciples that he will pray the Father to give them his Spirit, as, for other acts and offices, which the word imports, so expressly to be a comforter, and that for ever. Not only for them, but for all his people to the end of the world. He is interceding for this for ever. We have further assurance for this, in that he prayed for it on earth, John 17:13.

Glory. Christ's interceding in heaven makes it as sure that they shall be glorified in heaven with him, as though they were already, Ephesians 2:6. He sits in heavenly places interceding; and, upon this account, those that come to him are as sure to be saved to the uttermost, as sure to sit in heavenly places with him, as though they were already with him. He sits there in our nature, as one with us; we are one with him who is in heavenly places; while we look upon him at the right hand of God, we may see ourselves in heavenly places. He sits there as our head; the body is so far in heaven, as the head is there. He is there as our forerunner, Hebrews 6:20. He is there to make way for us, John 14:2-3. He prepares it by interceding, that is his great work for us in heaven. What he intercedes for there, we may understand by what he prayed for on earth, John

17:22, John 17:24.

Relief in all weaknesses, infirmities, troubles, sufferings, whatever needs compassion or relief. Hebrews 4:14-15, Christ our high priest is now passed into the heavens, and the only act of his priesthood in heaven is intercession for us. And he intercedes as one touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He sees all that we suffer by, in soul or body. He sees it all, so as to feel it, to be touched with the feeling of it. He is touched with the feeling of it, as one that has felt the like himself. He feels it effectually, so as to appear for our relief, so as to intercede for the procuring of what we want, securing us from what we fear, easing us of what is grievous, or obtaining for us that which is as good or better.

He accommodates his intercession to all our infirmities, according to the exigencies of them, so as to intercede for supply, ease, deliverance, relief, so far as it is needful, as soon as it is seasonable, whenever it will be good for us. The intercession of Christ affords support to faith, and comfort to souls compassed about with infirmities, in the worst circumstances that can befall them, in all that may be grievous to them. All grievances whatever are comprised under infirmities, and this gives ground to expect relief, as to everything that is a grievance; especially taking in the ground of it in those words, ‘but was in all things tempted,’ or exercised like unto us.

Art thou poor? &c. Why, Christ is touched with the feelings of a poor condition, and intercedes as one touched with the feeling of it. It was once his own case. And so in other cases. Vide Serm. on Hebrews 4:15.

Answer of our prayers. The intercession of Christ gives great encouragement to come to the throne of grace, and ground to believe that we shall have admission and success, Hebrews 10:19-22. The people under the law were excluded from the holiest, the high priest alone was to enter it with the blood of the sacrifice; but, by the blood of Jesus, presented in his intercession, all believers have boldness to approach the holiest, and make their addresses there. By him way is made for us, a new and living way, through him who ever lives, in opposition to the old veil, which was an inanimate thing. It is made for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, which, when it was separated from his soul by death on the cross, it is said the veil of the temple was rent, Matthew 27:51. That veil, which excluded priest and people from access to the most holy place, and the sight of the mercy-seat there. This was rent, to signify that now a way was made to the mercy-seat, and nothing left to hinder our access to it; especially having an high priest, an advocate, an intercessor, there ready to appear for us. By virtue of this we may draw near, not only with faith but full assurance, that we shall obtain our requests, Hebrews 4:14-16. Since we have an high priest, whose office and work it is in heaven to make intercession for us, and who intercedes as touched with the feeling of what we want, or fear, or suffer; upon this ground we may approach the mercy-seat, we may come to the throne of grace, and come boldly, without fears, or doubts, or jealousies; without making any question, but that we shall obtain, &c. Faith is hereby assured, that we may obtain whatever will be a mercy to us, and that is all which is desirable. We may have it freely from grace, which gives to those that are most unworthy. We may find grace, which gives without money, without price, which expects no valuable consideration for it at our hands. We need but come to meet with it; we need but ask to obtain it. We may have it in abundance from the throne of grace, from him who sits on the throne to shew himself gracious; whose glory it is, to give like himself, the King of kings, to give royally, liberally, magnificently. We

may have all this in time of need, whenever we need it, whenever it will be seasonable to have it. We shall not want what is best for us, nor when it is best. All this we have assurance of, because we have such an high priest interceding for us; upon this account we may come boldy for it, and expect it.

There are many things in Christ's intercession which encourage us to come to the throne of grace, and to be much and often there; and also give assurance that we shall not come in vain; that we shall find the mercy we seek, and obtain the grace we desire, even all those great and glorious things already specified which Christ makes intercession for. When we pray for the same things for which Christ intercedes, and consider that while we are praying, Christ at the same time appears at the throne of grace on our behalf for the same things, how can we doubt but they will be granted? Though we deserve to be denied, Christ our intercessor will meet with no repulse. That our prayers may be prevalent, this is one condition requisite, that they be made in faith, James 1:6, Mark 11:24, Matthew 21:22. Now, there is no stronger ground in the world for the establishing of faith in prayer than Christ's intercession. His intercession gives assurance of the success of our prayers upon another account. It is by virtue thereof that we have the Spirit to help us to pray; and that which proceeds from the assistance of the Spirit will be acceptable and prevail, Zechariah 12:10. It is by virtue of Christ's intercession that this promise is accomplished, John 14:16. The word παρακλητος signifies not only a comforter, but an advocate; and the Spirit is promised, and declared to be an advocate for his people, both unto men and unto God, to plead for them or help them, to manage their plea, both with men, Matthew 10:20, and with God, Romans 8:1-39. So that when Christ promises that he will pray the Father to give us another advocate, he promises to intercede for us that we may have another intercessor in us; and if we take notice how the Spirit acts as an intercessor, how he helps our infirmities, what he is ready to do for us in prayer, it will be a great encouragement to believe that our prayers, through his help, shall succeed.

I have shewed particularly what great things the intercession of Christ gives assurance of. Let me shew upon what ground we may have assurance hereof by his intercession.

1. Christ has power, all power, to effect what he intercedes for; and this is a great support to faith, and that which we often doubt of, though we do not observe. Can God prepare a table, &c.? can Christ do all those things for me which I hear he intercedes for? Yes, assuredly he can; for his intercession imports no less power than good will. He is at the right hand of God interceding, Romans 8:34. That is his work at the right hand, &c. Now, his sitting at the right hand of God is a metaphorical expression; we must not take it literally; for God is a spirit, not a body; he has no right hand nor left. But thereby is signified the fulness of power which Christ our intercessor has in heaven, and so it is frequently used in Scripture. Psalms 77:10, in opposition to his own infirmity and weakness, he would consider the right hand, i. e. the power of God; so Psalms 118:14-16, he expresses the power of God by the right hand; and Luke 22:69, Christ intercedes at the right hand of power, i. e. he has all power to accomplish what he intercedes for. He not only desires these great things for his people, but is able to effect them. He intercedes for the Spirit, John 14:16, and he sends the Spirit, John 16:7. He receives gifts as the effect of his intercession, Psalms 68:8. And he gives those gifts, Ephesians 4:8. He does not only ask and receive in behalf of his people, but has power to give. He intercedes that those who come unto God by him may be saved to the uttermost. And he is able to save, &c. He is able to remove all impediments, to conquer all difficulties, to bestow every degree of grace and spiritual strength, which is requisite that they may

be saved to the uttermost, to make them conquerors, and more, &c.

2. He has right. He intercedes for nothing but what he has right to obtain, nothing but what is due to him. He sues but for his purchase, that for which he has paid the full value to a righteous God. He has bought his people, 1 Corinthians 6:20; he has purchased their persons, Acts 20:28; and so has right to dispose of them as his own, according to the purpose of his grace; he has purchased the kingdom of heaven for them, Ephesians 1:14 he has purchased grace, and the means of grace, faith, holiness, perseverance, and all spiritual blessings; glory, and holiness the way to it, and all good things on earth. This is the sum of what he intercedes for, and this is no more than what is due to him. His blood was the price of it: the price is paid and accepted, and he appears for the possession; and his intercession will as certainly prevail for it, as it is certain that God is just and righteous, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. To us, upon our account, belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face; we have nothing to plead but free mercy. But that which Christ pleads for on our behalf is due to him, and therefore will assuredly be granted. His intercession, as I shewed before, is grounded upon merit.

3. He has interest, the greatest imaginable, as much interest as is possible. He intercedes, not with a stranger, or a friend, or a common relative, but with his Father, one who loves him as himself, John 5:20, and withholds nothing from him; he has as much interest in him as in himself, and can prevail as much with him as with himself; and can no more be denied by him in what he desires than he can deny himself, for they are both one, John 10:30; they have not only one interest, and one design, but one essence and one will. What Christ wills, the Father wills, and therefore what he desires it is granted, it is done; that which he intercedes for is his Father's will. Christ will have us say to the Father, when we pray, 'Thy will be done,' for it is no other than his own will; and heaven and earth shall pass away, rather than one iota or tittle of it shall not be fulfilled.

4. He has affections and compassions for us, and so intercedes affectionately, compassionately, as one greatly concerned for us; and that assures us we shall not miss of the great advantages he intercedes for, Hebrews 4:15. The apostle shews what an high priest we have, how he executes the office of an high priest in heaven for us, i. e. how he there intercedes for us; for his intercession is the only part of his priestly office that he performs in heaven; and he does it as one touched, &c. Herein the comparison holds betwixt him and the Levitical high priest, expressed Hebrews 5:2 and Hebrews 2:14. And as he is high priest and intercessor, both as God and man, so he has for us the affections, not only of God, but of a man; and accordingly intercedes for us, as one that has such love, care, pity, compassions for us, as are in the hearts of the children of men, the weaknesses excepted.

5. He is obliged; invested in an office, he is under the obligation of it: it is his office, as he is mediator, to intercede. His honour is engaged, and depends both upon the execution of his office, and the success of the performance. If he should either neglect it, or be unsuccessful in it, it would reflect ill upon him. It is impossible that either should fall out.

He took not the office upon him of his own accord, without a call, but the Father called him to it, engaged him in it, expects the discharge of it, Hebrews 5:4-5. The Father called him to be an high priest, and so to intercede; he would not have called him to it, but with a design to comply with him in it, and to be prevailed with by his intercession, Isaiah 42:1. This is spoken of Christ, and applied

to him, Matthew 12:18. He is called his servant, in respect of the office of mediatorship, a principal act of which is his intercession. Uphold; the Hebrew doctor renders it, whom I lean upon, i.e. whom I trust to or rely on, for the performance of the office I have called him to. My beloved, one whom I have chosen, beloved and preferred before any other to this great office, and well pleased with him for his undertaking and discharging it.

Now, if intercession be an act of Christ's office, and his honour engaged upon his sucess therein; if the Father employs him in it, loves him for it, is well pleased with his performance, with his interceding: there can be no question but it will be admirably, eternally successful, John 10:17. He laid down his life to give satisfaction, he took it up again to make intercession. The Father loves him for both, and in both the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.

6. He has a personal, a particular respect for every of his servants in his interceding. It is as comfortable, will be as effectual, and gives as much assurance of success, as if now in heaven he did pray and intercede for every of us by name. If you knew that Christ now in heaven were praying for you by name, you would not doubt of being saved to the uttermost. Why, that which his intercession imports is no less in effect. The high priest under the law carried the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast when he went into the holiest. Christ does not carry the names of the tribes of his people upon his breast only, but every of them in particular is in his mind and heart while he is interceding. There is in heaven a special, a personal regard of all that come unto God by him, as if their names were there recorded, Luke 10:20, Revelation 21:12. Christ remembers them as effectually, as if he presented them by name to his Father in his intercession, Revelation 13:8. Their names are written in the Lamb's book, that was slain, that was sacrificed, and he that was sacrificed is the same who intercedes. He knows who are his, 2 Timothy 2:19, and how; he knows them by name, John 10:3; and as he knows, so he presents, so he intercedes for them. Those who come unto God by him, may have as much assurance of the comfort and advantage of his intercession, as if they heard him in heaven interceding for them by name. For temporal deliverance. Christ, the great intercessor, is greatly concerned for his people in their outward distresses and calamities. Let me insist a little on this, as being seasonable. Our danger and distress is very great: we are threatened with ruin in all our concerns, and our posterity after us. Our main support in this sinking condition is, that Christ appears for us, and lives to do it. He is concerned for his people when they are in the depths, he has always been so, Genesis 48:16. This angel is Christ, who redeemed him. The word is ■■■, the Redeemer, as Christ is called, Job 19:25, Isaiah 59:20. He redeemed Jacob not only from eternal miseries but delivered him out of all the troubles and calamites he had met with in the world. But how does he deliver his people from outward calamities? Why, by his blood, by that presented, by his intercession, Zechariah 9:11. They were delivered out of Egypt, out of the wilderness, out of Babylon, by which the eternal redemption of believers is shadowed out, and confirmed by the blood of the covenant, by this blood presented in his intercession. Upon this account, when our condition seems helpless, as theirs in a pit of water; when we see not either how we can live in our present circumstances, or how we can get out of them; when we are encompassed with dangers and distresses on every side, as if we were in a strong prison, without means, and so without hopes, either to subsist in it, or get out of it: yet by virtue of this blood we may be 'prisoners of hope.' Upon the account of Christ's blood shed and presented, there is hope concerning this thing; even concerning temporal deliverance, when all things seem to look upon us with a hopeless aspect.

Deliverance out of all sorts of troubles seems ascribed to Christ as interceding, Isaiah 63:9. Who is this that saved and delivered his people in all their troubles and calamities? to whom so much love is ascribed, so much sympathy, so much compassion, so much tenderness and relief towards his people, in their distresses and dangers, all their days? Why, it is Christ, called ‘the Angel of his presence,’ Hebrews 9:24. All this was expressed to, all this was done for, his ancient people. Not some, but all the days of old, by the Angel of his presence, by Christ appearing in the presence of God for them; i. e. by Christ interceding for them. And all this may be expected, and will be done for his people now, by the Angel of his presence; in all days of distress and calamity, present or to come, even all their days, because he ever appears in the presence of God, he ever lives to make intercession.

Further, Christ is represented plainly, expressly, actually interceding for his people in reference to their outward distresses and calamities, Zechariah 1:12. This angel is Christ, God and man in one person. He is called God, Jehovah, ver. 9, and he is called man, ver. 8, 10. It is Christ, the Son of God, who in the fulness of time became man, who expresses such an affectionate resentment of the sufferings and calamities of his people; who is tenderly sensible both of the weight and continuance of them, and importunes the Father to turn from his indignation, and shew them mercy in sending relief and deliverance. And his intercession was effectual, and prevails for a gracious return, ver. 13. And this particularly expressed and opened in the following verses. The return was gracious and full of consolations.

Hereby it appears that faith may expect great and comfortable advantages from the intercession of Christ, in reference to outward sufferings and calamities.

1. The turning away of God’s anger and indignation. Upon Christ’s interposal, the Lord’s indignation was diverted from his people, and turned upon their oppressors and persecutors, ver. 14, 15. When the Lord’s anger is turned away, the bitterness of any affliction is past. Though the Lord writ bitter things against his people before, yet upon Christ’s appearing for them, he speaks good and comfortable words.

2. Faith may expect sympathy and compassions under sufferings, instead of wrath and indignation. Our great High Priest, who intercedes for us, is touched with the sense of our sufferings; and sufferings pass under the name of infirmities in the style of the apostle. He has as effectual a sense of them as if himself felt them. The Angel of his presence, he who appears in the presence of God for us, in all our afflictions he is afflicted. Whatever pressure lies upon us he bears us, and so is apprehensive of the weight of both.

3. Faith may expect that sufferings shall be proportioned to our strength. If our strength be small, sufferings will be, some way or other, made lighter; or if they be heavier, our strength will be proportionably increased. He who intercedes for us, as he is a merciful, so he is a faithful high priest, 1 Corinthians 10:13. He will take care that they shall not be too heavy, nor lie too long. When Satan or his agents would sink them, Christ interposes with a The Lord rebuke thee, Zechariah 3:1-2.

4. Faith may expect on this account that we shall be secured from the evil of sufferings; and when the evil is gone, there is nothing in them to be feared; for nothing is reasonably an object of fear, but something that is evil, John 17:1-26. He prays not they may be taken out of the world, nor that

they may be kept from troubles and sufferings, but from the evil of them. And what is there else to be desired? We cannot desire to be freed from the good of them, we need not desire to be freed from that which is neither good nor evil in them. All that we need, all that we can in reason desire to be freed from, is the evil; and this Christ prayed for, this he intercedes for.

5. Faith may expect deliverance in due time, when it is best, when most for his honour and interest, and most for our spiritual advantage and comfort. And that is as soon as we can in reason desire it; for before it be good in those respects, it is not desirable. Upon Christ's interceding for his people in their distress, the Lord prepares instruments from all quarters to cut off the horns which pushed, and gored, or dispersed his people. Their power and greatness could not secure them. Horns, in the prophetic style, signify kings or sovereign powers. Upon Christ's appearing for his people, they are cut off, their power is broken, so that the oppressed are no more in danger of their push.

6. Faith may expect, till deliverance come, that which is better than deliverance, i. e. an holy and fruitful improvement of suffering; and such an improvement of them is better than freedom from sufferings.

BELIEVERS' COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER AND SON And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.—1 John 1:3.

Here is heaven in the text, as much happiness as men and angels do or can desire, happiness both formal and objective; and the sweet issue of both in the words following: 'These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.' Joy, fulness of joy; joy, which is the smile of happiness and the flower of glory. The object of this happiness, or the object which is our happiness, is God in Christ, the Father and the Son, the Father of Christ, and the Father of believers. 'I go to my Father and your Father;' his Father by eternal generation, ours by adoption; his, quoad rem et modum subsistendi; ours, quoad effectum, et modum operandi; which shews itself in indulgence, love, care, pity, providence. 'And his Son Jesus Christ,' that is the other object of our happiness; he who, ver. 1, is called 'the Word of life,' and, ver. 2, 'eternal life.' Now eternal life and happiness are reciprocal, and used as convertible terms in Scripture. Christ is the word of life in himself, eternal life to us: the word of life, essentialiter; eternal life, causaliter. And this is that happiness, that eternal life, which we have from him and by him. This fellowship in the text, which we call formal happiness, the word κοινων■α, is rendered by some consortium, converse; by others, societas, fellowship; by others, communio, so Beza. And this does best express the word, and therefore we will use it, and the rather because it includes both the former. And from the connection we might observe that fellowship, or communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, is eternal life or happiness; for what is happiness but the enjoyment of the chiefest good? Now the Father and the Son are the chiefest good, and communion with them is the enjoyment of them; for then we enjoy the chief good, when we are united to it, when we have interest in it, and when we partake of it. But communion includes all these, as will appear in the explication. And thence we might infer that eternal life is not confined to heaven. If we take eternal life for happiness, a man may have eternal life on earth. Heaven is not so much local as we imagine. Communion with God is heaven, and happiness, and eternal life. He that hath communion with God is in heaven while he is on earth; and if a man could be there without this, he would want heaven even in heaven. There is no essential difference betwixt happiness on earth and happiness in heaven; they differ but gradually.

If a man on earth could enjoy perfect communion with God, he would be perfectly happy. But I pass by this to that which is express in the text, and I shall insist upon this.

Obs. Believers have communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. We need not seek out more proofs. That which will be most profitable is an inquiry into the nature of this communion, wherein it consists. Take an account of this in three particulars. Communion includes, 1, real union; 2, reciprocal community; 3, familiar converse.

1. Union. This is the basis of communion. Believers are united to the Father and the Son, and the Father and the Son to them. They are united morally, conjugally, mystically. The bond of moral union is love, gluten animarum, by which spirits cleave to one another, nay, penetrate into one another and mix together so as they become one. Jonathan loved David as his own soul, as though one soul had informed and animated both bodies. Thus friends are united. Now believers are the friends of God. Abraham was called the friend of God, James 2:23. 'Ye are my friends,' says Christ to his disciples, and in them to us, John 15:14-15.

There is also a conjugal union. By this men are ■ν σ■μα, as by the other they are μ■α ψυχ■. And thus we are united to the Father and the Son. We are the spouse of Christ, and the Father has married us in an everlasting covenant. Christ, by assuming our nature, became ■ν σ■μα, with us, Ephesians 5:1-33. And by this conjugal conjunction we are ■ν πνε■μα with him, 1 Corinthians 6:17. 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.'

There is also a mystical union, which is set forth frequently, though not fully, by physical unions. We are united to Christ as the branches to the vine, John 15:15; as the members to the head, Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 5:23; as the building to the foundation, 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; and, which is nearer than all these, as the soul and body. Christ is wholly in every believer, and wholly in every part, as anima is tota in toto corpore, et tota in qualibet parte; therefore, Galatians 2:20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' As the soul liveth in the body, and the body is animated by the soul, so is the soul animated by Christ, and depends upon him as much for spiritual life, as the body depends upon the soul for natural life. He is the actus primus, the principle of our supernatural being and operations; and, abstracting all imperfection from the word, Christ may be called the forma informans of a sanctified soul, as it is sanctified. But there is an expression beyond all this, John 17:21-22, 'That they all may be one, as thou art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us'; and ver. 22, 'that they may be one, even as we are one.'

2. Community. The Lord and believers have all this in common. And this seems to be the proper signification of κοινωνια. It may be rendered as well community as communion, if we may conclude from its original. Π■ντα τ■ν φιλ■ν κο■να, says the philosopher, and gives the reason in his Ethics, ■ν κοινων■■ γ■ρ ■ φιλ■α, friendship consists in community, and so does fellowship. Now there is betwixt the Lord and believers a fourfold community. (1.) Of enjoyment; (2.) Of affections; (3.) Of interests; (4.) Of privileges. There is a community,

(1.) Of enjoyments. The Lord is ours, and we are his. 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.' That is the covenant. The 'Lord is their portion,' Psalms 16:5, Lamentations 3:24. And they are the Lord's portion: Deuteronomy 32:9, 'The Lord's portion is his people.' We have interest in his glorious essence and attributes. In his omnipotency, that is our safety. By it we are more secure than if all the hosts of heaven and earth did surround us. And if we could use faith when we

seem most deserted in the world, we might see more with us than against us; we might behold, with Elisha's servant, 2 Kings 6:17, the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire about us. His wisdom is for us. That laid the plot of our happiness from eternity, and does carry it on successfully, maugre all the plots and stratagems of men and devils; and we, relying upon the conduct of omnisciency, are further from miscarrying than if all the wisdom of angels and policy of men were engaged for us.

We have interest in mercy. Mercy is peculiarly the saints'; no creatures partake of mercy but they, and they have nothing but mercy. All the ways of God are mercy to them, Psalms 25:10. The greatest afflictions, yea, in some sense the greatest sins, the issue makes it fœlix culpa. The saints are vessels of mercy; it falls into them here, but they shall fall into it hereafter, and be filled therewith, as a vessel cast into the sea. We swim in streams of mercy from one condition to another, till at last we be swallowed up in the ocean of mercy. In all-sufficiency. This is our riches, and we are richer in this interest than if we were actually possessed of the whole world. I am ■■ ■■■, says God to Abraham. And he is the same to all the faithful. 'To him that overcometh I will give to inherit all things,' Revelation 21:7. And he giveth us π■ντα πλουσ■ως, 'all things richly to enjoy,' 1 Timothy 6:17. Thus God, and with him all things, are ours; and so, reciprocally, we are his, and every part of us, our body, soul, and spirit. A saint is the temple of God, 1 Corinthians 3:16, and every part of him is dedicated and consecrated to God; he is ■ν■θημα, that is not ■ν■θεμα. Our body, that is the outer court; our souls, that is the holy place; our spirits, that is the holy of holies. God is most in this, and manifests himself most gloriously to it. 'This is my resting place, here will I dwell.' All the faculties of our souls and members of our bodies must be weapons and instruments of righteousness. And as there is this community betwixt us and the Father, so also betwixt us and the Son. His nature is ours, and ours is his; he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. His riches is ours, and our poverty his: 2 Corinthians 8:9, 'He became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.' His righteousness is ours, and our sins are his; he made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Corinthians 5:21. His happiness is ours, and our curse is his, Galatians 3:1-29. He was made a curse for us, that he might free us from the curse of the law. His glory is ours, and our shame was his; he took upon him the form of a servant, that we might be made the sons of God. He was made the most contemptible and abject of men, for so Isaiah 53:3 is rendered contemptissimus abjectissimusque virorum, ■■■ ■■■■■, desitus virorum, i.e. in quo desinunt viri, ita ut ipse non habeatur pro viro. He was brought so low, as he seemed not to be a man; and we are exalted so high, as we seem not to be men. He was the reproach of men and shame of the people, and we are the glory of Christ: John 17:22, 'And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.'

(2.) Community of affections. The Lord and his saints have the same affections, running in the same channel, fixed on the same objects. There is mutual love. The saints love the Lord, and are beloved of him. 'I love those that love me,' says Christ, the Father's Wisdom, in Proverbs. And John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,' &c. A saint loves whatever resembles Christ, whatever belongs to him: his image, his people, his ordinances. And the Lord loves whatever belongs to a saint as a saint; his love extends itself to his friends, his goods, his posterity; he shews mercy unto thousands of those that love him.

There is also a reciprocal delight. The Lord takes pleasure in his saints, and in their services; they are all his Hephzibahs, his rest, his joy, his peculiar treasure. And they delight in him and his administrations; they prefer him before their chief joy. The soul says, ‘Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I can love in comparison of thee.’ And the Lord says to his saints, ‘Whom have I on earth but thee? and there is none in the world that I love like thee.’ So mutual desires. The soul desires God’s glory, and the Lord desires the soul’s happiness. The soul desires to be with Christ, and cries, ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.’ Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or a young hart upon the mountain of spices. And Christ desires the soul should be with him, and calls, Song of Solomon 2:10, ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. John 17:24, ‘I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me.’ So for hatred. The Lord hates sin and sinners, and so does a saint: Psalms 139:21, ‘Do not I hate those that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee?’ Here is an exact compliance, they do idem velle, et idem nolle; love the same things, and hate the same things.

(3.) A community of interest. The Lord and saints have the same ends, the same designs, the same friends and enemies. So Jehoshaphat expresses his society with Ahab, ‘I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my chariots as thy chariots.’ The Lord aims at his own glory and our happiness, and we aim at his glory and our happiness. And though he may seem more to seek his glory than our happiness, and we may fear we seek our happiness more than his glory, yet indeed these two are inseparable and almost coincident. That which advances his glory promotes our happiness, and that which makes us most happy makes him most glorious. Wisdom and mercy have made a sweet connection betwixt his honour and our happiness, so that they cannot be disjoined. We need no more fear to come short of happiness than we need to fear that the Lord will come short of his glory, for these two are embarked together. And as they seek the same ends, so they choose the same means. There is not only μ■α βο■λησις, but προα■ρεσις. A saint will use no means but what the Lord prescribes and approves; he will rather depend on the wisdom of God for the success of those means which seem most improbable, if the Lord has prescribed them, than consult with or rely upon carnal reason; rather hazard the loss of a kingdom than set up a golden calf, though Jeroboam, a stranger to God, did; rather die than deny the truth, to save his life; rather lose the world than tell an officious lie. And as they have the same end and means, so in the prosecution of these they have the same friends and enemies. He is not a friend in the Lord’s account that is an enemy to the saints; nor is he the saint’s friend that is the Lord’s enemy. Those that hate thee (says David), and rise up against thee, I hate them with a perfect hatred, I count them my enemies. And they have the same account of things as of persons; what is done against one is done against both, and what is done for one is done for both. The wicked they persecute the saints, and the Lord looks upon them as persecutors of him: ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’ And Saul need not wonder at this, if he had considered that of the psalmist, ‘He that toucheth you, touches the apple of my eye.’ And therefore the sufferings of the saints are called the sufferings of Christ. The saints they do good to their brethren, feed, clothe, and visit them, and the Lord takes it as done to himself: Matthew 25:34-35, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father; I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: sick, and ye visited me: in prison, and ye came unto me.’ But how could this be, think the saints, seeing Christ is above these kindnesses? He tells: ver. 40, ‘The King shall say,’ and he says it with an asseveration, ‘Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’

(4.) Community of privileges. The Lord condescends to make the saints, so far as they are capable, partakers of his own privileges, even those which no creatures else partake of.

It is his privilege to be omnipotent, and the saints have something that resembles this. One would think Paul speaks as much, when he glories that he can do all things, Christ strengthening him. And every saint may presume as much.

It is the Lord's privilege to be omniscient, yet he vouchsafes some shadow of this to us, when he promiseth the Spirit shall lead us into all truth, and that the Spirit should teach us all things, 1 John 2:20.

It is his privilege to be all-sufficient. And what does he promise less to us, when he assures us we shall want no good thing, we shall have all things richly to enjoy, we shall inherit all things? Who would desire more all-sufficiency than to have all things sufficient, all things that are good? 2 Corinthians 9:8. And as we partake of the privileges of the Father, so also of the Son. He is τρισμεγ■στος, king, priest, and prophet, and so are we; he has 'loved us,' &c., 'and made us kings and priests,' enables us to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptably; and has prepared crowns, and sceptres, and kingdoms for us. We are prophets too, for we are all taught of God; we have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, Ephesians 1:17. The same Spirit, which was a Spirit of prophecy, is in us; and though it do not enable us, as formerly them, to foretell future contingencies, yet something future we know. Every saint, who has attained assurance, knows he shall be saved; and this is a contingency in respect of second causes.

Again, Christ is the Son of God, and so are we. What honour is this! 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God,' 1 John 3:1. Christ is the heir of all things, and we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Romans 8:17. Christ is the object of his Father's love, and so are we, Leviticus 26:11. Christ is the glory of God, the brightness of his glory, and we are the glory of God, Isaiah 11:10. It is rendered, 'His rest shall be glorious.' Now, the saints are they in whom God rests. Ecclesia, in qua aquiescit Deus, says one on the place. Therefore they are his glory. Christ is a conqueror, and so are we; conquer the world, John 5:5; and the god of this world, Satan, who also commands another world, prince of the power of the air; him we conquer, and all his legions of darkness. Yea, we conquer that which is more potent than both the world and the devils, and this is sin; it overthrew both the former, and we subdue this. Nay, in all this, ■περνικ■μεν, we are more than conquerors.

Christ is a judge, and so are we: 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, 'Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?' Nay, the chiefest part of the world, the angels: ver. 3, 'The saints shall judge the angels.' This is the second head, wherein this communion is expressed.

3. Familiar converse, which we may make out in four particulars: (1.) Visits; (2.) Walking with God, and he with us; (3.) Conference; (4.) Feasting.

(1.) Visits. The Lord visits us, and we visit him; he comes to us, stands at the door and knocks, and if we open he will enter, Revelation 3:20; he will come in and manifest himself to us. This is the end of visiting, to see whom we visit; and this is it the Lord desires, Let me see thy face, and hear thy voice, Song of Solomon 2:14. There are sweet interviews betwixt God and the soul; he shews himself in part, withdraws the veil a little, that we may have some glimpses of his glorious excellencies. The day of glory dawns here, though the meridian be only in heaven; and though we

see but darkly, as in a glass, yet we see more clearly than his ancient people. The object was far off from them, and the medium was darkened by the interposition of a cloud of ceremonies; but the Day-spring from on high hath visited us, and made them vanish. Abraham saw but his day, and that afar off; we see himself, he is set forth crucified before our eyes, Galatians 3:1-29. Moses's face was veiled, nor was he permitted to see anything of God but his back parts; but we, 2 Corinthians 3:16, with open face behold the glory of God, yea, the brightness of his glory shining in the face of Christ. These interviews, these visits are in the ordinances.

He visits us also in his providences. There is no condition so sad and forlorn, which can estrange him from us, hinder him from visiting us; nay, he takes those opportunities to be most kind and frequent in seeing us, when a visit will be most welcome; nor does he visit us merely to see us, but to do us good. In trouble of conscience, he visits us with his loving-kindness; in darkness and perplexities, with comforts makes his face to shine upon us. In troubles and dangers, he visits us with his salvation; in sickness and restraint he comes to us, and performs all the acts that love can put forth to a sick friend, he makes our beds in our sickness, Psalms 41:3; his left hand is under our head, and his right hand sustains us. Nor need we fear to be troublesome to him with too frequent visits; he takes nothing more unkindly than when we withdraw and grow strange; he invites us: Song of Solomon 2:10, 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.' 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary.' And when he cannot draw us up with his cords of love, he drives us with his rod; and that is one end why he exercises his people with sickness, losses, disappointments, wants, desertion of friends, and other afflictions, to draw them more to himself.

(2.) Walking with God. A saint walks with God, and God with him; so he promises, 'I will walk in the midst of you, 2 Corinthians 6:16; Leviticus 26:12, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' Nor is this only in fair way: 'When thou goest through the fire, I will be with thee,' &c., Isaiah 43:2. The familiarity of this walking, methinks, is held forth in this expression, Psalms 73:23, 'Thou holdest me by thy right hand.' What more familiarity than to walk hand in hand? Thus Enoch walked with God, Genesis 5:22; and Noah, Genesis 6:9; the whole conversation of a saint is a walking with God. He sets God always before him, Psalms 16:8; walks, as seeing him who is invisible, Hebrews 11:27; makes God his meditation day and night, and says with David, 'I am continually with thee,' Psalms 73:23. He observes God in all his ways, looks upon the world as an engine acted by the Lord's influence, acknowledges no other animam mundi, he sees providence act and move the whole universe. He sees God in everything visible, quælibet herba Deum, tastes God's sweetness in every comfort, hears God's voice in every one that speaks to him. David heard God speak, when his companions heard none but Shimei. Job's carnal acquaintance would blame the Chaldeans, Satan, and other second causes for his losses; but he looks higher, 'The Lord giveth,' &c. Others may refer sickness to the distemper of the humours, and blame the malice of men for their afflictions; but a saint says, with Eli, 'It is the Lord.' He rests not in the surface of things, but penetrates through them to the first mover; his sight is not terminated in second causes, he knows they are dead and without motion, till moved by the first; nor do any give a firmer, at least a more practical, assent to that metaphysical principle, causa secunda non movet, nisi mota. And as he observes God in all, and ascribes all to God, so he depends upon God for all; the arm of the flesh supports not him except he see the strength of God in it. Ordinances are in his account empty cisterns, till the Spirit of God fill them; the staff of bread cannot strengthen him till the Lord strengthen it; the word is a dead letter unless the quickening Spirit enliven it. He esteems these

because they are means of God's appointing, but he knows they are arbitrary means; God can give the end without them, but they can never attain the end without him. As he walks with God in respect of thoughts and judgment, so also in respect of his affections. These are animi pedes, τ■ς ψυχ■ς πτηρ■ματα.* Desire draws us towards him, love joins us to him, delight continues us with him; by desire we move to God, by delight we rest in God. Desire acts thus: Oh when shall I come and appear before God? How long will the Lord be as a stranger, and as a wayfaring man? How long shall there be such a distance betwixt me and him whom my soul loves? Oh draw me, and I shall run after thee; nay, draw me, that I may run with thee, for nothing short of thyself can content me. Then, when desires are answered, love acts thus: it closes with Christ, and twines itself into a strict embrace with him; it is jealous of everything that might estrange, and counts it death to hear of parting. It says, with Ruth to Naomi, Ruth 1:16, 'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.' Being thus united and resolved, delight acts thus: Oh then, and have I found him whom my soul loves? I have enough: 'Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee; whom have I in heaven but thee?' &c. There is more beauty in the light of his countenance than in all the glory of the world; there is more sweetness in thy presence than in all worldly pleasures; there is more riches in the enjoyment of thyself than in all the kingdoms of the earth. So in practice, as in judgment and affection, our conversation is a way, a pilgrimage. Now because our weakness is much, the difficulties and dangers many, the Lord promises his presence shall go along with us; he walks with us, Isaiah 49:10-11, nay, in us; before us, so he is our guide, Psalms 48:14; behind us, so he is our guard, our rearward, Isaiah 58:8; beside us, on our right hand, Psalms 121:5, Psalms 110:5; lest we should err, he leads us, Isaiah 58:11, takes us by the hand, cum apprehensione manus, i. e. apprehendendo manum meam. When we grow weary, he bids us lean upon him: Song of Solomon 8:1-14, 'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?' he holds us up, Psalms 71:8. Faith is expressed frequently by this notion, leaning upon God, ■■■, recumbency. When we faint, and can walk no longer, he bears us, his everlasting arm supports us, Isaiah 63:9, Isaiah 46:3-4: a full place, Isaiah 40:11, 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.'

(3.) Friendly conference. The Lord talks with us, and we with him; friendly and familiar colloquies; he speaks to us by his word, by his providence, by his Spirit; the sweet whisperings of the Holy Ghost, that still voice comforts, directs, encourages. This answers all objections by which we would deprive ourselves of comfort; this tells us the non-consequence of all Satan's fallacies, and does nonplus that arch-sophister. When he presents hell and wrath, it says, 'I am thy salvation;' when he brings us into the valley and shadow of death, it saith, 'Be not afraid, I am with thee,' I will not leave thee. When we have lost our way, and know not how to return, then we hear a voice behind us, nay, in us, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.' And when the word that he hath writ to us seems obscure, he instructs us viva voce. The Spirit, as Philip to the eunuch, not only joins himself to the chariot, but comes in; and this voice the saints know: 'My sheep know my voice,' John 10:5; others are strangers to it. Nor does he only make known, tell us the secret of his word, but the secret of his providence: 'The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him,' Psalms 25:14; 'Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?' Genesis 18:17, 'The Lord will do nothing, but will reveal his secret to his servants the prophets,' Amos 3:7. Oh what familiarity is here! What more amongst the

dearest friends than communication of secrets? These God communicates, yea, those which were locked up from eternity, even from the angels, the salvation of particular souls. So he speaks to us. And we speak to him in prayer and meditation. We may speak at any time: the King's ear is never denied us; the chamber of presence is always open, and we may speak with boldness and confidence, though we be poor worms. The Lord delights in such dialogues, and is much displeased when we estrange ourselves: 'Let me see thy face,' &c. And therefore when he sees us so busy in the pursuit of other things, and so much taken up with outward comforts, as we neglect him, he many times deprives us of these comforts, that when we have less of them he may have more of our company. See a pregnant place, Hosea 2:10, 'I will allure her into the wilderness;' she shall be in a wilderness in respect of friends, comforts, riches, honours; these shall desert her, or be taken from her. And what then? 'Then I will speak comfortably to her.' The noise of the world was before so loud in her ears as she would not hear me, no, not when I spake comfortably to her; she was so busy in parleying with the world, as she had no leisure to confer with me. But I will bring her into the wilderness, far from these incumbrances that have interrupt our communion, and then we shall enjoy one another; he will speak comfortably, and we may talk familiarly with him. He oftentimes breaks the cistern, that we may have recourse to the fountain; lets our corn, wine, and oil be plundered, that we may more delight in the light of his countenance; lets the swine devour our husks, that we may learn to prize the pleasures of our Father's house. He deals with us, as Absalom did with Joab, when he desires conference with him; he sets our corn on fire, for, says he, in their affliction they will seek me diligently, Hosea 5:15, Hosea 5:2, Lamentations 4:20.

(4.) Kind entertainments. The Lord feasts the saints, and they feast him: Isaiah 25:6, 'And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.' Christ leads his spouse into his banqueting house, Song of Solomon 2:1-17. He satisfies them with the fatness of his house, Psalms 36:8, and makes them joyful in the house of prayer; fills our souls as with marrow and fatness, Psalms 63:5; feeds us with manna from heaven, with angels' food. All truths are pabulum animæ; but divine truths, they are delicacies, sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb to a renewed soul. He gives us sweet intimations of his love, peace that passes all understanding, joy unspeakable, and full of glory. The full fruition of these joys are reserved for heaven, yet some drops fall from those rivers of pleasures that are at his right hand, to refresh us in our pilgrimage. He conveys to us in this wilderness some clusters of grapes and figs, though we must stay for a full vintage till we come to Canaan. We break our fast here, but stay for the marriage-feast till we be taken up to our glorious bridegroom. Some of our master's joy enters into us here, but there we shall enter into our master's joy, and shall bathe ourselves in that boundless and immense ocean of pleasure and sweetness to all eternity. And as the Lord feasts us, so we him. 'Behold,' says Christ, Revelation 3:1-22, 'I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.' And what is that which the Lord counts a feast? A broken heart, that is a sacrifice well pleasing; a humble spirit, he dwells with such a spirit, Isaiah 57:15. He does not sup and depart, but is at a constant diet with such a spirit. So also high thoughts of God; these he delights in, they are as a feast to him. When they are so elevated as they make us tremble at his word, Isaiah 57:1-21. So also graces exercised, affections rightly fixed and elevated; for when affection is down, and grace unexercised, the soul is asleep, and cannot entertain Christ, as the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:12; will not admit him, will not open to him, though he tell her he has gathered his myrrh with his spices, and prepared the honeycomb with

the honey, and brought wine and milk, brings his entertainment with him, will not put her to the charge and trouble of providing it. Yet, in the drowsy condition, she opens not, though he use such powerful rhetoric to get entertainment: ‘Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.’ What sweeter compellations, what stronger arguments, could be used? Yet he prevails not; the spouse was slumbering, the exercise of grace was suspended. A sleeping soul will not, cannot, feast with Christ. It is an awakened soul, whose graces and affections are exercised, that entertains Christ; these he counts a feast.

Use 1. If believers have communion with the Father and the Son, then unbelievers hath communion with the devil and his angels. Your fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. There is happiness, here is your misery. I might enlarge it in analogy to the particulars formerly insisted on. As believers are united to Christ, are one with him, so wicked men with the devil. As all things are common between God and believers, so are all things common between the devil and unbelievers.

Briefly thus. Unbelievers are one with the devil. There is a physical union; they are his members, he their head. There is a moral union betwixt them, such as is betwixt friends; the bond of that union is love; and though they defy him, and pretend much hatred, yet the argument of Christ proves unanswerably that they love him. ‘He that keeps my commandments, he it is that loveth me,’ John 14:21. And so answerably, he that keeps the devil’s commandments, he it is that loves him; but these keep his commandments, comply with his will, do what he suggests. The power of the devil is absolute over these, as the centurion’s over his servants. He says to one, ‘Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; to all his servants, Do this, and they do it.’ Nay, which is more, there is an essential union betwixt these; not because his essence, as he is a spirit, belongs to them, or their essence, as they are men, belongs to him; but because those qualities, which make him a devil, and are essential to him as he is so, are in wicked men; and those sinful qualities which make them wicked, and are essential to them as they are wicked, are in the devil. Pride, malice, averseness to God, hatred of his people, antipathy to his ways, ordinances, and administrations, these are the same in both, and do only differ in degrees. Further, the nearness of this union is evident, in that the devil is in them, keeps possession of them. He is the strong man that keeps the house. He is the prince of the power of the air, that not only rules over, but rules in, the children of disobedience. Wicked men may more properly be called demoniacs, than those whose bodies are possessed of the devil, of which we read in the Gospel; for he possesses wicked men’s souls, and being a spirit, can join himself more intimately to a soul, and mix his being more nearly with it, than with a body. And as they are united, so they have all things common. He is theirs, and they are his, Romans 6:16. The apostle’s argument proves it. ‘Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his ye are to whom ye obey?’ He is their god, ‘the god of this world;’ their prince, he ‘rules in the children of disobedience;’ their father, ‘You are of your father the devil,’ John 8:44; and they are his people, his slaves, his children: Acts 13:10, ‘Thou child of the devil.’ They have the same interests, the same designs; they both drive on this design, to dishonour God, and destroy souls; they have the same affections; they love, hate, delight in, and desire the same things; they love, and delight in, the works of darkness, hate God, his image, his people, his ways and ordinances. So for converse, they walk and confer together; for as the Lord does talk with his people, by his Spirit suggesting his will to their souls, so

Satan talks with wicked men by his suggestions, making his will known to them. And as they have all things alike in communion here, so they shall have the like condition hereafter; the like torments, and eternal woful fellowship in them. That is the doom which you must hear pronounced: ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ‘Consider this, O ye that forget God;’ see and bewail the misery of your condition. Think you are in hell, while you are so near to, and so familiar and intimate with, the devil. Renounce this cursed fellowship with the prince of darkness, and with the unfaithful* works of darkness, and never give rest to your souls till ye be in that happy condition on which you may be admitted to fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Use 2. An exhortation to get this fellowship, and continue it. This we shall urge by some motives, and shew the way to it, prescribing the means whereby it may be attained. The motives I shall reduce to two heads, the two ends for which we were sent into the world, and therefore the most powerful to move and excite desire and endeavours, God’s glory, and our good. 1. It is most for God’s glory. 2. It is best for us.

1. It is most for God’s glory. God is most glorified in heaven. Now to have communion with God, is to be in heaven. This is the gate of paradise, and puts us into the suburbs of heaven. Besides, it is true, God’s absolute glory is indivisible, admits of no addition or diminution; it is, as Chrysostom calls it, ■ναλλ■ιωτος κα■ ■κ■νητος δ■ξα, admits of no change, no alteration, for in this respect he was infinitely glorious from all eternity, and nothing can be added to infiniteness, Infinito non datur majus. But his relative glory, that may be augmented; he may be more glorious, though not in himself, yet in reference to us. And in this sense he is glorified, or (as we speak) made more glorious, both by himself and by his creatures: by himself, when he manifests his glorious excellencies to the world; by us, when we acknowledge and take notice of those excellencies. Both ways God is glorified by our communion with him. He manifests many glorious attributes hereby in admitting us to this fellowship: his truth in performing, whereby he is engaged to grant it; justice, in excluding others; power and wisdom, in fitting us poor pieces of clay for it; and that which is the darling of his attributes, to which he seems in the gospel to have designed a peculiar glory, his mercy, love, and free grace, so far condescending as to advance us, who are less than worms, worse than nothing, to such a glorious fellowship. And as God glorifies himself, &c., so those that have fellowship with him hereby glorify him; for he is glorified when he is acknowledged to be glorious, and none can do it with such advantage as these, for it is grace by which God has most glory. Every grace exercised gives a testimony to all, or some of God’s excellencies: love to his beauty and goodness, fear to his justice and holiness, faith to his truth, all-sufficiency, wisdom, power, and faithfulness, humility to his majesty, patience to his sovereignty. Now none exercise these graces but those who have this fellowship; and those who have most intimate communion have the most constant and vigorous exercise of them. And as the Father, so the Son is hereby glorified. It is the honour of any person to attain his principal end, and this is it in which he most glories. The end not only crowns the actions, but the agent. Now the end of Christ’s glorious undertakings on earth, the end of all his actions and sufferings, was to glorify himself and his Father, in bringing us to communion with both. He suffered so many things of God and man, that he might make reconciliation, Hebrews 2:17; that, being reconciled, we might meet and converse in a sweet and blessed fellowship here and hereafter. And as the Father and Son are glorified hereby, so the Holy Ghost; the Scripture holds forth this as his peculiar glory. Hence that phrase in

Paul's prayer, 'the communion of the Holy Ghost,' 2 Corinthians 13:14. The Spirit is no less glorified by this communion (which seems to be ascribed to him as an attribute) than the Father by the manifestation of his love, or the Son by the dispensation of his grace. This then is the glory of God, and this renders it most desirable to all generous and self-denying spirits. The end is the primum mobile, the first principle of motion, and the motion is swifter and nobler, according to the value and excellency of the end. Heroic actions aim at glory, as that which is the noblest end. But no glory comparable to the glory of God, which seeing this communion so much advances our desires and endeavours after it, should be no less strong and indefatigable than they are noble and glorious. There is nothing more glorious than that which most glorifies God; and there is nothing so worthy of our desires and endeavours, as that which is glorious; and therefore we should desire and endeavour nothing more in the world than this fellowship, since hereby God is so eminently glorified, both in his attributes and relations. But if our spirits be so low, as we cannot rise to this highest and supreme end; though those, who are elevated by grace, neither can nor* ought; if this last end seem too remote, to have any strong influence upon us by way of motive, though indeed nothing is nearer or dearer to those to whom grace hath endeared the glory of God, there are other motives near us, yea, within us, not only the glorious concernment of God, but our own may move us. It is not only most for God's glory, but best for us.

2. Most for our good. The sweetest pleasure, the highest honour, the greatest advantage, and the chiefest happiness.

(1.) The sweetest pleasures are in fellowship with the Father and the Son. Every step in communion with God is a paradise. And how can it be less, since they are led by that hand, at which are rivers of pleasures; lie in that bosom, which is infinitely sweeter than myrrh, aloes, and cassia; walk in the light of that countenance, from whose smile spring all the delights of heaven, are always in the view of that beauty which makes heaven glorious, and all that behold it happy? They sit under the shadow of the tree of life, and have the banner of Christ's love for their canopy; feast daily with the choicest delicacies of Christ's banqueting-house, and drink of that pure river of the water of life, which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Pleasure is the result of those acts, which well tempered faculties exercise upon the best object. Now what faculty can be of a rarer temper, than that which is refined and elevated by grace, the most excellent accomplishment that ever omnipotency created; grace, I say, which informs the whole soul of him who has this privilege? And what more excellent, more glorious, more delightful object, than God in Christ, the Father and the Son? God in Christ is the ocean of all sweetness and pleasures, in comparison of whom all the pleasures that are, or ever were in the world, amount not to the proportion of a drop, and for quality, the very quintessence of them is but bitterness. This is that object, which is all made up of sweetness and ravishing delights. And he holds forth himself as delightful to every faculty of man that is capable of pleasure. Truth, that is the dainty upon which the mind feeds. Now he is the first truth, the sun, the fountain of it, from whom were darted all those beams of truth which are scattered to this lower world. 'He enlightens every man,' &c.

Goodness is that only which the will embraces with complacency. Now he is the chief good, ■υτ■ ■γαθον, the idea and exemplar of all goodness, and the spring from whence dropped all creature goodness.

Beauty, that is the pleasure of the eye. Now God in Christ, as Clemens Alex. ■ρχ■τυπον τ■ν καλ■ν, the archetypal exemplar of all beauty. The fairest and most glorious creatures are but rude, blurred, and imperfect transcripts. He is fairer than the morn, clearer than the sun. As Basil, ■περλαμπει τ■ν το■ ■λ■ου λαμπρ■τητα, his brightness darkens the lustre of the sun. Nay, he is infinitely brighter than the most glorious seraphim, τ■ ■ντως καλ■ν κατ■ληψιν π■σαν ■νθρωπ■νην ■περβ■ινει κα■ δυναμιν, it is this beauty that transports those happy souls that behold it, ■ις θε■αν τ■να ■κστασιν, as Basil, into a divine, an eternal ecstasy. To the taste he is hidden manna, angels' food, the bread of life. The touch is ravished with the kisses of those lips that drop sweet-smelling myrrh, Song of Solomon 5:13, and with the embraces of his eyerlasting arms. The ear is delighted with the voice of joy and gladness: 'The voice of my beloved,' Song of Solomon 2:8. The sound of the voice can heal broken bones, Psalms 51:8, can breathe life into a dead soul, convey heaven into a spirit despairing at the gates of hell, and still it with joy unspeakable and glorious. To the smell he is spikenard, myrrh, aloes, cassia, Psalms 45:8. What a fragrant smell does Christ diffuse, when he lies in our bosom as a bundle of myrrh! as Song of Solomon 1:13.

Oh what joy is in this fellowship, whenas there is nothing in the Father or Son, but is a spring of comfort, pure, satisfying, overflowing, ravishing comfort! It is true, while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are not yet admitted to the well-head, that is in heaven; but there are rivers flowing from hence, that make glad the city of God. There are streams of comfort conveyed to us in ordinances, promises, privileges, of which they only have the actual improvement who have such communion, they only with joy draw waters out of the wells of salvation, whenas to others they are a fountain sealed. No wonder if the saints have such a high esteem of this communion, and of the ordinances wherein they enjoy it. See it in David: Psalms 42:1-2, 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before him?' So Psalms 84:1-2, 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' Ver. 4, 'Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,' &c. And why so? See ver. 7, 'Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God;' ver. 10, 'For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.' Hence the Marquis of Vico, the pope tempting him with gold to leave the ordinances at Geneva for the enjoyment of his estate in Italy, replied, Let his money perish with him who prefers all the riches in the world before one day's communion with Jesus Christ. But it is in vain for me to endeavour to express what joys are in this fellowship, for it is beyond expression. It is joy unspeakable; nay, not only beyond expression, but above apprehension; the peace of God passes all understanding. Such peace, such joy is there in this fellowship.

(2.) The highest honour. It is accounted a great honour amongst men to be near unto and familiar with princes. 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before princes,' Proverbs 22:29. These shine in the orb of honour as the sun, when all about them, as planets of an inferior degree, borrow their light; and they shine with the clearest ray who are nearest to the fountain. What honour is it, then, to have such near and familiar converse with the King of kings and Lord of lords; to a companion of the prince of the kings of the earth? He alone is truly the fountain of honour, and whatever is not derived from him by advantage of vicinity to him is but a name, a

shadow, ο■δ■ ■ξι■ματα ■υτ■ ε■ναι ■ν τ■ς φα■η, ■λλ■ ■ν■ματα ■ξιωμ■των μ■νον, as Chrysostom. He is clothed with honour and majesty as with a garment; and there is no way to be honourable but by getting near to him, and creeping under the skirts of his garment. Those that are not near to God are far from honour, even as those are far from light who are antipodes of the sun. The light of these is darkness; the glory of those is their shame. Now, those who converse with God must needs be near him; they are so called, ‘a people near unto God,’ Psalms 148:14. They are vicini, neighbours; there is nothing but the partition of the body betwixt them, and there are many windows, many avenues in that by which God passes to them and they to God; whereas others are strangers, foreigners, aliens to the commonwealth of this Israel, Ephesians 2:12. There is a vast ocean parts them from that region where God is known and enjoyed. It is true of them which Abraham says of those in hell; we may say to them as he to Dives, ‘Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.’ The king of this commonwealth forbids traffic and commerce with all but those few who have submitted to his sceptre, and these only are near him. They are not only vicini, but propinqui; not only neighbours, but indwellers; not only of the same commonwealth, but of the same family. They are members of the household of faith. The Lord is the master of the family, and Christ the heir. It is a great honour to be a servant in such a house; so says Chrysostom, ■ντ■ μεγ■στου ■ξ■ωματος το■το τ■θησι, λ■γων δο■λους. Paul puts this amongst his titles of honour, accounts it one of his greatest dignities, to be servant of Jesus Christ. But we have greater honours than these; we are not only servants, but friends: ‘Henceforth I call you no more servants, but friends,’ John 15:14, 15; nay, not only friends, but favourites. What greater honour than to be a prince’s favourite, to be in his presence, to have his ear, his smile, his heart; to be deep in his affections, high in his thoughts; to have liberty to make known all grievances, and the privilege to know all his secrets? And all these are made ours by communion. Haman knew that his interest in the king’s favour did entitle him to all the honour he could confer; therefore he says, Esther 6:6, ‘To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?’ Though Haman’s hopes deceived him, yet does the Lord never disappoint his favourites. They have the royal apparel which the king useth to wear, the robe of his righteousness, and shall have the crown royal upon their heads; and time will come when they shall be brought through the streets of the great city, the new Jerusalem, with glory and triumph; and he shall command his angels to proclaim before them, ‘Thus shall it be done to the men whom the king will honour.’

Nay, this is not all. They are not only propinqui, but proximi, by this communion; joined to the Lord in the nearest ties of affinity and consanguinity. The nearest affinity are husband and wife. Now, they are married to the Lord, betrothed to Christ; and uxor coruscat radiis mariti, the rays of honour which make the husband illustrious shine in the wife. The glory of Christ makes his spouse glorious; so he says, John 17:22, ‘The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.’ What glory in the world comparable to this? It is as far above the highest honours in the world as he is higher than men who is higher than the heavens. The nearest tie of consanguinity is that between parents and children. Now, these are the children of God, and do converse with God as with a father. They have fellowship with the Father, not only as he is so to Christ, but also as to them. Now, what kind of honour is this, that we should be called the sons of God? ■ταν δ■ ■ιο■ς ■ιπη, ■παντα τ■ν ■γαθ■ν τ■ν θ■σαυρον ■νεκ■λυψε. The spouse is not only the Lamb’s wife, and so a queen, a queen in gold of Ophir, Psalms 45:9, but also a king’s daughter, ver. 13, the daughter of him who sits on the throne. And as though this were not honour enough, he gives us a better name than

that of sons and daughters: Isaiah 56:5, ‘To him that lays hold on my covenant, I will give within my house a name, &c., even an everlasting name.’ Here is immortal honour. Sweetly Chrysostom, κ■ν δο■λη κ■ν ■γ■νης κ■ν πενιχρ■ τ■ κα■ ■σημος κ■ν ■ν τ■ κατ■ τ■ν γ■ν β■ω ■περριμμ■νη, ■π■ρχη δι■ τ■ν πρ■ς ■υτ■ν κοινων■αν ■ξευγεν■ζων βασιλ■δα ο■ραν■ν ποιε■. But we are not yet come to the highest of that honour to which this fellowship advances. There is not only approximation, but union. They are not only near to God, but one with him; united to him closely, intimately, inseparably. And this by virtue of communion; for this (as before) necessarily includes union. What honour is this, to be one with God; to be one with the Father and the Son, even as the Father is one with the Son? So Christ prays, John 17:22, ‘that they may be one, as we are one;’ as truly, though not as perfectly. And the intimacy of this union is expressed by inhesion; they are not only united to God, but (if we may use the phrase) mixed with him; ver. 23, ‘I in them, and thou in me.’ Nay, a mutual inherency: ‘He that dwelleth in love’ (in love, which is the bond of this glorious fellowship) ‘dwelleth in God, and God in him,’ 1 John 4:16.

(3.) The greatest advantage. We have hereby, [1.] Plenty, and [2.] Safety.

[1.] Plenty. No good thing will be withheld from those that walk uprightly, Psalms 84:11; and who walk uprightly but those who walk with him? as appears, Genesis 17:1, ‘Walk before me, and be thou perfect,’ or upright, which is either an ■ξ■γησις of the former, or has necessary connection with it. There is nothing good in heaven or earth which God will withhold, no, not heaven and earth itself, when they are good; nor that which hath more goodness in it than heaven and earth united, himself, his Son, his Spirit. ‘The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands.’ The Son loveth us, and giveth us all things; for all things are common in this communion; the Son, and whatever he hath, is ours, as before. He gives us π■ντα πλουσ■ως, 1 Timothy 6:17; ‘all things richly to enjoy.’ All things, not only good, but evil; not as they are evil, but good. The worst thing given to a saint becomes good. That which is evil in itself, and evil to others, is good to them; that which is good in itself and to others, is evil to the wicked. ‘All things shall work together,’ &c. 1 Corinthians 3:21, All is yours, the whole world; π■σης τ■ς γ■ς ■ρχοντες ■ι ■γιοι, rulers of the whole world. See here the total of your wealth. The parcels are in the same chapter, ver. 22. You have your possessions in a map, divided into two hemispheres; each of them comprise a world; things present and things to come, heaven and earth, this world, and that which is hereafter. And in either of these, besides what is known and described, there is a terra incognita, vast continents which no eye ever surveyed, nor ear ever heard a relation of; nor could any heart, any thought, take the dimensions of it, so large it is. Yet all this is theirs who are Christ’s, ver. 23.

[2.] Safety: Psalms 91:1, ‘He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall lodge under the shadow of the Almighty.’ Isaiah 33:16, ‘He shall dwell on high, his defence shall be the munition of rocks.’ Who dwells in the secret of the Most High, but he that is continually with God, by secret and intimate communion? And he it is that abides under the shadow of the Almighty, his shadow, who is the rock of ages; therefore it may be well said, his defence is the munition of rocks. He that hath such a defence need not fear, as Psalms 46:2-3, ‘Though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof,’ ver. 5, ‘God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.’ No such safety as in nearness to God. And as the Father undertakes their protection, so the Son. He looks upon them as parts of himself, and those parts that are nearest to his heart. They are his members, and he is sensible of their sufferings, as though the union betwixt

them were not only mystical, but physical; in all their afflictions he is afflicted; nay, his body mystical, his people, who have communion with him as a head, are more dear to him than his natural body; for he exposed this to all miseries, to make that happy. Christ will suffer himself rather than they shall suffer. How safe are they!

(4.) The chiefest happiness; for what is happiness but the fruition of the chief good, the enjoyment of God in Christ? Now, what is it to enjoy the chief good (to enjoy God in Christ) but to be united to it, partake of it, converse with it? All these are included in communion.

There is no true blessedness but in this fellowship; and hell itself cannot hinder those who have this fellowship from being blessed. There is more happiness in this communion, abstracted from heaven, than there is in heaven abstracted from this communion. Heaven is the place of happiness; but this fellowship is the cause, or rather the formality of happiness. This is it which makes heaven happy; and this would make hell to be heaven, if that unhappy place would admit of it: this is heaven upon earth now, and will be the heaven of heaven hereafter. He that has this fellowship is happy before he come to heaven; nay, heaven comes down to him, and is in him, before he be in it. After the descent of the new Jerusalem from heaven, John heard a voice, Revelation 21:3, saying, ‘The tabernacle of God is with men,’ &c. The tabernacle of God is heaven, Psalms 15:1-5. When God dwells with a soul, and continues to grant communion, heaven is with that soul. Where the king is, there is the court.

It is true, this communion, while in the body, is very imperfect, and much interrupted, and our happiness is answerable; but, whatever happiness we enjoy, we have it from and in this fellowship. In heaven it shall be perfect and constant, and this is it which makes heaven desirable; however, the happiness which we shall have in heaven, and this here, differ not essentially, but only in degrees. Communion here is the first dawnings of heaven, the first gladsome appearings of glory; the day breaks here, and. the day-star of bliss arises; the meridian, the noon-day of happiness is in heaven; but there is no happiness, here or in heaven, but springs from this communion. This is the highest privilege, the greatest happiness, that the most glorious angel in heaven enjoys. What difference betwixt angels and devils, but this, that the one has fellowship with God, the other neither hath, nor can have it? What difference betwixt heaven and hell, but this, that heaven is made happy by this communion, hell miserable by wanting it? What difference betwixt saints militant and triumphant, but this, they are perfectly happy in a perfect communion; these happy imperfectly, enjoying but communion in part! But whatever happiness either angels or saints, in heaven or earth, enjoy, it consists only in this fellowship.

What a strong invincible motive should this be to desire communion with the Father and Son! What stronger motive than happiness! There is none but desire it. There is a strong inclination, a natural tendency, in all creatures, in their several spheres, to happiness. It is the voice of all mortals, ‘Who will shew us any good?’ Why, here is the way to the chief good, to the greatest happiness, if you will walk in it. Ask the glorious angels and saints why they are happy; they will tell you, because they have this fellowship. Ask the devils and damned spirits why they are miserable; they will say, because they have not, or ever shall enjoy this fellowship. Ask why there is nothing but darkness; they will answer, because they have no fellowship with the Father of lights. Why there is nothing but weeping, &c. Ans. Because no communion with the Father of consolation. Ask why there is nothing within them but the torturing worm that dies not; they will answer, because they have no

fellowship with him who died for sinners. Ask why nothing without them but everlasting burnings; they will answer, because no communion with him whose blood should quench them. Ask the saints in this world why they are imperfectly happy, why their life is γλυκ■πικρον, made up of bitters and sweets, happiness and misery; they will answer, because their communion is imperfect and interrupted. Ask inferior creatures why they are [not] so happy as men and angels; the answer is, because they are not capable of this fellowship. Ask who you will, all will conclude, all happiness is in communion, nothing but misery without it. If then you would be happy, if you would not be miserable, get it; and if you would be perfectly happy, get nearer, closer communion with the Father and the Son.

Means.

1. Entertain frequent and delightful thoughts of God. Such will present us to God, and make him present with us. While they are in our minds, he is in our hearts; and there we enjoy him, and converse with him, in a way most suitable to spirits. Communion amongst men is maintained by conference; that with God principally by meditation. This is the character of the wicked, those who are at the greatest distance from God, ‘God is not in all their thoughts;’ he is not in all their thoughts, or to little purpose. But those who have fellowship with him, he must be in all their thoughts; all their thoughts must be of God. Even when their thoughts are employed about lower objects, they then think of him; because their thoughts of other things have always a tendency to him; he must be your meditation day and night, last and first thoughts; he must be betwixt your breasts as a bundle of myrrh, Song of Solomon 1:13, that, when ye awake, ye may be satisfied with his image; and so, with David, ye may be continually with him, Psalms 73:1-28, Psalms 139:1-24.

It is true, while we are here, we must be employed in particular callings, and must do what we are called to with all diligence; but one who tastes the sweetness of this fellowship can never be so busied in the world, but he can steal a glance at Christ; and in the thickest crowd of worldly employments, can find a passage to let in some sweet thoughts of God; but, when disengaged from earthly affairs, oh then, as Basil sweetly, π■ς μ■ν τ■πος ■ν τ■ ψυχ■ τ■ς ■φεως Χριστου πεπληρ■σθω; let the whole soul be taken up with thoughts of Christ; let him fill every part of it; μηδεις δ■ τ■ συν■λον τ■πος ■ν ■υτ■ σχολ■ξεται, no vacant place, no room to entertain vain, sinful thoughts.

He that is much in thoughts of God hath much of God; these both admit him into the soul, and there entertain him. Christ enters into our hearts, when thoughts of Christ enter; and the meditation of him, in effect, is his inhabitation in us. So Basil, κα■ το■το ■στ■ το■ Θεο■ ■νο■κησις, τ■ δια τ■ς μν■μης ■χειν ■νιδρυμ■νον ■ν ■αυτω τ■ν Θε■ν. These seat God in our hearts, as he sometimes seated himself between the cherubims; and these make our souls his temple, yea, the holy of holies, the holy place of the most holy God; so he, ο■τω γιν■μεθα να■ς Θεο■, ■τ■ν μ■ φροντ■σι γη■ναις τ■ σ■νεχεις τ■ς μνημ■ς διακ■πτηται. Our hearts, by a constant entertainment of such thoughts, either actually, or, when that cannot be, habitually, become the tabernacles of God; and he says of them, This is my resting-place, here will I dwell; and, according to his promise, I will walk in them, and dwell in them. God is but a sojourner with those who seldom think of him; he is a wayfaring man, that turns but in for a night; but he is an indweller, and makes a constant abode, with those who constantly entertain him with sweet thoughts. He dwells in them,

and walks with them, i. e. he abides in them, and converses with them. He does not παροικε■ν, but κατοικε■ν. This for frequency.

They must be also delightful; such wherein both Christ may, and we must, take delight. Take heed of such thoughts as disparage or misrepresent God; they must be such as advance him, endear him to us; those must delight us. ‘How precious are thy thoughts!’ &c. Not merely speculative thoughts, for devils and reprobates may have such, but such as have a sweet and powerful influence upon heart and affections. Speculative let God into the head, but not into the heart; into the fancy, but not into the affections. They must be high, adoring, affecting thoughts. The Lord enters with such thoughts, and with him enters divine light; which, as light here below, being accompanied with heat, kindles the heart into flames of love, zeal; burns up world-lusts and affections, quickens grace, refines the spirit, melts the whole soul, separates it from dross; makes it fit to be cast into the mould of God, and impressions of his glorious image. Be frequent in thoughts that beget such effects; for in these we both enjoy communion with God, and by them are fitted for further communion.

2. Live in dependence upon Christ, in the exercise of faith upon God in Christ. Trust him in all, for all, with all. Trust him with all your concerns, for soul and body, for this life and eternity, for yourselves and posterity. Have confidence in him. You can have no fellowship or intimacy with one in whom you have not confidence; so far as you have fears, doubts, suspicions, jealousy, distrust of him, so far you will be estranged from him; these will keep you off from him, as from one whom you cannot fully trust, and will disoblige him, and so keep him off from you. These, so far as they prevail, will occasion a mutual distance and estrangement, which will not stand with near and mutual fellowship. When you find anything too hard and difficult for you, sin, the world, temptation, any spiritual duty, any service, he calls you to leave it, commit it to him, Psalms 37:5. When you find anything too heavy for you, any want, affliction, suffering, when it proves too burdensome, cast it upon him: Psalms 55:22, ‘Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.’ He will shew the part of an intimate friend, and put his shoulder under, and not suffer thee to shrink, to be moved, much less to sink. When you are apt to be troubled, perplexed, solicitous about anything, cast that care upon him, 1 Peter 5:7, Php 4:6. They that have lived most in communion with God have lived most in the exercise of faith; trusting him with all they have, in all they fear, for all they want. Walking in communion with God is a walking by faith, not by sense; not making sensible objects, persons or things, their support and confidence; but renouncing all confidence in the flesh, or in those things which a carnal heart has recourse to for support. Rely on, and stay yourselves upon God, Isaiah 50:10, else you will walk in darkness, not see your way to communion with God, nor discern the comfort of it. There is perfect peace and repose in this communion, but how may one come by it? See Isaiah 25:3. While you stay yourselves on God, and go leaning on him, you are near him; he is near you, you are in fellowship with him. This is the posture of intimate friends; thus they enjoy one another, herein their communion shews itself.

3. Renounce fellowship with others, all that is not consistent with, and subservient to this with God. Aristotle tells us, Eth. 10, πολλο■ς δ■ ε■ναι φ■λον κατ■ τελε■αν φιλ■αν ο■κ ■νδ■χεται. Perfect friendship can be betwixt no more than two. And good reason; for entire friendship requires intense affection, a high degree of love. And love, when it is divided, dispersed amongst many objects, is weakened. This is more evidently true here. The continuance of this blessed fellowship requires the whole strength of our souls, the highest strain of affection, Matthew 22:37. No love is

sufficient, but that which is cordial, love with all the heart. God will have all, or none at all. He will have our love, or we must have none of his company. Now, how can God have all our hearts, if we let them be distracted, by admitting others into such endeared fellowship? Basil upon that place, With all thy heart, &c., says, τ■ δ■ ■ξ ■λης μ■ρισμον ■ις ■τ■ρα ο■κ ■πιδ■χεται, that is not the whole which is divided. God has not all that heart, which is parted betwixt him and others; ■σον γ■ρ ■ν τ■ς ■γ■πης κατανα■σις ε■ς κ■τω, τοσο■τον σο■ λε■ψει ■ξ ■ν■γκης ■π■ το■ ■λου. God wants so much of our affections as the creatures have, or when they are loved otherwise than for his sake. The stream of affection will run low to heaven, when it finds many channels on earth; nor will God ever mix with that stream that dirties itself in an earthly channel. As he will not be found of us except our whole hearts seek him, so he will not stay with us except all our affections wait on him; and how can this be, if we suffer other objects to steal them away?

More particularly,

(1.) No fellowship with sin. He shall not have fellowship with the Father of lights, who will have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Renounce all sin, the least, the sweetest, the dearest, the right hand, the right eye, else Christ will renounce you. We have fellowship with Christ as with a king. Now, what king will admit of a competitor, will suffer one to exercise equal authority with himself in his own dominions? Our hearts are Christ's throne, and when we obey sin, delight in it, we lift it up into his throne; and while we do this, Christ will be so far from conversing with us as friends or subjects, that he will denounce war against us as traitors and rebels. It is such as betwixt husband and wife. Now, what husband will admit of a co-rival? He is a jealous God. Our hearts are, as it were, the marriage bed; and when we delight in sin, it creeps into our hearts, and takes possession of the bed of love. If we suffer this, we may expect a divorce rather than a conjugal converse with Christ. It is as impossible that light and darkness should be received in the same subject, that heaven and hell should be in the same place, as that Christ and sin should be affectionately entertained in the same heart. Forsake sin, or Christ will forsake you, 1 John 2:24.

(2.) No fellowship with the world. 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' If the love of the Father be not in us, there is no love of the Father to us; and where no affection, there can be no fellowship, James 4:4. 'The friendship of the world is enmity with God.' He that will be the world's friend will be God's enemy. No fellowship, in respect of things lawful or unlawful. You must not give too much of your hearts to lawful comforts, not too affectionately converse with lawful relations. 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me;' is not worthy of such fellowship. If we be ready and willing to forsake father and mother for Christ, we shall find incomparably more comfort in fellowship with God than in all these enjoyments. Κα■ πατρ■ς ■κ πολλο■ το■ περ■ονος ■περβ■ινει φιλοστοργ■αν κα■ μητρ■ς κηδημονιαν, Chrysost. If these have more of our affections than God, we shall lose both our relations in heaven and earth, and be deprived of fellowship with both. He that will not lay down his life for Christ, shall lose both his life and Christ too. ο■κ ■μπαθ■ δε■ι ε■ναι τ■ν ■γ■πην.

(3.) No fellowship with the wicked: 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 'Touch not the unclean thing,' or things (as the Syriac); it is an allusion to the legal ceremony. For as unclean things did defile the Israelites, who touched them, so are believers in danger to be defiled by conversing with the wicked; and as those so defiled were not received into the sanctuary, no more will the Lord receive those into friendship with himself, who defile themselves with familiarity, intimate, delightful, with

the wicked. But be ye separate, keep at a distance from unclean persons, and then I will receive you. Not into heaven (that is not the meaning), but into my tabernacle, into the secret of the Most High, as appears, Leviticus 26:11-12. I will admit you into my tabernacle, and there you shall converse with me as familiarly as sons and daughters with a father, ver. 8. Now that God's people are defiled by such converse, appears, Hebrews 12:15-16, 'Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled,' &c. 2 Peter 2:13, 'Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you.' Jude, ver. 12, 'These are spots in your feasts of charity,' &c.

4. Labour to be like to God. Assimilation is an effectual means to attain and preserve this fellowship. Φιλ■α is either ■μοι■της or καθ■ ■μο■οτητα, as Aristotle. It is the mother of friendship; and communion is nothing but friendship in exercise. Likeness doth both engender and nourish it. There is in similitude a secret sympathy, which does strongly incline the subjects of it to unite, close, mix together, and that attained, does rest in it with much delight; whereas unlikeness is cause of disagreement, and this of estrangement. We must be like God, if we would converse with him; but how? It is true, if we speak properly, we cannot. No creature can be like God, there is an infinite distance betwixt us. He is infinite, we finite. Now betwixt finite and infinite there is no proportion, no similitude. This notwithstanding, God does put such a glory upon grace, as to style it his image, his likeness: Genesis 1:26, 'after his own likeness,' because his soul was adorned with holiness; which is, in Scripture phrase, the divine nature, the image of God, an impression of divinity. The way, then, to be like God, is to get this image repaired, which is now razed and defaced by sin. To get it conformed to its first idea and pattern; to raze out all the sculptures of hell, all the impressions that Satan hath stamped upon our souls, thereby making them deformed, unlike to God, the pattern of our primitive beauty, and incapable of this fellowship: we must be holy, as he is holy, 1 Peter 1:15, 16; merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful, Luke 6:35-36; just, faithful, righteous, spiritual, even as he is so. 'Then shall the King delight in your beauty,' Psalms 45:1-17.

Like the Son too. The same mind must be in us, Php 2:5. We must express the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness, &c. Learn of him to be meek, lowly, patient, self-denying, zealous, faithful, public spirited. Look unto Jesus as our pattern, endeavour unweariedly to reduce our whole man to a conformity and likeness with him. The more we resemble him, the more will he love and delight in, the more frequently visit us, the more affectionately embrace us; ■μοιον ■μο■ου ■φ■εται. What communion hath light with darkness? The harmony of this communion may admit of disproportions, but not of contrarieties. You may as well reconcile light and darkness, as bring the holy God into fellowship with those who have nothing in them like him; μ■νοι φ■λοι Θε■ κα■ ■λλ■λοις ■ι ■γιοι, says Basil. There can be friendship and communion betwixt none but God, and those that are holy, like him; ο■δ■ π■πτει τ■ τ■ς φιλ■ας καλ■ν ε■ς μοχθηρ■ν δι■θεσιν. A wicked disposition, an unsanctified heart, is incapable of friendly communion with men, much more with God.

5. Get nearer union with the Father and Son. This is the foundation of communion. Far from God, and far from communion. Distance hinders the acts of friendship; the interruption of these acts occasions forgetfulness, and this begets estrangement, and this destroys friendship; and where no friendship, no fellowship. On the contrary, the nearer union, the sweeter communion. That we may be more nearly united, we must exercise uniting graces, faith and love. Faith is the cause of

mystical, love of moral union. The hand of faith clasps Christ to us, the bonds of love tie us to Christ. Exercise faith on the attributes, promises, providences of the Father; on the person, offices, undertakings of the Son. The more faith is acted, the more it is strengthened; the more strengthened, the more it unites; the nearer united, the more sweetly may we converse with God: Hebrews 10:22, 'Draw near to God in full assurance of faith.'

Love, that is affectus unionis. The formality of it is an inclination to union, accompanied with a sweet sympathy, which strongly inclines to join, unite, mix, with the object beloved. Love cannot endure absence or distance; it calls in and commands all other affections to assist in attainment of what it loves. Desire is the wing by which it flies towards its object, and hope supports it. It fixes hatred upon that which interposes, and when this cannot be removed, sorrow and anger attend it. When it is attained, joy and delight embrace it. No grace or affection tends so much to union as love, and therefore none so much to communion; ο■ π■ντων Θε■ς ■ θε■ς ■λλ■ τ■ν ■ικειωθ■ντων ■υτ■ δι■ τ■ς ■γ■πης, Basil. Love is essential to friends, mutual love, ■ιτιφ■λησις, we cannot imagine this without friendship, nor any communion without both. When we love Christ, he loves us; and where there is mutual love, there will be reciprocal delight; and this will not suffer any distance or estrangement, the only obstacles of this fellowship.

Exercise love, then. Let it inflame itself by the contemplation of the glorious excellencies, eternal love, merciful administrations of the Father; meditation of the transcendent love, infinite loveliness of the Son. This is the way to increase love, and every degree of its increase brings us a degree nearer.

6. Comply with God's designs. That of the wise man* is applicable, 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' No communion where no concord; no concord, where contrary designs: for contrary designs and ends require contrary means; and they who agree not either in end or means, agree not at all. If you would have fellowship, comply with his end, let his end be yours. Manifest this compliance by promoting his design with his own means. Now the last and the first design of God is his own glory; the end of all his purposes from eternity, and performances in time, is to glorify himself. This must be the aim of all our designs and actions, to make God glorious. Do nothing that tends not thereto; all things with an intent to advance it, and all so as they may most glorify him. The apostle's rule, 1 Corinthians 10:31, ■ν■ μ■λιστον ■ρ■ν ■μ■ν δο■ς, &c.; not only spiritual, but natural acts, must be directed in a straight line towards this end. And not only actions extraordinary and of great concernment, but ordinary and of smaller importance. No thought must be entertained, no employment undertaken, before we put this question to it, Will this glorify God? Can I think or do nothing that will more honour him? And if an answer cannot be returned, according to this rule, we should there stop, let it proceed no further, lest we run cross to God, and so break that concord which is the bond of communion. And as we must comply with general, so with particular designs. God in every act of providence intends his glory, all his works praise him: but commonly he glorifies one excellency more than another, making one attribute more conspicuous than the rest, mercy, or justice, or power. Now when such a beam of glory shines in a dispensation, our soul should fix upon it, praise, adore, admire it; for when God thus honours himself, by darting forth such irradiations of glory, to the end we may glorify him, by acknowledging and taking notice thereof with suitable affections; if we neglect it, we run cross to God's design, and such crossness is inconsistent with communion. And as we must comply with the end, so with the means which he has made choice of to advance this end. Now the means

whereby he promotes this end, in those who are admitted to this fellowship, is their holiness. Our holiness is his honour, our grace his glory; though not formally, yet by necessary consequence. God is most honoured by those who are most holy, gets most glory where he gives most grace. The way that is called holy leads directly both to God's glory and ours, brings us to the place where his honour dwells, and where we shall be happy in dwelling with him. Now we must shew our compliance with God in improving this means. Grow in grace, be perfecting holiness. Which that we may do, he calls upon us by the motions of his Spirit, ordinances, acts of providence: these all bespeak our holiness. The rod has a voice, he speaks by afflictions distinctly; he sometimes calls for the exercise of this grace, subduing of that lust. If we diligently observe, we may spy some passage, circumstance, which points at that grace, corruption, &c. Be watchful, obsequious, and then we have God engaged to vouchsafe communion, Revelation 3:1-22, John 14:23. But if we comply not with God in end and means, will not hear nor open, he will not deal with us as with the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:2; he will withdraw and be gone.

PUBLIC WORSHIP TO BE PREFERRED BEFORE PRIVATE The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.—Psalms 87:2. That we may apprehend the meaning of these words, and so thereupon raise some edifying observation, we must inquire into the reason why the Lord is said to love the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. This being manifest, the words will be clear.

Now the reason we may find assigned by the Lord himself, Deuteronomy 13:5-6, Deuteronomy 13:11. The gates of Zion was the place which the Lord had chosen to cause his name to dwell there, i. e. as the following words explain, the place of his worship. For the temple was built upon, or near to, the hill of Zion. And this, you know, was in peculiar the settled place of his worship. It was the Lord's delight in affection to his worship, for which he is said to love the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob. But it may be replied, the Lord had worship, not only in the gates of Zion, in the temple, but also in the dwellings of Jacob. We cannot suppose that all the posterity of Jacob would neglect the worship of God in their families; no doubt the faithful among them resolved with Joshua, 'I and my house will serve the Lord.' Since, therefore, the worship of God was to be found in both, how can this worship be the reason why one should be preferred before the other? Sure upon no other account but this, the worship of God in the gates of Zion was public, his worship in the dwellings of Jacob was private. So that, in fine, the Lord may be said to love the gates of Zion before all the dwellings of Jacob, because he prefers public worship before private. He loved all the dwellings of Jacob, wherein he was worshipped privately; but the gates of Zion he loved more than all the dwellings of Jacob, for there he was publicly worshipped. Hence we have a clear ground for this

Observation. Public worship is to be preferred before private. So it is by the Lord, so it should be by his people. So it was under the law, so it must be under the gospel. Indeed, there is difference between the public worship under the law and gospel in respect of a circumstance, viz., the place of public worship. Under the law, the place of public worship was holy, but we have no reason so to account any place of public worship under the gospel; and this will be manifest, if both we inquire what were the grounds of that legal holiness in the tabernacle or temple, and withal observe that none of them can be applied to any place of worship under the gospel.

1. The temple and tabernacle was [set] apart, and separated for a holy use, by the special express command of God, Deuteronomy 12:13-14. But there is no such command for setting apart this or that place under the gospel. The worship is necessary, but the place where is indifferent, undetermined; it is left to human prudence to choose what place may be most convenient. We find no obliging rule, but that in general, ‘Let all things be done decently and in order.’ Men’s consecrations cannot make that holy which God’s institution does not sanctify.

2. The temple was pars cultus, a part of the ceremonial worship under the law, but there is no such ceremonial worship under the gospel, much less is any place a part of gospel-worship; and therefore no such holiness in any place now as in the temple then.

3. The temple was medium cultus, a mean of grace, of worship, under the law. Thereby the Lord communicated to those people many mysteries of religion and godliness; thereby was Christ represented in his natures, offices, benefits. But there is no place under the gospel of such use and virtue now; no such representations of Christ, or communications of religious mysteries by any place of worship whatever; ergo, no such holiness.

4. The temple was a type of Christ, John 2:19; but all the shadows and types of Christ did vanish when Christ himself appeared; and there is no room for them in any place under the gospel.

5. The temple did sanctify the offerings, the services of that people. The altar did sanctify the gift, Matthew 23:19. The worship there tendered was more acceptable, more available, than elsewhere, as being the only place where the Lord would accept those ceremonial services, as also because there is no acceptance but in Christ, who was hereby typified. But these being ceased, to think now that our worship or service of God will be sanctified by the place where they are performed, or more available or acceptable in one place than another, merely for the place’s sake, is a conceit without Scripture, and so superstitious; nay, against Scripture, and so profane. The prophet foretold this: Malachi 1:11, ‘In every place incense shall be offered unto my name;’ in every place, one as well as another, without distinction. The Lord Christ determines this in his discourse, John 4:21. The hour is at hand when all such respects shall be taken away, and all places made alike, and you and your services as acceptable in every place of the world as at Jerusalem. Hence the apostle’s advice, 1 Timothy 2:8, ‘I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands,’ not in this or that place only. And the promise of Christ is answerable, Matthew 18:20. He says not, when two or three are gathered together in such a place, but only ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,’ Observable is that of Origen upon Matthew, Tract. xxxv., Vir quidem Judaicus non dubitat de hujusmodi, A Jew indeed doubts not but one place is more holy than another for prayer, but he that has left Jewish fables for Christ’s doctrine doth say that the place doth not make one prayer better than another. So in Homil. V. on Levit., Locum sanctum in terris non requiro positum, sed in corde, I seek no holy place on earth, but in the heart. This we must take for the holy place rather (quam si putemus structuram lapidum) than a building of stones. So Augustine, Quid supplicaturus Deo locum sanctum requiris, &c., When thou hast a mind to pray, why dost thou inquire after a holy place? Superstition had not yet so blinded the world but these ancients could see reason to disclaim that holiness of places which after-ages fancied. And well were it if such superstitious conceits were not rooted in some amongst us. Those who have a mind to see, may, by what has been delivered, discern how groundless that opinion is. But I must insist no longer on it.

Hence it appears that there is a circumstantial difference betwixt the public worship of God under the law and under the gospel. But this can be no ground to conclude that public worship is not to be preferred before private, as well under the gospel as under the law; for the difference is but in circumstance (the place of worship), and this circumstance but ceremonial (a ceremonial holiness); whereas all the moral reasons why public worship should be preferred before private, stand good as well under the gospel as under the law. But before I proceed to confirm the observation, let me briefly explain what worship is public. Three things are requisite that worship may be public, ordinances, an assembly, and an officer.

1. There must be such ordinances as do require or will admit of public use; such are prayer, praises, the word read, expounded, or preached, and the administration of the sacraments. The word must be read, and prayer is necessary both in secret and private, but they both admit of public use, and the use of them in public is required and enjoined. These must be used both publicly and privately; the other cannot be used duly but in public.

2. There must be an assembly, a congregation joined in the use of these ordinances. The worship of one or two cannot be public worship. Of what numbers it must consist we need not determine; but since what is done in a family is but private, there should be a concurrence of more than constitute an ordinary family.

3. There must be an officer. The administrator of the ordinances must be one of public quality, one in office, one set apart by the Lord, and called to the employment by the church. If a private person in ordinary cases undertake to preach the word or administer the sacraments, if it be allowed as worship, which is not according to ordinary rule, yet there is no reason to expect the blessing, the advantage, the privilege of public worship. This for explication; now for confirmation. Observe these arguments.

1. The Lord is more glorified by public worship than private. God is then glorified by us when we acknowledge that he is glorious. And he is most glorified when this acknowledgment is most public. This is obvious. A public acknowledgment of the worth and excellency of any one tends more to his honour than that which is private or secret. It was more for David's honour that the multitude did celebrate his victory, 1 Samuel 18:7, than if a particular person had acknowledged it only in private. Hence the psalmist, when he would have the glory of God most amply declared, contents not himself with a private acknowledgment, but summons all the earth to praise him, Psalms 96:1–3. Then is the Lord most glorified, when his glory is most declared, and then it is most declared when it is declared by most, by a multitude. David shews the way whereby God may be most glorified, Psalms 22:22-23, Psalms 22:25. Then he appears all glorious when publicly magnified, when he is praised in the great congregation. Then he is most glorified when a multitude speaks of and to his glory: Psalms 29:9, 'In his temple does every one speak of his glory.' The Lord complains as if he had no honour from his people, when his public worship is despised, neglected: Malachi 1:6, 'If I be a father, where is mine honour? If I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord God of hosts unto you, O priests that despise my name.' By name of God here is meant his worship and ordinances, as plainly appears by what follows, ver. 7, 8, 11. And he here expostulates with them as tendering him no honour, because they despised his worship and ordinances. Then shall Christ be most glorified, when he shall be admired in all them that believe, in that great assembly at the last day, 2 Thessalonians 1:10. And it holds in proportion

now; the more there are who join together in praising, admiring, and worshipping him, the more he is glorified: and therefore more in public than in private.

2. There is more of the Lord's presence in public worship than in private. He is present with his people in the use of public ordinances in a more especial manner, more effectually, constantly, intimately. For the first, see Exodus 20:24. After he had given instructions for his public worship, he adds, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.' Where I am publicly worshipped, for the name of God is frequently put for the worship of God, I will come; and not empty-handed, I will bless thee: a comprehensive word, including all that is desirable, all that tends to the happiness of those that worship him. Here is the efficacy. For the constancy of his presence, see Matthew 28:1-20: 'I am with you always to the end of the world.' Where, after he had given order for the administration of public ordinances, he concludes with that sweet encouragement to the use of them, πασας τας ημερας, I am with you always, every day, and that to the end of the world. Here is the constancy.

See the intimacy of his presence: Matthew 18:20, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' He says not, I am near them, or with them, or about them, but in the midst of them; as much intimacy as can be expressed. And so he is described, Revelation 1:13, to be in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, in the midst of the church; there he walks and there he dwells; not only with them, but in them. For so the apostle, 2 Corinthians 6:16, renders that of Leviticus 26:12, which promise he made, upon presupposal of his tabernacle, his public worship amongst them, ver. 11. Hence it is, that when the public worship of God is taken from a people, then God is departed, his presence is gone; as she, when the ark was taken from the Israelites, cried out, 'The glory is departed.' And why, but because the Lord, who is the glory of his people, is then departed? Public ordinances are the sign, the pledge of God's presence; and in the use of them, he does in a special manner manifest himself present. But you will say, Is not the Lord present with his servants when they worship him in private? It is true; but so much of his presence is not vouchsafed, nor ordinarily enjoyed, in private as in public. If the experience of any find it otherwise, they have cause to fear the Lord is angry, they have given him some distaste, some offence; if they find him not most, where ordinarily he is most to be found, and this is in public ordinances, for the Lord is most there where he is most engaged to be, but he has engaged himself to be most there where most of his people are. The Lord has engaged to be with every particular saint, but when the particulars are joined in public worship, there are all the engagements united together. The Lord engages himself to let forth as it were, a stream of his comfortable, quickening presence to every particular person that fears him, but when many of these particulars join together to worship God, then these several streams are united and meet in one. So that the presence of God, which, enjoyed in private, is but a stream, in public becomes a river, a river that makes glad the city of God. The Lord has a dish for every particular soul that truly serves him; but when many particulars meet together, there is a variety, a confluence, a multitude of dishes. The presence of the Lord in public worship makes it a spiritual feast, and so it is expressed, Isaiah 25:6. There is, you see, more of God's presence in public worship, ergo public worship is to be preferred before private.

3. Here are the clearest manifestations of God. Here he manifests himself more than in private, ergo public worship is to be preferred before private. Why was Judah called a valley of vision, but because the Lord manifested himself to that people in public ordinances? Which he not

vouchsafing to other nations, they are said to ‘sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death.’ Here are the visions of peace, of love, of life; and blessed are those eyes that effectually see them. Here are the clearest visions of the beauty, the glory, the power of God, that can be looked for, till we see him face to face. David saw as much of God in secret as could then be expected, but he expected more in public, and, therefore, as not satisfied with his private enjoyments, he breathes and longs after the public ordinances, for this reason, that he might have clearer discoveries of the Lord there: Psalms 27:4, ‘One thing have I desired, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.’ Why did he affect this, as the one thing above all desirable? Why, but to behold the beauty of the Lord? &c. So, Psalms 63:1-2, though David was in a wilderness, a dry and thirsty land, where was no water, yet he did not so much thirst after outward refreshments as after the public ordinances; and why? ‘To see thy power and thy glory.’

If we observe how Christ is represented when he is said to be in the midst of the churches, we may thereby know what discoveries of Christ are made in the assemblies of his people, Revelation 1:13, &c.

Clothed with a garment down to the foot. That was the priests’ habit. Here is the priestly office of Christ, the fountain of all the saints’ comfort and enjoyments.

Girt about the paps with a golden girdle. This was the garb of a conqueror. So Christ is set forth as victorious over all his people’s enemies. His head and hairs white like wool. Here is his eternity; whiteness is the emblem of it. Therefore, when the Lord is expressed as eternal, he is called the Ancient of days. His eyes as a flame of fire. Here is his omnisciency; nothing can be hid from his eye. The flame scatters darkness, and consumes or penetrates whatever to us might be an impediment of sight. His feet like to fine brass. Here is his power; to crush all opposers of his glory and his people’s happiness; they can no more withstand him, than earthen vessels can endure the force of brass. His voice as the sound of many waters. Here his voice is most loud and powerful; so powerful, as it can make the deaf to hear, and raise the dead out of the grave of sin. His voice in private is a still voice, here it is as the sound of many waters.

He had in his right hand seven stars. Here is his providence, his tender care of his messengers, the ministers of the gospel, the administrators of public ordinances; he holds them in his hand, his right hand, and all the violence of the world, all the powers of darkness, cannot pluck them thence.

Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. His word publicly preached, sharper than a two-edged sword, as described, Hebrews 4:12-13, pierces the heart, searches the soul, wounds the conscience. With this Christ goes on, conquering and to conquer, maugre all opposition. His countenance was as the sun that shineth in his strength. Here the face of Christ is unveiled, the fountain of light and life, the seat of beauty and glory, such as outshines the sun in his full strength. So he appears, as he becomes the love, the delight, the admiration, the happiness, of every one whose eyes are opened to behold him.

Now, as he is here described in the midst of the churches, so does he in effect appear in the assemblies of his people. No such clear, such comfortable, such effectual representations of the power and wisdom, of the love and beauty, of the glory and majesty of Christ, as in the public ordinances: ‘We all here, as with open face, behold the glory of the Lord.’

4. There is more spiritual advantage to be got in the use of public ordinances than in private, ergo they are to be preferred. Whatever spiritual benefit is to be found in private duties, that, and much more, may be expected from public ordinances when duly improved. There is more spiritual light and life, more strength and growth, more comfort and soul refreshment. When the spouse (the church) inquires of Christ where she might find comfort and soul nourishment, food and rest, he directs her to public ordinances: Song of Solomon 1:7-8, 'Go by the footsteps of the flock,' walk in the path of God's ancient people. And feed the kids beside the shepherds' tents. Shepherds are (in the phrase of the New Testament) pastors or teachers, those to whom the Lord has committed the administration of his public ordinances. To them is the church directed for food and rest, for spiritual comfort and nourishment; and it is commended to her as the known way of the whole flock, that flock whereof Christ is chief shepherd. That is a pregnant place for this purpose, Ephesians 4:1-32, where the apostle declares the end why the Lord Christ gave public officers, and consequently public ordinances. He gave them, ver. 12, 'for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' Here is edification, even to perfection: ver. 13, 'Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' Here is knowledge and unity, even in a conformity to Christ: ver. 14, 'That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.' There is strength and stability, maugre all the sleight and craftiness of seducers: ver. 15, 'But speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.' There is growth and fruitfulness, and that in all things. These are the ends for which the Lord Jesus gave his church public officers and ordinances; and they will never fail of these ends if we fail not in the use of them. What more can be desired? Here doubts are best resolved, darkness scattered, and temptations most effectually vanquished. David had private helps as well as we, but how strangely did a temptation prevail against him, till he went into the sanctuary: Psalms 73:16-17, 'When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.' Nothing was effectual to vanquish this temptation, till he went into the sanctuary. Thus you see there is more spiritual advantage in public worship than in private, and therefore it is to be preferred.

5. Public worship is more edifying than private, ergo, &c. In private you provide for your own good, but in public you do good both to yourselves and others. And that is a received rule, Bonum, quo communius, eo melius, that good is best which is most diffusive, most communicative. Example has the force of a motive; we may stir up others by our example: Zechariah 8:20-21, There shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts.' This was frequent with David: Psalms 34:3, 'Oh magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together;' Psalms 96:7, 8, 'Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.' Live coals, if ye separate them, and lay them asunder, will quickly die; but while they are continued together, they serve to continue heat in one another. We may quicken one another, while we join together in worshipping God; but deadness, coldness, or lukewarmness may seize upon the people of God, if they forsake the assembling of themselves together. It is more edifying; therefore to be preferred.

6. Public ordinances are a better security against apostasy than private, and therefore to be preferred: an argument worthy our observation in these backsliding times. He that wants the public ordinances, whatever private means he enjoy, is in danger of apostasy. David was as much in the private duties of God's worship as any, while he was in banishment; yet, because he was thereby deprived of the public ordinances, he looked upon himself as in great danger of idolatry. Which is plain from his speech, 1 Samuel 26:19, 'They have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go serve other gods.' There was none about Saul so profane as to say expressly unto him, Go serve other gods. Why then does he thus charge them? Why, but because by banishing him from the inheritance of the Lord, and the public ordinances, which were the best part of that inheritance, they exposed him to temptations which might draw him to idolatry, and deprive him of that which was his great security against it. They might as well have said plainly, Go and serve other gods, as drive him out from the public worship of the true God, which he accounted the sovereign preservative from idolatry. But we have too many instances nearer home to confirm this. Is not the rejecting of public ordinances the great step to the woful apostasies amongst us? Who is there falls off from the truth and holiness of the gospel into licentious opinions and practices, that has not first fallen off from the public ordinances? Who is there in these times that has made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, who has not first cast the public worship of God overboard? The sad issue of forsaking the public assemblies (too visible in the apostasy of divers professors) should teach us this truth, that public ordinances are the great security against apostasy, a greater security than private duties, and therefore to be preferred. For this end were they given, that we might not be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, Ephesians 4:14. No wonder if those that reject the means fall so wofully short of the end; no wonder if they be tossed to and fro, till they have nothing left but wind and froth. This was the means which Christ prescribed to the church, that she might not turn aside to the flocks of those companions, hypocrites, or idolaters: Song of Solomon 1:1-17, 'Feed by the shepherds' tents.' No wonder if those who shun those tents become a prey to wolves and foxes, to seducers and the destroyer. Public ordinances are a more effectual means to preserve from apostasy, and therefore to be preferred before private.

7. Here the Lord works his greatest works; greater works than ordinarily he works by private means, ergo. The most wonderful things that are now done on earth are wrought in the public ordinances, though the commonness and spiritualness of them makes them seem less wonderful. It is true, we call not conversion and regeneration miracles, but they come nearest to miracles of anything that is not so called. Here the Lord speaks life unto dry bones, and raises dead souls out of the grave and sepulchre of sin, wherein they have lain putrefying many years. Here the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and his messengers, and those that hear do live. Here he gives sight to those that are born blind; it is the effect of the gospel preached to open the eyes of sinners, and to turn them from darkness to light. Here he cures diseased souls with a word, which are otherwise incurable by the utmost help of men and angels. He sends forth his word, and heals them; it is no more with him but speaking the word, and they are made whole. Here he dispossesses Satan, and casts unclean spirits out of the souls of sinners that have been long possessed by them. Here he overthrows principalities and powers, vanquishes the powers of darkness, and causes Satan to fall from heaven like lightning. Here he turns the whole course of nature in the souls of sinners, makes old things pass away, and all things become new. Wonders these are, and would be so accounted, were they not the common work of the public ministry. It is

true indeed, the Lord has not confined himself to work these wonderful things only in public; yet the public ministry is the only ordinary means whereby he works them. And since his greatest works are wrought ordinarily by public ordinances, and not in private, therefore we should value and esteem the public ordinances before private duties.

8. Public worship is the nearest resemblance of heaven, therefore to be preferred. In heaven, so far as the Scripture describes it to us, there is nothing done in private, nothing in secret, all the worship of that glorious company is public. The innumerable company of angels, and the church of the first-born, make up one general assembly in the heavenly Jerusalem, Hebrews 12:22-23. They make one glorious congregation, and so jointly together sing the praises of him that sits on the throne, and the praises of the Lamb, and continue employed in this public worship to eternity.

9. The examples of the most renowned servants of God, who have preferred public worship before private, is a sufficient argument. It was so in the judgment of those who were guided by an infallible Spirit, those who had most converse with God, and knew most of the mind of God; and those who had experience of both, and were in all respects the best, the most competent judges. If we appeal to them, this truth will quickly be put out of question. David, who has this testimony, that he was a man after God's own heart, shews by his practice and testimony that this was God's own mind. To what I have formerly produced to this purpose, let me add but one place, wherein he pregnantly and affectionately confirms this truth: Psalms 84:1, 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!' He speaks by way of interrogation, insinuating that they were amiable beyond his expression. You might better read this in his heart than in his language. Accordingly he adds, ver. 2, 'My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' Oh what expressions! Longing; nothing else could satisfy. Fainting; it was his life; he was ready to faint, to die, for want of it: ver. 10, 'I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' David was at this time a king, either actually or at least anointed; yet he professes he had rather be a door-keeper where he might enjoy God in public, than a king where deprived of public worship. He would choose rather to sit at the threshold, as the original is, than to sit on a throne in the tents of wickedness, in those wicked, heathenish places where God was not publicly worshipped. Hezekiah and Josiah were the two kings of Judah of highest esteem with God, as he has made it known to the world by his testimony of them. Now what was their eminency but their zeal for God? And where did their zeal appear, but for the public worship of God? See it of Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 29:2-3, 'He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them.' Of Josiah, chap. 34 and 35. The apostles also, and primitive Christians bear record of this. How careful were they of taking all opportunities that the word might be preached, and the Lord worshipped in public! How many hazards did they run, how many dangers, how many deaths did they expose themselves to, by attempting to preach Christ in public! Their safety, their liberty, their lives, were not so dear to them as the public worship; whereas, if they would have been contented to have served the Lord in secret, it is probable they might have enjoyed themselves in peace and safety as well as others. The Lord Christ himself, how much soever above us, did not think himself above ordinances, though he knew them then expiring; nor did he withdraw from public worship, though then corrupted. Nay, he exhorts his disciples to hear them who publicly taught in Moses's chair, though they had himself, a far better teacher. You find him frequently in the synagogues,

frequently in the temple, always at the passover; and his zeal for public worship was such, as they apply that of the psalmist to him, ‘The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.’

10. Public worship is the most available for the procuring of the greatest mercies, and preventing and removing the greatest judgments. The greatest, i. e. those that are most extensive, of universal consequence to a whole nation or a whole church. It is most effectual for the obtaining public mercies, for diverting public calamities, therefore to be preferred before private worship. This is the means the Lord prescribes for this end; and he encourages his people to the use thereof with promises of success: Joel 2:15-16, ‘Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders, sanctify the people,’ &c. There is the means prescribed: See the success, ver. 18, 19, ad finem. He assures them the issue hereof should be mercies of all sorts, temporal and spiritual, ordinary and extraordinary, and that to the whole nation. Jehoshaphat used this means, and found the success answerable: 2 Chronicles 20:3-4, ‘He set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah,’ &c. This is the argument he uses, ‘Thy name is in this house,’ ver. 9. Immediately the Lord despatches a prophet with a gracious answer: ver. 15, 17, ‘Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s. Stand still, and see the salvation of God.’ The event was wonderful: ver. 23, 24, ‘The children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them. And when Judah came toward the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies.’ Nineveh bears witness to this, who hereby prevented her utter destruction, threatened by the prophet within forty days. Nor want we instances in the New Testament. Hereby the church prevailed for the miraculous deliverance of Peter, Acts 12:5. And wonderful were the effects hereof to the whole church: Acts 4:31, ‘When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness.’ So Revelation 8:4. There you have mention of the prayers of all saints, in a description after the form of public prayers, offered in the temple at the time of incense. And an answer is immediately returned, such an one as brought with it the destruction of that domineering Roman state which then persecuted them. Now, that which is of most public and universal advantage is worthily to be preferred; but such is public worship, and therefore to be preferred before private.

11. The precious blood of Christ is most interested in public worship, and that must needs be most valuable which has most interest in that which is of infinite value. The blood of Christ has most influence upon public worship, more than on private; for the private duties of God’s worship, private prayers, meditation, and such like, had been required of, and performed by, Adam and his posterity, if he had continued in the state of innocency; they had been due by the light of nature, if Christ had never died, if life and immortality had never been brought to light by the gospel. But the public preaching of the gospel, and the administration of the federal seals, have a necessary dependence upon the death of Christ. As they are the representations, so they are the purchase of that precious blood; as Christ is hereby set forth as crucified before our eyes, so are they the purchase of Christ crucified, so are they the gifts of Christ triumphant. Conquerors used on the day of triumph, spargere missilia, to scatter gifts amongst the people. Answerably the apostle represents to us Christ in his triumph, Ephesians 4:1-32, distributing gifts becoming such a triumph, such a conqueror: ver. 8, ‘When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.’ And those gifts, he tells us, ver. 12, are public officers, and consequently

public ordinances to be administered by those officers. How valuable are those ordinances, which are the purchase of that precious blood, which are the gifts Christ reserved for the glory of his triumph!

12. The promises of God are more to public worship than to private. Those exceeding great and precious promises, wherever they are engaged, will turn the balance; but public worship has most interest in them, and therefore more to be valued than private. If I should produce all those promises which are made to the several ordinances, the several parts of public worship, I should rehearse to you a great part of the promissory part of Scripture. I shall but briefly touch some generals. The Lord promises his presence, in the places before alleged: Exodus 20:24, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.' Protection and direction: Isaiah 4:5, 'Upon all the glory shall be a defence.' The Lord will be to the assemblies of his people as a pillar of cloud and fire. His presence shall be as much effectually to his people now as those pillars were then. 'Upon all their glory.' As formerly in the wilderness, the Lord, having filled the inside of the tabernacle with his glory, covered the outside of it with a thick cloud, Exodus 40:34, so will he secure his people and their glorious enjoyments in public worship. His presence within shall be as the appearance of his glory, to refresh them; his presence without shall be as a thick cloud to secure them, ver. 6, a tent. His presence shall be that to the assemblies of his people which the outward tent or coverings were to the tabernacle, Exodus 26:7.

Light, and life, and joy, and that in abundance, even to satisfaction, Psalms 36:8, 9. Satisfied abundantly, and drink spiritual delights as out of a river. Life and growth: Isaiah 55:2, 3, 'Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness,' &c. Life and blessedness: Proverbs 8:34-35, 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.' Acceptance, Ezekiel 20:1-49; Ezekiel 44:1-31:4. Spiritual communion and nourishment: Revelation 3:20, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock,' &c. He speaks there to a church, and in public ordinances he knocks hardest. Grace and glory, yea, all things that are good. There is not a more full and comprehensive promise in the Scripture than that, Psalms 84:11, 'No good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly.' But what is this to public worship? Why, the whole psalm speaks of public worship; and therefore, by the best rule of interpretation, we must take this as promised to sincere walking with God in public worship. Besides, the particle for tells us this is given as the reason why David had such a high esteem of public worship, why he preferred one day in God's house before a thousand; and therefore this promise must have reference to public worship, else there is no reason to use this as a reason. This promise is to public worship; and what is there in heaven or earth desirable that is not in this promise?

It is true, you may say, there are many great and precious promises to public worship, but are there not promises also to private duties?

It is granted there are, but not so many, and the argument runs so. The promises are more to public worship than to private; besides, those which seem to be made to private duties are applicable to public worship, and that with advantage. If the interest of one saint in a promise be prevalent with God, how prevalent then are the united interests of many assembled together? So that all the promises which the people of God make use of to support their faith in private duties will afford us much support, nay more, in public. Then add to these the promises which are

peculiar to public worship, and the sum will appear far greater, and this reason of great force to prove the truth propounded; that is most valuable which has the greatest share in those exceeding great and precious promises, but public worship has the greatest share in these, and therefore most valuable.

Obj. But notwithstanding all the arguments brought to prove public worship is to be preferred, I find something to the contrary in experience; and who can admit arguments against experience? I have sometimes in private more of God's presence, more assistance of his Spirit, more joy, more enlargement, more raised affections; whereas in public I often find much dullness of heart, much straitness and unaffectedness, therefore I cannot so freely yield that public worship is to be preferred.

Ans. I shall endeavour to satisfy this in many severals.

1. Experience is not a rule for your judgment, but the word of God; that is a fallible guide, this only infallible. If you press your judgment always to follow experience, Satan may quickly afford you such experience as will lead you out of the way. Be scrupulous of following experience when it goes alone, when it is not backed by the word, countenanced by Scripture. It has deceived many. Empirics are no more tolerable in divinity than in physic. As there reason and experience, so here Scripture and experience, should go together. Those that live by sense may admit this alone to be their guide, but the event has often proved it a blind one. Those that live by faith must admit no experiments against Scripture. Nay, those that are but true to reason will not admit a few experiments against many arguments. You find this sometimes true in private, but do you find it so ordinarily? If not, here is no ground to pass any judgment against what is delivered. It may be a purge or a vomit does sometimes tend more to your health than your meat and drink; will you therefore prefer physic before your ordinary food? It may be in some extremity of cold you find more refreshment from a fire than from the sun; will you therefore prefer the fire, and judge it more beneficial to the world than the sun? Experience must not rule your judgment here, nor must you be confident of such apprehensions as are only granted upon some few experiments.

2. It may be your enjoyments in private were upon some special occasion. Now some special cases make no general rule; nor are they sufficient promises to afford an universal conclusion. For instance, it may be you enjoyed so much of God in private, when you were necessarily and unavoidably hindered from waiting upon the Lord in public ordinances. Now in this case, when the people of God bewail the want of public liberties as an affliction, and seek the Lord in special manner to supply that want in private, he is graciously pleased to make up what they are deprived of in public, by the vouchsafements of his quickening and comforting presence in private. So it was with David in his banishment, yet this did nothing abate his esteem of or desires after the public ordinances; far was he from preferring private duties before public, though he enjoyed exceeding much of God in private. Nor must we from such particular cases draw an universal conclusion; either affirmatively, that private is to be preferred; or negatively, that public is not to be preferred.

3. These enjoyments of God in private may be extraordinary dispensations. These the Lord does sometimes use, though seldom, though rarely. Now, such extraordinary cases are exceptions from the general rule, and such exceptions do limit the rule, but not overthrow it. They take off something from the extent, nothing from the truth of it. It holds good still, more of God is enjoyed in public than private; except in rare extraordinary cases, ordinarily it is so. And this is sufficient, if

there were no other argument to establish the observation as a truth, public worship is to be preferred before private.

4. It may be thy enjoyments in private are the fruits of thy attendance upon God in public. It may be the assistance, the enlargement, the affections thou findest in private duties, are the returns of public worship. The benefits of public ordinances are not all, nor always, received while ye are therein employed; the returns of them may be continued many days after. The refreshment the Lord affords his people in public worship is like the provision he made for Elijah in the wilderness, 1 Kings 19:18, 'He arose and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days.' When the Lord feasts his people in public, they may walk with the Lord in the strength thereof in private duties with more cheerfulness, with more enlargedness, more affection, many days after. Those that know what it is to enjoy communion with God in his ordinances, know this by experience. When the Lord meets you in public, find ye not your hearts far better disposed to, and in, private duties? Now, if the assistance you find in private be the fruits of your waiting upon God in public, this should rather raise your esteem of public worship than abate it. That which is objected tends to confirm this truth, so far should it be from hindering you to subscribe it.

5. There may be a deceit in thy experience. All those joys, affections, enlargements, which men find in duties, are not always from the special presence of God. There may be a great flash of spirit, and much cheerfulness and activeness from false principles; some flashes of fleeting affections, some transient and fading impressions, may fall upon the hearts of men, and yet not fall from above. The gifts of men may be sometimes carried very high, even to the admiration of others, whenas there is little or no spiritual life. Vigour of nature, strength of parts, enforcement of conscience, outward respects, delusive joys, delusive visions, ungrounded fancies, deceiving dreams, yea, superstitious conceits, may work much upon men in duties when there is little or nothing of God. When men seem to be carried out with a full gale of assistance, it is not always the Spirit of God that fills the sails. A man may move with much life, freedom, cheerfulness, in spiritual duties, when his motion is from other weights than those of the Spirit.

Nay, further, not only those potent workings which are ordinary, but extraordinary, such as ecstasies and raptures, wherein the soul is transported, so as to leave the body without its ordinary influence, so as it seems without sense or motion; such inward operations on the soul as work strange effects upon the body, visible in its disordered motions and incomposed gestures. Such workings as these have been in all ages, and may be now, from the spirit of darkness transforming himself into an angel of light; and therefore, if such private experiences be produced to disparage the public worship, the public ministry, or any other public ordinance of God (however they pretend to the Spirit of God), they are to be rejected. The deceits of our own hearts, or the delusions of that envious spirit, who has always shewed his malice against God's public worship, should not be admitted, to render this Scripture truth questionable, that public worship is to be preferred before private. And, indeed, the experiences of ordinary personal assistance in private duties, if it be made use of to this end, is to be looked upon as suspicious; you may suspect it is not as it seems, if this be the issue of it. Those assistances which come from the Spirit of God have a better tendency than to disparage the public worship of God, which himself is so tender of. And this should be the more regarded, because it is apparent Satan has a design against God's public worship, and he drives it on in a subtler way than in darker times. He would thrust out one part of God's worship by another, that so at last he may deprive us of all. Mind it, then, and

examine thy experiences, if there be a deceit in them, as many times there is. They are of no force against this truth, public worship is to be preferred before private.

6. It may be the Lord seems to withdraw from thee, and to deny thee, spiritual assistance in public worship for trial; to try thy love to him, and the ways which most honour him; to see whether thou wilt withdraw from him and his worship, when he seems to withhold himself from thee; to try whether thou wilt serve God for nothing, when thou seemest to find nothing answerable to thy attendance and endeavours. This is the hour of England's temptation in other things, and probably it is so in this as well as others. If it be so with thee, thy resolution should be that of the prophet, Isaiah 8:17, 'I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob.' If this be thy case, thy esteem of his public worship should hereby be rather raised than abated, since this is the way to comply with the Lord's design in this dispensation, the way to procure more comfortable returns, more powerful assistance than ever.

7. You may enjoy more of God in public, and not observe it. As there may be a mistake in thinking you enjoy much of God in private when you do not, so there may be a mistake in thinking you want the presence of God in public when indeed you have it. It is not the improvement of parts, enlargement of heart, flashes of joy, stirrings of affections, that argue most of God's presence; there may be much of these when there is little of God. It is a humble soul, one that is poor in spirit, that trembles at the word, that hungers and thirsts after Christ, that is sensible of spiritual wants and distempers, that is burdened with his corruptions, and laments after the Lord and freer enjoyments of him. He whose heart is soft and pliable, whose conscience is tender, it is he who thrives and prospers in the inward man. And if these be the effects of thy attendance upon God in public worship, thou dost there enjoy much of God's presence, whatever thou apprehend to the contrary. These are far more valuable than those affections and enlargements by which some judge of the Lord's presence in his ordinances; for these are the sound fruits of a tree of righteousness, whereas those are but the leaves or flourishes of it, which you may sometimes find in a barren tree. So far as the Lord upholds in thee a poor and hungering spirit, a humble and thirsting heart, so far he is graciously present with thee; for this is it to which he has promised a gracious presence in his ordinances, Isaiah 66:1-2. The Lord speaks here as though he were not so much taken with the glory of the temple, no, not with the glory of heaven, as with a spirit of this temper. As sure as the Lord's throne is in heaven, this soul shall have his presence. The streams of spiritual refreshments from his presence shall water these valleys, whenas high-flown confidents, that come to the ordinances with high conceits and carnal boldness, shall be as the mountains, left dry and parched. See Matthew 5:3–6. You may enjoy the presence of God in public, and not observe it. Now, if thy experience be a mistake, no reason it should hinder thee from yielding to this truth, that public worship is to be preferred before private.

8. It is to be suspected that what you want of God's presence, in public worship, is through your own default. Not because more of God is not to be enjoyed, more spiritual advantage is not to be gained in public ordinances, but because, through some sinful miscarriage, you make yourselves incapable thereof. Let this be observed, and your ways impartially examined; and you will find cause to accuse yourselves, instead of objecting anything against the pre-eminence of public worship. There is so much self-love in us, as we are apt to charge anything, even the worship of God itself, rather than ourselves; yea, when ourselves ought only to be charged and accused. The Lord's hand is not straitened, &c. The worship of God is the same, the Lord as much to be enjoyed

in it; no less comfort and advantage to be found in it than formerly (and formerly more has been enjoyed therein than in private); how comes it, then, that there is any occasion to object against it? Why, our iniquities have separated between us and our God.

Let our hearts and ways be searched, and all, or most of all those, who have any temptation to object against it, will find it thus, and may discern the reason in themselves. Do ye not undervalue the public worship, and the enjoyment of God in it? Are ye not many times indifferent, whether ye enjoy it or no? Is it a sad affliction to your souls, when ye leave the ordinances, without enjoying God in them? Have ye bewailed it accordingly? If not, you have too low thoughts of spiritual enjoyments to have much of them. Do ye think God will cast such pearls before swine, such precious things before those who trample on them, who contemn them? Do ye not entertain some prejudice against some public ordinances, or against the public minister? Even this is enough to render them less comfortable, less effectual. Why was the public ministry of Christ less effectual amongst his own countrymen? Why were they possessed with prejudices against him? Matthew 13:55. Have ye not neglected the public worship? Have ye absented yourselves from the ordinances without any necessary occasion? Oh how common is this sin! and how justly chastised, when the Lord absents himself from them, who are so willingly absent from his public worship. When you withdraw from the public ordinances, you withdraw from God; and is not here reason enough for the Lord to withdraw from you?

Come ye not unprepared, with slight and careless hearts, without due apprehensions, either of the Lord or of yourselves? This is to affront his majesty, this lays his honour low, Malachi 1:6. No wonder if ye find not that power and quickening virtue in the ordinances; you may find the reason in yourselves; you hereby provoke the Lord to withdraw from them, and you in them. Where are your desires after public ordinances, after the presence of God in them, after the spiritual advantages of them? Can ye say with him, ‘One thing I have desired, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord,’ &c. Can ye say, ‘As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God? My soul thirsteth for God, when shall I come and appear before God?’ Can you say, ‘My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, to see thy glory,’ &c. Can ye say, ‘My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.’ Oh, were there but such desires, there would be few such complaints, few such objections. Were there such desires, the Lord would quickly clothe his public ordinances with their wonted glory and power, cause to say, Nunquam abs te, absque te. But is it not reason they should not enjoy much, who desire so little? Do ye not give way to deadness, slothfulness, carelessnes in public worship? Do you stir up yourselves to lay hold on God? It is the diligent hand that makes rich. ‘He becomes poor that dealeth with a slack hand,’ Proverbs 10:4. If the ordinances come not to you, as a ship laden with precious treasures, blame your negligence: Hebrews 11:6, ‘He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’ Do ye come in faith? Do your thoughts and hearts work upon a promise, when you are going to public ordinances? You know who said it, ‘Except ye believe, ye shall not see the power of God.’ If Christ could do no mighty works, because of their unbelief, what think ye the ordinances can do? Do ye not come for by-ends, come for something else, something worse, than that which you complain yon find not? Come ye not for custom, because it is the fashion, and shame not to come to it? Come ye not to avoid the censure, the offence, the displeasure of others? Come ye not to stop the mouth of conscience, to avoid its clamours? Come ye not for niceties, notions, novelties, as those who seek

a fine weed rather than the ears of corn? Come for what you will, if ye come not to meet with God, to get life, to be filled with the Spirit, is it not reason why you should go without them? Do ye not neglect the after improvement of public ordinances? Neglect ye not to draw out the efficacy of them in secret, by prayer, meditation, and the exercise of faith? Think ye the act done is sufficient, labouring for nothing but what ye find in the present exercise? Do ye think your work done when the minister has done? Oh no. If you would enjoy God in the word, then your work should begin. The ordinances are like grapes; it is not enough that they are given into your hands; if you would have the sweetness and nourishment of them, they must be pressed, that is your work in secret. The negligence, carelessness, slothfulness of men in not improving public ordinances in secret, causes him to withdraw himself, and his blessing in public.

These, and such evils, provoke the Lord to deny his presence, withhold the comforts and blessed advantages of public worship; so as others may enjoy more hereof in private than those that are herein guilty do find in public. You need but read your own hearts for an answer to this objection; it is not because the Lord is less to be found in public than in private, that you find less of him there, but because you make yourselves uncapable of enjoying him, unfit to find him.

9. Suppose what is alleged were true, that you did find more joys, enlargement, assistance in private, that there was no mistake in these experiences, and that they were ordinary, which I am far from granting, yet, allowing all the advantage imaginable in this respect to private duties, this notwithstanding, public worship is to be preferred, for divers other unanswerable reasons formerly given. I will but now instance in two. Public worship is a more public good, it is more edifying, the advantage more common and extensive, the benefit more universal, and therefore to be preferred before private, as much as an universal benefit is to be preferred before a particular, a public good before a private. He is a man unworthy to live in a commonwealth, who will prefer his private interests before the public good. It is a nobleness of spirit to be public-spirited; the light of nature discovers an excellency in it, religion and gospel principles much more require it, and the Lord himself does commend and encourage it with special rewards. Those that profess themselves to be servants of God should be ashamed to be outvied herein by heathen. Our first question should not be, Where may I receive most good? But where may I do most good? The saving of souls should be preferred before our comforts, and that advantage most valued which is most extensive and universal. Such is the advantage of public ordinances, and therefore they are as far to be preferred before private, as the public good before a man’s private interest.

Then suppose you found more comfort, enlargement in private than in public worship, yet the glory of God is to be preferred before your advantages; and therefore that whereby his glory is most advanced, before that wherein your particular interest is most promoted. But God is most glorified in public worship; here is given the most ample testimony to his glorious excellencies, here is the most public acknowledgment of his glory No otherwise can we glorify him than by acknowledging his glory, and the more public this acknowledgment is, the more is he glorified; but it is most public in public worship, and therefore this is as much to be preferred before private, as the glory of God before your private advantage.

Use 1. Reproof to those that undervalue public worship. Too many there are worthy of this reproof, especially two sorts:

1. Those that prefer worse things before public worship. If it be to be preferred before private duties, which are excellent and singularly advantageous in themselves, how heinously do they sin who prefer things that are base and sinful before public ordinances; those who prefer their ease, their worldly employments, their lusts or unlawful recreations, before them! Do not they prefer their ease before the worship of God, who will not take the pains, who will excuse themselves by very slight and trivial occasions from coming to the place of public worship? The Lord has not made the way to his worship so tedious, so toilsome, as it was under the law; there is not the distance of many miles betwixt us and it, nor will it cost us divers days' journey to have the opportunities of public worship; we have it at our doors. And yet such slothfulness, such contempt there is of it, as we will scarce sometimes stir out of doors to enjoy these blessed liberties; a little rain, a little cold, anything of like moment, we take for a sufficient excuse to be absent. The people of God, in former times, counted it their happiness that they might come to the public ordinances, though through rain, and cold, and wearisome journeys, Psalms 84:1-12. But where is this zeal for God's worship now? Is there not much less, when the gospel engages us to much more? May not even the unbelieving Jews rise up in judgment against the slothfulness of this generation, and condemn it? No such thing would hinder them from coming to the gates of Zion at the appointed seasons, how far soever their habitations were distant from it, how unseasonable soever the season seemed; yet many amongst us make every sorry thing a lion in the way, prefer their sloth and ease before God's public worship.

Others prefer their worldly occasions before the public worship of God, willingly embrace any earthly business offered to stay from the ordinances. Esau was stigmatised as a profane person for preferring the pottage before his birthright; but they exceed Esau in profaneness who prefer the things of the world before this singular prerogative, of worshipping God in public. What a special privilege is this! How few are they in the world enjoy it! Does the Lord vouchsafe this honour, to have it, and himself in it contemned? Of thirty parts, into which the world may be divided, twenty-five are pagans or Mahometans, wholly without the true worship of God; but five bear the name of Christian. And of those, when you have discounted the Greeks, papists, Abassines, amongst whom the worship of God is wofully corrupted, you may judge to how small a part of mankind the Lord has vouchsafed his public worship in its purity. It is a special, a peculiar favour, a singular prerogative. Oh what profaneness is it, to prefer outward things, such as are common to all, to the worst of all, before this peculiar blessing! Yet how common is this profaneness! The thinness of our assemblies does daily testify it. One part of the day is thought enough by some, too much by others, for God's public worship; whereas we think nothing too much for the world. Oh the Lord's infinite patience!

Others prefer their lust before it; had rather sit in an ale-house, or in the seat of scorners, than wait at the posts of wisdom. Many had rather spend that time which the Lord has allotted for their souls, in sports and recreations, than in the public worship; think one whole day in seven too much, will rob God of all, or part of it, to recreate themselves. Oh that such profaneness should be so common where the light of the gospel has so long shined! The Lord prefers the gates of Zion, but these prefer Meshech and the tents of Kedar. I beseech yon, consider the heinousness of this sin. The Lord styles his worship his name frequently in Scripture, as though his worship were as dear to him as himself. What do ye then but contemn God himself, while ye despise his worship? He that speaks it of his officers has the same account of his ordinances: he that despiseth them

despiseth me, &c. And what do ye think it is to despise Christ? How jealous has the Lord always shewed himself of his worship! Some of the most remarkable judgments we meet with in Scripture have been inflicted for some miscarriage about his worship. For this Nadab and Abihu consumed with fire from heaven, for this Eli's family utterly ruined, for this Uzziah smitten with leprosy and Uzzah with sudden death, Michal with barrenness, for an error in the outward part of worship. The Lord is a jealous God, jealous especially over his worship. If you despise that, you are in danger; his jealousy will burn like fire against you. Now, do ye not despise it, when you prefer your ease, worldly affairs, lusts, idleness, recreations before it? This is to profane the holy, the glorious name of God. And the Lord will not hold him guiltless; it is a με■ωσις; the Lord will certainly judge, surely condemn, him that does so.

2. They deserve reproof who prefer private before public worship, or equal with it. I shall but instance in two particulars, wherein this is evident.

(1.) When private duties are used in the time and place of public worship. Now, how ordinary is this amongst us! When you come too late to wait upon God, after the public worship is begun, I see it is common to fall to your private prayers, whatever public ordinance be in hand. Now, what is this but to prefer your private praying before the public worship, and so to despise the ordinance in hand? What is it but to thrust public worship out of its season, and put private in its room? It is held indeed a great point of devotion and reverence, that is the pretence for it; but this pretended reverence casts a real disrespect upon the public ordinance then used. For the mind is withdrawn from it in the sight of God, and the outward man in the sight of men; and so public worship is hereby disrespected, in the sight both of God and men. The intention may be good indeed, but that cannot justify what is sinful, what is evil; for we must not do evil that good may come of it. And this is evil, it is sinful, since it is sinful to prefer a private duty before a public ordinance.

It is against the apostle's rule, which he prescribes for the regulating of public assemblies: 1 Corinthians 14:40, 'Let all things be done decently and in order.' Now that is not done in order, which is not done in its place and season; but this is neither the place nor season for private prayers; it is the time of public worship, therefore private is now unseasonable. Nor is this the place of private prayer; that is thy closet, according to Christ's direction, Matthew 6:6; and he makes it the badge of hypocrites, to use their private prayers in public places, ver. 5. A good thing, out of its place and season, may become evil, evil in the worst sense, that is, sinful. This is not the place, the time for your private prayers, therefore it is a disorder here to use them; and what is here disorderly, is, by the apostle's rule, sinful, and therefore I beseech you let it be avoided. Do not expect the Lord will accept your private devotion, when it casts disrespect upon his public worship, which he himself prefers, and will have us to prefer before private.

(2.) When men absent themselves from public worship, under pretence that they can serve the Lord at home as well in private. How many are apt to say, they see not but their time may be as well spent at home, in praying, reading some good book, or discoursing on some profitable subject, as in the use of ordinances in public assemblies! They see not but private prayer may be as good to them as public, or private reading and opening the Scripture as profitable as public preaching; they say of their private duties, as Naaman of the waters of Damascus, 2 Kings 5:12. May I not serve the Lord as acceptably, with as much advantage, in private exercises of religion? May I not wash in these and be clean? They see not the great blessings God has annexed to

public worship more than to private. Oh, but if it be thus, if one be as good as the other, what means the Lord to prefer one before the other? To what purpose did the Lord choose the gates of Zion, to place his name there, if he might have been worshipped as well in the dwellings of Jacob? How do men of this conceit run counter to the Lord? He prefers the gates of Zion, not only before one or some, but before all the dwellings of Jacob; and they prefer one such dwelling before the gates of Zion. What is this but to disparage the wisdom of God, in preferring one before another when both are equal; in preferring that which is unworthy to be preferred? What presumption is this, to make yourselves wiser than God, and to undertake to correct him? He says the gates of Zion are to be loved, public worship before private; you say no, you see no reason but one should be loved as well as the other. Who art thou, O man, who thus disputest against God? To conclude this use, let me shew you the sinfulness of preferring private worship before public, in the fore-mentioned or other respects, by applying what has been delivered. To prefer private before public, or by not preferring public before private, in your judgment, affection, or practice, you neglect the glory of God, which is here most advanced; you slight the presence of God, which is here most vouchsafed, that presence which is the greatest happiness the people of God can expect, in heaven or on earth. You undervalue the manifestation of God, those blessed visions of life and peace, which are most evidently, most comfortably, here represented; those manifestations which are the dawnings of approaching glory, the first glimpses of the beatifical vision. You contemn those blessed soul advantages which are here more plentifully gained; you prefer a private supposed benefit before public edification; you expose yourselves to the danger of backsliding, which is here more effectually prevented; you contemn the Lord's greatest works upon the souls of sinners, which are here ordinarily effected; you slight heaven, which is here in a more lively manner resembled; you disparage the judgment of the most renowned servants of God, who in all ages have confirmed this truth by their testimony or practice; you make yourselves less capable of procuring public mercies, or diverting public calamities, slighting the means most conducible to this end; you undervalue the blood of Christ, whose influence is here most powerful; you despise those great and precious promises of the gospel, which are more engaged for public worship than private. Oh, consider how heinous that sin is, which involves the soul in so much guilt, which is attended with so many provoking evils; bewail this sin, so far as thou art guilty of it, and let the sinfulness thereof engage thee to be watchful against it.

Use 2, of exhortation. Be exhorted to give to the public worship of God the glory that is due to it; let it have the pre-eminence which the Lord has given it; prefer it before private, in your thoughts, in your affections, in your practice. Get higher thoughts of public ordinances, get affections answerable to those apprehensions; manifest both by a frequent affectionate use of these ordinances, by your praises for the enjoyment, by your prayers for the continuance of them. A duty this is which the text requires, a duty which these times call for. When there is so much disrespect cast upon the worship of God, your endeavours should be more for the advancement of it. This is the way to shew yourselves faithful to God, stedfast and upright, in the midst of a declining generation. This duty always finds acceptance with God; but now he will take it better, because there is a stream of temptation, of opposition against it. Oh let not your souls enter into their secret, who dishonour God, by despising his public worship; who blaspheme God, by speaking contemptibly of his name, that name which he records amongst us, and thereby does graciously distinguish us from the neglected world. I might enforce this with many motives; but what more forcible than this in the text? 'The Lord loves the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of

Jacob.' Those that thus do are herein like the Lord. This is the highest pitch of excellency that angels or men can aspire to, to be conformable to the Lord, to be like him, to have any resemblance of him. Why, this is the way; when we thus love, prefer the public worship, the like mind is in us that is in the Lord (so far as likeness may be admitted, where there is an infinite distance), herein you will be followers of God as dear children. Whereas those who despise the public worship of God, despise God himself, comply with Satan in one of his most mischievous designs against God and his people, and hereby do what in them lies to lay his honour in the dust. It is not out of any respect of private duties that Satan endeavours to advance them above public worship; his design is to withdraw professors from both, he knows they stand or fall together, and the event proves it. You will find those that withdraw from public worship will not long make conscience of private; except the Lord break Satan's design, by a sudden reducing them. If you will not be carried away with the error of the wicked, and fall into the snare of the devil, keep up the honour of public worship. To that end observe these directions.

1. Get high thoughts of God. The Lord and his worship are so nearly related, as they are either esteemed or despised together. He that has high thoughts of God, will have suitable apprehensions of his worship, wherein his glory most appears, Psalms 102:16. We see it in David. None had higher apprehensions of God; see with what raised expressions he extols him, Psalms 146:1-10. And none had a higher esteem of public worship, as appears in those affectionate expressions formerly alleged. If you have high thoughts of God, that will be of high esteem with you, wherein he most appears, wherein he is most enjoyed. 'In the temple will every one speak of his glory,' for in public worship he appears most glorious. If ye have low thoughts of God, no wonder if you undervalue his worship! If you have a high esteem of God, you will have an answerable esteem of his name, of his worship. So Psalms 48:1-14, they profess their high thoughts of Zion, the public ordinances, ver. 2, 3, and the reason you may see: ver. 9, 'We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple!' If you apprehend God as great, and holy, and fearful, and glorious, it will help you to such thoughts of his worship as becomes his great, and holy, and fearful name. His worship is his name.

2. Get due apprehensions of those things, whereupon the pre-eminence of public worship is grounded. It follows, ver. 3, 'Glorious things,' &c., i. e. of the church and ordinances of God. It was the city of God in these respects, and in no other respect could so glorious things be spoken of it. Here is the sweetest enjoyment of God, the clearest discoveries of his glory, the powerful workings of the Spirit, the precious blood of Christ in its force and efficacy, the exceeding great and precious promises in their sweetest influences, spiritual life and strength, soul comforts and refreshments, the conversion of sinners, the edification of the body of Christ, the salvation of souls. These are the glorious things that are spoken of public worship; get a high esteem of these, and public worship will be highly valued. Look upon public ordinances in their glory, as they give the greatest glory to the God of heaven, as they are the greatest glory of his people on earth, and this will raise a spiritual mind to high apprehensions of them. Will you not honour that which is most honourable to God, that which is your greatest honour? Here the Lord, if anywhere in the world, receives the glory due unto his name, Psalms 29:1-2. To worship God in public is the way to give him the glory due to his name; and is not this of highest value? It is your glory too. Public ordinances are the glory of the people that enjoy, that improve them. Where the Lord has placed his name, there his honour dwells. When the Lord has erected his public worship in a place, then glory dwells in that

land; when this is removed, the glory is departed. That which is most your glory, challenges your highest esteem. Look upon this as your glory, and then you will account it highly valuable.

3. Delight in the worship of God. We soon disrespect that which we take no pleasure in; and, therefore, when the Lord is commanding the sanctifying of his Sabbath, he joins these: Isaiah 58:13, ‘If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable,’ &c. If it be not your delight, it will not be honourable. If you be of their temper who say, ‘When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn; and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?’ Amos 8:5; if public ordinances, praying, preaching, be a burden to you: not only private duties, but the base things of the world, will take place of it in your minds and hearts. When we are weary of a thing, take no pleasure in it, we easily give way to any suggestion that may disparage it. Let the worship of God be your delight, the joy and solace of your souls. Be glad of all opportunities to worship God in public, in season, and out of season, like David: Psalms 122:1, ‘I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord.’ Let it be your meat and drink to be thus employed; go, as to a feast; sit down under the shadow with great delight, while the fruits of ordinances, the shadow of heavenly enjoyments, are sweet.

4. Get spiritual hearts. All the glory of public worship is spiritual, and spiritual things are spiritually discerned, 1 Corinthians 2:14. A carnal man cannot discern that which renders the public ordinances so highly valuable. Custom, and other respects, may persuade him to use them, but he will never perceive the glory, the spiritual value of God’s worship, till he have a spiritual eye. Christ himself was foolishness to the Greeks, because they saw no further than his outside, 1 Corinthians 1:23. So was the preaching of Christ to carnal Jews and Gentiles; so it is, more or less, to all natural men, except some outward respect, some plausible ornament commend it. A spiritual eye can discern a glory in public worship, when the outside seems mean and contemptible. As the unbelieving Jews of Christ, so carnal men of his ordinances; there is no form nor comeliness therein to command any extraordinary respect; they see no beauty therein that they should desire them.

5. Look upon the public ordinances with the eye of faith. If you consult only with sense, you will be apt to say as the Assyrian, What are the waters of Jordan more than the rivers of Damascus? What is there in public reading the word, more than reading at home? What is there in public preaching, more than in another good discourse? Sense will discern no more in one than in the other; but the eye of faith looks through the prospect of a promise, and so makes greater, more glorious discoveries; passes through the mean outside, to the discovery of a special, an inward glory; sees a special blessing, a special assistance, a special presence, a special advantage, in public worship; no way so discoverable as by the eye of faith through a promise. Unbelievers want this perspective, and therefore see no further than the outside.

Faith can see the wisdom of God in that preaching, which the blind world counts foolishness, as they did the apostle’s; can see a glory in those ordinances which, in the eyes of carnal men, are mean and contemptible. When the child Jesus lay in the manger, a poor, despicable condition, the wise men saw, through those poor swaddling clothes, such a glory as commanded their wonder and adoration, whenas many others, in the same inn, saw no such thing. And why so? The wise men looked upon the child Jesus through that intimation, that word from heaven, whereby he was

made known to them. The outside of public worship, now under the gospel, is but like those poor swaddling clothes; but Christ is wrapped in them, there is a spiritual glory within, which a believer discerns, and accordingly values them, whenas an unbeliever sees no such thing. That worship, which, to sense and unbelief is mean and contemptible, is to faith, looking through a promise, the most glorious administration under heaven. The eye of faith must be opened, else the ordinances will not be valued. The Lord has given more encouragements to faith under the gospel, and therefore may expect more exercise of it, than under the law. And his dispensations are answerable. His children under the law were in their minority and nonage, Galatians 4:1. The outside of his worship was then glorious, the administration of it in state and pomp, he allowed the children that which would please their senses; but now, under the gospel, they are come to riper age, he allows no such gay outside, prescribes no such pomp as sense is taken with; the glory is spiritual, and such as is only visible to faith. And yet the glory of the second temple is greater than the first, the public worship under the gospel is more glorious than under the law. Though there be no golden censer in the ark, overlaid with gold, no cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat, no such ornament to take the senses, yet there is a far more exceeding glory, 2 Corinthians 3:11, but it is such a glory as is only discerned by the eye of faith. This you must exercise if you would give to the public worship of God the glory that is due to it.

6. Labour to draw out the virtue and efficacy of public ordinances, to make the utmost improvements of them. When you find the refreshing comforts, the blessed advantages of public worship, you will not need many motives to give them their due honour: Psalms 48:8, ‘As we have heard, so have we seen,’ &c. When they had not only heard, but seen, what God was to his people in his public worship, no wonder if they express their high esteem of it: ver. 1–3, ‘Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion,’ &c.

Now, that you may reap such advantage by them as may raise your esteem of them,

1. Come not unprepared. No wonder if unfruitfulness under the ordinances be so common, when neglect of preparation is so ordinary: Ecclesiastes 5:2, ‘Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God.’ Come not rashly, without due consideration with whom you have to do, and what you are a-doing. Come not with guilt and pollution upon your consciences, Ezekiel 23:21, Ezekiel 23:29. This is it from which we must be separate, if we would have God receive us, 2 Corinthians 6:17. Come not with minds and affections entangled in the world: ‘Put off thy shoes,’ &c. Come not with careless, indisposed spirits, with hearts unfixed, Psalms 57:7. Come not with that carnal, dull temper, which your hearts contract by meddling with the world. Plough up the fallow ground. If you sow among thorns, you will reap little to raise your esteem: Psalms 26:6, ‘I will wash mine hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.’ He alludes to the custom of the priests, enjoined under the law to wash their hands and feet, when they went about the service of the tabernacle. And this was exemplary to the people then, to us now, to teach us with what preparedness we should approach God.

2. Get acquainted with your spiritual condition. Come apprehensive of the state of your souls, whether it be the state of grace or nature, what your spiritual wants, what your inward distempers, what your temptations are; else you may hear much to little purpose, not discerning what is seasonable; else many a petition may pass unobserved, when you know not what most concerns

you. Oh, if professors knew their soul's condition punctually, and were throughly affected with it, the word would come in season, it would be like apples of gold, the ordinances would be as rain upon the new-mown grass, they would distil a fruitful influence, and their souls would grow as the lily.

3. Come with hearts hungering after the enjoyment of Christ in his ordinances. This affection has the promise: Matthew 5:1-48, 'He filleth the hungry with good things.' Sense of emptiness and indigency brings you under the aspect of this promise, under the sweet and gracious influences of it; whereas conceitedness of our own abundance, senselessness of our spiritual poverty, shuts up the treasury of heaven against us, 'The rich he sends empty away,' Psalms 81:10. Our souls should stretch themselves wide open, in earnest longings after God; this is the way to be filled with the rich blessings of spiritual ordinances.

4. Use the ordinances with holy fear and reverence, Psalms 2:11, and 3:7. That confidence which the Lord approves in his children is not a carna boldness, such as some mistake in the room of it. When we are admitted to most intimacy and familiarity with Christ, when we are invited to kiss the Son; yet there is a holy fear required: 'Serve the Lord with fear,' &c. When we have cause to rejoice in the Lord's gracious condescension to us poor worms, yet then we must tremble in apprehension of that overpowering glory and excellency to which we approach, Hebrews 12:28. The house, which the Lord prefers before the temple, is a trembling heart, Isaiah 66:1-24. And if he choose it for his habitation, he will richly furnish it; his presence will be to it light and life, joy and strength, grace and glory.

5. What you do in public worship, do it with all your might. Shake off that slothful, indifferent, lukewarm temper, which is so odious to God. Let your whole man tender this worship. Think it not enough to present your bodies before the Lord. Bodily worship profits as little as bodily exercise. The worship of the body is but the carcase of worship; it is soul worship that is the soul of worship. Those that draw near with their lips only shall find God far enough from them; not only lips, and mouth, and tongue, but mind, and heart, and affections; not only knee, and hand, and eye, but heart, and conscience, and memory, must be pressed to attend upon God in public worship. David says, not only 'my flesh longs for thee,' but 'my soul thirsts for thee.' Then will the Lord draw near, when our whole man waits on him; then will the Lord be found, when we seek him with our whole heart.

Let your whole man wait upon God; serve him so with all your might. Let his worship be your work, and be as diligent in it for your souls, as you are in other employments for your bodies. Spiritual slothfulness is the ruin of souls, it brings them to consumptions, it leaves them languishing under sad distempers. Those that will not stir up themselves to lay hold on God, will be bowed down under many infirmities. Soul-poverty will be the issue of spiritual sloth, Proverbs 18:1-24, 'a great waster.' So far from increasing the stock of grace, as he will greatly waste it, Proverbs 20:4. It holds in a spiritual sense. His soul shall be in a beggarly condition, as though it had nothing, even in harvest, in the midst of plenty, when others are reaping the sweet fruits of public ordinances, and laying up store against winter, against an evil day. In the midst of their plenty, the spiritual sluggard shall have nothing, Proverbs 12:17. It is the diligent man that shall be enriched with precious substance, even the precious advantages of public worship. The Lord is the rewarder of those that seek him diligently. Those that are diligent in preparing for it, diligent in attending on it,

diligent in after improvement of the ordinances, this man’s soul shall be rich, rich towards God. The Lord will bless him with such spiritual riches, in the use of public ordinances, as will raise his esteem of them. end of discourses.

# 04 - THE PRACTICAL DIVINITY OF THE PAPISTS

THE PRACTICAL DIVINITY OF THE PAPISTS discovered to be destructive of CHRISTIANITY AND MEN'S SOULS

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[As this is a polemical treatise, it has been deemed necessary to use more than ordinary care in verifying the numerous quotations. Almost the whole have been so verified, and may be depended upon as absolutely accurate.—Ed.] AN ADVERTISEMENT

I have always thought, since I considered and understood what popery was, that the knowing of it would be a sufficient dissuasive from it, to those that regard God and their souls. This persuasion, together with compassion for those that are seduced, and desire to secure those that are in danger, engaged me in this present undertaking; wherein I have discovered what the practical divinity of that church is, how pernicious, and inconsistent with the way to salvation declared in the Scripture. I have herein the concurrence of some (few in comparison) of that church, who are sensible of such doctrine prevailing amongst them, as they say is absolutely opposite to the rules and spirit of the gospel; such as no man that hath never so little tenderness of his own salvation, but must conceive an horror at;2 such as they call a poisonous morality, more corrupt than that of pagans themselves; and which permits Christians to do, what pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and barbarians, would have had in execration;4 such as is, in their style, the most palpable darkness that ever came out of the bottomless pit; such as overthrows the essential points of Christian religion, and the maxims that are most important, and of greatest necessity, in order to the salvation of men.6 Of this they have given the world notice in several discourses, two of which I have seen (though unhappily not the latter, till I had gone through the greatest part of what I intended). As to the extent of this execrable divinity, they declare, that whole societies would have these extravagancies accounted Roman traditions;8 that the church is overgrown with this poisonous morality; that it is ready to be overwhelmed with the deluge of these corruptions; that

the church is filled with this most palpable darkness. Elsewhere they seem to fix this charge upon the Jesuits principally, as if they would have it thought not to reach much further; but withal tell us, that the Jesuits are the most numerous and the most powerful body of men in the whole church, and have the disposal of the consciences of all the greatest.10 So that I can represent them no worse than some of themselves do; and the worst that can be said falls, by their own acknowledgment, upon the most considerable part of their church. That they should so far accuse the whole, cannot be expected (whatever occasion there be for it), so long as they think fit to continue in its communion. But then, if we regard those who are so great a part of the church upon the account of their numbers, and more in respect of their authority and influence, the maxims so branded, are Roman traditions,2 the true doctrine of faith, the true morality of the church, not asserted by that society alone, but equally (if not more) by Catholic writers of all sorts; and those that quarrel thereat are factious spirits. Hereby, so far as the testimony of adversaries against themselves can clear a matter in question, there is evidence, both that the practical doctrine amongst them is pernicious and damnable, and also that it is common and generally followed.

I intend not here to impeach any maxim peculiar to the Jesuits, but that doctrine of the Romanists which is far more extensive, delivered by canonists and divines, secular and regular, of every sort, and in part by the canon law and their councils (who sometimes glance at this subject, though they make it not their business); that which in most particulars, and those of greatest moment, is ancienter than the Society; and in many points such, as the censurers of the Jesuits' morality do not touch, but either approve themselves, or dare not condemn, lest they should involve the whole church in the condemnation. I cannot discern that the practical divinity of the Jesuits is more corrupt than that of other Romish writers, their contemporaries; and those that view the moral discourses of both, and compare them, will (if I much mistake not) discern no other. I never yet met with any author of that order so intolerably licentious, but might be matched, if not outvied, by others. There is no need to except Escobar or Bauny (though most branded), nor do their keen antagonists do it, when they speak of others whom they know to be no Jesuits, as the most extravagant that ever were. There is no reason why the odium which a community incurs should be appropriated to a party; nor that the Society only should be noted as the sink, when the corruption is apparent everywhere. So far as the Jesuits are concerned herein, it hath been sufficiently exposed by others; upon which account I decline those of that order, not putting the reader to rely upon any evidence from their writing. Only because it is requisite to shew their concurrence in some points, which otherwise might not pass for the common doctrine, I make use of Bellarmine freely (whom none can count a corrupter of popery, however Christianity hath been treated by him), and of Suarez sometimes (whose judgment alone is counted equivalent to a thousand others, by some4 that are none of the Society). I allege beside, though rarely, one or two more of those fathers, of like eminency and authority in that church; but none of them, save in such points wherein they have not been noted for extravagancies by others; or in such wherein those of other orders concur with, or go beyond them. The greatest advantage I make of them, is to represent the opinions of others, not their own; and most herein of Suarez, who usually gives an account of the common doctrine out of unexceptionable authors. Those whom I principally rely on to make good the charge, are the ancienter and better sort of their divines and casuists (the strictest of them in points of morality that I could meet with), such as are so far from being disciples of Ignatius, that most of them are Dominicans (most opposite of all orders to the Jesuits, and said to be the least tainted with these corruptions), and the greatest part of them were writers before

their order was founded, or appeared to the world on this subject. To these I have added other casuists of this last age, not that there is need to produce any worse than the former, but to shew that time hath made little or no alteration amongst them for the better. The Romanists, when they are ashamed of their doctrine, or think the world will cry shame of it, are wont to disown it. It is like they may do so here, and tell us that these points, not being determined by councils, are not the doctrine of their church, but the opinions of particular doctors. This serves them for a shift in other cases with some colour, but it will be absurd to offer at it here. For though this be not their doctrine of faith, which with some generals, most about the sacraments, (reflected on in the sequel as there is occasion) is the business of their councils; yet it is the practical doctrine of their church, if it have any, and if they think their catholics concerned to be Christians more than merely in opinion. And this, under several heads, I have collected out of such writings as are the proper place of it. Therefore, to say that this is not the doctrine of their church, because the particulars are not found decided by councils, is to tell us that they are not charged with it, unless we can find it, where they know it cannot be found, and where, with any reason, it cannot be looked for. It is no more reasonable than if one, who hath taken a purse, should plead, though it be found in his hand, that he is not to be charged with it, unless we can spy it in his mouth, when yet he never opens it. That councils should give particular directions for conscience and practice, in cases innumerable, was never attempted, nor ever can be expected. Their church leaves this to her divines and casuists; and that nothing may pass them but what is agreeable to her sense, no books are to be published, but with the approbation and authority of such as are counted competent judges hereof; so that the doctrine of their authorised writers, that especially wherein they commonly agree, is the practical doctrine of that church, or else she hath none such, and consequently no care of the lives and consciences of her members; and though this be not infallible, or de fide, as they count the decisions of councils, yet is it as certain, they say, as the nature of the subject requires, nor do they pretend to have any infallible doctrine for particular directions herein; which yet may justly seem very strange to any man that considers that gross faults in life and practice are more infallibly damnable than errors in faith and speculation. Now, upon this their common doctrine, the substance of the charge ensuing, and the principal articles thereof, are grounded. As for the opinions of particular doctors, wherein there is no such common concurrence, though they be not so certain as the other, yet they are (even the worst of them) safe in practice, any of their people may follow them without danger, and with a good conscience; for this (as will appear hereafter) is the common judgment of their schools and doctors, and so far the doctrine of their church. And if that church did no farther own these opinions, common or particular, then, under this character, this is enough for our purpose (when the question is of the danger of popery in reference to men's salvation), that she counts such rules of life safe, and publicly allows them as direction for practice, which tend to ruin religion and men's souls. If they were not counted safe, that church which pretends to so much care of souls, since all in her communion are exposed to the danger, would be concerned to give warning of it, and brand these maxims as pernicious; but this was never yet done, nor ever like to be. These opinions, all, or the greatest part of them, were taught and published in that church, before the Council of Trent; there was time enough, in eighteen years, to take cognisance of them and their pernicious consequence; yet, when they bestowed anathemas so liberally, where there was occasion, and (for the most part) where there was none, they thought not fit to bestow one curse upon these doctrines, how execrable soever; yea, some part thereof of worst consequence had there an express confirmation. Their popes since, though they could see

occasion to condemn such propositions as the five ascribed to Jansenius, and those of Baius, White, and many others, could not, by the help of a judgment counted infallible, discern anything in the worst of these doctrines worthy of, or fit for, their censure. The cardinals of the inquisition at Rome, and their setters in other countries, whose business it is to spy whatever (in books particularly) is against faith and good manners, see nothing of this nature in that which destroys both. No expurgatory index (what havoc soever has been made by those tools in their best authors) hath, so far as I have observed, touched the common opinions here exposed. It is true, some others have been expunged, and I find above forty opinions of the late casuists censured by Alexander the Seventh, and the cardinals of their sacred congregation; but hereby more authority is added to those I insist on, being thought good enough to pass untouched; which must therefore be counted sound doctrine and safe for practice in the judgment of their virtual church, and the chief parts of their church representative.

There is no ground to expect that this doctrine, as to the principal and most pernicious parts of it, will ever be condemned by any popes or councils of such complexion and principles as that of Trent, where it was a maxim observed religiously, that no determination should pass, which either in matter or form would disoblige any considerable party among them, much less all. The Roman interest is supported by such politics, and must be secured, whatever become of souls or saving doctrine. There are indeed some dissenters amongst them (as there are elsewhere) who complain of their moral divinity, but they are such whose power and interest can reach little further than complaints; and these are so far from being the voice or sense of their church, that their writings which exhibit such complaints are condemned at Rome by the supreme tribunal (as they call it) of the inquisition. In short, by the known custom and settled order of the Roman church, the people, for regulating of their hearts and lives, are to be directed by their confessors, their confessors have their direction herein from their casuists and practical authors; both priests and people must believe this to be safe, because the church hath made this provision for them, approves the course, and obligeth them to take no other. And thus that doctrine, the deadly venom whereof I here discover, must be conveyed from their casuists to all sorts amongst them; nor must they fear any danger in it, unless they will question the wisdom and goodness of their church. There can be no question but that this doctrine is thus far owned by the church of Rome; whether it be delivered fallibly or infallibly, by councils or without, is not at all here considerable. It is enough that such is the conduct provided for Roman catholics, and that it is to be followed without apprehension of danger, and cannot be declined by those that will keep the ordinary road of that church, though it lead directly to destruction. When no other shift will serve, to hinder those from being undeceived whom they would delude, it is usual with them to make loud outcries of false citations, and that their doctrine is misrepresented. I have been very careful to give no just occasion for this, being apprehensive that he who doth it wrongs not them more than he doth himself and his cause. The places cited I have viewed again and again, where there might be any doubt of misconstruction, and set down their own words where it might seem scarce credible that Christians and divines (directing conscience) should speak at such a rate; and where that would have been too tedious, have given their sense faithfully, so far as I could discern it, and directed the reader where he may find and judge thereof himself. Yet if, notwithstanding all the care and diligence I could use, it hath been my unhappiness anywhere to mistake them, upon notice from any I shall do them right; and am capable to give them further satisfaction, knowing well that I am yet far from representing their doctrine fully so bad as it is. Large volumes might be filled with the corruptions of it; I have but

pointed at some, and contented myself with few authors in many particulars, where plenty might have been produced. I designed briefness, and have waived much that was ready, lest I should be tedious, considering that some who are most concerned in such discourses will have nothing at all when they think too much is offered.

I have been less solicitous about the style; it doth not always satisfy myself, so that I can allow others to find fault with it; it may be thought sometimes less grave, elsewhere too sharp and vehement. I suffered it to be what the subject would have it; and the quality thereof now and then overruled me, somewhat against my own inclination. Only I make nothing ridiculous, but find it so, and should scarce do it right if I represented it otherwise than it is. Where I seem too sharp or severe upon any occasion, I found something in the nature of the subject that forced me to it. And it is not easy (if it be congruous or just) to speak of what is monstrously extravagant or pernicious, with such calmness as we treat indifferent things.

It will be enough for me if (through God's blessing) people will hereby be brought to understand that popery designs not to trouble them either with the reality of religion, or the happiness which Christ has entailed thereon. And that their practical doctrine is contrived accordingly, will, I doubt not, be hereby manifest to all such as have a mind to see, and are not wilfully resolved to lose the way to salvation, and their souls together, by shutting their eyes against so plain a discovery of so great a danger.

INTRODUCTION The danger of popery in points of faith hath been sufficiently discovered to the world by the divines of the Reformation, but their doctrine, which concerns life and practice, hath not been so much insisted on. And yet there is as much occasion for this; for here the mischief is as great, an unchristian heart and life being at least as damning as erroneous belief; and hereby the great apostasy and degeneracy of the papal church is as apparent, and herein they have proceeded with as much disregard of Christ and the souls of men. Their design in this seems to have been, not the promoting of Christ's interest (for that is manifestly prostituted), but the securing and greatening of a faction, which, under the profession of Christianity, might be false to all its realities. And their rule is the corrupt inclinations of depraved nature, to which they have throughly conformed their practical divinity, which easeth it of the duties for which it hath an aversation, how much soever enjoined, and clears its way to those sins to which it is disposed, as though there were no need to avoid them. This rule serves their design with great advantage; but souls are more endangered hereby, and their principles become more pernicious, because they are so taking. Persuade a man that he may safely neglect the duties which he owes to God, his own soul, and others, and may gratify the lusts he is addicted to, and give him the maxims of religion, and the authority and conclusions of divines, and the teachers whom he trusts, for it, and he will like that religion, because he loves his sin, and is in danger to follow both, though he perish for it eternally. And indeed this is it which makes the condition of papists deplorable; for though the principles of their belief, as it is popish, be mortally poisonous, yet there might be some antidote in the practicals of Christianity, retained and followed by those who are unavoidably ignorant of the danger of their more speculative errors, and so some hopes of such; but their practical doctrine being no less corrupted, the remedy itself becomes poison, and their condition who freely let it down hopeless. Whether their errors in matters of faith be directly fundamental hath been with some of their opposers a question, but those who will view their practical doctrine may discern that it strikes through the heart of Christianity, casting off the vitals of it as superfluities, and cuts off

those who will believe and follow it from the way of life; not only by encouraging them with security to live and die in all sorts of wickedness, but also by obliging them to neglect, as needless, the greatest and most important concerns of Christians, without which God cannot be honoured by us, nor salvation attained. This will be apparent by observing what is determined in that church by those who have the conduct of their lives and consciences, concerning the worshipping of God, Christian knowledge, love to God, faith in Christ, repentance from dead works, and holiness of life; as to the exercise of Christian virtues, the abandoning of sin, and the practice of good works; of all which in particular the following discourse gives an account. THE PRACTICAL DIVINITY OF THE PAPISTS discovered to be destructive of CHRISTIANITY AND MEN'S SOULS

CHAPTER I Real worship of God not necessary in the Church of Rome

There is nothing wherein the honour of God and the happiness of men is more concerned than divine worship. Religion provides for these great ends by obliging us to worship God; this it doth indispensably, and can do no less without abandoning itself; for this is essential to it, and gives it being. And the truth and goodness of it depends as much thereon; for no religion is true and saving but that which obligeth to worship God really. Now worship is not real unless mind and heart concur in it; whatever it hath, without this it wants2 its life and soul, and is no more worship really than a picture is a man. Hence Christ brands those who draw near to God with their lips, without their hearts, for hypocrites, Matthew 15:7-8, Mark 7:6; such as pretend to be what they are not, and to do what really they do not; who are but worshippers in show and fiction; no more so indeed than the stage-player is the prince whose part he acts. The Romanists seem to acknowledge all this, and therefore ought not to deny but that it is as necessary that God should be really worshipped, as it is needful that he should have any honour in the world, or that there should be any true religion amongst men, or salvation for them. Yet notwithstanding, their practical doctrine makes it needless to worship God really. That this may be fully and distinctly manifested, let us observe, first, what they count requisite in divine service and in their mass. The former is their worship for every day (which goes under the name of canonical hours and the divine office), and is the proper service of their clergy and monastics; the latter is for holidays, and is common to the people with the religious, and the only public service they are ordinarily obliged to. Afterwards we may reflect upon what else passeth under the notion of worship in public, and also take some notice of their devotions, or religious employments in private. For the first of these, their divine service, if there were anything of religion or religious worship counted needful amongst them, it would be required of their clergy, and those whom by way of eminency they call religious, in their divine office especially (if anywhere); but by their doctrine it is not needful for them to worship God really there, unless he can be said to be worshipped where both himself and all that concerns worshippers indeed may (as it may by their leave) be quite neglected, and no way actually minded. They seem, at least some of them, in their discourses of worship and prayer particularly, to require as necessary thereto both an act of the mind and of the will (attention and intention they call them); but proceed with them a little, and you will find the former of these quite lost in the latter; and the latter, as they order it, dwindling into nothing. It is the common determination of their schools and doctors, that actual attention of mind is not necessary when they recite their canonical hours, that is, they need not mind God in their service, nor the matter of it more than the object, nor the sense of what they say, nor the words they use; not any of these need be actually minded. A purpose or intention to do it is sufficient, though that purpose be not at all performed. This is the doctrine of

their great Aquinas, concerning prayer in general, whom the rest2 commonly follow. Attention is not necessary all the while, but the virtue of the first intention, with which a man comes to prayer, renders the whole prayer meritorious, as it falls out in other meritorious acts. And this first intention also is enough to make the prayer prevalent. So he explains his main conclusion, viz. prayer ought to be at least attentive in respect of a previous intention. So that they may be attentive enough, by virtue of this first intention, though they do not at all mind afterwards what they are doing, when they should be worshipping; which is just as if they should say, a man that goes to church with an intent to join in their service, but falls fast asleep when he comes there, serves God effectually, and is attentive enough by virtue of that former intention, though he sleep all the while. It seems it is sufficient in the church of Rome, and effectual, even to a degree meritorious, to worship God as one that is asleep may worship him, if he falls asleep after a good intention. However, hereby it is manifest that with them it is not needful to worship God at all, even in their most solemn service, but only to intend some such thing. If there be a purpose of worship, though God be never worshipped indeed, by their doctrine, it is enough for him. I suppose ‘his holiness’ would not think himself well served at this rate. The common women at Rome are to pay him a julio a head weekly, for the liberty he gives them to drive there their trade; now if, instead of payment, they should allege an intention of it, and declare this is all they are obliged to, and that they ought to be acquitted upon that account, though they never laid it down, he would think himself not paid hereby, but scorned; he loseth his sacred reverence, and is affronted into the bargain; yet at this rate will he have God served by Roman catholics. Well, but if God need not be worshipped but in purpose only, and the intention may serve without the act, yet sure it must be an actual intention, or at least a purpose to worship God. If it be not the worship of God that they need intend, divine worship is clearly abandoned, both in deed and in purpose; if it must not be actual, there need be actually no thought of worshipping God. But I cannot discern that they count either of these necessary. They declare plainly that an actual intention is needless; in this they generally agree, though they differ in the terms by which they use to express it. They call it an habitual, or a virtual, or an implicit intention, in opposition to that which is express or actual; so that actually either to worship God, or to have an intention of worshipping him, is more than needs. But since they will not have it actual, let it be what sort of intention they please otherwise, yet sure the thing intended should be the worshipping of God; so that they may be said to worship in purpose, though they think it needless to do it in deed. Whether they count this necessary, may be best discerned by their own expressions, which they use in some variety. Commonly, they say, a virtual intention may serve. Now this is not an intention, indeed, to worship God; but supposeth a former act, by virtue of which one is said to have an intention when really he hath none. As they call that a virtual intention to worship when a man had a purpose to attend, though he do it not at all; answerably, a virtual intention to worship will be a purpose or thought to have such a purpose, though he never have it. Let those who can apprehend how they may be said to worship God so much as in purpose, by virtue of a purpose to worship him, which they have not, but only intend to have, without effect. But it may be there is no such intention needful with them, for custom may serve to this purpose (Soto). The precept for attending the performance of divine service canonically includes two things:2 first, that at the beginning of prayer every one mind what he is going to do. But for this former it is enough that it be done by virtue of some former intention and custom, as if one, when the sign is given for prayers, go, as is the custom, to the choir; by this he satisfies the precept. Now this he may be accustomed to do, without any thought of God, or of worshipping

him; yet by virtue of that custom, wherein God is quite neglected, he will have their virtual intention to worship him; all the intention that they require, that is, plainly none at all, unless by virtue of neglecting God he may be said to mind him. Or an habitual intention may serve, they sometimes tell us. Sylvester expresseth it thus, after Paludanus, he is bound in the beginning of the service to have an intent to perform it, so that the service may be from his reason, and not from his imagination only, i. e. he must go about it like a man, and not like a beast. But lest it should seem too hard for a man to go about their service, with an intention so much distinguishing him from a brute, he adds a favourable gloss. This is to be understood, saith he, either in act, or habit, or virtue; so that if it be but an habitual intention, it may suffice. Navarre explains it by this conditional (and others with him), if one be asked, why he takes his breviary, he would answer, that he doth it to say service.2 Now hereby we are told, that rather an habitual than a virtual intention is expressed; and they acknowledge that such an intention is not sufficient for a human act, much less therefore for an act of worship. Since then they think that such an intention will suffice, a purpose to worship God is not needful with them, unless they can make divine worship of that which is less than human; or will have the brutes to be catholic worshippers. They tell us also that this habitual intention is in those that are asleep.4 So Scotus, the first founder of this distinction (and herein that which they call virtual agrees with it; indeed, Aquinas saw no cause to distinguish them; and6 others, who affect Scotus his subtlety, use the terms as if they were distinct, yet confound them in their instances). And thus, when all the worship which they think needful is shrunk up into an intention, yet that intention is no other than they may have in a dead sleep, when they dream of no such thing. So that their souls need be no more concerned in worshipping God, either when they are at service, or when they are addressing themselves to it, than if their church were in mount Celius with the seven sleepers. When they are coming to it (as we see here), they need have no more purpose to worship God than if they were asleep; and when they are at it (as we said before), they need no more attend to what they are a-doing than if they were not yet, awake.

They say also an implicit intention will suffice; which is, as they explain it, when a man hath not expressly any thought of praying or worshipping God, when he is to read service, but only intends8 to accomplish the precept of the church, or to perform his task, or to do as he is wont to do. As when a man first takes orders or enters into a monastery, understanding that the church enjoins all in that capacity daily to recite their canonical hours, if he then have an intention to perform this task, to do as the church requires, or as others of that quality are wont to do, and accordingly say his hours as the fashion is, though he have not once a thought of God or worshipping him all his life after, either when he is going to service, or when he is reading it, yet that first intention may suffice, yea, it is of such sufficiency that any other act of mind or heart, either in worship, or in order to it, becomes needless; it is of such admirable efficacy, that by virtue of it they can worship God, when they mind no such thing as God, or worshipping him, no, nor ever intend it otherwise. Let us suppose that they thought it requisite to renew this implicit intention frequently, yet would it not necessarily amount to a purpose of worshipping God, for not only their task, and what they are wont to do, but the precept of the church, may be (as we shall hear them by and by declare) accomplished by acts of wickedness, which sure cannot be acts of worship, nor a design to do them an intention to serve God; yea, they may satisfy the church's injunction for divine service, though they have an express intention not to fulfil it all the while, as2 Arragon and their divines of greatest reputation determine. So that if the church did enjoin them to worship God, yet no

intention to worship him would be needful, because they can satisfy the church with a contrary intention. Finally, a sinful intention will serve their turn; this passeth for their common doctrine.

If a man intend principally his own praise or worldly advantage, and so design to serve himself, and not God, this cannot with any reason be counted an intention to worship God; yet such a design will suffice for the worship they require, and it will be substantially good in their account, only a little tainted with a venial speck, which, though it may hinder it from being meritorious of eternal glory, yet he that never otherwise intends to pray or worship cannot be damned, and so will be saved notwithstanding. In short, the Lord requires the heart in worship; without this, nothing else can please him, nothing in his account will be a real honour or worship of him, but only in appearance and fiction. The Romanists teach, that God need not have anything of their hearts in their service, not any one act or motion thereof, while they are at it, only some sort of intention before, while they are going about it; but this no act of will or heart neither, but only a virtual, or habitual, or implicit something; they have minced it so small, that an ordinary eye cannot discern in it so little, as a purpose to serve God; yea, in fine, they have reduced it to that which is worse than nothing, and if the heart must be cumbered with any such thing as an intention about serving God, yet a sinful intention may serve, this satisfies their holy church and her precept fully; she doth not, she cannot, require any more for God, what burdens soever in other cases she lays upon the consciences of men. But though the heart, and every act of it, be thus discharged from any concern in their service, yet it may be they will have the mind more engaged. One act thereof, and but one (mental attention), they seem to require; and it is true some of them make show of calling for it, but as soon as ever it appears it is dismissed immediately as needless, for they conclude generally, that a purpose to attend will serve, though they attend not, and this purpose too by their handling (as we have seen) comes to nothing or worse. But suppose they did (though they do not) account an intention to worship God needful, and that actual, express, and well qualified, yet they confess an intent to worship or wait on God is not to worship him really: no more than a man is sober when he is drunk, because he intended to be sober. But they leave us no ground for this supposition, yet ascribe as much to their intention, and more than the best imaginable will bear, after they have reduced it to as bad as nothing. However, since all the worship they count necessary is included in this purpose, and all their pretensions depend on it, they are concerned to have it thought to be something, and they will seem cautious about it, as a thing material, so this proviso they lay down. It must not be changed into a contrary purpose; if that should fall out, it will lose its wonderful virtue, and not make those worshippers who mind not what they are doing when they should be praying. But there is no danger of this, nor need they be solicitous about it, for (as they tell them) they change not their purpose, though they do nothing that they intended, or do what is quite contrary to it, viz., though if they purposed to attend, yet they attend not at all, but turn their minds to other things, if they act cross to the supposed intention; yet, so long as they assume not a contrary purpose, they must be thought to mind what they are about, though they mind it not one moment; and there need be as little care, as there is danger of changing their purpose, for2 carelessness cannot do it. It cannot be changed, unless a man designedly, and on set purpose, will turn his mind from what he is about to other things. Since then a person who doth not mind God, or anything that concerns his worship, when he seems engaged in it, doth not worship God at all, as is evident in itself, and they confess it, in case he mind not this on set purpose; therefore, though he doth not worship God at all, yet he worships him as much as the Romanists require, unless he wills not to worship him on set purpose; yea, though he voluntarily mind nothing that

concerns a worshipper, though he deliberately and willingly let his mind run upon other things, yet so long as he is so regardless of God, and what he is about, as not to take notice of this extravagancy, he fulfils the precepts of the church, and minds divine service as much as is required. Thus Cajetan, Soto, and others; so that by their doctrine, if they do not worship God and voluntarily neglect it, yet they do as much as the church enjoins, so long as they take no notice that they do not worship him. And as they may voluntarily employ their minds about other things, when they should be worshipping, so may they on set purpose busy the outward man about other employments, when they are saying their service. They can perform their best devotions while (to give their own instances) they are4 washing themselves, or putting on their clothes, or mending pens, or laying the cloth, or making beds, or anything else which requires no more attention. Nor dare they count this a venial fault, because the Dominicans are enjoined by the rules of their order to say their service while they are doing something else. That which would spoil the devotion of others gives no impediment to theirs, and good reason, for how can that be disturbed that is not, or lessened when it is already nothing? This is to worship God after the Roman mode, when neither body nor mind is taken up with the service, but both deliberately employed about something else. But that by their principles they need be no better worshippers, will yet be more manifest if we view their doctrine concerning attention more distinctly. Aquinas and Bonaventure (whom the rest follow) give an account of three sorts hereof, according to the severals which may be minded in prayer. The first is attention to the words, so as not to err in pronouncing them. The second, to the sense of the words. The third, to the person prayed to, and the things prayed for.

Bonaventure calls attention to the first superficial, and that to the second literal (we may as well call it human or rational), that to the third spiritual (divine or Christian attention others call it).

Now (which is to be observed as that which unveils the whole mystery), they hold that any one of these is sufficient, not only the third or the second, but even the first, though it be the worst, and of least importance. So Angelus, Sylvester,4 Cajetan, Bellarmine,6 Tolet, so Aquinas,8 Soto, Navar, so all of them, it is (they tell us) the common doctrine universally received. And this clears all, and leads us directly through their reserves and concealments, and the ambiguity of their expressions (apt to mislead an unwary eye, and abuse a charitable mind, loath to think them so bad as they speak themselves) into the open view of their irreligious (not to say atheistical) doctrine. This makes it very evident that with them it is not needful either to worship God or intend it. For since they agree that any one of the several sorts of attention is sufficient, the first, which concerns the bare words, is enough on their account, and the other are needless. It is not requisite that they should mind either the things to be prayed for, or the God they should pray to, or the sense of the words they pronounce; it will suffice that they mind the words, to them senseless, and therein the empty and insignificant figure and sound. Now, words without sense are in themselves neither good nor bad; no worship, sure, can be imagined in them; they are no better (but less tolerable) in the mouths of men than the sound of brutes. And the mere figure and sound of letters can make men no more worshippers than conjurors; yet such is all the worshipping and praying that they count necessary. But if they had a mind to supererogate, and their Catholics were to do more than their duty, i. e. act as becomes men in their service, taking the sense along with the words, yet the third sort of attention, which concerns God, is still unnecessary, there need be no application of the mind unto God in their prayers. Surely in any religion but that which will have men abandon both sense and reason in matters plain and obvious to either, God would not be thought to be

worshipped when he is not at all minded. By their common doctrine now mentioned (wherein all sorts of their authors conspire), first their minds may in their divine service not only depart from God by natural or inadvertent vagaries, but they may dismiss them from God on set purpose; for they may voluntarily and upon deliberation decline in their service what is more than enough; and the attendance of the mind upon God in prayer is plainly with them more than enough, seeing they declare that their attending to the bare words alone is sufficient. If they mind but to pronounce the words entire, no more is needful; God may be left out of their minds during their whole service; and they may be as much without God in their worship as others are said to be without him in the world, deliberately and out of choice. They leave us not to rely for this upon consequences, how evident and undeniable soever; they stick not to declare that they may without sin voluntarily abandon the better sorts of attention, viz. both that which is rational and that which is spiritual. This will be no fault at all, if done upon a reasonable account; for example, if any one decline these, that he may not tire his head therewith, or anything of like nature.2 It seems reasonable with them not to trouble their heads with minding God, or what becomes men in their worship of him. The reason is, because they are not obliged to serve God as well as they can. It is a received maxim amongst them, that they are not bound to do their best.4 The third sort of attention is better than the second, and the second is better than the first (that is worst of all); but when there are better and worse ways of serving God before them, they may choose the worst. The worst attendance of all, it seems, is good enough for God, even that wherein he is not at all regarded. This doctrine is so common, that I find but two who demur on it, and one of them (Cajetan) but drawn in by consequence. Only Navar, though he, as the rest, counts the first and worst sort of attention sufficient, yet thinks it may be a venial fault to retain it, so as voluntarily to exclude or hinder the better. Yet both6 these hold that they may voluntarily want the better, and may without fault turn their minds from God to other things, so long as they observe it not, or if they do observe it, yet so long also as they do not reflect upon it as a vagary. And both maintain that any one may pray whilst he is dressing himself, or is taken up with any other like employment. And such action, though it be consistent with the worst attention, yet undoubtedly (they say) it hinders the better, especially that which is spiritual and elevated. So that herein these authors are either reconciled to the common opinion, or fall out with themselves. And that such employments (though inconsistent with spiritual attention, i. e. with minding God) are lawful while they are at their service, is not only the sense of these two casuists, but to deny it is against the usage of all the pious (it seems the Roman piety is without regarding God even in his worship). All the Dominicans are particularly obliged to it (as we saw before), and have a visible demonstration for it from the ancient form of their dormitories. Thus one way or other all agree that God may voluntarily be neglected in their worship without sin.

Secondly, As it is not necessary by their doctrine to worship God, so neither is there any necessity to intend it. When they have encouraged all, even their religious, not to pray at all, by assuring them they need not mind God at all, whilst they should be praying to him, yet they would persuade them notwithstanding that they may pray by virtue of a former intention. The vanity of this is shewed already (where we prove both that this is not enough, and that indeed they require not so much); but because it is the only pretence that such can be worshippers of God who think it needless to mind him, even in the most solemn addresses amongst them, it will not be amiss to see it again put quite away by their own doctrine. What must be designed in that previous intention, upon which, not only the efficacy, but the reality, of their prayers depends? Must they

intend, when they are going about it, to mind the things they are to pray for, or the God they should worship, or the sense of the words they utter? No; as it is not necessary to mind any of these when they are at their worship, so neither is it needful to intend it beforehand: it will be sufficient if they do but intend to mind the senseless pronounciation of the words, and neither God nor anything else which becomes Christians, or men in acts of worship; nothing but what brutes or birds are capable of, the mere uttering of the words. This is very manifest by their common doctrine, now before us, concerning attention in prayer. Attendance to the words without the sense is sufficient, but they need not purpose beforehand to have any sort of attention more than that which is sufficient; for they will not imagine there is any need of a purpose to do that which is not needful to be done; and they declare expressly this is all which is requisite, that they come to their service with a purpose to have any sort of attention, that is sufficient; telling us withal, that attendance to the bare words will suffice. So that in the issue the worship of God (his and our greatest concern in this world) is reduced to this: there is no need to mind God, and so not to worship him at all, either actually or virtually, since it is neither needful to do this, nor intend it. He is not worshipped in that remote and minute way which they call virtual (which is not the doing of it, but a purpose only to do it), but by virtue of a former intention; where this intention is not, it can have no virtue; but with them there need be no intention to mind God, and so by their doctrine it is not necessary to worship him one way or other.

Thirdly, Since with them it is not needful to mind anything in their service, for which they can be counted worshippers, nothing but the words, it will not be very material to take notice what attention they must give to these; yet seeing the senseless recital of the words is all that they would have them mind in divine service, one would think that this should be attended to purpose, at least actually. No; it is enough if their attention be but virtual, i. e. if they have a purpose to mind them, when they are going about their worship, and change it not while they are at it, though then they mind them not; for as they generally hold that attention to the words is sufficient, so none question but a virtual attention thereto will serve.2 It may seem strange that one should be said to attend when he attends not, but they will satisfy this with something that is as odd; they would have them think their heedlessness is excused by being more heedless, and so the more careless they are in their worship the better. For if they mind not what they are doing, when saying divine service, yet if they do this without reflection, and take no notice that they mind it not at all, they therefore mind it well enough. Such is the attention which the strictest of their authors require and judge sufficient; even such as is as good as none, and about that which is nothing worth. Now, this doctrine hath such an atheistical aspect, that they (who profess themselves to be, and would have the world think that they are worshippers of God) seem concerned not to expose it commonly barefaced. And indeed they give it some disguise, when they declare so much for attention of mind in worship, as that which is of the substance of worship, so essential thereto, that without this it is no worship of God, no praying at all, but a mere clamorous noise, yea, a mocking of God, and taking his name in vain.4 The Jesuits forbear not frequently to acknowledge this. Who would not think hereupon, that they count it most necessary for the mind to attend God in worship? Oh! but the vizor falls off, when we understand that attention of mind to nothing else but the bare words, stripped of their sense, and all respect to God, is enough with them, and that virtual only, and in purpose, though they never actually mind so little. They themselves assure us that the attending to the words only (if that were to be done indeed) is no attending God; for they make these distinct things, and will have one of them suffice without the other; and it is against the resentments of all

religion, and common sense, too, that God should be said to be worshipped when he is not at all minded. And therefore, in fine, when they teach (as the best of them do, so that it passeth for their common doctrine) that superficial attention in their service is sufficient, they declare plainly enough, that in the church of Rome there is no need to worship God, no, not for their religious, in that which they call divine service. But if we would have a plainer acknowledgment hereof than is needful, we may have it from those who declare that no attention of mind is needful in worship, and these are the greatest part of their authors, which I find alleged in this question (taking none into the account neither, but those who are ancienter than the foundation of the Society). They determine, without distinguishing that all attention is needless, actual, or virtual. If the words are pronounced entire, and no external action admitted to hinder that, it is no crime with them, if as nothing else, so neither the bare words be further minded, but the thoughts be quite dismissed from them. Sylvester, the master of the sacred apostolical palace, and their prime champion against Luther, in his book dedicated to Pope Leo the Tenth, determines expressly, that to pray with attention in their canonical hours is not required by God's law. If he had said, the church had not required it, he had spoken within compass, and said no more than many others before and after him; but he says that too, for having told us that Hostiensis, Antoninus, Summa Rosellæ do all hold, that the church enjoins, not attentiveness, but only saying the service, he adds, that they say true as to this, that attention is not under the precept of the church.2 Of the like persuasion are Durandus, Paludanus, Angelus de Clavasio, and others. For attention, as they say, is not a command of their church, but a counsel only, which may be neglected without sin. Others, who make the best of it, deliver it thus. The church do not command internal acts, no more than judge of them, therefore requires not attention in worship; the precept is fully accomplished without it, by the external act alone; the want of attention is no fault, unless upon the account of the natural precept, and in reference to that it is no worse than venial.4 They are herein opposed by some later casuists and Jesuits (however these come to be counted more licentious). But the differing parties fully agree in making it needless to worship God. For both hold, that they need not mind either God, or the matter, or the sense of the words in their service, either actually or virtually, and both conclude that the words without the sense (and all else for which they can be considerable) need not be minded actually. All the difference is about a virtual attention to the bare words, whether the want of that (which is no attention indeed) be a mortal crime. It is just as if when they had concluded it lawful to murder a man, they should fall into a hot debate whether it were a deadly crime to disorder his hair. But so it becomes those who make no scruple to destroy religion body and soul, to make a zealous stir about the slightest appurtenances of it. Something must be done with some shew of conscience, too, about its appendices, that the world may not think they retain nothing of it amongst them. And yet how palpable is the irreligion of these sophisters, who will have it a damnable crime to neglect their empty words, but no fault at all wholly to neglect the great God, even when, if ever, the whole soul should attend him. Here is evidence too much, that the church of Rome, so far as we can know her sense by her doctors, the most, and best of them, if she think it fit that God should be worshipped, yet thinks it not needful that he be minded, i. e. though it be convenient to pretend worship, yet it is not necessary to worship him indeed. Medina is so ingenuous as to tell us, that since the church requires not attention in their service, she doth not oblige them to pray, when she enjoins them to say their canonical hours. So that all in the Church of Rome are discharged from any obligation to worship God at all, even in their most solemn service; they need not pray when they are at their church prayers. Not only he, but all of

them, must acknowledge this, who will yield to that reason or authority which they count best. Their law saith, God is not prayed to with the mouth without the heart;2 and it is a natural and evident principle (as themselves tell us) that vocal pronouncing of the words is not prayer, unless it is done with some attention; whereas most of them say no attention is requisite in their service; and that virtual attention which the rest are for, themselves say, is no attention indeed, no more than the purpose is the act when not performed. But what then becomes of their pretences to worship or devotion? May they be wholly without this? Medina easily resolves this difficulty: though he who useth their service hath no devotion, yet the church in whose words he prays, and whose minister he is, brings her devotion.4 So that the church brings devotion still, though none in the church, no, not the clergy, not the religious have any. The church prays effectually, in the words of those who say service, though these should blaspheme God in their hearts, while they utter the words of a prayer, and they pray in the person of the church by their common doctrine. So that though they be in mortal sin (suppose atheists or debauchees) their prayers prevail in regard of the church's holiness. Happy persons they are, as ever any were in a dream, who can pray effectually when they pray not at all, and be devout with another's devotion, and why not saved too by the church's holiness? But, then, since this is applicable to all particular persons, what is that church, by which they may have such advantages? It must be something not made up of particular persons, something abstracted from subsistence, and refined above the grossness of any reality; and the structure, their devotion and worship must be answerable, and as much beholding to imagination for a being. Not to disturb their fancies further, it is enough that they acknowledge (what cannot be denied) that they are not obliged to worship God in their divine service; being there is no worship without attention, and no attention with them necessary, or only that which is in effect none. But it is no wonder they make attention at their divine service not necessary, since, being in Latin, it is, to far the greatest part concerned in it, impossible. The first sort of it, which they call superficial attention, none are capable of effectually but those that are well acquainted with that language, so as not only to understand, but duly pronounce it, which few of their monastics are; indeed, it is not the talent of many of their priests. The lowest degree of attention, saith Soto, none can have, but he that knoweth the tongue. The second, which they call literal attention, fewer can arrive at, it is only for expert divines. To attend to the sense is not for all Latinists, but only for those that are expert in divinity2 (saith the same author), which is so far from being the attainment of monastics and common priests, that many of the chief of their clergy cannot pretend to it. It was necessary for them to conclude (since they will have their own way, whatever the Scripture saith against it), that it is no sin for the clergy not to understand what they say when they say service, though they confess they can have no relish of what they understand not. As to the third, which they call spiritual attention, they cannot mind the things prayed for, who know not what they are, and apprehend nothing of the contents of their prayers. Nor can they mind the God that is to be prayed to, when they know not whether they pray to God or no; for they understand not to whom the prayer is directed, to God or to a creature, to an angel or a saint, to a man or a woman.

Now, seeing attention to what they do at their service is impossible to most and unnecessary to all, it may seem superfluous to shew that with them reverence and devotion is also unnecessary. (And what religious worship there can be without these, let those who have any tolerable notion of religion judge). For reverence and devotion are included in attention, or necessarily depend on it, and unavoidably fall with it. No man will imagine that there can be any devotion or reverence

toward God when he is not so much as minded, when he is not before their eyes, when the mind is voluntarily turned from him and wholly taken up with thoughts which are inconsistent with the observance of him. And this is the plain import of that non-attention which they allow in their service. When the mind departs, the heart follows it (since it moves by its conduct and acts, not otherwise), and when these are gone,5 the man is morally absent, and worships God no more, nor hath any more devotion or reverence for him (if these be so much as moral acts) than if he were not in the place where he is worshipped. And seeing (as themselves tell us) outward acts in worship are not considerable, but as signs of inward motions, all external shows of devotion or reverence, when there is none of these in the soul, will be but hypocritical significations, denoting that to be there which the Lord discerns is not there, and so tend to affront him, instead of approaching him with reverence, worship, or devotion. But there is no need of a proof where the thing is confessed; they tell us plainly that neither reverence nor devotion is necessary.

Reverence (saith De Graffiis, in his time the grand penitentiary at Naples) consists in this, that the body be in a composed temper, otherwise it signifies an incomposed mind; they ought, therefore, reverently and humbly to pray, for such prayers penetrate the heavens. But this is only counsel and advice; it is not commanded, as he tells us immediately. Such reverence, saith he, is not required by any precept; though the service be said irreverently, yet the command is satisfied1. Here is encouragement enough for irreverence, inward or outward. All the danger follows, but possibly it may be a venial fault if the irreverence be great, according to Pope Innocent. And if great irreverence will in the pope's judgment prove but a small fault, they may venture on great as well as little freely, for neither pope nor penitentiary thinks any much concerned to avoid a venial sin. Sylvester tells us3 that irreverence is not always mortal; but will it ever be so, or when? It is not so when, instead of worshipping God, they take his name in vain, how severe soever the terms be in which the Lord hath forbidden this, and thereby signified the heinousness of it. Yea, that irreverence to God, which is injurious to his divine majesty and excellency, may not be big enough to be counted mortal;5 unless it be so outrageous as to destroy the majesty of God, or some of his perfections, it may be venial. The little account they make of reverence is the more considerable, because, as themselves describe it, it compriseth all love and observance of God. For devotion, Aquinas tells us, as to the fruit of spiritual devotion, he is deprived of it who doth not attend to the things he prays for, or doth not understand; so that devotion is lost (by the oracle of their schools) on a double account, both when prayer is not attended, as it needs not be with them, and when it is not understood, as it cannot be. He that is negligent both as to attention and devotion offends venially. Thus Cardinal Cajetan, after he had told us that devotion consists in every holy affection.8 So that he who through negligence wants all holy affection (whatever is included in attention or devotion) incurs but a slight fault; and it may be not so much. There ought to be devotion (saith Cardinal Tolet), and he sets it out by love to God and desires of seeing him, but adds, if this be wanting without contempt, it is no great sin. Whether he thought it a little one, he saith not; but if he had so hard thoughts of it, the Jesuit is more severe than those of other orders. Graffiis, after he had described devotion, concludes,2 He that wants devotion sins not, not so much as venially it seems. Lopez and Metina in him censures that opinion as false and cruel which will have actual devotion requisite for receiving of the eucharist, though that devotion be no more than an actual consideration that they are there to receive Christ. Indeed, they generally count devotion needless there, where, if ever, it would be counted requisite. To4 be destitute of it and attention too, at the eucharist, is either but a small fault or none at all. Sylvester saith inward devotion is not enjoined

by the church, but as to outward devotion, he will not exempt it from the command; and what that is, he lets us understand by the undevoutness which is forbidden: when they make sport with one another for a great part of their worship, so as to scandalize others and disturb the priest.6 It seems they may be as devout as their church would have them when they play the wags one with another at divine service, so that their sport be but thus qualified; if it be not so uncivil as to offend the people, or so boisterous as to disorder the priest, or so long as to take up a considerable part of their worship, their church, who requires no inward devotion at all, will not burden them much, we see, with that which is outward. So little devotion serves their mass, their divine service requires no more. Devotion there, saith he, is not commanded. Others, amongst which the same author names Hostiensis, Antoninus, and Summa Rosellæ, hold that in the orders for divine service,8 the bare saying of it is commanded, but all that consists in devotion is no more than counsel (which by their principles may be neglected without sin). The ground of their persuasion is considerable; to enjoin devotion (say they) had been to lay a snare for men, and impose intolerable burdens on them; so that it seems the church had been wicked and unmerciful, if she had but obliged their clergy and religious to be devout in their worship. And by this reason, neither God nor man can make devotion a duty to any sort of Roman catholics; hereafter we must not wonder if they neither enjoin nor observe it. And though their reason may be singular, yet the opinion is the common doctrine, since all are discharged from devotion or reverence, who are not obliged to attention. Such, therefore, and no other, is the worship which the church of Rome makes needful for the clergy and religious. Such as it can be, without attention, without holy fear or affection; it is not the thing they call it, it deserves not the name of worship, or the title of holy or religious; it must be a profane and irreligious exercise, it can be no better without reverence, and without devotion; it cannot but be without these, whilst it is without attention, which they oblige all to neglect, by declaring it needless. Durandus maintained that images are not to be worshipped properly, but only abusively, that is, as they explain it, though worship be exhibited before, or about the image, yet the mind of the worshipper is far from it. This, his opinion, is now damned, as little less than heretical; being, in their account, no less than a denial that any worship is to be given to an image. Yet this abusive worship is all that they make necessary for the God of heaven; for requiring no attention of mind, no devotion of soul in their service, they allow both mind and heart to be far from him, while they do something before or about him which they call worship. So that what worship they count intolerably too little for a senseless image, not to say a detestable idol, they think enough in conscience for the true and living God. I have not observed that any idolaters in the world were ever so gross and stupid, as by their avowed doctrine thus to advance what they look upon as a mere image, and so to debase what they took to be the true God. However, hereby it appears, that they count no worship at all needful for God, since worship without the heart will, by their doctrine, serve the turn, which,2 in reference to an image, is, with them, no worship at all. It is not true honour or worship, but fiction and mockery. This is their own character of such worship when images are concerned, and under it I leave their divine service.

Sect. 2. Let us in the next place view their mass. This is for the people, and is the only public +worship enjoined them in any of their days for worship. They call it4 the chief part of their religion, and this summons us to expect that herein, if at all, they will shew themselves religious, and worship God indeed; however, they think not themselves obliged to it in their divine office. But all expectation hereof is quite blasted when they tell us, that less attention is required at the mass than at their canonical hours; yet so they commonly determine, and their reason is,6 because

prayer is a more rational act than that moral presence required at mass. So that their hearing mass is a less rational act than that which is performed without understanding, and requires less attention of mind, than that to which none at all is actually needful. And we cannot yet apprehend how that can he divine worship, which is so far from being reasonable service, or how God can be thought to be worshipped, when the soul which is to worship him doth not take any notice of him. The servant of servants at Rome would not think himself honoured, if the holding out of his toe were not regarded by such as have access to him. But Roman catholics may, it seems, mind God less at their mass, than one that minds him not all, and yet worship him well enough after their mode.

Besides, all inward worship is clearly discharged, for when they teach that the mass is for the people, the only worship on the Lord's days, or any other day set apart for worship, they tell us expressly, no inward worship is the duty of those days, external worship alone is commanded. So Aquinas, Cajetan,2 so Navar, so de Graffis, so Lopez, Dominicus a Soto also, who asserts it with many reasons, amongst which this is one, because the church requires no other than this external worship, and if God had required more, the church had not been fida divini juris interpres, a faithful expounder of the divine law, which rather than they will yield they will admit anything, though it be that God should never have any true worship amongst them.

Particularly and expressly, they deny all acts of contrition for sin to be the duties of mass days. So Sylvester, Summa Rosellæ,4 Melchior Canus, and all the other authors last mentioned.6 Likewise, all acts of love to God, Bellarmine, and in him Aquinas,8 so Navar and Pope Adrian, de Graffis,10 and Soto, who would maintain this with many arguments, one of the chief of them, he calls it ingentissimum argumentum, is, that this would be to ensnare souls, and cast them into grievous straits, if so harsh a duty as an act of love to God, were enjoined so frequently. Another is,13 that all the commands of God, as to the substance of them, may be fully accomplished without love to God, and therefore this.

It is good divinity with them that we are not bound to worship God out of love. The mass, saith Navar, which we are commanded to hear on those days, and nothing else, may be heard well enough without any such act of love. So Bellarmine, we are not bound on these days by any particular precept not to sin, or to have any act of contrition, or any act of love to God. What, not one act of love to God? No; he will prove it. One of his arguments is,2 because the church hath determined the time and manner how divine law is to be observed in keeping this command, but the church nowhere requires inward acts; she thinks, it seems, that God may be served sufficiently with the mass, without any sense of sin or love to God. And thus all those other graces and affections that flow from repentance, or love, or necessarily depend thereon, as filial fear, spiritual desires, delight in God, &c., will be no duty on their mass days, their mass hath nothing to do with them. Confessions of sin there may be well enough without godly sorrow, and petitions without desires, and praises without complacence or ingenuous gratitude, because all is well enough without love to God, or grief for offending him; and that on all these days wherein they are obliged to hear mass.

If you would see anything of the worship of God in the mass, it is as if you look for the life and nature of a man in a picture; and such an one as will not so much as shew you his colour or figure, but very rudely. The precept for observing mass days, as Sylvester tells us, requires not the end,

that is, waiting upon God, nor what is necessarily requisite thereto, but the hearing of mass. Not waiting on God, but hearing mass! These are distinct things, and disjoined in the sense of the Roman doctors, the one is commanded, the other is not; so that they may duly hear mass all their lives, and yet not wait on God one moment: the former they must do, the latter they are not obliged to regard, nor anything that necessarily belongs to it. Navar4 asserts this, and would prove it by reason, and the authority of Aquinas, herein generally followed. In short, if there be any worship required in the mass, it is merely external; and that, disjoined from the inward service of the soul, is but a mere shew or visor of worship, as they themselves confess in their lightsomer intervals. Well, but is it worship in any sense? Is there anything religious required of the people herein? For this they tell us it is enough, if it be a human act, no more is enjoined, the precept obligeth not, but to hear, so that it may be a human act,6 saith. Soto and others, and if it suffice that it be a human act, it needs not be religious. Let it be deliberate, that is enough to make it a human act; and then, though there be no religious motion or intention in it, the precept is fulfilled. Sylvester confirms us herein: the precept, saith he, is given unto men, and therefore the work must not be the issue only of the imagination, which is common to us with beasts, it must proceed from deliberation, which requires some attention.8 So that there is something more required of one that goes to mass than of a beast; but that is before he comes there; if he advance but to it as a man, he may be excused even from human acts, when he is at it, he needs neither exercise his understanding nor his senses. He needs not understand it, that it is far from being a duty, they have made it impossible; it is no sin either for priests2 or people not to know what they do, so reasonable is their service. The Latin makes it unintelligible enough, but if it were in a language less known, if in Mosarabic or Greek, those who are present without any but their mother tongue fulfil the precept. As Victorel tells us,4 after Soto and others, he need not see what is done, he may do all that is requisite at the mass blindfold; he needs not hear it, as Cajetan and others tell us,6 and this is much, he is enjoined only to hear mass, and yet doth all that he is enjoined if he hear it not, if not one syllable of it reach his ears; it seems, with them, to hear is not to hear. Just by the same figure that they say they worship God, when in truth they do not worship him at all.

He needs not be sensible of anything about it; to hear mass, saith Tolet, is not to use any of his senses about what is done in the mass. And if this be their worshipping God, a man may worship him as much as the church of Rome requires, not only without reverence and devotion, without heart and affection, but without the use of sense or reason. A brute may do more at mass than they require their catholics to do. No wonder that church enjoins no attention, devotion, or reverence, nor counts them needful (as we have already manifested), for can there be any pretence to require these, when both sense and understanding are superseded; or can there be anything that deserves the name of worship without these?

They themselves cancel and overthrow all their own pleas and pretences for their offering God anything of worship in the mass. For, they say, he doth not worship there who is not present; and they cannot deny that in God's account he is absent whose mind is not present. And yet they justify voluntary departures of mind and heart, when they would be worshipping; and those who would not seem to do this do it really, when they conclude it no fault to employ themselves about other things when they are at mass. They allow them to say their hours (and so neglect the mass, out of a neglect of their divine office), or to recite what is enjoined them by way of penance (and so prefer a punishment before the chief part of their religion), or other voluntary performances (so

they may do what they will rather than mind what they are about). They know they cannot do two things at once, especially in divine worship, which should take up the soul. Though in their worshipping, where the soul is not concerned, they may attend a hundred acts at once; as much as they are obliged to mind the mass, that is, actually not at all. They admit them not only to read or write what they please, but also to sleep part of the time, so that they take not too long a nap.2 It should not last above a third part, or half the mass (for that is pars notabilis); if it be but less than that, it passeth for nothing.4 Or if they be too brisk to sleep, they may entertain themselves with familiar chat. Medina concludes that he who is at mass may spend the whole time in discourse about other things,—merchant affairs or making bargains,—and yet fulfil the precept.6 They must, it seems, demean themselves at mass altogether as religiously as at the exchange, and no more is required. Suarez would have the discourse neither so long nor so serious, there should be some intermissions to attend. But what attention can he mean? He (with the rest) tells us that to the mass less attention is requisite than to their divine office; and to that office, he and they say, a virtual intention is sufficient, and this is the least of all that can be. So that to the mass less attention than the least of all will suffice; and this, to common apprehension, is none at all. Others of them (as we saw before) will have no attention of mind needful for their office; and so with them, none will serve the mass. Their catholics may have their choice here, and satisfy their devotion at mass either with the attention of this doctor and some other late authors, which is none at all; or (if this seem too much) with that of their ancienter doctors, which is less than none. And what must they attend to who need neither hear, nor see, nor understand what is said or done? It would puzzle one as subtle as himself to tell one how he can attend to that which is neither offered to his senses nor his intellect. And therefore the Jesuit, though he seems more strict, yet herein is less rational than Medina, and not so consistent with himself or their common doctrine. Also he would not have the discourse at mass so grave and serious as that of merchants: it should be more light, more idle than that about trade and business. It seems the levity of the stage suits with the mass better than the seriousness of the exchange. Answerably, if their discourse be not decent, nor the subject of it very modest, the mass will comport with it, and the church's precept will bear it without a breach. And no wonder, since it hath been the custom of that church (as many of their writers inform us2) to sing not only profane, but filthy, songs at high mass; and that to the organ, that the people might not only be refreshed by their own private immodest discourse, but edified more effectually this way by the louder voice of the church. And how, we learn by a grave cardinal (though little herein more rigid than others), who tells us that the hearers were thereby excited to what was profane and filthy, as experience witnessed. And still notwithstanding any pretence of reformation, tunes to the organ at divine service or mass, though lascivious and very profane, will pass for a small fault (in the judgment of those who seem most severe in the case) if either the matter be slight, or the intention good, or the actors inconsiderate.4 Here is provision enough, that the scenes in their mass may not be dull and heavy. Yet further, they may laugh and be pleasant, and when the music (which sounds not always) doth it not, they may make themselves merry in the height of their worship. But this with some caution: their talk and laughter may break out into such noise, that possibly it may prove a sin of irreverence. Here is some show of danger, but it will vanish presently; for if it should be a very loud extravagance, and the irreverence great, yet great irreverence may with them be but a small fault, and they have the authority of the pope to warrant this.6 Nor must this seem strange to us, since they will not have all contempt of God criminal; that which is material may be venial, and it is not formal, unless besides the contempt of God there be

also an intention to contemn him. Such is the most solemn worship in the Roman church, and so is God worshipped amongst them; and that not by the unwarranted presumption of the profane multitude, but by the rules and conclusions of those who direct their worship and guide their consciences. Here we may see in the mass the religion of Roman Catholics; they call it the chiefest, the best part of their religion, that we may not look for anything better amongst them, nor anything religious, if it be not found here; yea, it is all (better or worse) that the people are obliged to in public (and in private their church doth not trouble them with any).8 He that views it well, and believes he hath a soul, and that there is a God, must have little or no regard of either if he do not bless himself from it, as a thing which hath nothing of religion but the name, and that merely usurped. A religion which needs nothing, by the doctrine of its chief professors, that is either godly, or so good as human; no regard of God at all, so much as in one thought of him; nor any act of reason, yea, or of sense, either about anything religious or divine, yet allows a free exercise of both about that which is profane and irreligious; he that counts this religion indeed, must stifle the common notions of religion and Christianity; and he that, understanding it, makes choice thereof, had need first be very indifferent, whether he have any religion or none. Had the ancient fathers talked after this senseless, lewd, extravagant rate concerning the worship of God, how would Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian have triumphed over them! Nay, they might justly have challenged them to have instanced in any one that bore the name of a philosopher, that ever treated of the worship of God with so little reverence and discretion. Had such loose and wild doctrines been broached by the first teachers of Christianity, the heathens needed not have raised so fierce a persecution against it, they might with ease have hissed it out of the world. But this is not the worst: they encourage that in the mass which they cannot but condemn as wicked, and maintain that the precept for hearing mass may be satisfied by such wickedness. Melchior Canus to this objection (that the command of God or the church cannot be fulfilled by sin) answers according to the opinion commonly maintained amongst them, that he is no transgressor of the precept who to the act enjoined, and good in its kind, adds something sinful. He supposeth that the act commanded by the church is some way good; but withal, that the precept may be satisfied, though it be done wickedly, and that by their common doctrine. Whether the circumstances may be venially or mortally wicked he saith not, but leaves us to understand it of either. Dominicus à Soto tells us expressly, that though what is added to the act2 enjoined be a mortal wickedness, yet the precept may thereby be satisfied substantially. With these divines of greatest reputation amongst them, concurs Navarre, no less renowned (and none of them Jesuits); The opinion of Antoninus (which he is disproving) presupposeth, saith he, that by a sinful act, especially if it be a mortal sin, the command of the church cannot be fulfilled; but that this is false we have largely proved. He would have us know that he hath fully demonstrated that the precept for hearing mass may be entirely accomplished by deadly crimes. This is the judgment of the most eminent doctors amongst them, such as are not of the Society, and (if they will believe their famous bishop of the Canaries) the common doctrine in the Roman church, and by this the world may judge what a church it is, what her religion, what her worship, what her precepts for it are, when all that she requires for that worship, which is the principal part of her religion, may be satisfied by acts of wickedness, such as are mortal and damnable to the worshippers, and most (of all others) dishonourable to God, whom they pretend to worship. And let those that are seduced, or may be tempted by seducers, seriously consider whether they can wisely trust their souls to such a conduct, or be safe in such a communion, where there is no more tenderness for the salvation of

souls than to be satisfied with such a worshipping of God as will confessedly damn them.

Sect. 3. Thus much for the manner of their public worship, all of it, whoever amongst them it concerns, whereby it appears that they count it not necessary that God should have any real worship from them. This will be further manifest by what they teach concerning the end of it.

They maintain that it is lawful for their clergy and monastics too (who profess perfection) to serve God for their own ends, viz. to get preferment, or compass a dignity, or gain some worldly advantage, and so to prostitute the honour and worship of God to such low, earthly, sordid designs, as religious persons would never appear to own, but that irreligion is grown too monstrously big for its vizard. He that riseth to their morning service for this end, that he may have his daily dividend, if it be not principally for this, he sins not. So their glossa celeberrima, the two popes Urban and Cœlestine, determine that it is lawful for their clergy to serve God in their churches for this design, and hope to get ecclesiastical dignity; in Navarre. But then this great casuist (of so high esteem among them, that he was sent for from Spain to Rome, to give advice and direction to the old gentleman there, that cannot err) understands (after Aquinas and Jo. Major,2 as he pretends) the principal end to be something else than others do. It is not that which so much moves the agent, as that without it he would not be drawn to act by any other end; and accordingly he will have the premised testimony to be understood. So that one of their perfectionists, who riseth to morning prayer for this end, that he may have his dividend, and would not stir4 out of his bed to attend the worship of God for God's sake, or any other end beseeming a religious person, if the consideration of his daily allowance did not rouse him, yet he serves God so well herein as that he is sinless, and not so much as venially tainted. Likewise the clergy who address themselves to the worship of God, moved thereto more by hopes to gain preferment and dignity than any respect to God, yet they sin not; that is, they worship God well enough, though they respect themselves and their own ends more than him; or, which is all one, though they serve themselves rather than God, whom they are to worship. They are all concerned to maintain this; for he tells them, if such acts of virtue or worship were vicious, all their acts in a manner would be stark naught, since there are extremely few amongst them that are purely done for God. They are a church in the meantime that worthily profess godliness, since nothing is done, or needs be done by them, even in the worship of God, for him, so much as for themselves; and, indeed, Sylvester deals ingenuously when he tells us plainly, without the cover of any pitiful shift, that it is no sin to serve God principally for their own profit.

Moreover, and yet worse, they teach it is no sin to worship God for an end that is in itself a sin, if it be not principally intended. It is lawful by their doctrine to preach, to pray, say mass, &c., for praise of men (though Christ will have those that designed it, as Cajetan notes, even when he is excusing this, to have no better reward), or for vain glory (though they reckon this amongst capital crimes3), only he must not make so wicked a thing his chief end, and then he is innocent enough, though sin against God be his design in worshipping him. It is no sin, yea, it is meritorious, to do these things, viz. to preach, and say mass, and to do other things of like nature principally for God, and secondarily for vain glory and praise of men, aptly directed as our end. Thus Navarre determines after their great saint and doctor, Aquinas. Now he had taught us before, that these acts of worship are but done secondarily (and so unlawfully) for these criminal ends, when they so much sway a man as that he would not worship God unless he were excited by them; and that vain glory is not his principal end, even when he is so much influenced thereby as that he would not pray or

preach, &c. If this were not his motive, this in the judgment of others, as he acknowledged, is to make sin his principal end, and to advance wickedness above God, even when he pretends to worship him.5 But let us not interrupt this great doctor in his way, it is foul enough as himself makes it; for hereby a man may serve God, and that meritoriously (after the Roman mode), though he never would let him have an act of worship, if pride and vain glory did not set him a-work. He would never pray or preach, &c., if he were not more moved to it by sin, and out of regard to some wickedness, than out of respect to God.

Further yet, they hold it is but a venial fault to worship God principally for vain glory, and other designs of like quality. Aquinas, as he is represented by Sylvester, determining that it is no mortal sin to serve God principally for vain glory, if that be one's chief end actually only, and not both habitually and actually. Sylvester declares it as his own persuasion, that it is both against Aquinas and the truth to hold it is a mortal sin, when those things which are ordained for the glory of God are used principally for a man's own glory. He instances in the sacraments, saying mass, the Scriptures, and preaching.

Cardinal Cajetan declares himself thus in one instance, which involves the rest: It is but venial to preach for vain glory, or hopes of a gainful alms, signifying that he means such vain glory as Christ condemned in the pharisees, when he told them this was like to be 'their reward.'

Navarre affirms, that to preach, or say mass, or pray, and such things as are instituted for the honour and worship of God and the salvation of souls, for vain glory principally, or more than principally, is but a venial fault; and that such as gainsay this (who are but two) have been confuted by others, and by himself after them. These are the chief of their doctors, whom the rest commonly follow (and none of them Jesuits), who unanimously assert this. Now it is not necessary with them for any man to avoid a venial sin, since by their doctrine a world of them can never damn a man; and therefore it is not necessary for any papist to worship God otherwise than principally for vain glory, or ends equally criminal, i. e. it is not needful for them to worship him at all; for no man can imagine that he is worshipped when he is in the highest degree dishonoured and affronted; and what greater affront can be put upon him than under a pretence of worship to debase the great God, and thrust him lower in our designs, not only than ourselves and earthly trifles, but lower than sin, the vilest thing on earth, yea, or in hell? and this is evidently done when vain-glory (a capital sin) hath the pre-eminence of God in addresses to him, and is regarded as principal; when the Lord of heaven and earth hath no regard at all, or only in a lower place. It is not worshipping of God, but a horrid impiety, for men to serve themselves instead of God, but more intolerably impious to worship sin; and that hath the worship and is honoured in the place of God which hath the highest advancement, and is principal in religious addresses; yet no better than this is all the worship which, by the Roman doctrine, is necessary from their catholics. In short, whereas by their doctrine of non-attention, formerly examined, it is so evident that they discharge themselves from all real worship, as they have no colour to hide it, no shift to evade it, but a supposal of some previous attempt to serve God when they are addressing themselves to their service; this, their last reserve, they themselves ruin, by their doctrine concerning the end of worship; for they teach, besides what is premised, that a man who comes to mass or divine service, with a purpose not to worship God, but to serve his lusts, doth satisfy the precept. We are not obliged, saith Soto, to hear mass but only so that it may be a human act, which it may be, though there be a sinister intention in it; yea, though the thing intended be a sin, and that highly

criminal, for he adds: If one attend prayer, though he do it for vain glory (that is a small matter to stick at), yea, though it be with a purpose mortally wicked, yet he fulfils the precept substantially. Such are the commands of the church of Rome for her most sacred worship. They may be fully satisfied by deadly wickedness; there needs no purity of heart or hand for her devotions; a design damnably evil will serve the turn. That of Antoninus, saith Navarre,2 is not to be maintained, that he doth not satisfy the precept who comes to church principally to look on a handsome woman, or to talk with her, or for any other sinful thing. If a man, in going to mass, designs to satisfy his curiosity, or his lust, or anything else which is wicked, that church is so good-natured she will be satisfied with it, and think her precept for worship well observed, and you must believe (if you can) that she is a good Christian church that will have Christ worshipped at this rate. He adds reason for it. A man may come to church for a wicked end, and yet hear mass well enough there.

Bonacina instances in several sorts of wickedness, whereby the command for worship may be fulfilled. This is one amongst the rest: if a man go to church on purpose to gaze on or to lust after women lecherously, he satisfies the precept, and for the general rule vouches not only Sotus, Navarre, Medina, and others of greatest reputation in their church, but also their angelical Saint Thomas.

I need not censure these things. Let those that are impartial consider the premises, and see if this be not their sense, that the people in the papacy, by its order, do not, or are not obliged to give God any real worship in public, and by their leaders are taught and encouraged, instead of worship, to present him with gross wickedness. If the measures of religion may be best taken by its worship, what can any indifferent person judge of popery, where a service so palpably irreligious is the best and the most excellent worship they have? If this were duly considered, I think it alone might be sufficient to reduce those that are deluded, and to secure those against temptations who are not yet ensnared.

Sect. 4. There is another public exercise which Christ makes as necessary as any evangelical service whatever, and that is, preaching and hearing the word of God. But the Romanists are not of his mind in this. The mass is commanded, but not preaching, saith Sylvester, and he one of the order of predicants. Accordingly hearing mass is commanded, but hearing sermons is only matter of advice (saith another), which may be neglected without imputation of sin, and if observed is an act of supererogation.

They conclude it no duty in such circumstances where it would be counted necessary, if ever; it is no duty on the Lord’s day, or any other time set apart for the public worship. Mass must be heard then, but no need to hear a sermon. If it were any man’s duty in their account, it would be so in that case when one wants the knowledge which is necessary to salvation, and hath opportunity to get it by hearing; but even then they declare him not obliged. Sylvester propounds the case in these terms:3 Doth he sin mortally who is ignorant of those common things which are necessary to salvation, and may hear sermons, but doth not? He answers, He so sins who omits it out of contempt, or with notorious scandal, but not always when it is out of negligence; because, according to Aquinas, negligence is not mortal, unless something be omitted which is under precept, or with contempt; adding, such negligence may possibly be a mortal sin, but when it is so, it cannot be determined. It seems no man can tell when it will be a crime for a person damnably ignorant to neglect the means of instruction; but more briefly and positively he resolves it

elsewhere, that he is not commanded to hear a sermon upon the Lord's-day; although he be ignorant of those things which are necessary to salvation, because he may otherwise satisfy the precept for learning.

Sect. 5. As to the sacraments, and the worship in them, the despatch may be quick. There are none considerable here but baptism and the eucharist, for their other five are not of divine appointment, nor the worship of God, but their own inventions; and therefore, how needful soever they count them, thereby they make no true worship necessary. But indeed none of them are in their own account necessary to salvation, save only penance, and that we shall meet with hereafter. What worship they shall have in the eucharist is sufficiently discovered by what they are satisfied with in the mass, where we have found them contented with none at all, or that which is worse than none. Neither do they account this sacrament simply necessary, for although it be required that they communicate once a year, yet that is but by human law or custom, as they teach. The sacrament of the eucharist, saith Canus, is not a sacrament of necessity. For baptism, if they account any worship necessary, it must be either in respect of the administrator or the baptized; as to the former, none with them is needful. For by their doctrine it may be validly administered by any man or woman, or one that is both; yea, or by a child, by those also that are strangers, or enemies to all Christian worship, by Jews, pagans, or infidels of any sort, by such as worship not the true God (as Sylvester tells us out of Aquinas, Paludanus, and their church's law); by such as believe that baptism is good for nought, and minister it in scorn; by such as believe that it is not a sacrament, that it hath no spiritual virtue, and intend not, while they baptize, to administer a sacrament, but only think to do as the church does, although they account that to be nothing at all; so Aquinas2 and Pope Innocent saith it will be effectual, though the baptizer neither know nor believe what baptism is, but counts it a trifle; though he neither know what the church is, nor minds to do what the church doth, but means to do the contrary. No other worship is necessary upon the account of the ministers, but what might be expected from such as these. Nor any more upon the account of the persons baptized. For as to the adult (there being no pretence in reference to infants), they think it sufficiently administered by force to those who would not endure it, but for fear of death if they did not yield; to such as make all the resistance they can,4 and offer foul injury to the sacrament, and defile the water; to those who receive it, not for the purpose for which it is intended, but for quite other ends than ever it was designed for; yea, to those that are frantic, and never had the use of reason, or are6 stark mad, and that in the height of their madness; to those also that are fast asleep, if they had a mind to it when they were waking. Since they think it duly administered to such as these, they cannot count any worship necessary herein upon the account of the partakers, but what such as these now mentioned may offer.

Sect. 6. For fuller and more particular satisfaction, it is observable that they divide their sacraments into some for the dead and some for the living. Those for the dead are baptism and penance. As to these two, some count no disposition requisite but only a willingness to receive them. Others, who would seem to be more severe, count attrition sufficient, which is a slender dislike of sin, not as it is an offence to God, but out of some other consideration, human, natural, or servile. And the lowest degree of this possible, and that despatched in a moment; and this moment need not be while they are at these sacraments, but either before or after. Their penitents2 may make their confession with laughter instead of grief, yet have as much grief at their sacrament of penance as they require; this is past doubt with them. So that it is their common doctrine that no

good act, or motion at all, no, not so little and low as that of attrition, much less any ingenuous reverence or devotion, any act of grace or holy affection, is needful while they are at the sacrament, either of baptism or their penance. The sacraments of the living are their other five: confirmation, orders, matrimony, extreme unction, and the eucharist. These, they say, were instituted for the increase of grace; this is their proper effect; and that they may have their effect, there is not requisite in the partakers any actual dispositions at all, not the least inward act or motion that is good; no, not so little as that of attrition, which, in their account, is of all others the least and lowest disposition. And well may they count it so, since the best sort of it, with them, is but the issue of servile fear, which, as such, is below the least degree of moral goodness; and so far from being supernaturally good, that it is morally evil, as we shall see hereafter. All that is needful is only that the partakers be in a state of grace (such as a priest may put a sinner into who is impenitent, and never truly contrite), though he shew it not by any act in the sacraments, where, if ever, it should appear. That the sacraments may confer an increase of grace, they only require an habitual disposition, i. e. that they be received in the state of grace; this is the judgment of Aquinas and Scotus, whom the rest generally follow. So that, to partake worthily of these sacraments, no actual disposition, no act of reverence or devotion, not any inward motion (such as should be in true worshippers), is more required or expected than in the senseless statues which they idolise. Their souls need act or move no more as worshippers of God herein, than if they were neither Christians nor men; than if they were so far from having grace, as to have no souls. Yea, these sacraments may be valid, and duly celebrated as their church requires they should be, while the partakers are not only void of all good motion towards God, but while their souls are in motion against him, and all that is divine and sacred. Their minds and hearts may, during the celebration, be taken up with acts, not only of folly and vanity, but of pride, or lusts, or revenge, or infidelity, or atheism, or what is most contrary to the most holy God and his worship, and yet partake as well as the church requires. For the precepts of their church, concerning the administering of the sacraments, and all other things by her enjoined, may be entirely satisfied by acts of wickedness; so notoriously holy is that church, by the report of their chief writers.

Sect. 7. If they count any of their sacraments more worthy of holier treatment than that now mentioned, it will be the eucharist; for this they count more worthy than the rest, and have it in such veneration, as not only to worship Christ in it, but to worship it even as Christ himself; and therefore here, if ever, they will judge it requisite to shew themselves worshippers indeed. Yet for all this, whatever worship of this sacrament they count needful, they conclude no true worship of Christ necessary; no, not so much as the least inward act of reverence, devotion, or honour; for this is their common doctrine, that besides the disposition of habitual grace, there is no precept so rigorous as to require any actual disposition for the worthy receiving of this sacrament, so as that the omission of it can be a mortal sin. In this all their divines agree; so that any one may partake worthily of this sacrament, and be free of mortal guilt, without any actual reverence or devotion, any act of grace or holy affection, while he is communicating. This one maxim (wherein they all concur) quite stifles the spirit of Christianity, and bereaves it of its life and soul; it leaves nothing that can honour or please Christ, or be of any advantage to souls, needful in any Christian duty. For no good motion of mind or heart, being needful in the celebrating of this sacrament, which requires it more, they cannot imagine it necessary in any other duty of less consequence; and the want hereof being but a venial fault, there is no more necessity to have it, than there is to avoid a venial sin, which they make nothing of. In this very case, they hold that3 a venial sin, even in the

act of communicating, will not hinder the effect of the sacrament. Yea, it may not be so much as a venial fault, if the vagaries of the mind, which exclude attention and reverence due to such a religious act, be natural. But will it not be more than so slight a fault, voluntarily to abandon every good motion in the celebrating of this sacrament? No; to decline every good act of mind or heart, and that voluntarily, it can be no worse; if it be without contempt, it will be no mortal fault, and that also in the judgment of all their divines. But though there be not any good disposition in the soul towards Christ, in partaking of his supper, yet is it not necessary that vile and wicked dispositions should be excluded? No; there is no more need of this than the other. The mind and the heart may actually entertain such as are sinful, without any more danger than it rejects those that are good. It is but a slight fault2 to communicate out of ostentation and vain glory, and so to nourish pride while he should be feeding upon Christ, and to design his own honour without any act of reverence for Christ; he may let his thoughts run out upon vanity, or entertain his soul with vain delights, without the least motion of love, or delight, or desire for Christ, without the least act of faith in him; and may be pleasing himself with sin, instead of grieving for it, when he hath the greatest advantage to look upon him whom he hath pierced. And all this he may do without any guilt that need be repented of or regarded. This is all the worship and honour that it is needful their souls should give to Christ, even in the sacrament of his body and blood; who will have others cursed to hell, and burned beforehand, for not giving divine worship to a wafer. But this is not all; their church will be satisfied with greater indignity offered to Christ than this; for they teach, that those who communicate unworthily, to such a degree as they count sacrilege (and that so heinous, as they question whether it be not as tolerable to cast that which they count their God to be devoured by dogs, or throw it into the dirt to be trampled on; and many of them are positive that it is greater wickedness than murder or adultery, or that uncleanness against nature which is most abominable),4 do fully satisfy the precept of the church for this communion. Thus Soto, Corduba, Covarruvius, and others, alleged by them. And this is all derived from their St Thomas, that maxim of his so generally received; the law commanding an act enjoins the substance of it, but not the manner. By which we must understand, that the church would have the thing done, but regards not how they do it, whether as Christians or as atheists. She is indifferent as to devotion or sacrilege in her catholics, having something else in design than to be concerned in the honouring of God, and the happiness of men, which so much depends upon the manner of worshipping. It is too plain to be denied, that such a treatment of holy things (to use their own words) is not at all for the worship of God, or the salvation of souls, but opposite to both; yet their church's precept is entirely thereby fulfilled. So that, if God have no worship, and men no salvation, yet the church is satisfied. This and other outward acts mast be visibly done, that the world may not think but they have something like religion amongst them; but though, instead of the worship due to the divine majesty, they perform the acts of it in such a manner, as no less dishonours and provokes him, than the crying sins of murder or sodomy, their church hath full contentment; it is all she requires.

Thus we have surveyed the church service amongst the Romanists in the several parts of it, and cannot discern any real worship therein to which they are obliged; but rather that all such worship of God in public is, by their rules and orders, rendered either impossible or unnecessary.

Sect. 8. Let us inquire, in the next place, whether they count it needful that God should have any worship from them in private; and this we may discover by what they determine concerning meditation, reading the Scripture, and private prayer. For meditation, the casuists speak little of it,

nothing at all (that I have met with) of its necessity; it is like they reserve it for their contemplative persons, as a degree of perfection to which others need not aspire. The perfectionists themselves may waive it, but when they will be so over good as to supererogate, and do better than God commands them, if they judge it necessary at any time, sure it would be on those days when such acts are most proper and requisite.2 But they conclude it no duty upon the Lord's day, or any other devoted by them, as they pretend, to the observance of God. For they generally agree that no inward worship is then required, and meditation is discharged by name; now if they need not think of God on his own day, or any other, wherein a particular observance of him is requisite, it is ground enough to conclude they do not count it needful to think of him at all. Who can imagine that they judge it necessary to think of God at any time, who count it needless to have God in their thoughts when they are at his worship?

Sect. 9. As for the reading the word of God in private, they are so far from esteeming this a duty, that they will scarce excuse it from a crime: all that can be obtained for it is only a toleration (as a thing that passeth under an ill character), and that but in some places, and there but for some persons, with more restriction and caution than the public stews are tolerated by their holy bishop in Rome. So much friends are they to the word of God, or so little do they judge it a friend to them. They are the best catholics in their account who do not desire to look into it, or to understand from God what he would have them to be; they think it advisable that no mortal should be acquainted with more of the Scriptures than is in the mass, where they can understand nothing, and need hear nothing of it at all.

Sect. 10. For private prayer, it is either vocal or mental. That which they call vocal, they generally count not necessary by any law, either of God or nature, or the church; and so all praying with families is quite cashiered from the rank of Christian duties. There to call upon God's name together they are not concerned, though some think the heathen are. They count it not a duty to say so much as the2 Lord's prayer (if they understand but otherwise what is to be prayed for). This is the common opinion in Suarez; nor do they think an Ave Mary (though these are the prayers most in request with them) more needful. They are not obliged to say it when the public sign is given at night for that purpose; nor need they use any vocal prayer at all, no, not so much as on the solemn days for worship. But is mental prayer a duty when the other is not used? So it seems; but the question (as in all affirmative precepts) is, when? Lessius thinks it should not be put off above a month or two; that would signify too much neglect of our salvation. It seems those that pray but once in two months do not much neglect it; but this Jesuit is too strait-laced. That opinion is probable enough, saith one of the greatest casuists of this age, which6 assigns three times for prayer, once when we come to the perfect use of reason (suppose when they think him capable of fasting, about twenty-one years of age); and again at the point of death, and in the interval, when we are obliged to love God (that is, once in five or once in seven years). But is not this Jesuit too severe also? It may be those of other orders will not oppress us so much, or wish us so unlike to atheists as to have us pray once in seven years. The Jesuits, though accounted most licentious, yet seldom exceed, and sometimes fall short herein of their other divines. Sylvester, a Dominican of greatest reputation amongst the casuists, thus determines the question after Aquinas.8 When one first comes to the use of reason, he should pray for God's assistance; (videtur) he is not peremptory that he must, and speaks but conditionally too; for he adds, If he be thus inspired, otherwise he is not determined to that time. When then? Why, the providence of God moves him

to it when it is necessary. Thus he leaves it, and finds no other time, when a man is obliged to pray once for himself, but when he sees his soul in greatest danger, which, it may be, he will never see. Their common doctrine is yet worse; thereby we are not bound to pray but in the article of necessity, and that is, when we are in such extremity as there is no other remedy for us:2 if we judge that we can any way else obtain what we would have, we need not pray. The law of God or nature makes it not then our duty. They help us to understand this by two instances; the one to shew when it is requisite to pray for ourselves, the second when for others. When a man falls into most grievous temptations to impatience, or to lust, if there can be no other remedy against it but the grace of God, to be obtained by prayer, then it may be his duty. But it seems if he can rid himself of it any other way, or but think he can, then, though the temptation be never so violent or dangerous, he needs not pray. The other is, when a man at a distance sees two ready to fight a duel, and makes account there is no remedy but the help of God for parting them, then he is to seek it (which is not the case of one in a thousand), yet if perhaps he can any otherwise more help them than by praying, he may let it alone.4 So that private prayer needs not be their daily practice, nor used as a Christian exercise in ordinary, but in extremity only, and cases otherwise desperate, and as the last remedy, and when there is no other indeed, or in their apprehension; it will not be a duty, but in such circumstances as do very rarely, if ever, concur.6 They are not to use it as their common repast, but as physic; not for prevention neither, but when they are already surprised with extreme danger. And if such extremity occur not once in seven years, they need not pray for so many years; nay, perhaps it may not befall them, or they may not be apprehensive of it while they live, and then they need not pray at all. This is not my inference only; it is their own, and acknowledged to be the consequence of their common doctrine. Thereby there is no divine precept for prayer which can oblige any directly; only by accident it may happen sometimes to be a duty, but such an accident as few may meet with. It is said expressly that from thence it follows that many may pass their whole lives without ever praying to God, and this without any great fault. It should be said, without the least fault; for where there is no obligation, there is no duty at all; and then no sin, great or little, in the want of performance. This is some of their church's sense; but they speak it more fully who tell us that mental prayer is to be reckoned amongst counsels (which none are obliged to observe), and this by the common consent of Aquinas and their other doctors. And accordingly, that there is3 no divine precept, or of natural law, of itself obliging to mental prayer, meditation (some peculiar engagements or occasions set apart, wherein mental prayer is not concerned); and this is counted so certain, that to teach the contrary is temerarious, because against the common use and sense of the whole church. So that they are not far from the sense of the church, who (without excepting public or private, mental or vocal), deny that there is any divine precept in special for prayer. And these are not only their modern divines, but some of the ancienter also, particularly Alexander Alensis5 (the prime of all their school doctors), in strictness seems to deny that there is any proper command by divine law for prayer, taking it properly, but only in a most large sense, as any pious act or good desire may be called prayer. And those who would not seem to like this in general, yet allow it when they come to particulars, since they teach that the precept obligeth not at any such particular time or occasion, when it would oblige, if ever. There is no command, they tell us, which binds them to pray in private at any set time whatever. They are not obliged to pray when they first come to the use of reason,7 nor on common days afterwards; not the least prayer, not a paternoster, not once a-day, no, not at their meals; even their clergy need not do it; nor on holidays neither,9 no, not when they have quite neglected their

service in public; nor on their fasts, though Scripture still joins these, as all Christians who minded religion were wont to do of old. Their fasts are no more religious for prayer or any holy exercise than the abstinence of their cattle; nor to prepare themselves for sacred or solemn employments, for their sacraments of penance, or else for the eucharist (though this would but trouble them once a-year);11 not at the beginning of any service or undertaking whatever. To pray at such times and occasions is mere matter of counsel, which none can be blamed for neglecting; nor when a man hath vowed and solemnly promised to God, and sworn too, that he will pray, even then, if it be but a little prayer,13 it will be but a small fault to omit it for all this. In short, which compriseth all, there can be no certain time assigned (unless the hour of death) in which, by any precept of religion, we are bound to worship God, or seek his help by an act of prayer, as in like case is said of an act of contrition and love to God. So Bonacina; no time for prayer certain, none determined; but, as they conjecture, perhaps it may be a duty, when they apprehend themselves under grievous and dangerous temptations, and judge there is no remedy but prayer. This, or none at all, is the time for it by their common doctrine; and this is in effect to say, it is a duty at no time, for no person. For those under temptation may not apprehend it dangerous, or a remedy needful, as all will be ready to do who either regard not temptations, or are pleased with them, or what they lead to. And neither these nor any else can judge there is no other remedy but prayer, if they believe their doctrine, which offers them divers other remedies, and those more relied on than this. To mention none else, almost any of their sacramentals (of which they have multitudes) will serve their turn, even a little salt,2 conjured after the mode of holy church, may do it. Thus we see these catholics secured from all divine obligations to pray while they live. But they have another way to do it; for, if any apprehend themselves in dangerous temptations, and also that there is no other remedy against it but prayer, they determine that if such be ignorant that it is then a duty, or if they know it, but do not consider it, they are excused from sin, though they then neglect to pray. Now, the people may well be ignorant that they are in such case obliged, when their learned men scarce know it. And for those that do know it, the violence of the temptation (and the case supposeth it violent) may leave no place for consideration. However, no man considers this or other things unless he will, and so it will be no sin to neglect prayer at that time, when only they count it a duty, unless he list. Yea,4 though the ignorance or inconsiderateness be culpable, and through his own default, yet the neglect of the duty which is thereby occasioned they can excuse from sin. Besides, if they should both know and consider that prayer is then their duty, yet they teach that the omission of it is then no special sin, i. e. no other sin than that which they should seek to avoid by praying; whereby they plainly declare that there is in their account no special precept for prayer, no, not in that case wherein alone they would have it thought a duty; otherwise they would judge it a special sin then to neglect it.

Sect. 11. But though their catholics be thus sufficiently eased of all obligations to private prayer all their lives, by virtue of any divine command, it may be there is some precept in the church for it. Can she be content that they should live so much without God, or any acknowledgment of their dependence on him, more like atheists than Christians? Yes, there is not anything for private addresses to God amongst all her precepts; she is too indulgent to trouble them with any such thing; she requires not of them the least prayer, or such as are accounted best, not so much as a Paternoster: there is no ecclesiastical precept for this, to make it so much as a venial fault, not to use it, says Medina, not a Salve Regina, no, nor an Ave Mary. They have indeed a special respect to this last, and prefer it ten to one before any other (though they might use this every minute,

without ever praying once to God all their life). And Pope John XXII. ordained, that thrice every evening the bell should sound, that every one might say an Ave Mary thrice; and since it is grown a custom (and a church custom usually stands for a law with them), that not only at evening, but at noon and morning, too, a bell should sound for the same purpose; so that this, if any, is under injunction. There is a fair show for it, but it is no more than a show, for they assure us this is a voluntary devotion, and hath nothing of obligation in it. Those that never use this and such prayers, it is, they say, a shrewd sign they do not live well; but the omission thereof is no special sin with respect unto any precept either of God or the church. And is not this a very pious concession that they are pleased to grant, that for a man never to say his prayers, is a general bad sign that he does not live as he ought, though they will by no means allow it to be any special sin. Oh the piety and tenderness of this mother and head of all churches!

If, for all this, any of them should conceive themselves obliged to pray sometimes; or if, without such opinion, they should find some season for private prayer, though God (as they dream), and the church (as they know), hath prescribed none; as when a confessor enjoins it for penance; or out of voluntary devotion, when they have a mind to supererogate, and do better than God requires, upon which accounts some of them may be found now and then very busy with their beads; yet in these cases there is by their principles no more need to worship God in their private than in their public prayers, where (as we have shewed) they account no actual observance of God at all necessary. As for the prayers enjoined them by way of penance, these are not necessary for them, but as their punishment; and then they pray not, for that is an act of the soul, but this is a suffering of the outward man. The church as (they say) it cannot judge of inward acts, so it cannot order them to be penal. And the malefactors here being their own executioners, as there is no need, so there is no fear that they will punish their souls, but leave them untouched, unconcerned, whatever their lips, or fingers, or beads may suffer, by that grievous penalty of praying. But it were well if God did not suffer more by such abuse of his name and worship, than those malefactors, who count it a suffering to do anything like his service. And it sounds not well that prayer must pass for a punishment. It is, as Damascene defines it, and they after him, the ascent of the mind unto God. Now, is the approach of the soul to God a punishment? One would think the devils should think better of it; for the misery of hell is distance from God, without hopes of having access to him. But they can solve the difficulty well enough, for they mean not to do any such thing as praying in the case, but only to suffer some thing which they call so. Their care and pains is about their beads, not their souls; if they keep but count, and bring in the full tale which the confessor enjoins; though in as many crowns and rosaries as there are Ave Maries in each ten thousand times over, they have not one thought of God, nor the least motion of mind or heart towards him; yet they give full satisfaction, and undergo all they were adjudged to. In their voluntary prayers there is less worship required than the other, if there can be less than none. For when they need not use such prayers unless they please, they may do it as they list; it being no duty enjoined, the manner of the performance is arbitrary, and wholly at discretion. Hence those who think something (of some sort) of attention requisite in commanded prayers, count none at all necessary in these; no, not that which is superficial, not so little of that as they call virtual. So that, if herein they mind nothing at all, wherein worshippers at prayer are concerned, not so little as the bare words; yet they acquit themselves well enough, yea, if this neglect of all be wilful,2 and the mind not only run of its own accord, but be sent away and employed about something else on set purpose, it will be at worst a slight fault.

Sect. 12. In this fashion they would have us suppose that God may be worshipped, when there is neither inward nor outward observance of him. Inward he hath none, when the mind is departed from him, and the heart with it. Outward he hath none, unless merely in show, when the mind directs it not to, and designs it not for him; which is never done, when he is not minded. In fine, by the doctrine of the Romanists (to say nothing of the idolatry or superstition of their service), it is unnecessary that God should have any real worship, either public or private; unless God can be said to be truly worshipped, without the love or fear of God, without acts of wisdom or affection, without reverence or devotion, without sincere or honest intentions; or with designs of wickedness; without knowing what they do, or heeding what they are about; without mind or heart, yea, or body either, unless in mere show; this is apparent by the premises. The people (as they think) worship God well enough at this rate; their leaders teach them no more is needful; their church, by confining their service to an unknown tongue, makes it necessary for their divines thus to teach, and unavoidable for the people to worship, no otherwise. Now, what a church is this, or of what religion, that makes the real worship of God, and of Jesus Christ, to be needless, and takes an effectual course that he shall have none? Let those who are of their communion, or tempted to it, consider it seriously, and in the fear of God. Is it the way to salvation to be without religion? Is there any religion, indeed, where it is made needless to worship God really, when worship is as essential to religion as a soul is to a man? They may, by joining with them, greaten a party, and promote the interest of a faction, which carries on other designs under religious pretences, without regard of God, as to his worship and honour, or to the souls of men, as to their happiness, and the true way to it; but if they follow the conduct of the Roman doctrine, and worship God no otherwise than these would have them; they may be of the Roman profession, and yet of no religion. If a man have a mind to trouble himself with none of the realities of Christianity, and yet to pass for religious enough, in the opinion of so much of the world as is papal, and will hang his soul upon so common reputation, popery is contrived to allure and gratify him; and he may safely venture on it, if damnation be not dangerous, or if he can escape it by an opinion or show of worshipping God, and being religious without morality.

CHAPTER II Christian knowledge is not necessary for Romanists by their doctrine

Sect. 1. Knowledge is the foundation of almost all that is saving: of faith, holiness, obedience, worship. It is the groundwork, without which scarce a stone can be laid in the whole structure of salvation. No saving faith without it, Romans 10:14. There can be no love to, or hope in, an unknown object. There can be no fear, no desire of what we know not. There can be no true worship of God, unless that of the Samaritans was such, ‘who worshipped they knew not what.’ There can be no obedience without knowing whom, what, why, and for what end we obey. In brief, without knowledge there is no eternal life, John 17:3; nothing but ruin and eternal destruction, Hosea 4:6, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12.

Yet for all this, popery decries knowledge, as that which is unnecessary for the people, and extols the want of it, as that which is essential to their faith (Bellarmine saith, faith is better defined by ignorance); as that which is the mother of their devotion; (so others declare it), as that which is the excellency of their obedience; none comparable to that which they call blind obedience, as Cardinal Cusanus tells us.2

It sufficeth the people to know that their church hath knowledge; and their sight is good enough, in that their teachers have eyes; so one of their authors: In matters of faith, the people ought not to see with their own eyes, but the eyes of their superiors. They need not know what they pray for, nor what they are to believe, nor what they are to do.

1. They need not know what they are to pray for, or to whom, or whether they pray or not; all is muffled up in an unknown language, and they are to venture at they know not what, nor how, nor whither. No wonder if they direct the Lord's prayer to saints, male or female; and say Our Father to the virgin mother, and, in like manner, direct Ave Maries to Christ, as if they took him to be a woman, or to be with child (and with himself too), to be the fruit of his own womb; or to be his own mother, which the words so applied signify. This ignorance is the dam of such devotion, such as is both horrid and blasphemous to the highest degree of horror; and yet their great clerks will countenance it. The wisdom of their church hath thought it fit, that they should not be so wise as to understand what they do, when they are serving God. The Council of Trent fulminates a curse against those who hold that the mass ought to be celebrated in a known tongue; that is, they curse those who approve not that mode of service, which the apostle condemns as barbarous, 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, such as is not fit for God or man; they curse those who will not offer a blind sacrifice, or blindfolded. As if one under the law ought not to have seen whether that which he offered were a hog or a sheep; whether he sacrificed a lamb, or cut off a dog's neck; whether he presented an oblation, or offered swine's blood. They think not only the people, but even the clergy unconcerned, to know what they say when they speak unto God. The clergy (saith Jacobus de Graffis), or the laity, when they are at divine service, if they understand not what they say, they sin not.2 It is so far from being their duty to serve God as Christians, that they need not act as men in his service. If the words be but said, though with no more understanding than magpies are taught to sound them, it is as reasonable service as their church requires; what God requires of them is no matter. They expect not that any should understand their service but expert divines, as Soto tells us.4 Now it is a very small part of their clergy that pretends to be divines, and a small part of those few that are expert therein; it is an attainment which most of their bishops fall short of. Their common priests are sufficiently qualified with the art of reading, nor need they be masters of that neither; the mass-book is almost taught to read itself. For in the missals established by Pius the Fifth, and recognised by Clement the Eighth, every syllable is diversely marked, whether it is to be sounded long or short. What do we speak of clergy or priests? It is not necessary for their popes to be able to understand, or to read their common prayers; themselves spare not to divulge this. It is manifest, saith Alphonsus à Castro, that many popes are so illiterate, that they are utterly ignorant of the grammar. It seems he may be universal pastor, and the teacher of the whole world, who hath not learned his grammar; and the infallible guide of all mortals, who understands not his own language, wherein the articles of faith, their laws, ceremonies, and church service is delivered. And is it not very much that two things so different as ignorance and infallibility, should have the good hap to meet together in the same person?

Sect. 2. Secondly, they need not know what they are to believe; they tell us they are obliged, under pain of damnation, to believe whatever the visible church of Christ proposeth, as revealed by almighty God. Now, their church proposeth for points of faith so revealed, not only what they have in Scripture, but what they have by tradition, or by the custom of the church in former ages, or by the consent of the fathers, or by the decrees of councils, or by the determination of popes, ex

cathedra, whereby points of faith become infinitely numerous, beyond all account which the learned amongst them can give, either to satisfy themselves or others; yet all must be believed, and that under pain of damnation, whenas it is but a very small part of them that can be commonly known. The articles of the creed called the apostles', are not the hundredth part of those points that must be believed by all that will not be damned; and yet they generally conclude that it is not necessary for the people to know all of those few articles. How to believe the rest, and it may be five hundred times more, which they know nothing of, nor ever once came into their thoughts, they must make what shift they can.

However, they need not know all the articles of the small creed, as the chief of them teach. Not all, saith Aquinas, but what is sufficient to direct to the last end; not all, saith Scotus,2 but the gross things, as that Christ was born and suffered, and others belonging to redemption; not all, saith Sylvester, and many with him, but those particularly for which the church hath public solemnities; not all, saith Bonaventure,4 but those which we have notice of by the church solemnities, or acts of the priests, and these in him are four, that of the nativity, passion, resurrection, and remission of sins, to which he adds another, which the sign of the cross teacheth, and wherein Angelus follows him; so that the half and more needs not to be known, for they reckon fourteen in all.

Others there are who require not this little, nor think it needful to know these articles more than implicitly, that is, without understanding them; so Gulielmus Parisiensis, and Altissiodorensis in Bannez. Summa Rosellæ, after others,7 holds it enough for the simple, and perhaps all discerning people, to believe that God is the rewarder of the good, and punisher of the evil. A compendious creed, truly, and that which will never trouble the conscience of a Turk or a heathen; the knowledge and faith of a barbarous infidel is enough, it seems, to make a papal Christian. Accordingly, others teach, that such as are educated amongst catholics, and are ignorant of the Trinity, are excused from the explicit knowledge thereof, especially if they want a teacher. So Bartholomew, Medina, and Immanuel say, who gives this reason for it: We cannot say that an infinite number of Christians, otherwise good people, do perish, that scarce know anything aright of the mystery of the Trinity and incarnation; yea, judge perversely of these points if you ask them. And yet, without the knowledge of the incarnation of Christ, there is no knowledge of the creed or of the gospel. Sancta Clara is of the same mind too, and quotes others for it.9 So that by this doctrine a man needs not know the persons in the Godhead, nor the incarnation of Christ, upon which his birth, life, death, resurrection, and intercession depends, which are the sum of the gospel; yea, he may not only be ignorant of these truths, the knowledge of which, if of any, is necessary to salvation, but he may have false and perverse apprehensions of them, and yet be secure from perishing. According to Soto and Medina, he that is ignorant of the incarnation and Trinity, because he was educated in the mountains, without a preacher to instruct him, will be saved if he die in grace, which they suppose he may have without knowledge, for an implicit faith, that is, without knowledge, will then serve his turn. Secundum doctores nobiles, as noble doctors conclude, saith Lopez, so that they may have eternal life without knowing the true God, or Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Ignorance hereof will be invincible, that is, both inculpable in itself, and sufficient to justify the criminal issues of it, if they want a teacher, that is, not only if it be not possible, but if it be difficult or inconvenient to have one. The cardinals of the Inquisition at Rome will have such confessors allowed, who hold that persons are capable of absolution, and so supposed to be in a state of salvation, how palpable soever their ignorance might be of the

mysteries of faith; nay, though out of pure negligence they know nothing of the mystery of the blessed Trinity, or of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Medina teacheth, that if one when he is dying acknowledge that he hath been very negligent to learn Christian doctrine, and would not hear it, and thereby wants the knowledge of the mystery of the incarnation and Trinity, and the articles of faith, yet to deny him absolution would be impious: so Lopez reports him,4 and himself says, such an one is to be absolved. Here is encouragement, more than enough, to live and die in gross ignorance, and those who have a mind to continue without the knowledge of God under the name of men, or of Christ, under the profession of Christians, have a general warranty by their doctrine to do it. For the former sort of their divines, who seem to require a knowledge of some articles, do indeed make no more knowledge necessary than those who require it not. For when they explain themselves, commonly such a knowing is sufficient, as is without understanding, a dark conceit, that such things there be, though they apprehend not at all what they are. Such mysterious subtilties their doctors are pleased with, as they have a sort of faith without knowledge, or any thought of what they believe; so a knowledge without understanding.

Scotus thinks they have sufficient knowledge of the Trinity, three persons and one nature, who can neither apprehend what a person or a nature is. Accordingly, Bonaventure saith, the people may know the Trinity by crossing themselves, since they do it in the name of the Father, &c.; and by the festivals, they may know the rest which is necessary to be understood. And when it is argued, that there are few, but such as are expert in divinity, who know how to distinguish and number the articles of the creed; and therefore, if all were bound to know them distinctly and explicitly, id est, to know what they mean, few or none would be saved, which is an extreme cruel saying; he in his answer grants it all.

Bellarmine seems to make some knowledge of the articles of the creed necessary, but what it is he signifies elsewhere, when he tells us that experience witnesseth that the greatest part of the faithful, and in a manner all the country people, are so far from understanding the mystery of the Trinity, and the incarnation, and other such points necessary to salvation, that they scarce apprehend anything besides the mere sound of the words, and yet are deservedly counted believers. So cardinal Tolet requires in those that are to be absolved, a kind of acquaintance with some prime articles of faith, but signifies it will be sufficient if, hearing them rehearsed, they can tell us which is an article, and which not; and this they may do by the sound, though they understand nothing of the sense.5 De Graffiis is confident, that a confessor may make an ignorant person understand all that is necessary to salvation by making the sign of the cross. And Angelus, who would have three or four articles of the creed to be known, yet concludes, if one can answer this or that article decently, Quod sic, it is so; it will be sufficient for him, though he know not the creed.

Sylvester pretends to make more knowledge requisite than Rosella, but yet he determines that mere want of knowledge is no sin; that it is not a sin to be ignorant of what he ought to know, but upon the account of negligence; that negligence to know things necessary to salvation may be a mortal sin sometimes, but when, it is hard to tell, yea, impossible. So that here is encouragement enough to continue carelessly in ignorance of things necessary to salvation, and to neglect saving knowledge; for when this is a mortal sin, no man can tell, and a venial fault no man needs avoid. In short, they not only justify simple ignorance, how gross soever, but that which has a worse character, ignorantia pravæ dispositionis: and count it no crime, not only to want the knowledge of

the articles of faith, but, out of ignorance, to entertain opinions contrary thereto. He that believes an heresy, saith Navarre, out of simplicity or ignorance, because he thinks the church holds it, and is ready to relinquish it when the truth shall be discovered regularly, he sins not mortally. And with Alphonsus à Castro, no kind of heresy is a sin, if it be out of ignorance and without pertinacy;2 if their teachers instil such errors into the people, and they, through ignorance, receive impressions contrary to points of faith, and follow such guides blindfold, therein they sin not. Yea, I say more, saith Angelus, Sometimes such an error may be meritorious; for example, one hears a famous preacher or a bishop preach some error, and he simply believes it, with a mind to be obedient to the faith, but ready to be reduced, for things are to be judged of by the intention. But sometimes it may be a venial fault,4 as when an old woman believes the Trinity to be one woman; and because she thinks the church so holds, therefore believes it. To recite the names of those who assert that the people, through ignorance, may safely follow their teachers in errors, would be tedious, they are so many. For shortness, let us take Sancta Clara's word, who tells us, It is now the common opinion of their schools and doctors, that people erring with their teachers or pastors, are wholly excused from all fault; yea, many times by so erring materially, for this Christian obedience which they owe their pastors, they merit. So that ignorance of points, whose belief is with them necessary to salvation, is so far from being a sin, that it can render heresy sinless, yea, make the entertaining of damnable errors to be a meritorious belief.

We cannot expect that knowledge should be accounted necessary, where the worst sort of ignorance hath such excess of honour and privilege. It is no more necessary, nor more of it, according to their principles, necessitate præcepti, by virtue of any command, than we have shewed out of their best writers. But then the necessitas medii, needfulness as a means or way to life, that is none at all; for as the same author tells us, and brings us abundant evidence of it, it is the common doctrine of their more grave divines, that men may now be saved; and the more common tenet of their schools,7 that they may be justified without the explicit belief, and so without the knowledge of Christ himself. So that those who hold the knowledge of Christ unnecessary to salvation are many, and their most grave divines; those that count it unnecessary to justification, are the greatest number of their doctors: put these both together, and there will be few left amongst them, and these little considerable in comparison, for number or gravity, but such as judge the knowledge of Christ needless to bring men into a saving state; for this, it will not be needful to be Christians, unless any can be Christians without the actual belief or knowledge of Christ.

Sect. 3. Thirdly, They need not know what they ought to do; they may be, without sin, ignorant of what the Lord hath made their duty. Adrian, Corduba, Herrera, determine, and it is the more common and received opinion, that men may be inculpably ignorant of the law of nature and the ten commandments, as Sancta Clara informs us. But, then, since they need not know the rule, what have they to follow? Why, the direction of their teachers; and these they must follow blindfold, right or wrong. It is one of the qualifications required in the obedience of others, but especially of the religious, which they would have us think to be best of all, that it be blind;2 nor should fear of going wrong move them to open or use their own eyes, for if they do wander out of the way of God after such guides, yet they are right, and do their duty. Those who managed the conference for the Romanists at Ratisbon, anno 1601, maintained that the people are so subjected to the government of their teachers, that if they err, the people may and ought to err with them. And they

are not only excused from all faults, when they thus wander with their teachers, but their obedience to their pastors herein is many times meritorious. This is the judgment, not only of Valentia, Angles, Vasquez, but the common determination of their schools in Sancta Clara.3 It seems a man may deserve eternal life by leaving the way to it, and may come to heaven meritoriously by wandering from it. What a strange thing is it, that they will not let their catholics be certain of salvation, since they cannot miss it, no, not by going out of the way that leads to it! When they follow their guide into the ditch, yet they are safe; but that is a small matter: by being willing to be led by such as see not, or mind not the way, they merit, and spring up to heaven marvellously, even when they are falling from a precipice, and tumbling headlong after their leaders. The same author tells us that some doctors ascribe so much to the instruction of pastors, who have care of the flock, that if they should teach that now and then God would have them to hate him, a simple parishioner is bound to believe them. All think not fit to give so broad instances; but whether all have not warrant to do it by their common tenet, let others judge.

However, if the people (content to trust, and not to see, what so much concerns them) suffer themselves to be deceived, they sin not, their ignorance will save them harmless. And what would any impostor desire more than to have those whom he hath a mind to abuse to the uttermost, possessed with such a confidence, that however they be deluded, it will not hurt them? Now what an admirable expedient is ignorance for the children of this kingdom, when by virtue of it the leaders may carry the people whither they list without suspicion, the people may follow in the dark without danger! No wonder if ignorance be nourished in them by all means, when they are not concerned to know whether that which they are led to be good or evil, just or unjust, against God, or for him; whatever it be, they ought to obey at a venture. They need not so much as know whether their leaders have power to require what they enjoin.

If they be in doubt whether that they are led to be against the law, yet on they must go, for they all agree here to drive them. Secundum omnes, saith Sylvester, if he doubt of this, whether it be against the command of God, yet he is bound to obey, he may venture safely, It seems that is no danger which the apostle speaks of, ‘He that doubteth is damned,’ Romans 14:23. They allege an express text for this in their law, which will carry it against the apostle. And as that evil which God forbids may be done by him that doubts lest God hath condemned it, so that good which he hath enjoined (if salvation can be had without it) may be neglected when superiors will have it so; their canonical text saith it,5 which must be regarded whatever becomes of that other, ‘Whether it be better to obey God or men, judge you,’ Acts 4:19.

Yea, if they be past doubt, that what is required is against God, if they think, if they believe it to be against his command, yet if they believe it but upon weak grounds, yea, or if upon probable grounds (if they be not more certain thereof than they ought to be of their salvation), they are to suppress their own judgment, and will be excused for the goodness of such obedience, i. e. for obeying men rather than God, and that against their own judgment.

Such art is used to persuade the people, that they need see nothing they are to do further than their leaders would have them; if they doubt or if they believe, if their eyes be opening or if they be opened, they must shut them close, and obey men blindly, without discerning what God forbids or requires. And it is not for nothing that they deprive them of their eyes, for thus they can make them grind. Such ignorance is the way to have them in more subjection, and that they account the most

perfect obedience, which is next to brutish, without knowledge, and without judgment; that they need not have, and this they must not use. A judgment of discretion must by no means be left the people, that is a point they would maintain against us; but as to their own followers, they put it out of question beforehand, for by keeping them without knowledge, they leave them no judgment, but such as one may pass on colours in the dark. Ribera expresseth their sense significantly, All who are to obey, especially religious persons, ought to have no head of their own, i. e. they are to obey as if they were without eyes or brains. So he explains this worthy expression, non suo sed rectoris sui consilio duci. Let me but add the pregnant words of Cardinal Cusanus, which comprise all that I charge them with in this particular, No man (saith he) can be deceived by an ill pastor; if thou say, Lord, I have obeyed thee in him whom thou hast set over me, this will be sufficient for thy salvation; for thou by obedience paid to a teacher whom the church tolerates, cannot be deceived, although he command what is unlawful. Wherefore the opinion of the pastor binds thee upon thy salvation for the good of obedience, although it be unjust; for it belongs not to thee to take notice whether it be unlawful or not, neither hast thou leave not to obey if it seem unlawful to thee, for that obedience which is irrational is the most complete and most perfect obedience, to wit, when one obeys without the use of reason, as a beast obeys his owner. A speech fit only for the mouth of the beast and the false prophet. The sum of their doctrine concerning ignorance is little less than this: they need not be men as to their obedience; they need not be Christians as to the knowledge of Christ; they need scarce be either as to their worship.

Sect. 4. The ground of all this is, that they judge the knowledge of the Scriptures unnecessary, in a manner, to all sorts; yea, count it necessary to keep as many as they can possibly from acquaintance therewith. They are highly concerned for this, even as much as those who have villainous designs, and would accomplish them without observance and control, are concerned to shun the light. They know full well the Scripture condemns popery; we may well say they know it, when themselves confess that both their worship and their doctrine is contrary and repugnant to Scripture, and allege this as the reason why they would have as little of the Scripture, as can be, known to any. From their own mouths we have the reason why they would never have suffered the Bible to be exposed in a vulgar tongue, if it could have been avoided. The protestants' translations made that impossible, and the papists among them, who had a mind to look into the word of God, might have made use of these, if no other had been provided. To prevent which they were forced to translate it, and yet their own translations (which are so strange a disguise of Scripture) they dare not trust to the common view; they are in the index of forbidden books put out by Pius the Fourth, and an unpardonable sin they make it for any to read them, but such as can procure a licence for it from a bishop or inquisitor; that is, none but those who, they are confident, will not be moved by what they meet with there against popery. And yet (as if so great restraint were too much liberty for so dangerous a thing as the word of God), in the after edition of the index, by Clement the Eighth, he declares that no new faculty is granted to bishops or inquisitors to grant any licence for reading the Bible, since, by the mandate and usage of the church of Rome, and the universal inquisition, all power of granting such licences is taken away. So far are they from thinking the knowledge of the Scriptures needful for the people, that they count it heresy to affirm the Scripture ought to be in a language which they know (how can it be less than heresy to think that needful to be known, though it be the revelation of God, which discovers popery to be an imposture?). It is a sin from which they shall never be absolved, if they read anything of the word of God in a language which they understand, without a licence from a bishop or inquisitor, by Pius

his rule; and no bishop or inquisitor hath any power to grant any licence, by that of Pope Clement.

Knowledge of the Scripture is no more needful for monks than other people; it is equally necessary that they should be ignorant of the word of God; they are under the same restraint, and are no otherwise permitted to read or buy it. Ignorance is proper for this kind of creature, they are for contemplation, not for knowledge.3 It seems they may employ their heads in contemplation of they know not what. To be sure they need neither sacred nor any kind of literature. A monk may be illiterate (say they) they have that privilege by their canon law, there quoted by Sylvester and others, and they generally make use of this indulgence; for their clergy, six parts of seven, need no more to be acquainted with the Scripture than the black art. The four first orders are sufficiently accomplished, if they are able to read5 (according to the Council of Trent); the two next should understand Latin, i. e. the words, but not the matter, yet no necessity of either; it is not of necessity to their sacrament of order that any below a bishop should have the use of reason when he enters into orders.

Yea, their priests need not have any knowledge of the Scriptures. It is no part of their qualification; nor doth their office, by the Roman constitution, require it; all that belongs commonly to a priest is only to say service and to say mass;8 there are infinite numbers made priests merely to read mass (as Polydore Virgil tells us); and this they may do completely, though they cannot so much as read without a fescue, such as the missal hath ready for every syllable.2 But if the priest have a special cure, and so be a preacher or confessor, yet may he be both good enough Without any acquaintance with the Scripture; he may preach the gospel after the Roman mode, without knowing the word of God; for with them it belongs both to deacons and monks to preach; yet those need not understand anything of Scripture, and these must not read it in a language they understand, without a licence. The priests in Scotland were accounted sufficiently qualified, who, it is said, did think the New Testament to have been composed by Martin Luther. The priests even in Italy, if they had more notice of the author, yet scarce more acquaintance with the contents of the New Testament; they never read it, and were much more ignorant thereof than the silly women amongst the Taborites, as Æneas Sylvius, afterward Pope Pius II., writes.

Knowledge of the Scriptures was not counted necessary for their preachers, either regular or secular. The chief of their regulars were the Franciscans and Dominicans. In the rule of friar Francis, approved by several popes, the Minorites (one sort of preaching friars) are, amongst other vices, to avoid learning, if they were illiterate. And those of the Dominicans (the order of friars prædicant) who were rude and illiterate, did preach notwithstanding. As for their other doctors or teachers, that which they are bound to know is, the rudiments of faith (such as our children, who can scarce read, will give an account of. The papacy had no doctors or divines more eminent than those of the Sorbonne; yet they seem little beholding to the Scripture for their divinity. Robert Stevens in the last age, conversing with those doctors, would be asking in what part of the New Testament such or such a thing is written, but had such answers returned. They had read it in Jerome, or the Decrees, but what the New Testament was they knew not. For a confessor he is sufficiently qualified, according to Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Albertus, as Sylvester collects, if he have but read and understand (not the Bible), but Antoninus his book entituled Defecerunt, unless he be a mere natural or presumptuous fool; and neither will doubt of anything (when be knows nothing), nor inquire of others. So that he may be a complete confessor and guide of consciences, who knows nothing of Scripture, and little else, if he have but the wit to

discern his own ignorance, and a will to learn of those that are wiser, when he can meet with them. Thus we see a Roman priest is furnished for all points of the office, common or special, without any acquaintance with the word of God. As to bishops, they seem to agree, that some knowledge of the Scripture is requisite in them, and some venture to say a full and perfect knowledge of the Old and New Testament, signified by their mitres, the two horns whereof mystically demonstrate, that they understand the two Testaments both alike. And, indeed, since their prelates, secular and regular, have honour, power, and plenty by the papal contrivement, and hopes of more and greater than other professions can offer, their interest ties them so fast to it, that they may trust them (if any) with the sight of the word of God securely, and not fear that any discovery of popish corruptions, through such a medium, will make any impressions on them to their prejudice, or move them to believe, or act anything against that which is so much themselves; there is no such danger in admitting these to some acquaintance with Scripture, as others, who have no expectations from religion, but for their souls and eternity. Nevertheless, their rules which seem to make this knowledge necessary for bishops, are rather counsels than precepts, they are cautious, and will not press this too much (for conscience enlightened sometimes proves too hard for secular interest). And their prelates may be easily dispensed with, if they be ignorant of Scripture, or have little notice of it. It is one of Sylvester's and Angelus's questions, whether an ignorant bishop sin mortally, if in his ordination, being asked whether he understand the whole Bible, he should affirm he does? This he so resolves after Richardus à Sancto Victore. If the bishop be so ignorant, that he knows not in general the commands of God, the articles of faith, what are virtues and vices, and which the sacraments, then he so sins, he lies perniciously: leaving us to judge that he doth not thus lie, when he solemnly affirms, that he hath as much knowledge of the Old and New Testament as the church of Rome requires in a bishop; if he do but know the creed, the ten commandments, which are virtues and vices, and which are sacraments, and have but some general perception of these. They will not have the bishops burdened with too much Scripture learning, since every child they confirm should have no less than this. This may pass for perfect knowledge of the Scripture, and of an episcopal pitch with those who count it no imperfection to be ignorant of that which, they say,2 doth more hurt than good, for so they were wont to blaspheme the Scriptures, or the Holy Ghost, whose inspiration they are. The bishop of Dunkeld thought he had enough of it, when he said, I thank God I have lived well these many years, and never knew either the Old or New Testament. I content me with my portuis and pontifical (History of Church of Scotland, lib. ii. p. 66). The bishops in other countries thought themselves bound in conscience to be as ignorant of the Scriptures, when they counted it a sin to read them.

Yea, he that wants a sufficiency of this knowledge, though so very little or nothing be sufficient, may be dispensed with upon the account of some other quality. As for example, charity, they say, will make up want of knowledge in those who have not sufficient to make them capable of any place or dignity amongst them. Yea, they may be dispensed with, though they have no better qualities than in Gerson's time, when he tells us, there were none anywhere that were good, or approveable for doctrine or practice, but all chosen were both carnal persons, and ignorant of spiritual things.2 So he in the fifteenth age; and about the same time Clemangis says there were scarce any advanced to the pontifical dignity, who had so much as superficially either read, or heard, or learned the Scriptures; or who had ever touched anything of the Bible, except the cover. 'Quotusquisque hodie est ad pontificale culmen evectus qui sacras vel perfunctorie literas legerit, audierit, didicerit; imo qui sacrum codicem nisi tegumento tenus unquam attigerit.'—De corrupt.

Eccl. Statu. In the age after, wherein the Council of Trent was held, we have (in Papyrius Masson de Episc. Urbis) the character of the Roman prelates, by Pasquil begging the next cardinal's cap, as being more capable thereof than the bishops then created.

Si imbelle sum atque rude marmor, Complures quoque episcopos creari Ipso me mage Saxeos videbis. And the same age, in the Council of Trent, where (as they boast) was the flower of all the Roman prelates in Europe, very few of the bishops had knowledge in theology, as father Paul tells us, yet these had only decisive voices in that council, and all was concluded by plurality of their votes; when far the major part understood not the matters concluded, so that the articles of the Roman faith were voted blindfold. And yet all must be damned who believe not these points of faith, when those who made them so were ignorant of them, and knew not what they did when they decreed them. Such is the Roman charity and knowledge; so burning and shining are their best lights, they will have all burned here, and in hell, too, for not believing that which the council (for the greater part of it) understood not. But sure, the knowledge of the pope must be transcendent, especially as to the Scripture; his place and office requires it, being accounted the head of the whole church (which ought to have good eyes), and teacher of Christians (as much or more than Peter was), and judge in all controversies which concern religion, and interpreter of all difficulties in Scripture, and a more lively oracle of God than the Scripture itself in the things of God. Yes, say they, the pope ought to have far more knowledge than any other, being the president of the whole Christian commonwealth, so de Graffiis. But, then, he adds, as to him the presumption of the law is enough for all this, and that presumes that all is in the cabinet of the pope's breast (as it may well be presumed, that a skill beyond that of all physicians is in a bold mountebank), although indeed what is quite contrary may prove true.2 Accordingly the pope may be all that they style him, without the knowledge of a novice in the Scripture, without any such acquaintance with it, as to pretend to the name of a divine (though acquaintance with it be expected from none but divines), and many that have the name have little or nothing of the thing. The popes think not themselves concerned at all to trouble their heads with divinity. If he be but a canonist (as Peter no doubt was), he is the apostle's undoubted successor, though he be no more a divine than his chair is, or can make him, and why may not the chair inspire him with knowledge as much as holiness? Pope Innocent the Tenth, in our days (since they have been more concerned for the reputation of the Vatican throne, than, as before, to let monsters of debauchery and ignorance ascend it), declared that he had never studied divinity, nor was it his profession.4 Pope Clement the Eighth began to study it when he was very old, and then not to much purpose it seems; for he could not at last decide the question that he had studied, how much soever their church was concerned in it.

None can understand their church prayers but expert divines, as Soto tells us; he means the matter of them indeed, but popes need not understand the words neither; for many of them do not who pass for lawful popes, and such can neither understand the subject nor the words of the Bible, for it is in Latin; and, if Alphonsus deceives us not, many of them have not gone so far as their grammar; yea, very many of them have been so ignorant as they could not speak their own name in Latin. Yet such knowledge of Scripture is enough in the Roman account for the infallible interpreter of Scriptures, the supreme judge in all matters of faith, and the teacher of the universe. When we are ready to wonder at this, they stop us presently by telling us that God did make Balaam's ass speak.2

They seem to grant as much stupidity in a pope as can be imagined, but then the miracle of making an ass speak does partly answer that objection. Had the bishops of Rome anciently been such ignorant, dull creatures, as many of their later popes, and yet adored at that rate, the heathens might have had some colour for charging the Christians with worshipping an ass's head. As for the people, they are so far from obliging them to get knowledge, that they either make it impossible for them to attain it, or encourage them never to look after it. They cannot attain it but either by reading or hearing. They must not read the Scriptures (as before), and they cannot, or need not, hear. If the priests be ignorant (as they are allowed to be), they are not able to instruct them; if they be able, they need not preach; that is sub consilio; or the people need not hear, no, nor inquire of them in private; no, not those that are most ignorant. The further they are from all knowledge, the more excusable, if they take no care nor pains about it. Sancta Clara makes this query: Are they not bound, at least to some diligence, to free themselves from this ignorance? He answers, if it be one who hath no knowledge of these things which may move him to seek instruction, it is certain that no diligence or care is required of him, especially if he do not at all doubt, i. e. if he be confident that he knows well enough, and his ignorance makes him so senseless that he discerns it not. His reason is, because he is not obliged to that which is impossible, and it is not possible that one should seek that which never came into his mind (as Angles also determines with him); so that if knowledge never came into his mind, there is no need that it ever should come there, and he is not bound to take the least care or pains to make way for it.

CHAPTER III Their doctrine makes it needless to love God

Love of God, or, as they had rather call it, charity, is in their account, as they seem sometimes to express themselves, of greatest moment. Regeneration and spiritual life, they say, consists in it; without it no man is in the state of grace, or favour with God. This is the righteousness whereby they are justified, and their sins pardoned, i. e. abolished (for that is pardon with them), and their souls sanctified (for justification and sanctification is all one in their reckoning). This is it which is the life and spirit of all other graces and virtues, say they, without which the best of them are dead and unactive things, and deserve not the name of virtues. And though they look not for heaven unless they deserve it by their own works, yet their works, they say, are of no worth without this;2 yea, their indulgences will not avail anything without it. So far, therefore, as love to God is unnecessary, so far regeneration and spiritual life, a saving state and reconciliation with God, justification, pardon, all graces and virtues, all their own good works or their church's indulgences, are unnecessary; no further need of what either God or themselves have made necessary to salvation.

One would think, if they had any desire of heaven or fear of hell, or dread of their own purgatory, if they had any design for the salvation of souls, or any regard of what is saving, they should be tender in this point above all, and not abate any moment of its necessity. But what they do herein, let us see. Indeed, they make both the habitual and the actual love of God unnecessary. First, for habitual love, they teach, the Lord hath not at all commanded us to have the habit or principle of this love; he nowhere requires that we should love him habitually. Certainly, saith Bellarmine, the Lord hath not commanded that we should love him from an infused habit, for laws do not require habits. Add to him one of the most eminent amongst the Dominicans:5 there is no affirmative precept for habitual love to God, saith Melchior Canus. I need allege no more; I find none of them

questions it.

Now, in that they do not make this love necessary as a duty, they cannot account it necessary as a means; for they hold that all means necessary to salvation are commanded. So that the habitual love of God, by their doctrine, is no way necessary. And this they teach not only of the habit of love, but of all other graces. The precepts of the law are not for habits, saith Soto. We are not, as he adds, to pay what we owe from a habit of justice or liberality.3 When we are enjoined to live soberly and righteously, we are not required to do so out of habit, but only to do it, saith Bellarmine; and these instances they bring to shew that we are not obliged to do anything out of a habit or principle of love to God.

Sect. 2. Secondly, For actual love, how can they account the acts of it needful, when they make the habits or principle from whence the acts must flow to be unnecessary? But let us view their doctrine about this more distinctly. The acts of love are either more foreign and remote, which they call imperate, or native and proper, which they call elicit acts. For the former, all acts of religion and righteousness, that they may be truly Christians, such as the gospel requires in order to salvation; that they may have a real tincture of divine and supernatural goodness, and be advanced above the pitch at which heathen or graceless persons may arrive, they must proceed from love to God, and be ordered and directed by it. This they sometimes not only confess, but assert; and yet, notwithstanding, they teach that it is not needful to perform any such acts, or to observe any commands of God out of love to him.5 The commands of God, saith De Graffiis, do not oblige us to perform them in love; he clears his meaning by an instance: for he sins not, nor is punished of God, who gives due honour to his parents, although he have not the habit of piety (and so though he do it not out of such a principle), much less, adds he, doth the church oblige any one to observe the command in love; for if the end of the precept be love, saith Canus, we are not forthwith bound to observe all the commands out of love. The reason is premised; for in the opinion of Aquinas and the most grave authors, we are not bound to observe the end or intention of the lawgiver, i. e. of Christ, but the means which the law prescribes in order to it. Soto discourseth this at large, and concludes: Love being considered as the universal condition and mode of acting all virtues, and performing all obedience, such a mode of acting out of love is not commanded, as when we are enjoined to honour parents, the precept binds us not to honour them out of love to God. This he delivers as the doctrine of Aquinas, and finds but2 one doctor amongst them of opinion that we are bound to do all out of love to God; but condemns this as false and very near the Lutheran error condemned by the council of Trent, because then all acts done without grace would be sins. So we must believe (if we will not venture to fall under the condemnation of their council) that it is no sin not to obey God out of love to him; that all acts of virtue and obedience whatsoever may be performed without sin, though they be done without love to God; that any man baptized may be saved, though he never act out of love to God, no, not so much as once while he lives; though he perform not one act of a true Christian while he is on earth. He can never perish for want of love to God in any, or all the acts of his life; for he will never be damned but for sin, and to act without love to God is no sin. Thus their chief doctors determine, and this they must all do, in conformity to the decrees of their infallible council, and be deluded infallibly in a matter of no less consequence than the way to heaven, believing that they may arrive there without acts of love, filial obedience, or ingenuous observance of God in anything that he hath commanded, without ever acting as (and so without being at all) true Christians.

Sect. 3. But though they do not transgress other commands, when they observe them without love, yet they may violate that special command which requires inward acts of love, if at that time when this obligeth they do not act out of love. Some of them seem to say this, and we shall see what they make of it in the next place. The nature and proper issue of love is its internal act, when the heart being possessed with a principle of divine love to God in Christ, actually loves him above all. If this actual love (the inward act of it) be not necessary, as there will be no need of the habit (that being but in order to acts), so there will be no place for the imperate acts; for those who would have us sometimes observe other commands out of love, yet never think this requisite, but when the precept obligeth us to actual love.

Now, whether there be any command for this act of love, or whether it oblige, or when, they are not agreed, only in the issue they conspire to make the commandment of no effect.

Some of them determine that the command to love God with all our mind is not obliging; which is all one as if they should say, There is no command for it at all. Thus Stapleton, one of the greatest divines amongst them in his time, The precept of loving God with all our mind is doctrinal, and not binding. To the same effect others conclude there is no special precept of love to God. So John Sanctus, There is no special command in the law of God for this, but general, says he. By which he would have us understand, that there is no precept in particular for loving God, none besides those commands that require other things; which, if they be done, we are discharged from any act of love, or inward affection to him. Aquinas is vouched for this, and much alleged out of him,3 to shew he was of this persuasion. If there be any special precept for this affection to God, it is that which requires us to love him with all the heart, and soul, and strength; but this (as Cardinal Cajetan declares) does not oblige to the love of charity. And Bannez5 teaches, that for natural love there is no special command; and so amongst them they leave no such command for any sort of love to God at all. The command to love God with all our hearts, Maldonate will have to be a general, no special precept.

Others of them confess there is a special command obliging us to love God actually; but they put such a construction upon it, that it signifies little or nothing more than if there were no such thing. They say it is requisite that we should love God one time or other; but what time this is needful, you will never learn of them; what period one fixeth, another unfixeth; and while they find no certain time for it, in the end they leave no place for it.

They all agree in this, that we are not bound to love God always actually; for, say they, the precept for it is affirmative, and such precepts bind not at all times. But since we are not obliged to love God at all times, at what determined time is this required of us? Are we to love him after we are fallen into sin; is that the article of necessity? No; Canus supposeth that this will be generally denied, that a man is obliged to love God soon after he hath sinned. Are we to love him when he vouchsafes some special favour; when he discovers his infinite goodness and amiableness, and makes the most lovely representations of himself to us? One would think, then, if any time at all, we should be obliged to love him actually. No, saith the same bishop, and he no Jesuit or late casuist, he sins not mortally (i. e. he transgresseth no command of God) who loves him not, how much soever he discovers his divine goodness, and most enamouring loveliness, unless it be when it is necessary to love him. And when shall we ever meet with the time when it is necessary, if not in such circumstances as these? If it be not needful to love him, either when we disoblige

him, or when he most obligeth us to acts of love; if neither when he is angry with us, nor when he is well pleased, when will, when can it ever be needful?

Let us see if any others amongst them can nick this article of time when this love will be necessary. Are we bound to put forth an act of love on holy days? So Scotus thought. The time, saith he, for observing this command is on holy days; then we are to recollect ourselves, and ascend in mind unto God. He would have had this love to be a holiday habit at least, if not fit for every day's wearing. But this is too much (say others), nor do they find any reason why this imagination should come in the subtle doctor's head; Canus saith, without all doubt it is to be rejected, and so they do. Scotus herein is borne down by the full torrent of their doctors. I find none now that will have us obliged to love God so often. But since they think it too much to love God every holiday, are we bound to love him upon his own day? No, not once a week neither; for though the church oblige them to be present at his worship, to mind things above, to praise his infinite divinity, and to give thanks for his bounty towards them, yet in all this they are not bound to any act of love; and Soto gives this reason for it: The end of the commandment (which is love) is not commanded. The assertion is hardly so absurd as the reason given for it, that the end, which is the principal in moral actions, should not be commanded. This is to say, that the law does not require to be fulfilled; for love, which is 'the end of the commandment,' is by the apostle expressly said to be 'the fulfilling of the law.' But, notwithstanding all this, in this maxim (which is one of their chief engines, whereby they demolish Christianity in the practice of those who profess it; make void the commandments of God, depriving them of their life and spirit, and leave nothing of the whole body of religion but the mere superficies),3 their divines, he tells us, unanimously agree with Aquinas. So that, it seems, the worship of God may be sufficiently discharged without any love to him. We may serve him well enough (as far as the command for his service will have us) without any affection. In all acts of worship, there needs not any act of love (by their doctrine) in any part, or any of the times of worship, either their own holidays, or the Lord's. They have no more respect to his than theirs, nor for him in either, but serve them and him all alike, and think they hallow them, and honour him enough, without any motion of love in their hearts, when (if ever it were needful in their account) it should be most in motion. Certainly those that think not this love due to God in his worship, think it not due to him at all. But if it be more than needs to love God once a week, are they obliged at least to love him once a year, if not at ordinary times, yet upon extraordinary or special occasions, such as more particularly seem to call for some act of love; when they are to partake of some sacrament, when they come to the eucharist, or to the sacrament of penance (as they are to do once yearly by their church orders)? No; it is not then necessary neither.2 It is false, saith Navarre, that we are bound to fulfil this command when we receive any sacrament; for it is enough that we be not in mortal sin, or that we probably believe so, although no such actual love be conceived in the heart. We are not bound to that love (saith he) when we minister, or receive the sacraments; because we are not then bound to have contrition. Those that make such hard shifts to discharge themselves from the obligation of loving God, whenever occasion is offered, will scarce think it needful to love him upon no occasion; and what occasion can we think of upon which it will be counted requisite, if not on these already specified? If not after sin, if not upon the receipt of mercy, if not on any day of worship, if not in any part of worship; if these be not occasions for it, who can hope they will ever meet with any? If an act of love be not requisite once a week, or once a year, on such an account as would make it so, if any imaginable could do it, it will not be a duty in any week, or any year, in a whole life; those that

discharge themselves of it in such circumstances, do plainly enough discharge it for ever. But since they would make a show of finding some time for it (though their determinations all along are pregnant with a denial of any), let us proceed with them a little further. If an act of love be not due to God once a year, yet may it be a duty once in four or five years? Soto and Ledesma, in Filliutius, ventured to think it may be requisite once in five years; and he gives this reason for it: Because the time is not determined, but left to the judgment of the wise; but (saith he), thus wise divines have thought.

Thus love to God, the greatest duty that we owe the divine Majesty, and that which is the sum of all the rest, is left to men's arbitrement; and if two or three reputed wise shall judge that God is to have no love at all, or but one act of love in a whole life, that must be the rule; God and man must be determined by it. Man will owe no more, and the Lord must have no more. Those of their divines have had the repute of wise, who thought it enough to love God once in a lifetime, as well as such who conceive it probable that he should have an act of love once in five years, or once in seven, for thither it may be adjourned by our author's leave. The Jansenists charge this opinion upon the late Jesuits, and would have all the odium cast upon them; but they go about to lead us into a mistake, if they would have us believe that these, and other horrid conceits concerning an actual love to God, are confined to that society; they are too common amongst those doctors who are of greatest repute, and judged free from extravagancies in their morality, and more tenacious of what they would have accounted the genuine doctrine of their church.

There were many in the time of the Council of Trent, when Jesuitism was but in its infancy, who held it enough to love God actually but once in a lifetime. One act of love, once in a life, which some count enough, saith Soto; and these some, he tells us afterwards, were very many. In the time of Francis de Victoria, who lived till the council of Trent had sat a year, this was the common doctrine, that a man is but obliged to love God once in his life. For upon the question, when the precept for love obligeth, he says, 'Nec videtur sufficiens solutio communis, quod tenetur semel in vita,' Relect. part iii. n. 11. The common answer, that one is bound to it once in a life seems not sufficient;—he speaks modestly, as one loath to dissent from the common doctrine.—That council (who, if it had been concerned for God and men's souls, as it was for other things, would have appeared in all its thunder against such an error) mends this, as it did other matters, by establishing a doctrine which makes it needless to love God so much as once in a life; of which hereafter. But when is that once? They leave us at liberty for the time, so it be but before we die. Suarez was not alone in this: as he wants not followers, so he had many that went before him in this conclusion, and those not Jesuits only; for it is grounded upon the notion which the Romish doctors have of affirmative precepts, when the time for their accomplishment is not expressed. They teach, that such divine commands, divers of them are fulfilled, and have sufficient observance, if they be but obeyed, semel in vita, once in a lifetime. Those that are very cautious express it with a saltem, once at least in a whole life, intimating that though more may be better, yet once is as much as is precisely needful; and this they extend to such things as, by the Lord's constitution, are means necessary to salvation. There are precepts, saith Canus, without determination of time, which oblige us to observe them some times, at least once in our life, such as are the means necessary to salvation. But in what part of our life must it be, that the Lord must have this act of love from us, which is enough once in the whole? Why, since neither the Scripture nor the church, say they, hath determined the time, there is no reason for one time more than

another; it is left to a man's own discretion,3 to love God when he thinks fit, let him do it before he die, and he may take his own time; so some leave it. But Vasquez would not leave it at such uncertainty, so he fixeth the period, and that is the period of a man's life; he determines, the time for loving God is when a man is at the point of death. Nor is this the doctrine of a Jesuit only; for before his time, and before the Society was founded, it was the common opinion of the Romish doctors; so Dominicus Soto informs us,2 very many hold that the time for the observing of this command is at the point of death, that is (as he explains it) when there is not any time left for deserving aught of God. Now every act of love being meritorious with them, either they contradict themselves, or by this opinion they are not bound to love God actually, till there be no time left for any acts of love. We are not by this doctrine obliged to love God, till we can live no longer, and are past acting at all. But are we then bound to love him, is it then necessary? May not a man be saved, who hath continued without love to God all his life, if he love him not actually, neither, when he is a-dying? For this, observe what Aquinas tells us, that we do not break this command, but fulfil it, so as to be free from all mortal guilt, if we do nothing against the love of God, that is, if we run not into mortal sin, and so hate him; as a soldier satisfies his captain's command, who, though he get not the victory, yet doth nothing against military discipline; or as Bonaventure explains it,4per exclusionem affectus contrarii, by the exclusion of the contrary affection, as if it were sufficient that he do not hate him.

Marsilius (of great renown for learning amongst their divines), will have that which the command for love enjoins, to be the keeping of grace and friendship with God, and the recovering of it when lost. So that it doth not oblige to actual love, but only to the avoiding of habitual enmity and hatred of God. But what if we hate God, and persist therein; is it not absolutely necessary that he should beware of that? It seems not; for saith one of their doctors, there is no precept that a sinner should not persevere in enmity against God; there is no negative command which forbids him to persist in such hatred. It may be you do not read this (no more than I could) without some horror and trembling; and I confess, when I found Reginaldus quoted for this, I was ready to think it was but the extravagancy of some singularly bold Jesuit; but upon further inquiry, I find it asserted by such whose writings have the greatest approbation of the Romish church. Melchior Canus, a Dominican, a bishop, cried up as a most elegant, judicious, and cautious writer too, and inferior to none of that order, their angelical doctor only excepted, clearly delivers this doctrine, we are not bound by any negative precept that we should not be enemies of God, in respect of guilt. He adds, for as there is no affirmative precept requiring habitual friendship with God, so for habitual enmity against God in respect of guilt, there is no negative precept that forbids it. So that to persist in enmity and hatred against God, by their approved doctrine, is no sin, it is against no command.

We need not allege the words of any other, since this is the plain and necessary consequent of their common doctrine; and we must take it to be the judgment of all, who hold that it is no sin to delay contrition (i.e. repentance and turning to God) in which both their ancienter school doctors and modern divines agree. For while it is no duty to turn to God, habitual enmity and hatred of him will be no sin. Now, contrition (and so conversion to God) they say may be deferred till death. Indeed, by their doctrine it will never be a duty; for even at death, the last attrition, with their sacrament of confession, is all that is needful.

Sect. 4. However, they make it unnecessary to love God either living or dying. For though they pretend that there is a time, some or other, when the precept for it is obliging, and make a show as

if then unavoidably, he that will be saved must have an act of love for God in his heart; yet whenever that time comes, in life or death, to which their several fancies have determined it, they discover to them many ways whereby the precept may be satisfied, without any act of love that it requires; and those which have a mind to be deceived with hopes of heaven, without ever loving God while they live, may have their choice which way they will be deluded, for they present them with variety. First, a natural love will serve the turn, such as a graceless man may have. For Aquinas determines after others, that he that hath no love to God may observe the precept of loving him actually, by disposing himself to receive this grace; and whereas some think that this great precept of loving God, since Adam's sin, cannot be fulfilled but in the state of grace, Navar asserts the contrary, both upon reason and authority, because a man by his natural power, remaining also in mortal sin, may and doth conceive God to be amiable above all, and the last end of all, and consequently can love him as such; as also, because there may be a love for God above all, without grace, as Cajetan proves; moreover, because St Thomas affirms that one may, without grace, fulfil the command of loving God, as to the substance of the act, though not as to the meriting of blessedness.

Elsewhere he affirms that all the ten commandments, and all other precepts, may be fulfilled by him who is in mortal sin as to the substance of the act, so as to avoid all sin that would be incurred if they were not fulfilled; and this, according to the judgment of Aquinas, commonly followed, and the sense of the Council of Trent.2 They assign, we see, two ways whereby the divine precept may be fulfilled. One as to the substance of the act, so as sin is avoided, and the other as to the end of the lawgiver, so as to deserve heaven. And they teach that any precept may be accomplished the former way by such as are destitute of grace. Now to observe the command of loving God, so far as not to sin against it, is all that is required, if Bellarmine's arguing be good. If I sin not, saith he, when I love God, without degree of love (in the judgment of St Thomas), certainly I am not bound in strictness to love him more; therefore, if I add another degree, I love him more than I am bound to do.4 So that an unsanctified man, loving God in such a degree as not to sin against the precept of love, hath all the affection for God that it requires; and none will be obliged to any love but such as is natural, and may be found in a graceless heart.

Secondly, An inferior degree of love will satisfy the command, such as is far short of what it enjoins. He is no transgressor (saith the oracle of their schools) who attains not the intermediate degrees towards perfection, if he reach but the very lowest of all. To keep the divine precepts (saith Bellarmine), any degree of love whatsoever is sufficient.6 Any act of love (saith Bannes), how remiss soever, is sufficient to fulfil all the commands of God; neither is there any certain intenseness requisite that one in this life may accomplish the precept of love to God. The Lord requires that we love him with all our hearts, i. e. with all the affection our hearts can contain; they say that any, the smallest degree, will suffice. He enjoins us to love him with all our might, i. e. as much as we can. They say it is enough to love him as little as we can; we need not love him as much as we might if we would; no more is commanded but as little as possible. The lowest degree of all will serve; and if we advance but another step, we supererogate, and God is beholden to us for more than is due. Their gross mistake about the perfection of obedience in this life entangles them in a necessity to maintain this and other impious absurdities. For if every just person perfectly observes the law, the least degree must be sufficient for such an observance; and when this command, declared with such circumstance, of loving God with all our hearts, mind, and

strength, doth especially puzzle them, they are concerned either to deny its obligation, as some of them do, or to interpret it so as to make it signify that which is next to nothing, as others. All of them are obliged to deface it one way or other, that it may not appear to confound them. But to go on. If we are not bound to love God save in the lowest degree, yet that degree sure should exceed our affection to all other things. No, not so neither; for they tell us commonly we are not obliged to love God more intensely than other things. So Cardinal Tolet. Yea, saith he, sometimes we more fervently love things sensible and the creatures. Navarre,2 after Aquinas, and their divines, ancient and modern, concur herein.

It is true, they say, God should be loved appreciatively (as to valuation, and in esteem) above all; but then by all they understand, not simply all things, but the worst things of all. In those, the worst. of evils, he is to have the pre-eminence; but the creatures are not such evils, and they may be preferred before God in most cases. By their doctrine we may prefer the judgment of others, or our own, before the advice of God in all matters of mere counsel, and to this they have reduced the greatest part of Christian duties; and we may follow our own wills, or the will of others, rather than God's continually, and make this the constant practice of our lives in all those innumerable evils which they count venial. And so in the most instances by far we may love and esteem ourselves and others more than God, and yet love him enough, and not transgress the precept. We need not love him more than all creatures; we may love any creature more than him, even in way of valuation; only he is to have this honour, and this will be enough, to love him more than deadly crimes, such as declare open hostility against God. This is all the import of that great precept whish concerns us in this life, as it is expressed after Aquinas by Soto and others.

Yea, to admit mortal sin, and so to love the creature more than God, in that respect in which alone they say he is more to be loved, is not against this precept. So Navar informs us. Indirectly, saith he, to love the creature more than God is not against this command (of love), because whoever sins mortally, indirectly loves something more than God; yet such a delinquent doth not therefore sin against the precept, because directly he doth nothing against it, nor acts what in itself, and in its own nature, separates from God, but by accident, according to Aquinas and Scotus. So that to love the creature more than God, and to shew it in a way which themselves say is most repugnant to the love of God, is no transgression of this command. To say he doth nothing against it directly is no salvo, when that he doth is all which they count (if they count anything) inconsistent with the love commanded. He tells us further, and Lopez after him, that absolutely to love God, but so much, or not so much as other things, without making any comparison, is not evil. So that if God have some affection from us, though we love him less than other things, it is no sin, no transgression of the precept; and if this be not transgressed in the instant when it calls for performance, it is fulfilled.

Thirdly, It will suffice, if nothing be done against love, as we heard before out of Aquinas. So that when the precept of love obligeth, if we then do nothing contrary to that love, we may be excused from the act itself, or from acting anything out of love. For that which they count contrary to it may be avoided out of fear, or other considerations foreign to love; and so the command may be satisfied at the instant, when (if ever) it requires actual love, without any act either of love or from it.

Fourthly, External acts may satisfy. The precept of love, saith Soto, doth not oblige precisely to inward affection, but certainly to some outward act; so elsewhere he explains this loving God above all, by doing his commandments.3 To the same purpose Maldonate and others. Now if the precept of love may be fulfilled by external acts, or by endeavours to observe the other commands of God, then it requires not the exercise of the inward act of love to him, and so there will be no command for that at all, nor will it be a duty; and all these other commands may be satisfied without any act of love to God in the heart, and we shall love him enough, though we never conceive any actual love for him in our souls.

Fifthly, It will satisfy the precept if a man believe that he loves God above all, though indeed he do not. So Lopez. It is enough to avoid the sin of neglecting this precept, for one to believe probably that he fulfils it at the time when its obligation occurs. Navarre had concluded this before him.6 He that believes God, probably believing that he is in the state of grace, and that his love is a love of God above all, although in truth it is no such thing, nor he in such a state; nevertheless, the precept is fulfilled by him, so far, that he is not then guilty of sin for omitting the observance of it. He adds this reason for it: Because, without special revelation, no man can know when he is in the state of grace, as the Council of Trent determines; and so unless we maintain this, we cannot know when we fulfil the precept. Thus, though his determination seem strange and desperate, yet the ground he proceeds on is a principle of their faith, and obligeth all to be of his persuasion who submit to that council. He declares himself further to this purpose: He sins mortally who loves not God at that time when he is bound to do it, under the pain of mortal sin, that is, when there is danger of death, or necessity of receiving or administering a sacrament, unless he probably believe that he hath grace or charity;2 for then he would have us believe it is not sin, as his limitation shews. Here we have the times specified wherein the precept of loving God obligeth, and these are but two, and the latter of them himself expungeth, concluding it false that we are bound to love God at a sacrament. So that a man is never bound to love God but when he apprehends death approaching; no, nor at the point of death neither, if then he probably believe that he hath grace and charity, though he have it not; for such a presumption will excuse him from sin if he love not God (as all his life before, so) even when he is dying. Thus is the case resolved according to their common principles, by the most learned and the most pious of their casuists, as Bellarmine honours him, though he was none of the Society.4

Sixthly, Attrition, with the sacrament of penance, will excuse any from loving God actually, living or dying, and will secure him from perishing eternally, though he never entertain an act of love for God in life or death. The doctrine of their church obligeth them all to believe this, and if any of their doctors seem to say otherwise, they contradict either that or themselves. For their church requires nothing precisely to put a man into the state of grace and salvation, living or dying, (how long soever he hath persisted in enmity against God, how highly soever he hath expressed his hatred of him), but only a due partaking of the sacrament of penance; and he is sufficiently qualified for such a participation if he be but attrite, that is, as they explain it, if he have but some remorse for sin out of servile fear, not out of love to God (for that fear as servile is contrary to the love of God), so that for this (which they count sufficient to secure his eternal state), even at last gasp, he needs not any act of love to God. And this is not only the opinion of particular doctors, but (as I shall shew hereafter) the doctrine of the council of Trent,6 and so not only probable with them, but certain.

If a man at the point of death, who never had an act of love for God in all his life, do then ask his confessor whether such an act be needful for him before he die; if the priest tell him it is not necessary, he may safely give up the ghost, and die as he lived, without any actual affection for God; for though he be deluded by his confessor, yet consulting him he has done his endeavour, and so his ignorance, they say, is invincible, and will excuse him. And the priest must tell him that it is more than needs, if he believe the council of Trent, since there it is declared that the sacrament, with attrition (though this include something repugnant to such love), is enough to justify, and pass any into a state of grace, and consequently is sufficient for salvation. And thus they argue,2 grace is a sufficient cause of glory; hence whatever it is, without which grace may obtained, that is not necessary to salvation; by which account no act of love (nor of any other grace) will be needful for them, that they may be saved.

Thus, in fine, here is a religion which pretends to be Christian, but excuseth and disengageth all that profess it from the love of Christ; a doctrine which bereaves religion of that which themselves count its life, and quite stifles all the spirits of Christianity, chops off all Christian virtues, all gracious acts and qualities in this one neck, and leaves nothing but a ghastly carcase. For obliging them to neglect love as needless, it makes the rest impossible; without it, there can be no saving faith, no godly sorrow, no filial fear, no delight in God, no desire to enjoy him, no genuine gratitude. When the life of a true Christian should be made up of these, they leave it not possible for him to have one act of true Christian virtue, for without love, they say themselves, there cannot be any one true virtue. Here is a way to heaven for those that never loved God in life or death, a path that pretends to heaven, but lies quite cross to the way of Christ, and leads directly to outer darkness; a doctrine that encourageth them to live in hatred of God all their days, and in the end sends them out of the world under the dreadful sentence of of the apostle, 1 Corinthians 16:22, ‘If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema, maranatha.’ To conclude this head, it is a doctrine which is damning, not only meritoriously, but effectually, and will certainly ruin eternally all that believe and practise it, and hath in it the mortal poison and malignity of a hundred such speculative opinions as pass for heresies. And beside the danger and horrible impiety of this doctrine, it is ridiculous to the very highest degree; for can anything be more senseless, than to ask how often a man ought to love his best friend and benefactor? whether once in his life be not enough in all conscience? nay, whether it be not very fair not to hate him? And, indeed, they state the business all along in such a manner, and manage it with such nicety and caution, not as if they were afraid lest men should love God too little, but as if all the danger lay on the other hand; and their great care were that nobody should love him too much, or love him at all. I do not believe that things so palpably impious and ridiculous were ever so solemnly debated by men of any religion whatsoever.

CHAPTER IV There is no necessity of saving or justifying faith by the Romish doctrine

Sect. 1. That no man can be justified or saved without faith is so evident in Scripture, that none but an infidel can question it. The Romanists do not express any doubt of it, and yet they make no other faith necessary than that which is neither justifying nor saving. They have two sorts of faith, one for the unlearned and ignorant, which they call implicit; the other for the learned and more knowing, which they say should he explicit. The former, as they describe it, is an assent to some general, including many particulars, with a mind to believe nothing contrary thereunto. The general is this, that whatever the Roman church (which cannot err) believes, is true; the particulars

included are they know not what, for they are supposed ignorant. Now this, we say, is no Christian faith, and make it apparent that it is no such thing. For, first, it is no belief of any one particular or article of the Christian faith. It is only a belief of a general, which is no truth at all, much less Christian (that the church of Rome cannot err, or believe anything but what is true), when the ignorant person neither knows what this church is, nor what she believes, nor why he should give her such credit. So that the act is a blind conceit, unworthy of a man, or a Christian; and the object a general error. And then as to the particulars which are necessary for Christians to believe, this implicit faith doth not actually believe any of them at all; if it did, it would not be what it is, implicit. It apprehends them not, and therefore cannot believe them; for, as themselves acknowledge, that cannot be believed which is not known. To render this clear to us, they thus explain it. When2 a man is asked whether Christ were born of the Virgin Mary, and whether there be one God and three persons, and he answers that he knows not, but believes touching these things as the church holds, this is to believe implicitly; so that a man may have this faith completely, and yet not believe an article of the creed; and if this be Christian faith, a man may have it who believes nothing of Christ. They are believers, at this rate, who have a mind to hold what the church doth concerning Christ or the creed, though they never know what that is. They know not what the church holds, unless the church's knowing be their knowledge; and so believe nothing, unless the church's believing be their faith; and so have no faith to save them, unless it be saving faith to believe by an attorney.

Secondly, As this faith may be without the knowledge and belief of any of the particular articles which are necessary to be believed by Christians, so (which is yet more strange) it may be with the belief of what is opposite and repugnant to the Christian faith. This they acknowledge, and clear it to us by instances. A man may be disposed to believe what the church holds, and yet may believe that God the Father and God the Son are not equal, but one greater and elder than the other, or that the persons in the Trinity are locally distant. Such is the virtue of implicit faith, saith Alstentaig, that, if he who hath it believes these errors, or any like them, he would be no heretic; he would not sin, provided he doth not maintain his error pertinaciously, and that he believes because he thinks the Church believes it. Or such a catholic may believe4 that the three persons in the Godhead are one woman; it would be but a small fault with Angelus to believe this, thinking the church believes the same. Or he may believe that Christ is not true God and man, and yet not be condemned for it, if the pope believed it too. If trusting a priest (who tells him the church holds it) he believes anything against the articles of faith, he is excused, saith Sancta Clara, after Scotus and Gabriel and others.2 Though he expressly disbelieve any article of faith, yet he may be said to believe it implicitly. So that he may believe that the creed or the gospel is not to be believed, he may count it a fable (as Pope Leo called it) and yet be a Christian as to his belief, if this be the Christian faith. He may be expressly an heretic or a monstrous misbeliever, and yet implicitly be a faithful Roman catholic.

Thirdly, Such a faith as this Jews and Turks and Pagans have, even the worst of these, who do but acknowledge a God of truth; for they believe what this God reveals is true, and this generally involves all the particulars of the Christian belief, so that if the belief of such a general, without other faith as to the particulars, may be sufficient for papists, such infidels may pass for as true believers, as Roman catholics. Yea, the faith of such catholics will be so much worse than that of these infidels, as it is better to believe God's veracity and revelation than to believe the infallibility

of the Roman church, or the truth of all therein believed.

Indeed, such a faith was not counted sufficient for Christians, till Christians were thought to be something like asses. Aquinas inquires whether all be alike obliged to have an explicit faith. He answers negatively, and the ground of his conclusion is Job 1:14, ‘The oxen were ploughing, and the asses were feeding beside them;’ from whence he argues gravely that the people, who are signified by asses, are to lie down in the faith of their superiors, who are signified by the oxen, as Gregory expounds it. But what if the oxen go astray; what must become of the asses then? Why, they may follow them without hurt, believing that they are right when they are in a wrong way (for they must not have their names for nothing). So he resolves this difficulty. Human knowledge is not the rule of faith, but divine truth,5 from which, if some of the superiors (the oxen) make defection, that hurts not the faith of the simple (the asses), who believe them to have the right faith. After these two saints, their best pope and their angelical doctor, that we may see we owe not this rare notion (where their whole church is so subtilly divided into oxen and asses) to any lower than the most eminent amongst them, Cardinal Bellarmine, their great champion, makes use of the same exposition of that text to maintain the sufficiency of such a faith.

Stapleton would have us believe that they admit not of this implicit faith, save in points of less moment; but herein he misrepresents them, and would delude us; for it is the common doctrine of the Romanists, that an implicit faith in Christ (such as pagans may have, and for which none should have the name of Christians) is sufficient under the gospel to pass any into a justifying or saving state. This is it which our divines commonly teach, saith Vega, when they say the faith of one mediator, either explicit or implicit, is enough for justification. And Sancta Clara,3 with others, tell us this is the more common tenet in their schools; and whereas they make some difference between justification and salvation in this point, Bannes helps to remove it. It is neither heresy, saith he, nor error, nor rashness, nor scandal, to assert that a man may also in the same manner be saved, because justification, being the last disposition to glory, it is very probable that he which is justified by an implicit faith, may also, by the same faith, without alteration, be saved.

It is true, they say there is a precept for a more express faith, though no more than this implicit belief in Christ be needful, necessitate medii. But they have so many ways to exempt infidels (even under the profession of Christians) from its obligation, that few in comparison will be culpable for not observing it. By their doctors they are excused, if they be dull or gross-witted. If they be ignorant or impotent,6 or if their priest or their parents mislead them, or if the object of faith be not duly proposed,8 if by slight reasons or by impious persons (then it would be imprudence to believe); or if they do not doubt of their faith, or if their teachers be fallacious or erroneous, or if the proposal10 be not enforced with reasons, with holiness of life, with the confutation of the contrary, and with some wonders; in short, if they have not had sufficient instruction (in this all agree). And this alone will excuse a great part of their church, who, for want of such instruction, are acknowledged by themselves to be infidels. Thus Navarre delivers it. In the whole Christian commonwealth (he means the Roman church), there is so great neglect as to this, that ye may find many everywhere who believe no more of these things (i. e. of Christ and the most necessary articles of the Christian faith) in particular and explicitly, than some heathen philosophers who have only the natural knowledge of the one true God. But if the precept could reach any through all these securities (which we cannot easily imagine), yet there is one way to clear them all of it, so that they may live and die infidels, without danger from any command requiring faith in Christ; for

he that hath not that express faith which is commanded in the gospel, but only what is requsite necessitate medii, is living or dying, if he be sorry for his negligence, and purpose to amend (which may be in their sense without true repentance), capable of absolution without any instruction from his confessor. And by virtue of that he may live in a justified state, or if he die, he passeth out of the world as a very good Christian, though he believe in Christ no more than a heathen.

Sect. 2. Pass we to their other sort of faith, which they call explicit. It is, as they define it, an actual assent to the particulars which the church propounds as revealed by God. This, with them, is justifying faith, requisite in the learned and more intelligent amongst them. As to the object of it, if we view it well, it looks untowardly for a thing by which a sinner is to be justified. For it is prodigiously extended, and takes in things uncertain, false, impossible, impertinent, and ridiculous, as points that must certainly be believed unto justification; for their church propounds as things revealed by God (and so objects of justifying faith) not only what is delivered in Scripture, but unwritten traditions concerning matters of faith and manners, and these, if they will be justified, they must believe, though they know not what they are, nor where to find them, but in the church's unerring fancy. She propounds also the unanimous consent of the fathers in several points; and though this never was, or is impossible to be known, yet it must be believed by those that mean to be justified. She propounds the decrees of councils to be believed as divine truths, when it is acknowledged that the design in councils for many hundred years was not to discover truth, but to promote the Roman greatness. She propounds also the determinations of popes: these must be believed as infallible, when ordinarily they were neither persons of common truth or honesty; and we must be justified by believing the dictates of atheists or heretics,3 of conjurors or incarnate devils,5 of vicious beasts and wicked monsters; for those who cry up his holiness have adorned him also now and then with these other sacred titles.

I know not whether these things are more ridiculous or more horrid; however, letting them pass as they are, let us take their faith at best, and make it better than they will have it. Suppose it rested in the Scriptures, and had nothing for its object but revelation, such as is truly divine, yet even so, they give such report of it as will scarce suffer us to think that they can expect to be justified by it. Considered in itself, they count it not worthy the name of a virtue. They call it a dead, idle thing;8 and though they would have it to be an infused habit, and the gift of God (because the Scripture so calls that which is justifying faith indeed), yet they say a mere human quality, acquired without any supernatural assistance, may perform its proper act and office by actual assent to the whole Christian doctrine. They confess it is commonly found in the worst of men (in perditissimis hominibus), such as are neither acted nor possessed by the Spirit of God; such as live and die in mortal wickedness, and are damned for it; yea, some of them confess that it is in the devils. This faith, saith Cardinal Contarenus,3 is not it by which we belive that there is a God, or by which we believe that the things are true which God speaks; for this also is in the devils and the most wicked men. Yet at other times this is with them, the Christian, the catholic faith, as if it were enough to make them true Christians and catholics; but sure they will not seek for their Christianity and catholicness in a room lower than purgatory. However, instead of a faith which the Scripture calls for as saving and justifying, they commend to Christians a faith which hath no connection at all, necessary or probable, with salvation or justification. All they have to say is, that it must necessarily be joined with love; but when they have said this, they undo it, and all by making love itself unnecessary, as we saw before.

Sect. 3. In fine, they seem little concerned for faith, who hath it or hath it not, or how little it be, or how seldom acted. It is not necessary that the pope himself should have this faith (though the devils want it not), yea, or any other virtue, for all his ‘holiness:’ the body may do well enough, though the head of it be an infidel. They are obliged to maintain this, because their popes often have been no better. And the body may shift pretty well without it too. This may be the true catholic church made up of the whole company of believers, when not one amongst them all hath faith; for time was, say they,6 when none at all had faith, but only one woman, and it may be so again. As for the exercise of it, Hurtado thinks an act of faith may be requisite once in a year; but the Jesuit may seem to deal unmercifully with them, putting them to believe some of their creed once in twelve months. Those of other orders would not have them so much oppressed, once in twelve years will be enough; Bonacina8 saith four or five moments in a whole life may suffice for this, and specifies them; but because this may seem too hard, he signifieth withal how they may be eased in a manner of them all. For once (though that be at the point of death) an implicit act may serve; at another time or two, the precept for faith doth not of itself oblige to the act, only10 it is requisite by accident; and so the neglect of it, then, will be no special sin, nor need be confessed; at another time (or more if there were occasion), ignorance, or want of consideration, may excuse them (for these two, though they ruin the greatest part of the world eternally, yet are the greatest security of Roman catholics; and not only exempt them from that which is most the duty of Christians, but will not suffer them to sin, at least mortally, do what they can). So that, after all, one act of their faith once in a lifetime will be enough. I think it sufficient (saith he after many others) for those that are rude, to give an explicit assent once to the articles necessary to salvation, while they are propounded by their confessor, or some other.2 But how must the confessor propound these articles to them, so as they may pass this one act of faith upon them once for all? Why, the best way, he tells us, is by a mode of forming the sign of the cross, as it is described for this purpose by Graffiis, Bellarmine, and other great divines. I had the curiosity to see how a confessor can make the most ignorant persons true believers by the sign of the cross, and so effectually, as they never need more believe than once while they live, and found it lying thus:4 Let the confessor teach him to form the sign of the cross with three fingers, to signify the mystery of the most sacred Trinity. But first, it must be drawn from the top of the head, or front, to the navel, to shew that the Son of God descended from the highest heavens into the bowels of his mother; then draw the cross line from the left arm to the right, so the cause of the incarnation is expressed; he came from heaven to earth, that we, who were to be placed amongst the goats at his left, might be removed to his right hand amongst the sheep. This is the admirable expedient. The grave Benedictine reflecting on it was put into a transport; for he adds, Behold what great mysteries of faith mother church has taught us by one mode of forming a cross, so that a rude person needs know nothing besides this, even this alone may be sufficient for his salvation! Here is a compendious way indeed to salvation, and all the knowledge and faith needful for it. He that can be satisfied with it (and give himself up to absurd and ridiculous delusions, against all the evidence of God’s word), may in few minutes, with once making the sign of the cross, get all the faith requisite for a Roman catholic; and when by such admirable conduct of the cross he hath but once believed, he need never more trouble himself with faith while he lives.6 The precept for faith (saith another) obligeth not, but perhaps once in a life; and it is delivered as the judgment of Aragon Torres, and other their chief divines, that of itself it binds not, but when one comes to the use of reason, or if it be not then performed, afterwards; but after one act of faith once put forth, the obligation to exercise more acts do rarely,

or may be never, occur. Such is their faith, and thus you must conceive, if you can, how they live by it. They can make a life of faith of one act alone in a whole life. No wonder they presume that they can so perfectly fulfil the whole law, yea, and pay God much more than his due, when they make the greatest commands (the sum of the law and gospel) to amount to little or nothing, and instead of a hundred, set down, not fifty, but a fraction, or a cypher; when, in the case before us, they take no more notice of the faith which the gospel calls for, yea, make bold in a manner wholly to neglect that of their own making.

CHAPTER V There is no necessity of true repentance for Romanists by their doctrine

Sect. 1. If anything be absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation, it is repentance. Christ himself declares it, Luke 13:3. The doctrine of repentance from dead works is a fundamental, and so made expressly by the apostle, Hebrews 6:1; so that without the belief and practice of it, no sinner can possibly be saved, nor have any hopes of it, but such as are delusions. Thus necessary hath the Lord made it, and yet by the Roman doctrine, it is more than needs for any sort of sins. As to original sin (the corruption of our natures), those of them who hold there is any such thing within us, yet declare that if it be any sin at all, it is the least of all sins. Andradius, employed by the council of Trent to write, tells us that their divines so determine. Bellarmine saith, that amongst all sins it is the least voluntary, and on that account is less than any venial sin; and it must be little indeed, that is less than any venial, for that, as another cardinal2 tells us, passeth for nothing. And that which hath so little, or nothing of sin in it, needs no repentance. So Soto concludes, a man that hath no guilt but that of original sin, hath no need of any repentance. Thus they represent original sin as it is in them before baptism, but after they are baptized, they all agree that it is no sin at all. The council of Trent hath determined it (and so it is now with them an article of faith) 4 that in baptism, not only the guilt of original sin is remitted, but whatever of it hath anything of the true and proper nature of sin, is totally taken away; and they curse those who hold that it is only pardoned or impaired, and not all the sin of it quite abolished by baptism. They say they are become innocent, pure, harmless,.spotless,6 without the least speck of original sin, and so without any need of repentance upon that account. They are so far from being actually obliged to repent of any natural corruption, that they cannot be obliged to it, God himself cannot bind any one to repent of it. So that if there be in our natures any defectiveness as to the image of God, any averseness to God and that which is good, any propenseness to evil, we are not to take notice of it, or grieve for it as a sin; for however the apostle frequently calls it so, it is none; no more to be repented of than an innocent, harmless thing. Thus original sin is quite discharged from any concern in our repentance.

Sect. 2. There are other evils which make up the far greatest part of actual sins, which by their doctrine are but venial. Of this quality are not only those which they count small in their own nature, and those which are small in respect of the matter of them, but likewise all (how heinous soever as to the nature of them, how great soever as to the matter of them) that are acted without perfect deliberation, and are not completely voluntary. And by favour of their describing this third sort of minute evils, the most enormous wickedness that can be acted against God or man, may come under the notion of venial faults (of which hereafter). Blasphemy, perjury, adultery, murder, &c., when without perfect deliberation, will be no worse.

However, these with them are light faults, and lightly cancelled (as they tell us) by the bishop's blessing, by holy water, by knocking the breast, by saying a paternoster, by extreme unction (so our Rhemists, Aquinas adds), by the encharist, by any of the seven sacraments,2 by any sacramental unction, by prayer in a holy place; yea, or by but entering into a consecrated church. So that by these and other such means, et si aliqua alia sunt hujusmodi (saith Aquinas), pardon of venial sins may be obtained; yea, any one of them will quite abolish the fault, if not the whole penalty, particularly holy water, which (as Canus teacheth4) takes away the punishment of sin, and also the faults that are venial. No wonder if they determine that the sacrament of penance is not needful for these, not so much as their ritual repentance, and that there is no necessity they should be so much as confessed, nor any remorse or grief required for them, nor that they should be relinquished so much as in their resolution only.6 Contrition is so far from being requisite for venial sins, that with them attrition is not needful, for that is a displicence arising from shame or fear; but these sins are (in their account) neither shameful, (it is no crime, they say, to glory in them) nor dangerous; no man can be condemned for them.8

Thus their doctrine giveth them all abundant encouragement to live and die impenitently in these sins, in all of them; for all of them in the world, if found in one man together, amount not to so much as one mortal sin. All the penitence for these that is required by the precisest of them, is no more than one act of charity contains, i. e. such a virtual dislike as a man may have of that which he was never actually displeased at, no, nor so much as thought of.

It may seem strange (the operation of the spirit of delusion not considered) how such a conceit could ever possess the fancies of rational persons, and of some acquaintance with the Scriptures; that their sacramentals (holy water, and the like trifles) should have the virtue to procure pardon of sins, even without repentance. Aquinas would have us satisfied with this, that they do not remit sins of themselves, but are said to do it, because they may excite that fervour by which they are remitted; but this fervour is not repentance, and whatever it be, it ought to be excited, that it may remit sin, since this admirable virtue is ascribed to it on that account. No, say his followers, we must understand him so, that it is not always requisite it should be excited, but that these sacramentals are instituted for this end. Wherefore to receive them as accommodated by the church to this effect is an act of repentance, and procures remission of venial sins; although there be no way any excitement of devotion, nor any remembering of these sins, nor any dislike of them; for if this were required, truly they would not be sacramentals, since this dislike alone would be sufficient; so de Graffiis after Soto.4 Here is pardon of sin by an excitement of fervour, though it be not excited; that must be the implicit repentance, sufficient for the pardon of venial sins; and the explicit very like it, an act of repentance (such as is receiving of holy water), without any remembering the sins to be repented of, or any dislike of them. They had need believe that these sins are no transgressions of the law, since they expect to be secured from its penalty by that which is no repentance.

Sect. 3. Hereby it is too manifest that they make repentance needless, both in reference to original sin, and likewise to all those which they count venial. If they will have it needful for any sin at all, it must be for those they call mortal; but then these are but few in comparison. They have reduced them to seven, and none pass for deadly but such as quite extinguish spiritual life, and kill the soul immediately.

Well, but is repentance necessary for these? As to this, divers of great eminency amongst them conclude that there is no divine precept for repentance. God hath not commanded any to repent. Now if he command it not, it is not necessary; and if it be not a necessary duty, it is no mean necessary to salvation. For, as themselves tells us, though all that is commanded be not necessary to salvation, yet all that is necessary to salvation is commanded. That there is no special precept which requires repentance, was the opinion of their famous Franciscus de Victoria (in his time the great master of divinity in Spain), and of other divines, both before and after him, as Melchior Canus (sometimes his scholar) tells us. And when that of Christ, Luke 13:1-35, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,' is objected, they answer the meaning is, They shall perish for preceding sins, not for impenitence. By their doctrine there is no danger that any should perish for that, though persisted in unto death; and they had some reason to allege Aquinas (the angel of their schools) as of their judgment herein; for he saith plainly, that impenitency continued in till death is no special sin, but a circumstance of sin. By this doctrine it is no sin, no transgression of any divine precept to be impenitent, or to persevere therein to the end.

Those who will be concluded by the council of Trent must believe that there is no divine precept which requires contrition or true repentance precisely, but only disjunctively, either that or what is there declared to be sufficient without it. And they must take it for certain that it is not a medium necessary to salvation, since that council has determined that something else will suffice for pardon without it, and so they declare it expressly.

Sect. 4. But let us take notice of those who seem more severe. Many there be who think that repentance is under a divine command, yet these in the issue make it no more necessary than the other, who find no precept for it. For they determine that we are not obliged to repent presently, that it may be deferred till the approach or danger of death; and, in fine, that it is needless, even when a man is dying. For the first, they teach that a sinner is not bound to repent presently, it is lawful to defer it. So their doctors of all sorts, so all the faithful (say they), so the whole church. That a man is not bound to repent presently is a conclusion, saith Soto, established by the practice and the usage of the church. Canus tells us it is his own, and the common opinion, that a man is not obliged to repent forthwith; and this, he saith, is confirmed by best reason, viz. the consent of all the faithful, both priests and people; and adds, that to make the precept so rigid as to require present repentance, hath no probable reason, no, nor any authority.5

Now this doctrine concerning repentance, in this first step of it, where it appears more modest and innocent than in its further advance, is yet very horrid and desperate. For it is all one as if they had said, that they may, notwithstanding any command of God, continue (for some time at least) in their hatred of God, and state of enmity against him, since that is confessedly the temper and state of the impenitent. Besides, it emboldens sinners, and giveth them confidence to leave their souls at a desperate venture, presuming they may repent time enough hereafter, when they can have no assurance of any time at all for the future. And it is the more dangerous, because their doctrine takes away all apprehension of danger, leaving them no fear, either of penalty or sin, in putting off repentance; no danger of suffering by present neglects or delays, for they are told that they may repent when they please. The Lord, saith one part of their divines, is every moment ready to help them to repentance; or, say the rest, he will help them to it (if they please) in the article of necessity, whenever the precept makes it their duty.2 And what should hinder them, upon such encouragement, to defer it, even to the point of death? They need not fear that they shall perish,

nor need they fear they shall sin by thus putting it off. Some of their doctors make it no sin at all, others as good as none. Bellarmine determines that it is not a sin, but only a circumstance of sin, when the command doth not oblige; and that it doth not presently, but only at a certain season. Medina affirms that, without all doubt, it is lawful.4 Soto saith it is but a venial sin. Canus takes a course to reconcile them, he concludes it is no sin at all not to repent presently, and that is but a venial sin to will (or resolve) not to repent.6 Now if it be no sin at all, there is no danger at all; if it be but a venial sin, there is very little or none to be regarded, no necessity upon any account to repent of it; and he saith the people never confess this in order to repentance, the priests never require it nor regard it; by the consent of all, we are not obliged to it.

Now, that which a man is not bound to repent of, he may still continue in, and so he may still continue resolved to put off repentance; yes, so he may safely, say they, till the article of necessity.

Sect. 5. But when is that? Let us next inquire after it, and in the pursuit thereof we shall discover the second point I charge them with, That a man, by their doctrine, needs not repent all his days, till he be in danger of death. This is their common doctrine: since the command to repent is affirmative, it doth not oblige, but in time of necessity, even as other affirmative precepts do. All the question will be, When is this time of necessity, when it will be necessary to repent without longer delay? Now their doctors are agreed in no other article of time, except it be the point of death, or when a man's life is apparently in danger. There is no other time in a man's whole life, wherein it is likely that repentance should be requisite, but they deny it to be then necessary, and offer arguments to prove that it is not needful in any other, however probable seasons. Let me shew this in some instances. Is it necessary to repent at solemn times of worship, when we address ourselves in a more particular manner to a holy God? No, say they, generally; and Canus3 giveth this reason for it: Though acts of religion be then required, yet repentance is not an act of religion, but of revenge. Is it needful on days of fasting? It may seem so, because the main and proper end of fasts is the exercises of repentance and humiliation. No, say they, it is not needful then; for if this were the intention of God, or the church, in enjoining fasts, yet the intention of the lawgiver doth not bind us. No exercise of repentance is with them requisite on their fasts, but what they may perform in a dream; for if they sleep the whole fasting day, yet they fulfil the precept for fasting.5 To their fasts they require nothing but abstinence from some sort of meat, not any religious act at all; and if with them the precept for the mass, or prayer, could not be fully accomplished without some penitent sense of sin, as it may, yet neither the mass nor prayer, public or private, is requisite to their fasts. Yea, in extraordinary times for prayer, upon occasion of some great calamity befallen them for their sins, they think not contrition for sin needful. The people know not there is then any necessity thereof; their confessors and preachers are never wont to mind them of this as a thing necessary; and therefore Lopez saith, he would not condemn any private person that neglects it in these circumstances, and so concludes he after others. As for their common fasts, these (no more than their festivals) require not abstinence from acts of wickedness, much less repentance for them. Is it necessary, when sins are brought to our remembrance, and when our minds dictate to us, that they are to be hated and repented of? It seems then needful, if ever, seeing a practical judgment obligeth even in things lawful, though they be not otherwise necessary. No, not then; a man is not bound to repent when his sins are offered to his mind, either speculatively or practically.2 One would think, if a sinner needs not repent, when he is mindful of

his sins, it could never be needful, since he can never repent but when he is mindful of them. Is it necessary, when a sinner comes to their sacraments, particularly to that of penance? This must be the time for it (as we may well conceive), if there be any time for it at all, in the Romish church. Then a sinner is to survey his life, to find out his sins, and as a penitent to make particular confession of them, and is to have pardon of his sin, as one that only repents; being absolved by a judicial sentence, as valid as if Christ himself did pass it immediately.4 If repentance be not needful, when a sinner is to have pardon, then the Lord never required it, nor can it ever be made necessary by man. This notwithstanding, repentance, they say, is not necessary, no, not for the sacrament of penance. Attrition will serve for that, which is but a slender dislike of sin, because it is hurtful to a man's self, without respect to God, as it is offensive to him.6 This, though short of true repentance, is sufficient to qualify a man for the sacrament of penance, by the doctrine of their church. For they hold the sacrament is not only duly administered, but effectual for all its ends and purposes, when there is no obstacle in the receiver;2 the obstacle in this case is complacency in mortal sins, the complacence is gone, when sin is disliked or displeasing out of any respect,4 and so the obstacle is removed by the dislike of sin, which is in attrition.

Thus comes attrition to be sufficient, and true repentance not needful, no, not for the sacrament of repentance. This is not only concluded by the generality of their doctors, but by the council of Trent. And by these particulars we may discern, that repentance with them is not necessary, at any season of a man's life, and when it would be counted so, if they did judge it needful at all, before the approach of death.

Sect. 6. But, indeed, there needs no induction of particulars to prove this, for they declare plainly, that by the command of God, it is not necessary to repent till one be at the point of death. This is said to be the judgment of Aquinas, Soto, Navarre, Durandus, Medina, Cajetan, and others, in Suarez. The ground of it is, because the reasons brought to prove that it doth not oblige presently, prove it as much of any other certain time in our life, except that only when a man is dying.

It is to the same effect that others say, the precept does but oblige in danger of death or perpetual madness. So Bonacina, and in him (besides Jesuits) Medina, Sotus, Angles, Zerola Pitigianus, Sayrus, Molfesius, and others, De Sacram, ibid. n. 5. So that, while a man is like to live, and be sober, he need not repent; but if he be in danger to die, or run mad, he should be so wise as to repent first; but how he shall know when he is like to run mad, or that his madness will be perpetual, is a hard question; and till he can resolve it, they will go near to excuse him. And if he can have a confessor, though he be at the point of death and distraction too, he need not trouble himself with repenting, that proviso they still add (saltem quando non adest copia confessarii, cui fiat confessio cum attritione); this, indeed, is it, that their confessors serve for to save sinners the labour of going to heaven, by turning them out of the only way to it.

However, by this it appears, that any papist hath warranty, by their doctrine, to live impenitently, till he be in danger to live no longer. He need not grieve for offending God till he be dying, nor resolve upon that account to forsake any sin, till there be reason to think that he can live no longer to commit it.

What a temptation is here for all wicked persons to turn papists, if they could but prevail with themselves to believe in this particular as the church believes, against all that God hath declared concerning repentance! And since men easily believe what they desire should be true, though

against the word of truth, how strange would it be if the world did not ‘wonder after the beast’?

Sect. 7. But though they excuse a sinner from repenting all his life before, yet when he comes to die, do they not then make it needful? They make some show of it, indeed, but it is a mere delusive show; and they are therein as false to their own pretensions, as they are to the souls of sinners. For at the approach of death (as at any period before, wherein some of them seem to make repentance necessary, yet), even then they abuse them with conceits, that something else will serve without it. The expedients which they have provided thus to delude perishing souls all their lives, and even when they are passing into eternity, are many and various; that those who do not like to be ruined one way may be taken with another; and so, that repenting, which alone can secure them, may be declined by all.

First, Repentance without any sensible sorrow for sin, will serve the turn. This is the way of Scotus, and Vega, and others. A will not to have sinned, though it be without any grief for sin, or without any actual consideration that he hath sinned, is sufficient for pardon. Such an act of the will is the essence of that contrition which procures forgiveness, as not only Scotus, but Paludanus, Cajetan, Soto, Victoria, and Navarre in Lopez.2

Sorrow is not essential to repentance, but an effect; and such a one as is contingent and separable, and doth not necessarily follow it. Correspondent to this is their doctrine, who teach, that a virtual repentance is sufficient,4 any act whatever, which may be counted penitence virtually, though it be no such thing actually, or formally, is enough by their common doctrine; any love to God above all is such a virtual repentance, though without any remembrance of sin;6 this is is not only the opinion of Medina, but that which is commonly received. Any kind of love will serve for this, though it be but natural, and such as may be had without the grace of God, as Navarre expresseth it. And the limitation which he would seem to add, that such a virtual repentance is but sufficient when there is no time for a formal repenting, is excluded by their common doctrine; for he, and others with him, generally teach, that there is no space of time requisite for this, but it may be sufficiently despatched in a moment.8 And some of their chief divines hold that, a sinner being pardoned upon this virtual penitence, if he remember his sins afterwards, is not bound to repent of then. So Corduba, Sotus, Vega, Bonacin. ibid. d. v. q. v. p. 2, n. i.

Thus we have repentance sufficient to salvation in the Roman church without any sorrow, without any sense or remembrance of sin. And how can they count any more sorrow for sin necessary, who hold that no prudent person doth confess his sins to a priest, but he detests them formally or virtually, and so some way sufficiently; when it is known to be their common practice to confess sins, without any sorrow or detestation thereof? Yea, even in the hour of death, asking God forgiveness, without any remembrance of sin or actual repentance, is enough for pardon. So Joseph the Minorite teacheth, favouring their conceit (as Lopez observes) who think it repentance enough, to beat their breasts, and say, ‘Lord, have mercy.’2 Nor doth such pernicious presumption find encouragement only in the Minorites’ divinity. Pope Clement the Eighth contributes more to it when, in his indulgences sent to Poland, he promiseth pardon to any one whoever that is dying, if he have but the name Jesus once in his thoughts, though he cannot express it. As there can be no true repentance without sorrow for sin, so neither without resolution to forsake it; and yet they teach, repentance may be as well without this as the other. A virtual resolution may serve, i. e. such a purpose to abandon sin, as he may have who never thought of leaving it. Navarre tells us

that the sufficiency of such a purpose is learnedly and magnificently asserted by Vega.4 He himself explains it and defends it, without any limitation, but that, the vanity whereof appears before; and tells us the council of Trent requires not a formal purpose, but thinks that sufficient which is only virtual.6 And their divines whom they call Nominals, deny that any purpose to forsake sin is necessary to repentance, as Soto informs us. So that by the doctrine of all sorts of divines amongst them, a repenting, which wants the essentials of true repentance, will suffice in life or death.

Secondly, A repentance or sorrow for sin which is merely natural is counted sufficient. The apostle to true repentance requires godly sorrow, 2 Corinthians 7:9, 10, but they, many of them, think it not requisite that it should be godly, no, not in respect of its original. That will serve which is not from God, but from nature. Scotus, a leader of one mighty squadron of their school doctors, determines, that such a sorrow may be had by the power of nature as will in congruity merit pardon of sin. And Adrian, Durandus, with all the Nominals in a manner, take that to be his judgment, and are of the same persuasion themselves. The Franciscans maintained it in the council of Trent.2 Aquinas, whom the rest of their school divines generally follow, was of that opinion too. And the chief of the Dominicans, his modern followers (even those of them who are loath their angelical doctor should appear to be so much a Pelagian), do hold, that such a sorrow as is merely from nature (without either habitual grace or special assistance) is enough to justify him who through ignorance thinks it enough. So Canus and Soto in Lopez,4 from whence Lopez infers, that in their account such remorse for sin, as requires special assistance, is not necessary to the justification of a sinner; but that may suffice which is had from the power of nature, though the ground of it be but outward disgrace. Thus if we will believe the Roman doctors, Thomists or Scotists (the Jesuits, who serve themselves of both as they see occasion, I need not mention, since of their concurrence herein there is no question), a sinner may be saved by such a sort of repentance as is not the gift of God, but the pure issue of corrupt nature.

Thirdly, A slight and inconsiderable sorrow (such as falls short of what the Scripture calls for) will suffice instead of true repentance. One act of grief, they tell us, is enough for the sins of a whole life, one only, there needs not two. So Soto, Bellarmine,7 &c. One act will serve for all sins in general and together; remembered or not remembered, in which sense they say general repentance will suffice. Their sense de Graffiis thus reports: A particular repentance is not required, but one general will serve, extending itself, at least virtually, to all mortal sins, both which he remembers, and remembers not; with a will to abstain from all; this is enough tot remission of sins.2

Further, this one act of grief needs be but very little and slender; the very least remorse, in the lowest degree that can be, will serve. When they require no sensible sorrow at all to repentance, but only a dislike of the will, or a will not to have sinned, the least and weakest motion of the will that way (against past sins) will suffice. To the perfection of repentance, a certain slender inward grief is requisite, saith Maldonate; one act of contrition, though it be remiss, is enough, saith Tolet. These two are Jesuits, but speak more modestly than others of their doctors. Let us hear Canus: We need not grieve for sin as much as we can; such an endeavour is not required in any other precept for love, faith, hope, or righteousness.4 Yea, they would be foolish precepts, if they enjoined a certain degree. But if we need not grieve so much as we can, how then? Why, as little as can be; or if that will not satisfy, as little as we will. Quantumcunque sit remissa, saith Navarre.

Penitence, be it never so little, it is sufficient for the washing away of all crimes, according to the common sense of the doctors, quantumvis remissa, be it as little as you will, says Lopez after Aquinas. No certain degree, none that can be assigned, above the least of all, is requisite in Bellarmine, Victoria, &c.7 But should there not be a degree, more than the least, for the more grievous sins? No, no more for them than the less. In honesty we may grieve more for the greater, to comply with the advice of God, but there is no necessity for it; it is only matter of counsel, and so left to our pleasure. But must we not grieve for sin, as those who conceive it to be hateful above all, and most to be avoided? No, not that neither.9 Lopez tells us, that neither council nor Scripture have declared it necessary to grieve for sin, as that which is most hateful, and (which is more than all) that the council of Trent requires it not. Navarre had said as much before him, only the former thinks it may be requisite that the penitent do not expressly or positively form in his mind a resolution not to grieve for sin above all that is hateful.2 Thus is repentance reduced in a manner to nothing. In respect of appreciation, it is too much to grieve for sin, as that which is most odious; in respect of intenseness, it is enough to grieve less for it than other grievances; the least degree of all is sufficient, and that which is next to nothing may serve.

Moreover, this one act, so extremely little, may be despatched in a moment. The least degree of it is enough, but the least continuance is too much; all the repentance that is a sinner's duty may be perfectly finished in the twinkling of an eye; an indivisible instant can serve all the exigencies of it, and it may be as soon over as a man can say Peccavi. It is such an act as vanishes so soon as ever it appears, and is come and gone before there is time to observe it; they allow not the least space, the least particle of time to be necessary for it. And it is so in faith, hope, love, and other virtues; no man ever required any space of time for this; so Bellarmine, Canus de Graffiis;5 so Navarre, so all in a manner; for he tells us it is the common sense of their divines.7 The least penitence that may be, in the shortest time that can be, yea, in that which is less than any particle of time, even in an instant, is enough to blot out all crimes. And Scotus, for saying that penitence despatched in a moment is not sufficient for pardon, had like to have suffered shrewdly, every one almost being ready to fall foul upon him; but his followers have compounded for him, and brought him off with a distinction, which makes him say as the rest do, whether he thought so or no. And now it passeth currently, that all the sorrow which any need have for all his sins may be over in less than a minute, and may be begun, perfected, and ended in less time than you can pronounce the least syllable of miserere, and this they restrain not to extraordinary cases, but conclude it as common to all. Finally, This one little act, so suddenly despatched, need never return: do it but once, and no need to do it again. The act, though next to nothing in degree, though nothing at all as to continuance, is not necessarily to be repeated, or the defect of it to be supplied by another act, though there be time and occasion for it; all exercise of repentance for sin, supposed to be thus pardoned, upon any occasion, is altogether unnecessary. Having passed one act of grief, so extremely slender and so suddenly over, he needs never trouble himself with it further. There is no command that can oblige us to have it twice for the same sin. Such is the repentance which, in the church of Rome, is counted sufficient for salvation even in ordinary cases; how agreeable it is to that which the Scripture makes necessary, let others judge; to me it seems calculated for the humours of those who would be saved with a conceit of repenting, without troubling themselves with the thing; yet this is not the worst. For,

Fourthly, When they have commended to sinners a sort of repentance which is not sufficient to save them, they take it for granted that it is insufficient, and yet maintain that it is enough, if the sinner do but think so, yea, or do not think the contrary. He that thinks he is contrite, saith Soto, when he is not, though his inward remorse be not sufficient, yet because he means honestly, he shall receive justifying grace by the sacrament. Navarre tells us that Soto herein followed Aquinas commonly received, and he,2 after Franciscus Victoria, judgeth it to be the plain sense of the council of Trent; Corduba, Canus, and de Graffiis,4 with others, concur herein. As for the followers of Scotus, amongst them it is taught, that whosoever thinks he is contrite, hath really obtained pardon; and therefore none, who make account they bring contrition to the sacrament, do by it receive the first grace, because they are possessed of it already, by thinking so well of themselves, as Soto reports them. Add but Cardinal Tolet (that we may see how all orders conspire herein6), those who come with remorse (which they think to be contrition) receive the first grace. He thus explains it: Sometimes a man hath some grief for sin which is not sufficient for pardon; but the sacrament being added, he is pardoned.

Thus, all sorts agree in this conceit, which I know not whether it be more ridiculous or pernicious, that a man's thinking he hath true repentance, when he hath it not, is enough (at least with the sacrament of absolution) to save him. Let any man but delude himself, or be deluded by others, with a false conceit that he truly repents, when he doth not; and any priest can let him, in his impenitence, into heaven; if the best of the Roman guides may be believed, or those impostors regarded, who hereby make it plain (if they did it no other way), that they are given up to strong delusions.

Fifthly, If a man want that penitent sorrow which is sufficient, yet if he signify that he would have it, or that he is sorry that he hath it not, it is as effectual as if he had it. The penitent is to be asked (saith Paludanus) whether he repent; and if he do not grieve sufficiently, whether this do not displease him, and whether he would not grieve sufficiently; and this (saith he) is sufficient, which Sylvester would have well observed, because one so disposed may be absolved (i. e. though he want that repentance which is sufficient, yet he hath enough to put him into a saving state); and this, he tells us, is not only the sense of Peter Paludanus, but of Aquinas and Bonaventure, and all their divines. Navarre saith as much, approving it as the opinion of all their doctors. And yet this willingness, which they will have to supply the want of sufficient repentance, is but a conditional velleity, such as, Lopez observes,3 may stand with an absolute unwillingness to repent sufficiently; such a will as a whore may have to leave the stews when she hath an absolute purpose to stay there; and yet he himself will have such a velleity with attrition (which is far from true repentance) to be sufficient in the want of it. And this leads us further;—

Sixthly, Attrition, though known by the sinner to be short of true repentance, is sufficient without it, to pass him into a saving state, if the sacrament be added. Betwixt contrition (which with them is true or complete repentance) and this attrition, the distance is great; they give an account of it in many particulars. That is a grief for offending God, this for temporal or eternal punishment, as the greatest evil; that proceeds from filial, this from slavish fear; that cannot be had without supernatural assistance, this may be had by the power of nature, say many of them; that is an act formed by grace and love, this an act unformed, destitute of grace and love; that can pass one into the state of grace, with a desire only of the sacrament, this cannot, without an actual partaking of it; so, in fine, that is complete repentance, this but a defective remorse, such as was in Antiochus

and Judas. Attrition, we see by their own account, is very far from true repentance, yet being held sufficient for a saving state without it, if the sacrament be added, by virtue hereof, repentance is most evidently rendered needless. And such attrition they think sufficient for this purpose, as either ariseth from the turpitude of sin, as it is disagreeable to reason, or from fear of hell, or apprehensions of temporal punishments and damage, as loss of health, credit, estate, &c. The council of Trent admits of any of these. For attrition, by their declaration,7 is either that which proceeds from consideration of the turpitude of sin, or fear of hell, or other punishment. And such attrition is, with the sacrament, sufficient for pardon, as is determined by that council in these words: Hereby he makes his way to righteousness; and although without the sacrament, it [attrition] cannot by itself bring a sinner to justification, yet it disposeth him to obtain the grace of God in the sacrament of penance. So that, by their doctrine, attrition so disposeth a sinner for justification, that their sacrament being added, it actually justifies, i. e. puts a sinner into a state of grace and salvation. From this sentence of the council, as Bellarmine tells us, the truth of what their divines hold is conspicuous, viz. that attrition, arising out of fear, is a disposition to justification, and the sacrament being added, doth truly justify. How generally they hold (with some difference of notion) the sufficiency of attrition with their sacrament, we may see in such as give an account of their opinions distinctly (not taking any of the Society into the reckoning): it will be enough but to name some of them, since their suffrages, after the determination of a council, are less needful. Some are for attrition improved,3 as Henricus, Cajetan, Ferrariensis, Petrus, Soto; some for attrition mistaken for contrition, as Victoria, Soto, Ledesma, Vega, Corduba; some for attrition known to be so,5 as Aquinas, Scotus, Paludanus, Capreolus, Durandus, Adrian, Antoninus, Sylvester, Canus; and some for the opinion of attrition without the reality. But this is enough to shew that, by the doctrine of their church, attrition with the sacrament is sufficient to put a sinner into a saving state at any time, living or dying. Thus is true repentance reduced to attrition, and this made enough to qualify an impenitent sinner for pardon, so as he cannot fail of it; and yet attrition, of what kind soever, can scarce pass for a good quality. That sort of it which is rational (a dislike of sin, because it [is] disagreeable to reason), is not so good in their account as that which is servile; because, as such,7 it is but a mere natural act, and hath no respect to God, and so hath nothing in it which looks like godly sorrow. As for that which is servile (a dislike of sin only, or principally, for fear of punishment temporal or eternal), this is so far from being spiritually good, that it is morally evil; so bad it is, by the authority and reason of their own divines. Thus Gregory, Almain, and Adrian conclude, that it is evil to act out of fear of punishment, as the next end or motive. It is no better by the reasoning of others, who would have us think better of it; a sinner thereby prefers himself before God; and that sure is a sin (in any, unless they will except ‘his holiness’) not any repenting of sin; for he that dislikes sin for punishment principally, or as the greatest evil, regards more (as themselves argue) that which is evil to himself, than that which is evil to God, and so placeth the ultimate end in himself, not in God.

Sect. 8. Having thus reduced repentance to a thing no better than we see attrition is, as though it were yet too good and too much, they bring attrition down to nothing. It is but as they describe it, a dislike of sin, not as that is offensive to God, but out of other respects, wherein self-love is most concerned, and slavish fear is most operative. The least dislike of this nature will serve, and in the lowest degree that can be:3 nor need this continue any longer than the least moment. And it will be sufficient, say some, though it be but merely natural, excited by some natural or human motive, without the grace of God, or his divine assistance; so Canus and Soto. Or it will serve if there be

but a dislike that this dislike of sin is wanting;5 so Paludanus, Navarre, and others. Or it will be enough if there be a willingness to have it in those who have it not, according to the doctrine of their holy men, Aquinas and Richardus especially; or a man's thinking, probably, that he hath it when he hath it not,7 will serve the turn, so Canus and Vega; or if he neither have it in reality nor in conceit, it will suffice, if he be but willing to partake of the sacrament; for so, they tell us, he is virtually willing to be attrite, and this qualifies him for pardon, though he neither actually hath attrition, nor desires it; so Scotus, and Sylvester after him. Thus after attrition hath swallowed up true repentance, yet it still becomes more lank by their handling, and, in fine, shrinks quite away. But whether it be little or nothing, it will serve to justify them, yea, and that too without their ritual penance; other sacraments or rites, with this, will do it. They advance the sufficiency of attrition, for all the purposes of true repentance, even without their penance. This, with the eucharist, will serve; not (say they) that there is need of true contrition, a conceit that he hath it, with this and the eucharist,9 will procure him pardon. This, with extreme unction, will serve, as Sylvester tells us; yea, this may be enough without any sacrament at all, as if a man in mortal sin, and so (with them) not in the state of grace, be killed, because he is a Christian, while he is asleep. If he was attrite, and willing to suffer before, by virtue hereof his sins are pardoned; so Cajetan, Sotus, and Lopez2 after them. In short, the mass may serve their turn; for divers of them hold that this being offered for such as are attrite, by virtue thereof (ex opere operato) immediately, and without more ado, they have pardon of mortal sins and habitual grace; so Catharinus (in Canus, loc. Theol. l. xii. c. xiii. p. 693) and others.

Here is competent provision made that sinners may perish securely, and never look after true repentance, living or dying. There is but one thing which may seem to give some check to this great encouragement. These administrations, whereby they will have the impenitent saved, depend upon a priest; and the sinner may be in such circumstances (though this be very rare) wherein a priest cannot be had; and then, if he should chance to die without contrition, he will perish. But this need not disturb any in their course of impenitence; for in case of necessity, where a priest cannot be had, another may serve in his stead; though he be a laic, confession may be made to him, and God will supply the want of a priest; so Aquinas (in iv. dist. xvii. q. iii. art. iii.); or he may have the eucharist administered to him without a priest; and it is their common doctrine that the eucharist justifies one that is in mortal sin if he be attrite, and thinks but himself contrite; yea, he may administer it to himself with the same effect in case of necessity. Divers of all sorts amongst them are of this opinion. The authority of Aquinas is alleged for it (iii. q. lxxxii. art. iii.), and Cajetan in Matthew 26:1-75. The example of the Queen of Scots (commonly produced), who, having the sacrament by her, administered it to herself, is highly approved by all.

Thus far Satan has prevailed with them to promote the damnation of sinners, by hardening them in impenitence, even when the interest of their priests seems a little concerned. But what if a catholic sinner, relying upon such impostors, still neglect true repentance, and death to surprise him so suddenly as to render these other devices unpracticable; is not his case then desperate? No; he may have as good hopes of salvation as other catholics have, a probable ground for his hope (and none must have any certainty). Such a ground is the judgment of their angelical doctor, who declares that if one sick desires penance, and before the priest comes he dies, or is speechless, the priest may look on him as if he had confessed, and may absolve him, being dead (Opusc. lxiii. de offic. Sacerd.). Accordingly Clemens VIII. absolved one whom he saw falling from St Peter's

church in Rome (Molfes. t. i. tr. 7. c. v. n. xlviii.); so that any may be absolved, i.e. pardoned and sanctified (for the sense of the priest's absolvo is, I give thee grace which pardons thy sins, Impendo tibi gratiam remissivam peccatorum; ut communiter doctores; in Jo. Sanc. disp. xxvii. n. xviii.) even after they are dead, if they did but desire confession before. Now, those amongst themselves who do not desire confession while they live, are such only as will not have salvation if they might upon the most trivial terms, and so none need fear damnation, how impenitent soever otherwise they live and die, but such as are worse than any devil now in hell. And who can accuse them as too rigid, if they make true repentance unavoidably necessary for such as these, since this doctrine makes it needful for none besides?

All these ways any man may be saved without true repentance, if he will believe the Roman doctors (though, if we believe Christ, he shall certainly perish that repents not, whatever course he takes besides). Any of these are probable, and may be by their principles (having grave doctors, more than enough, to authorize them) safely followed; but that of the council's prescribing is infallible, and will not fail to secure those who practise it, if anything in their church may have credit, nor can fail to ruin those who follow it if the word of God may be trusted. Thus, while they would increase their party by having it thought that in their way scarce any Roman catholic will be damned, they take the course (in this as in other particulars) that none who will follow them can be saved, unless salvation be for the impenitent.

Sect. 9. By this it is also manifest that the charge brought against them in the three last articles for making saving faith, love to God, and true repentance, needless in life or death, is not founded only upon the opinion of their private doctors, or the greatest part of them, but hath that which they count the surest ground of all, the determination of a general council confirmed by the pope. For if attrition be sufficient, as that council declares, then true repentance is not necessary. If grief for sin, out of slavish fear or shame only, without any love to God, be enough, then love to God is needless; and if love be not needful, then faith, which works by love, and is the only saving faith, is needless, till there be no time for it to work. But is it credible that they who sometimes seem to lay so great stress upon these graces, as necessary to salvation, should contradict not only the Scriptures, but themselves, and make them needless, not only all a man's life before, but even when he is dying? Sure, they must have some device to supply, in pretence at least, the want of these, if not before, yet at the point of death, and will substitute something in their stead of supposed equivalence to them. Indeed, they are fruitful in inventions tending to ruin souls and subvert the doctrine of salvation; and one particularly they have in this case, and that is, what we before mentioned, their sacrament of penance. When a man is near death, if he be attrite and confess his mortal sins to a priest, and be absolved, by virtue thereof he hath remission of sins, and together therewith infusion of grace, particularly of faith, hope, and charity. Thus they come to have grace in a moment who lived graceless all their days before, and had died so if such a rite had not been provided for their relief. By virtue of this sacrament, love is planted in their heart, and their faith in God; and sorrow for sin is formed by love, and becomes saving, so that if they die presently in that state, their salvation is secured. But what if they live, must not these habits be afterwards exercised? must not there be some act of contrition in those who never had any before? No; by their doctrine there is no necessity for it, though there be no true actual repentance without it. The question is in one of their greatest divines, Whether in the law of grace, after justification obtained by the sacrament of penance with attrition alone, there remain any obligation

to have contrition? And it is resolved that there is no such obligation, and that this is the judgment of all those who hold that the sacrament of penance doth justify with attrition alone, known to be so; and these are the most for number, and the most considerable for authority in their church and schools, Aquinas and Scotus both, whom the rest most commonly follow, concurring in it, besides their great council.

Sect. 10. This, then, is the doctrine of their church, introduced there instead of that of the gospel. The habits must serve to save them without their acts, and the sacrament of penance will help those that are attrite to those habits. Here is all the hopes they have for sinners whom they have encouraged to continue all their days without repentance, saving faith, or love to God, even to the very article of death. If this sacrament do not perform all this for them, they will not deny but they are certainly damned. But what ground have they for this, upon which their everlasting estate depends? None at all but their own opinion, and the opinion of such men as themselves, without any support from the word of God. If their own word will secure them for eternity, they are safe enough; otherwise, trusting to this, they are lost for ever; the whole weight of their salvation hangs upon a spider's web, spun out of their own conceits. For this sacrament of penance, upon which all depends, is a mere invention of their own; there is no divine institution for it, it was never authorised by God, he never promised anything to it, or any part of it upon their terms, much less any such thing as they expect. And who but they who are under the power of strong delusions would trust to anything for salvation without a word from him who is the absolute disposer of grace, and the sovereign Lord of life and death? Some of themselves acknowledge that their sacrament of penance was never instituted by Christ. And many3 of them hold that the material parts of it have no such institution. Now, to trust to any device of man for spiritual effects of so high a nature is impious folly; but to lay their salvation on it is prodigious madness. They may with as much reason expect the infusion of grace from the sprinkling of holy water, or the cleansing of a soul at death from the guilt and stain of sin by a priest's spittle; the Lord hath given them no more ground to expect any more from the one than from the other. But I need not insist upon anything which they may have the confidence to deny. It will be plain enough by what they cannot but acknowledge, that neither pardon nor grace can be expected from their sacrament of penance as ordered by them. For they assert that pardon and grace are always inseparably conferred together, so that he hath no infused grace that hath not pardon. And it cannot be denied but that pardon can never be had without true repentance; in Scripture nothing is more evident; he therefore that comes to the sacrament of penance with attrition only, and so without true repentance, he gets thereby nothing at all; neither pardon, which cannot be had without repentance, nor infused grace, which is never had without pardon; neither love, nor faith working by love, nor godly sorrow, nothing that is saving, unless he can have it without God, or against what he hath expressly declared. So that if he comes to their sacrament in a damnable condition, he certainly dies so, for any relief that rite will afford him. And therefore their doctrine, which encourageth sinners to live all their life without saving faith, or love, or repentance, in confidence that this rite will help them to these graces when they are dying, is a damning imposture; and their sacrament of penance, a most pernicious trap to draw sinners (as they set and bait it) out of the way of salvation whilst they live, and to plunge them into hell when they die, without any apprehension of their danger till there be no way to escape it.

Sect. 11. Hereby they manifestly declare themselves to be enemies to Christianity and the souls of men. For what more effectual course could they take to destroy these, and root out that, than by concluding it certain (as certain as they would have a decree of the council of Trent accounted), that though sinners neglect the great duties and acts of Christians, and live in any wickedness opposite to the rule of Christ, yet the church hath a device to save them, and by it they may be sure to escape hell without true repentance! What is this but to declare that the most damnable neglects and practices shall never damn them? Though they never repent thereof, the church hath a trick to secure them notwithstanding. What is this but to proclaim that the laws of God and the rules of the gospel are unnecessary impositions, without the observance whereof salvation may be had? The knowledge of Christ, explicit faith in him, actual love of him (which comprise all the rest), as they teach, are not necessary as means, salvation may be had without them. And as for a necessity hereof by virtue of any precept, that is not considerable, but in reference to the danger of not observing the precept; and there is no danger in this, though the neglect hereof were in their account a mortal sin, no more than in venials (or no sins at all), if it will not damn those who never truly repent of it. So that plainly by excusing sinners from repentance, they make all sins safe and all duties needless; and give men assurance that they may live and die impenitently, in the neglect of all, even the most important duties, and in the practice of any, the worst, wickedness, and yet be saved. There never was any heresy broached in the world more monstrous and pernicious than this which the council of Trent hath brought forth; it hath all the damnable wickedness, both as to judgment and practice, that ever was or can be on earth, in the bowels of it. It promotes the birth, the growth, the continuance thereof; for it promiseth safety to impenitency therein, yea, salvation too, by a knack of a very easy use and new invention. It hath in it the venom of all damning opinions, practices, and neglects; for that which makes them all deadly is impenitency; nor would they without this be finally and unavoidably destructive. But this would have impenitency itself swallowed.

CHAPTER VI Their doctrine leaves no necessity of holiness of life, and the exercise of Christian virtues

Sect. 1. Holiness of life is needless by the popish doctrine; though the Lord hath made this every way necessary, both as a duty which he indispensably requires, and as a means without which he ordinarily will save no man. It is declared necessary both ways at once, Hebrews 12:14. The papists indeed boast much of it, and seem sometimes to lay great stress on it, as if they would have it to be a character of the true church; concluding theirs is the only true church, because there is no holiness to be found in the world but amongst them only. Thus they pretend it to be of greatest consequence; but this is but to serve another turn, the design is not for holiness of life, for their doctors count that more than needs. And really they are extreme good husbands here, and make a little holiness go a great way; for it is enough to denominate the universal church holy, if there be but one holy person in it. So Costerus: How many soever of its members be dead and impious, so long as there is any one man that retains holiness, the church must be called holy. And then to make this one man holy, one act of virtue is enough, and that a very slender one too; for, saith Bannes, any one act of charity, how weak soever it be, is enough to fulfil all the commandments of God.2 Now, he is doubtless a holy man who fulfils all those commandments. Further, this one act he need but do once, and that not all his life; he may defer it till he die, if he have no mind to trouble himself with it in any part of his life before, as we have already shewed.

Yea, and he may be excused from it when he is a-dying too, as well as whilst he lives, if he can but get a priest to absolve him; and the priest must absolve him, if the dying man give but any sign which may be interpreted a desire of it. And their sacrament he must have, and be absolved absolutely, when speechless and senseless, if any can but witness that he desired confession, Antonin. iii. part. tit. 10, cap. ii.; Sylvest. v. confess. iii. n. 16; Paludan. dist. xxi. q. 2. a. 2. concl. 2. Yea, if he did not desire it, nor ever give any sign of repentance, he may be conditionally absolved, Rituale Pauli. 5. And though he have lived wickedly without restraint all his days, if at last gasp he be attrite, and have but (though it never appear) the virtue of Judas (only hoping better, i. e. presuming more, than he did), by virtue of such absolution he will be as certainly saved as other good catholics; though the other unfortunate wretch, for want of a priest (as virtuous as himself), to absolve and give him hope, was unhappily damned.

See here a most compendious way to be holy! Who can imagine any other but that such principles as these make holiness of life extremely needful? But, more particularly, we may discover how necessary they judge it, by what they determine concerning the necessity of exercising Christian virtues, and the forsaking of sin. There is no need of either of these by their doctrine.

Sect. 2. It is not necessary to live in the exercise of such virtues (though one would think that religion could not be Christian which obligeth not the professors of it to Christian virtues, and excuseth them from the most proper character of true Christianity), yet those who have the confidence to account themselves the only true Christians do this. For they teach that the acts of these virtues are required by affirmative precepts, and such commandments oblige not at all times; no, nor always when there is occasion and opportunity for the exercise of them, but only in the article of necessity; and when this is, it is not certain, there is no determination of it, it must be left to discreet men to judge; and being left to men, either they find no time for it at all, or none that will signify it needful to live in the exercise of such virtues. To exert an act of virtue once a year, or once in many years, or once in a whole life, or at the hour of death, is far enough from the daily exercise of Christian virtues, or an intimation that it is needful in their account who so determine. But indeed their church is more indulgent, and assures them all (that have no more regard for their souls than to believe it), that at the hour of death one act of slavish fear (though themselves count not that so much as a moral virtue), with confession, will excuse the neglect of every Christian virtue all their lives, and make their way at last into heaven, though they never had one act of virtue, any one character of a Christian, all their days. A pleasant doctrine indeed, and greedily to be swallowed by those that have an antipathy to a holy life, if the gospel and the doctrine of Christ concerning hell and heaven and the way to it could be counted but fables.

Sect. 3. They reckon but three theological or divine virtues; all the other they call moral, of which the divine are the foundation, and so all the rest must stand or fall with them. Now, two of these three they make needless (as is before declared), and without these two, hope, which is the third, is so far from being needful, that it is not possible to have it, as themselves acknowledge. A lively hope with them is needless till they be dying, and then it can but be like the giving up of the ghost.2 For to all that follow their doctrine, and look after no more than that makes necessary, their hopes at last can be no better, no other, than the expectation of such a pardon of sin, as a priest can give to an impenitent person, one to whom the Lord did never give hopes of pardon. And this is a hope than which despair itself is more hopeful; for this leaves no sense of danger (which despair retains), and so leaves no desire nor endeavour to avoid it, even when they are sinking

into bottomless misery. Hope is no more needful with them than a house is to him who thinks himself concerned to dig up the foundation of it, and counts it enough that he hath a castle in the air. And when they have left nothing that can be a real ground of hope, they found it upon that which is worse than nothing, their own merits; that which is inconsistent with the free grace of God and the merits of Christ, without which sinners are hopeless. It is a conjecture, founded upon a delusion, upon merit, which no man can have, and themselves say none of them know they have, and so upon they know not what. Oh wretched hopes, that have not so much for their foundation as the sand, that have nothing to bear them up but a proud and groundless fancy, that we might count ridiculous, if it were not too horrid to be the matter of sport. Can they blame those who doubt whether they will be saved, when they themselves have no better hopes of their own salvation?

How much they are concerned for hope they declare, when they tell us that the precept for hope does but of itself oblige, when the soul is tortured with the more grievous assaults of despair. It seems, unless they be violently tempted to despair, they need not hope. This rarely falls out as to any, and is scarce the case of one in a thousand, so that there is not one of a thousand in popery who need have any hope in God, or of mercy from him. No, not any at all, as others teach; for the command for hope is satisfied both by grief for sin, and also by a purpose against it (Dian. after others, v. Spes.) So that either of these, or both at least, will supersede all acts of hope for ever, and make them needless. And indeed he that considers what sorrow and purposes they count sufficient, may believe them when they teach that these leave them without hope.

Sect. 4. The next in excellency to the divine graces, by their account, is humility, and for this their doctrine makes excellent provision, as a virtue most necessary, by quite sweeping away the true ground of it. It leaves them without sense of any sinfulness, weaknesses, or unworthiness, to make or keep them humble. Being baptized, by virtue thereof all the sinfulness of their natures is not only pardoned or weakened, but quite washed away and utterly abolished. So that they are pure, immaculate, innocent, even as our first parents were in the state of innocency; not anything left in the least that can be truly counted sin. So that it would be very absurd and irrational for them to be humble under the sense of any remaining sinfulness, since they believe really there is none. But if they sin mortally afterwards (for venial sins they make no account of, and think that the Lord herein is such an one as themselves), they may be presently restored again by their sacrament of absolution to a perfect righteousness, without the least mixture or allay of what is faulty; a perfection short of heaven, because not so firm and fixed, but not wanting a hair of what is due, having not only all the parts, but every degree of what is required for their present state.2 And by the power hereof they can fully and perfectly fulfil the whole law in every precept, without any culpable defect; they can fulfil it very easily, facili et parvo negotio. Yea, they can do much more than the law requires, or the Lord hath made their duty;4 so far are they bereaved of all sense of any weakness that might humble them. And their righteousness is not only spotless, but meritorious; there is such a transcendent worth and sufficiency in it, as they improve it, that they need not, at least after they are justified, ask anything of God but what they fully deserve at his hands. All that God doth for them is but the paying of his debts; his bounty is prevented, his grace is quite excluded; it is not in his power to bestow any free gift; all is due to the meritorious excellency of their performances beforehand. They can merit the first grace in congruity,6 the second grace by way of condignity; and heaven and glory is as due to them as a penny for a pennyworth, or hell is due to proud, presumptuous sinners. God would be unjust, and not pay what

he oweth them on their own just account, if he should not let them have all the glory of heaven and eternity. They can merit the pardon of mortal sins before they have grace; pardon of venial sins before or after; they can merit the continuance of grace while they have it, and the restoring of it when they have lost it.8 They can merit not only for themselves, but for others; and deserve for them not only pardon, but grace; such grace as will enable them to set up and merit heaven for themselves. They can merit not only habitual grace for them,10 but the divine assistance, whereby the Lord works it. They can merit for them not only while alive, but when they are dead, and by their merits bring them out of those torments which are equivalent to the pains of hell, but only for the continuance, which their deserts hinder from being everlasting.

Here is a doctrine as proper to nourish humility as poison is to make a man fat and healthful; however, this, as that, is apt to swell them big, and mount them upon the heights of boasting and glorying. It is far below persons of such dignity to receive eternal life at God's hands as a poor man receiveth an alms: absit, far be it from them; it moves their indignation to think of it, that they should expect eternal glory for God's sake. They will not so disparage themselves as to have it in such a beggarly way; they will have it for their own sake, as that which they fully deserve, or else be without it. They will have it in a way more glorious, becoming persons of such transcendent worth, as conquerors and triumphers, as a laurel which they have sweat for, and is due to their merit. The Lord must treat them as persons of such high quality, and in a way that suits their honour. Now it is much more honourable, saith Bellarmine, to have a thing by his own merit than another's gift (though God be the giver).3 And the Lord (adds he), to honour them, would have them get heaven by their own deserts. Oh humble doctrine, and that which is as like the gospel as the apostle St Paul was to the king of pride. Can they think humility needful, who, plucking away the true grounds of it, instead thereof instil those principles, than which hell can scarce hatch any prouder?

Sect. 5. As for those virtues which concern men, they are all comprised in love, that love which affects others as capable of eternal happiness, and so desires it for them. Thus they describe Christian love (as for human or natural, we are not here concerned in it), and tell us it is this the Scripture speaks of, John 15:1-27 and Colossians 3:1-25, and cannot deny but it is called for in the New Testament most frequently, and with greatest importunity; and yet their doctrine makes it needless. We are not bound, saith Sylvester, to be moved with love towards any men whatsoever, but only in preparation of mind, if necessity occur. This seems to dissolve the obligation of this great command, and turn it into a mere counsel; for in these very terms they describe a counsel to us,5 and thereby distinguish it from an obliging precept. But are we bound to love our brother when there is necessity? No, not when he is in such necessity as is extreme, and consequently never; for though it be requisite that we help him in that condition, yet we sin not if we do not help him out of Christian love; it is enough to avoid sin if we relieve him out of natural affection. Thus Navarre. And this holds not only in the external necessities of others, but also in those that are spiritual; only he saith that it very rarely falls out that one can relieve spiritual necessities without this Christian love; but he tells us also,7 that a Christian is rarely in such necessity. So that though it cannot be done without Christian love but very seldom, that will not make such love a duty at any time, because the external act needs not be done but seldom. Yea, if the external act also, whereby we should relieve the soul of our brother, be neglected, it is with them no great matter. For as Cajetan determines that weakness of mind, which withholds us from those things which are

profitable to our neighbour, especially for the salvation of souls, though it be grievous, it is but a venial fault. In short, whatever be the circumstances of our brother, yet we may be excused from loving him indeed, if we do but think we do it. For Navarre2 and others tell us that he who honestly thinks himself to be in the state of grace when he is not, may satisfy this command for Christian love by some other kind of affection, so that it is enough to think that we have this love when we have it not; and this is confirmed by a reason a fortiori, because it is so in our obligation to love God. Thus one dangerous error is grounded upon another, and by such arts we are discharged from all Christian affection to God or men. But we need not stay longer here. All necessity of this love they quite take away, by making it needless to love God, the connection between these being indissoluble by their own account.4

If any will not rely upon consequences, Cajetan tells them, that the command to love our neighbour as ourself, obliges not to a love of charity, i. e. that special love which was always thought, till the Roman doctors taught otherwise, to be the great duty required of all Christians by the gospel. By the doctrine of Aquinas, the precept requires no special act of love to our brethren, no formal7 or internal act at all, nor any exterior that will signify more than the want of hatred. This is the common doctrine amongst his devoutest followers, the Dominicans. Others express it thus:9 There is no affirmative precept for love to our neighbour, no time for it; it is enough that we do nothing against him. Thus, so great a part of the whole sum of the law and the prophets, and all the rules of the gospel, leading us to brotherly love and the special expressions of it, are snapped off short; and we reach all that they oblige us to do, by doing nothing. We love them well enough, though we neither will nor do them good, if only we do them no mischief; or do no more for them than may be done without inward affection, or any Christian charity.

Sect. 6. It would be tedious to pursue this in all particular virtues. The generals which they acknowledge will serve for the rest. They confess that knowledge must go before faith, and that faith is the foundation of charity, and that charity, or love to God, which hath its rise and being from faith,2 is the form and root of all virtues. They all agree in it, nor is it only evident by their own confession, but also by the nature of the things themselves, that other virtues depend upon knowledge, faith, and love, for their being or exercise. For example, without love to God proceeding from faith, there can be no delight in God, nor desires to enjoy him. Delight and desire are but love in several postures; desire is love in its motion, and delight is love in its rest. There can be no delight in enjoying that which we love not, nor can the enjoyment of it be desirable; so, also, there can be no filial fear without love, for love is essential to it, and thereby it is distinguished from that which is slavish. Ingenuous fear springs from love,4 and is nourished by it, and increaseth or declines with it; it cannot be, nor act, but when and where love is, and is acted. So that together with love, the fear of God and the acts of it are cashiered; even all due reverence of him, and care not to offend him.

It is their common doctrine, that there is no special command, either for servile or filial fear of God; so that the want of it need neither be confessed nor repented of.5 So likewise there can be no hatred of sin, or sorrow for it, as it is an offence or dishonour to God, nor any true virtue at all without love, nor love without faith, nor faith without knowledge. Now, these radical graces being rendered needless by their doctrine, as I have declared before, they hereby stub up all the rest by the roots, so that neither sprig nor bud thereof can be expected. To tell us, after this, that they count any exercise of Christian virtue needful, is as if a man should take the spring out of his

watch, and then persuade us seriously that he counts it very necessary it should still go, and the wheels be always in regular motion.

Sect. 7. But let us stay here a little longer, and observe how their principles, concerning love particularly, disengage all from any exercise of virtue, and every act that is truly Christian. They take notice in virtue of a goodness that is merely moral, such as may be found in heathens; and of a goodness that is divine and supernatural, such as ought to be in Christians. This latter, they tell us, is derived from their end, when in the exercise of them they are referred to God as our supernatural end, and acted for his sake, with an intent to please him. They declare, further,8 that they cannot be thus referred to God without affection for him, nor done with a design to please him, unless they be done out of love to him; and so must be at least imperate acts of love, that they may be Christian acts, and anything better than nature in the heathen might reach. And yet they conclude, as appears before by variety of testimonies, that we are not obliged to observe any command, or act any other virtue out of love to God. They find no time at all, when we are obliged to this, unless it be when we are bound to have an inward act of love to God; but when this is, they never agree, except in this, that it may be never. For those who seem to say that it should be sometimes, though but seldom, or but once for all, in other words signify it need not be at all, since they assign something else which may serve instead of it, whenever it may be thought requisite. Thus, according to their rule in indefinite precepts, their wise men have determined, if their school doctors, or casuists, or their council of Trent, will pass for wise. Now, being thus discharged from doing anything out of love, they are thereby exempted from all Christian acts, and any other Christianity, as to the exercise of virtue, than honest heathenism. It is true, they hold they cannot be saved without meritorious acts, and cannot well think them meritorious if they be no better than merely heathenish: they should, one would think, have some Christian character upon them, and this of love particularly,2 that they may merit salvation; and if they disengage their catholics from this, they make it not needful for them to be saved. But I cannot help that, seeing they will have it so.

If they think there is no necessity their catholics should be Christians, as they do when they make no act truly Christian needful for them, they conclude it is not necessary for them to be saved, unless they believe that such as are no Christians can be heirs of salvation. Their church, pope, or council, or whoever it is, must provide them some other heaven, since that which is prepared for Christians they need not; no one step of the way to it being needful for them. All the necessity laid upon them by the popish profession is not for salvation, but for something else; they must be Roman catholics, but they need not be true Christians; they must be the pope’s subjects, but they need not be Christ s disciples; and this, and the rest, because they need not learn of him one Christian act while they live.

Sect. 8. Moreover, all exercise of virtues, opposite to acts in their account but venially evil, is with them unnecessary. And this goeth near, not only to discharge all acts of virtue which are required of Christians, but such also as were found even in pagans. This is grounded upon their doctrine concerning venial sins; these with them are not necessarily to be avoided, being either not prohibited by any command, as most of them hold, or by no command necessary to be observed, as some of them had rather express it, and therefore no need that the virtuous acts opposite to them should be practised. Upon this account no exercise of virtue will be necessary but what is consistent with the vicious acts contrary thereunto, in any degrees of wickedness which they think

venial; no acts of temperance, sincerity, righteousness, truth, or faithfulness, chastity, liberality, &c., will be needful, but what is consistent with all the intemperance, hypocrisy, unrighteousness, perfidiousness, &c., which by their docrine is venial. So he may be temperate who still loads his stomach till he vomits, and is daily half drunk; he may be sincere enough, though he always design to seem better than he is, or good when he is not; he may be a man of truth and Roman faithfulness, though his constant practice be telling lies, or breaking promises, or swearing falsely, so all be but in venial measures; he may be just enough, though in all his dealings he be continually wronging others in lesser matters. He may be chaste enough, though he be unclean in thought, word, and deed, venially; and he may be liberal enough, though he constantly practise all the covetousness which is opposite to every degree of liberality, so it be no worse. He may be religious enough, though his soul never actually worship God, and devout enough without any inward devotion, and reverent enough though greatly irreverent, even in the worship of God, and though at other times he be still profaning the name of God with vain oaths and divers sorts of blasphemies; holy enough also, though he never have one act of inward holiness, no, not on those days which either God or themselves have made holy; and, in short, he may be godly enough, though he never love nor fear God till he die! Some of these particulars are plain by the premises; the rest will appear so when we present their account of venial sins. So that, though a man were so far from expressing any Christian virtue, that he should be instead thereof continually acting the contrary sins in all degrees not mortal, yet he would not be condemned; for by their doctrine, all the venial sins in the world that a person can be guilty of, though every hour, every minute of a whole life, how long soever, should bring forth one or other of them, cannot possibly damn him. And since whosoever shall not be condemned will be saved, which themselves also maintain, consequently he that, after baptism, acts not one virtue divine or moral, whose whole life hath nothing of a Christian in it, but less and worse than a pagan, will yet be saved. Thus may they be deluded who trust their souls in this infallible church; they may be true catholics, though they be not Christians, so much as to one religious act, and may pass currently to heaven though they never move one foot in the way. Such a thing we must take Christianity to be, and with so ghastly and frightful a face will it look upon the world. If popery have not thus far abandoned it, and obtruded upon us a changeling, instead of what Christ left us, there will be no lineament of virtue in the visage of it, not one of necessity; nor needs there be more in the lives of those who would be counted the only true professors and faithful embracers of it.

Sect. 9. They have other ways to make the exercises of Christian virtues unnecessary. They do it especially by turning the commands of God into counsels. Of those things that are required in Scripture, some, they say, the Lord only adviseth and commends, others he commands and enjoins: those which he adviseth, they call evangelical counsels, the other are divine precepts. Now, the precepts, they say, are necessary to be observed, sometimes at least; the counsels are not needful to be observed at all, any man may be saved without complying with them, they are matters of supererogation, more than we need to do. So that all those virtues which they make but matter of counsel, are unnecessary, the acts and exercise of them more than needs. And those which they make so expressly, are not small nor inconsiderable in themselves, and in consequence little less than all. Many of those admirable rules which Christ giveth us in his sermon on the mount, wherein the singular and divine excellency of that religion to which he calls the world is so very conspicuous, they will not have to be laws obliging all Christians, but dissolve the obligation of them by declaring them mere counsels, though they were ratified by our great

Lawgiver with those universal sanctions: Matthew 7:21, ‘Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he which doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.’ And ver. 26, ‘Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand.’ Maldonate giveth that as the account why he is said, chap. 5:2, then to ‘open his mouth,’ because he never before propounded that sublime doctrine of evangelical perfection. Of this nature, in their account,2 is trusting in God, such as frees us from solicitousness about the things of this life, chap. 6:31, 34; sincerity of intention in doing good, such as is enjoined, ver. 1; patient digesting of injury, such as is commanded, ver. 39; relieving others freely, such as is required, ver. 42; innocent communication, such as is specified, ver. 37; avoiding occasions of sin, such as are meant, vers. 20, 30; exemplary walking, intended ver. 14; poverty of spirit, ver. 3; spiritual mourning, ver. 4; Christian meekness, ver. 5. The three last, saith Soto, are trinum consiliorum votum. We must take them to be peculiar concerns of votaries. Righteousness, likewise, as to earnest desires after it, ver. 6; mercifulness, ver. 7; purity of heart, ver. 8, as it is the height of charity; peacefulness also, ver. 9; love to enemies, ver. 44, more pressed by Christ than the rest, vers. 45–48; and before popery, taken to be the proper character of Christians, but with them it is no duty, nor anything of like nature: as that, Proverbs 25:1-28. ‘If thy enemy hunger, feed him,’ &c. Yea, acts of mercy are no more our duty, for these are another instance of the same author immediately adding, et reliqua præcepta misericordiæ; not only that, Proverbs 3:4, ‘Honour the Lord with thy substance,’ but all the rest in Scripture of like nature. So likewise, not only magnificence and magnanimity, but humility also,12 with sincerity of conversation, and Christian simplicity or plain dealing. If these be not enough, all good works are in danger to become no duties. Dominicus à Soto tells us, there are three kinds of good works to which all Christian offices are reduced: one respects a man’s self, the quelling of his own pleasures, signified by fasting; the other respects the love of our neighbours, of which kind is alms-deeds; the third respects God and divine worship, denoted by prayer; and all these three with him are works of supererogation. When they come to an account in particulars, they vary not: as to what concerns ourselves, to abstain from our lawful pleasures, even when they may be an impediment to holiness, is but advice, we need not follow it. Also, to avoid worldly cares, to be content with food and raiment, not to be eager after superfluities, not to be too solicitous for the body, not to affect dignities, are but matter of counsel by their common doctrine, in Jo. Sane, disp. 7. n. 10. As for the concerns of God, no inward worship in public is under command, nor any outward, but the mass; and for the hearing of that, no, divine precept. No more are we obliged to worship in private;3 meditation is reckoned among counsels of perfection. Vocal prayer is not enjoined by God, and so all public prayer in Christian families and assemblies are under no divine injunction. Mental prayer may be a duty,5 when it is our duty to love God; but when that will be is not well known. So mental prayer will be a duty, nobody well knows when. But this is a Jesuit, who minces the matter too precisely. In the judgment of Aquinas,7 and the generality of their doctors, mental prayer is under counsel only. And it is the more considerable, because they tell us that in mental prayer all the internal acts of religion are comprehended; so that hereby the very soul of religion is dismissed, as a thing of no necessity among Roman catholics. And since in all worship, public or private, they will have spiritual attention and devotion to be but matter of counsel (without which all that they call worship is but a cipher, or a blot rather), they leave no worship of God at all necessary. Cardinal Tolet gravely distinguisheth of a sanctifying the Lord’s day and all other holy days, for which presence at mass and abstaining from

servile work is sufficient, and of a sanctifying them well, to which it is necessary that he who is in mortal sin should be contrite, and turn to God; and he that is in grace should give himself to divine contemplation and good works, and both of them should abstain from new sin; yet observe, saith he, that a man is bound under mortal sin to sanctify the day, but not to sanctify it well; and after concludes: So I am only obliged to these two things, viz., presence at mass, and avoiding servile works; but not to the end, to wit, sanctifying it well, although it be very good counsel to perform all the other upon this day. Thus with him it is no necessary duty to which any are obliged on Lord's days, or any other days for worship, to repent of sin and turn to God, to meditate on divine things, and do good works, and abstain from any wickedness. All these, it seems, are only matters of counsel; and herein, he saith, Soto, Navarre, and Cajetan concur with him. And if they be only counsels on all these days, the world will scarce find a day when they will be duties. However, with them, to do a thing is commanded, to do it well is not necessary. On all the days which either God or themselves would have kept holy, it is mere counsel either to do that which is good or to think of it, either to be sorry for past wickedness, or not to commit more. And since it is no more on the holiest, it may seem not so much as a counsel on profane and common days. The means of honouring God being thus by them made unnecessary, no wonder if they discharge us from the due use of them. Pious sedulity (diligence for heaven and our souls) is but matter of counsel; we need not trouble ourselves with it. No more scarce with anything else, for2 the shunning of idleness is but counsel, yea, and such as doth not oblige the monks themselves, though they will have none else obliged by counsels. In reference to them, Soto says, the avoiding of idleness is not commanded.

Acts which concern others are either those of righteousness or charity; for the former, how favourable they are we saw before; they discharge us from such desires thereof as Christ encourageth to the uttermost, Matthew 5:6; the latter they make corporal or spiritual. That mercy or charity which affords outward relief, even their religious are not obliged to; nor need others exercise it by giving anything,5 no, not to those that are in greatest necessity, how much soever themselves have, how extremely soever others want. Spiritual relief, in affording of which the exercise of mercy consists, they give an account of in many particulars, viz. advising those that want counsel, teaching the ignorant, comforting the dejected, correcting offenders, remitting offences, bearing those that are burdensome, and praying for others. Now, all these (and as many more belonging to the other branch) are no necessary duties, or, which is all one in effect, under no precept obliging to mortal guilt, except in two cases only, saith Navarre, and those two concern only corporal relief; so that all the other duties, which we owe to the souls of men, are left arbitrary, as mere matters of advice without exception. That of the apostle, 1 Peter 2:13, for subjection to governors, is with them a counsel; no more is that rule of Christ for church discipline and government, Matthew 18:15–17, 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee,' &c.

Mortification can scarce with them be so much as a counsel, for their doctrine will have nothing in us to be mortified; that which is to be so treated is sin in us, but they maintain that in a just man there is no sin after baptism. Carnal concupiscence itself is sinless; it is natural to us, and so innocent. That which is in us by nature, they say, is neither worthy of praise or dispraise; hence they conclude, he is blind who will say concupiscence is a sin. They grant it induceth us to sin, but it is no more sin upon that account than hearing, seeing, or other of our senses; than gold, or honour, or beauty, or anything else that may draw us to evil; and so, plainly, we are no more

bound to mortify it (if sin only is to be mortified) than we are obliged to ruin our senses, to destroy gold, or to spoil the beauty of a handsome woman. And the same must be said of other vicious habits contracted by a continued practice of sin; for though they call these vices, yet vices with them are no sins, no more than virtues are duties.3 The law of God is not concerned in any habits; as it commands not those that are good, so it forbids not those that are vicious, and no reason to mortify that which is not condemned by the law. However, they retain the word, but little else we meet with in them about this great concern of a Christian, and a very odd object they find for it, instead of that which the Scripture assigns. It is the natural body that is to be afflicted and macerated, not the 'body of sin;' and so they are not concerned to get the work of the devil destroyed; it is the work of God that must be mortified. They may be excused if they make not this so much as a counsel. But they say the maceration of the body is in order to the bridling of concupiscence. It seems, as innocent as it is, it may need a curb, yet they take care to leave it loose enough, for those severities which should hamper it, they say, are not commanded. Afflicting of the body is under no precept, saith Soto and Sylvester. Having told us out of Aquinas that a vow is properly of a work of supererogation, acceptable to God, he adds, the maceration of the body, as such, for the bridling of concupiscence, falls under vows.5 And so, how unruly soever the flesh is, they may choose whether they will use the bridle or no; yea, if the priest should be so rigid as to enjoin severities of this tendency, the sinner needs not submit to them. Nor will they have us more engaged against the world than against the flesh. All the evils of the world are by the apostle reduced to three heads, 1 John 2:16; but the oracle of their schools tells us that to relinquish these three wholly, as far as we can, belongs to evangelical counsels. Soto herein follows him, and tells us2 that Christ left this unto every ore under counsel. So to be crucified to the world, and to get the world crucified to us, Galatians 6:1-18, is matter of advice with him; nor are we obliged thereto in reference to those things, or lusts, which very much endanger our souls.

Self-denial also hath the same measures from them. Bellarmine, by those words of Christ to the young man, Matthew 19:21, 'Follow me,' understands self-denial, explaining it by Matthew 16:1-28, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.' It is nothing else, saith he, but to renounce one's own judgment and affections, and to accommodate himself to the judgment and will of others. This the young man should have done, but it was not his duty; it was only a counsel of perfection, as he and all of them conclude, to subject himself thus to the will and judgment of Christ. He distinguished indeed, and will have submission to the will and judgment of Christ in things necessary to salvation, to be a common duty enjoined, Matthew 16:1-28 and Luke 9:1-62; but such a subjection of our wills and judgments to Christ, in things not of themselves necessary to salvation, to be only a counsel, it is advice for those alone that would be perfect. This is bad enough, for thus it will not be a duty to subject ourselves to Christ in most things, or to deny ourselves in anything which is not in their sense a deadly evil. But Soto, than whom there was no divine more considerable in the council of Trent, advanceth farther, and concludes that self-denial, not only which is required, Matthew 19:1-30, Luke 18:1-43, but that also commanded, Luke 9:1-62, Matthew 16:1-28. (which the cardinal understood to be a subjecting of our wills and judgments to Christ in things necessary to salvation), is but a counsel; and tells us for a man to deny himself is by vow to give up his liberty to another's will; and so Christ nowhere enjoins other self-denial than what their perfectionists voluntarily oblige themselves unto by vow, and the main duty of Christians is confined to cloisters, that self-resignation wherewith Christ should be honoured being transferred to an abbot.

There is one thing more remains which Christ requires of those who will be his disciples, that is, Christians (and but one where be gives us the sum of all), and that is suffering for him. It would be strange if, when they have eased themselves of the rest, they should leave their catholics obliged to this. The device of evangelical counsels had not been so useful a tool, though it freed them from the rest of Christ's yoke, if it would not have served to cast of the heaviest part of it; but hereby they can cast off sufferings greater or less. Martyrdom they reserve for those who receive the truth in love; for themselves it is only a counsel, when it serves for nothing more than the glory of God and the advancing of the faith; and this according to the judgment of Aquinas. If it be no more than an opportunity of manifesting the divine glory and edifying the church, it is a work of supererogation, and of no necessity, saith another. Parting with other things for Christ is no more a duty;2 to 'forsake brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for Christ's sake,' Matthew 19:29, is not a duty of any Christian, but only such as profess perfection. Such forsaking all for Christ, to follow him, is more than needs; it was so in the apostles. In short, taking up the cross is more than is commanded, when it is joined by Christ with self-denial, and following him, as the best character of his disciples, Luke 9:1-62. They take it to be but matter of counsel, and so quit themselves of the full character of Christians at once.

If there be any virtue left, requisite for the practice of a Christian, which this engine hath not yet demolished and brought to discretion, by working it otherwise, it will make clear work. The least degree of virtue, they say, is all that is necessary; none can be assigned above the lowest (in faith, hope, love, repentance, or other virtues) which is enjoined. Now that which is lowest of all is next to nothing, and that which is no more can act no further; so that all exercise of virtue which their doctrine makes needful, is either nothing or next to it. All growth in grace with them is needless,6 for the first degree they attain is not only a sufficiency, but all the perfection that is necessary; what is more may be profitable, but not simply needful. The first and least degree of virtue in every kind satisfies the precept, and that being satisfied, requires no more. So all other degrees will be but under counsel; it will be no duty to look after more than the least, nor will the grossest negligence as to endeavours for more be any sin. And since increase of virtue is by the exercise of it, where the increase is not necessary the exercise is needless. Further, no act of virtue in any degree is requisite, but only in the article of necessity; for then only affirmative precepts oblige; at all other times they bind no more than mere counsels, nor then neither, unless it can be known when this article occurs. And how shall it be known? The Scriptures have not declared it, they say, nor counsels neither. Why, they have a rule in the case. Things not determined are left to the arbitrement of an honest man; and so it is left to every man's will who can suppose himself honest. If he never find time for any act of virtue, he will not be obliged to any; or if he will be so cautious to consult their divines in the case, some of them declare that such a virtuous act is rarely needful, nor can they certainly tell when; others conclude there is no necessity of it at all. Now he may follow which please him best, even those, if he list, which discharge him from all obligations to the acts in question; and this he may do safely, not only by their doctrine of probability, but by the determination of their oracle. The council of Trent will secure him; though he never perform one act of virtue all his life, nor repent thereof at his death, by a fine device, which is neither repentance, nor a virtue; of which before.

Besides, all acts which have more than moral goodness seem by their doctrine to be under counsel, and all acts supernatural and truly Christian more than needs. They are not truly Christian

unless they be done out of respect to God, with an intent to please and honour him, as the apostle requires, 1 Corinthians 10:30. But this rule, as Soto tells us, taken in that sense which is nearest to the letter, that all be actually referred to God, is but a counsel. But may not a virtual intent to glorify God be necessary, though an actual respect thereto be but advice? No, not that neither; for without such a virtual reference, the acts we speak of may be morally good (as they say they were in those that knew not God), and so no sin. Now in any degree above this (viz. wherein they are more than not sins, or anything better than merely inculpable),2 they are works of supererogation, if their great cardinal be not mistaken.

There is yet another maxim pregnant for this purpose. The mode of virtue falls not under the precept; that is, we are not enjoined to act in a virtuous manner, or as becomes virtuous persons, viz. out of a virtuous habit or principle. Aquinas, who delivers and maintains this maxim, explains it by this instance: He is neither punished by God nor men as a transgressor of the precept, who pays his parents due honour, though not out of a habit of piety.4 Such honour, though it be no act of that virtue (piety they call it) from whence proceeds what we owe to parents, doth satisfy the precept, so that the person is free both from sin and the punishment. Accordingly Soto: We are not commanded to pay what we owe out of the habit of righteousness or liberality, but only to pay it to the full. By this one instance he would have us judge of all other precepts concerning virtues. The habits, i. e. the virtues, need not be exercised. Let the thing be done, and it is all the command of God requires, though it be not done out of a virtuous principle, nor be any act or exercise of it. So Bellarmine: When God commands that we live righteously and soberly, he commands not that we do this from a habit, but only that we do it. The external acts which pious, sober, and righteous persons do are requisite; but the exercise of any virtues therein, whether they concern God, others, or ourselves, is not commanded. 1 The habit is that which they count the virtue. Since, therefore, they say that nothing need be done out of habit, they thereby declare that no exercise of virtue is enjoined; nothing that we do need be the act or issue of a virtuous principle; this will be but matter of counsel, and not under any obliging command. Indeed, they make the exercise of virtue universally needless, since they declare it not requisite in all those cases where, if in any at all, it would be needful; they find no necessity for it, either in worship or common conversation; all may be done very well, without any act of grace or virtue. They may pray effectually; they may celebrate or hear mass meritoriously (and these are the sum of all their ordinary worship); they may partake worthily of all their sacraments; they may obtain all the effects of sacraments or sacramentals (these are evident by the premises); they may satisfy all the commands of God, and precepts of their church, so as to free both from sin and punishment, in the judgment of Aquinas and his followers; yea, they may merit too, not only other things, but grace and glory. This is the point more stuck at than the rest, but the gravest of their authors maintain that it is sufficient for merit that a man be in the state of grace, though he do not act it; and this state consists but in that imaginary grace to which a priest can help an impenitent sinner. It will be hard to divine for what ends the exercise of virtue can be by them counted needful, since without it all the ends specified may be accomplished, the chief not excepted. However, here is enough to enter the exercise of virtue amongst mere counsels.

If we should take into this account all these rules in Scripture, the transgression of which is by their doctrine but venial, as Scotus, Gabriel, and others would have us (Scotus et Gabriel, asserunt peccata mortalia esse contra præcepta; venialia vero contra consilia, Vasq. in i. 2, tom. i. disp.

143, c. iv. n. 7), the number of counsels would swell infinitely, and all conscience of the exercise of virtue would be in a manner stifled under that notion; but of venials hereafter. They have, without this, yet another expedient ready to do them universal and effectual service this way; for by their principles any one may turn what divine precept soever pinches him into a counsel, and make no more conscience, of it, if he have but some doctor's opinion for it; Ad præceptum non teneris, si te non teneri probabilis Doctorum est sententia, Medina, Soto, in Victorell. ad Sa. v. dubium, n. 2. Yea, though he have but the opinion of some one doctor, that is enough to secure him, as Angelus, Sylvester, Navarre, Sairus, Victorel (ibid, and in Jo. Sanct d. xliv. n. lxi.), and above twenty of their authors conclude (vid. infra). So far is it from being the singular conceit of some Jesuits; yea, though that doctor therein be opposed by all others.—Idem, ibid. after Lorea, Villalobos, and many more. Not to be tedious; where Christ intimates, Matthew 5:19, that some of the commands are greater, and some less, the great commands some of their writers will have to be evangelical counsels, because they are better, more meritorious, and tend to greater perfection; others will have the less commands to be such counsels, because they are not necessary to be observed. Now betwixt these two, both the great commands and the less will be dissolved into counsels, and what then becomes of the exercise of Christian virtues? If this be but matter of counsel, there is no necessity that any should trouble themselves about it. For this is the difference, saith Aquinas, betwixt a precept and a counsel: a precept imports necessity; counsels are left to the free choice of him to whom they are given, so that he may mind or not mind them, as he lists. If he observe them not, there is no fear of penalty, either eternal or temporal.2 There is no punishment, saith Bellarmine, if a counsel be not observed. They all maintain this. Not one of their divines will yield that God may punish any one for acting against his counsel, though of the highest importance. And no wonder, for by their doctrine he no way sins mortally or venially that doth not observe it. Though it may seem strange that it should be no sin to neglect counsels given us from heaven, and not to follow the advice of the all-wise God, yet it is past all doubt by their principles. A neglect of counsel is no sin at all.4 It is not only no sin to neglect these counsels at other times, but also when God calls us to comply therewith by divine inspirations and motions of his Spirit; to disobey these calls, and resist these inspirations, is no fault at all. Cardinal Tolet is rejected as too rigid for counting it so bad as a venial fault, not to yield to these divine inspirations (Jo. Sane. disp. vii. n. iv.). So that if the great God calls to us, either by his Spirit or by his word, or both together as our counsellors, we need not regard it; we may resist both, and yet be innocent. Herein others concur. Aquinas himself counts it no sin to neglect counsels, even against conscience dictating that it is good to follow them (2 sentent, dist. xxxix. q. iii. art. iii. ad. vi.). They may refuse the observance of them with some contempt; a presumptive contempt (i. e. a continued neglect thereof) passeth without control as innocent. A negative contempt hereof is justified as either a small fault or none at all. And some of them exclude not a positive contempt of these counsels of perfection, but allow a contemptuous neglect of them as sinless. So Angelus, after their law and gloss, and their Saint Antoninus.6 They may glory in their neglect of these divine counsels, and make their boast thereof. This will be but a slight fault, at most; for they may glory in anything but mortal crimes, and this is not so much as venial. It will be no worse if they not only neglect, but abandon them with some abhorrence too. They may bind themselves by oath not to observe them; it will be but a small fault at worst to swear, and call God to witness that they will not follow his counsels. So they commonly determine;8 and if they be true to their oath, it will be no fault at all. So that if we be loath to believe that they abandon holiness in the exercise of Christian virtues, as

a thing superfluous, and more than needs under this notion of counsels, to put us out of doubt they are ready to swear it, and their doctors assure them they may do it safely.

Sect. 10. But if all this were otherwise, and any exercise of virtue were needful by their doctrine, yet would there be no necessity of it, but only during the pope's pleasure. For by their principles, if the pope should determine that any virtue were a vice, all Romanists are bound in conscience to conform to his judgment, and virtue must be avoided as if it were a vice indeed. Bellarmine, their chief champion (who is wont with so much confidence to deny, or with so great artifice to hide or disguise anything in popery, which may render his party either odious or ridiculous), delivers himself plainly to this purpose. If the pope, saith he, should mistake in commending vices, and forbidding virtues, the church would be bound to believe those vices to be good, and those virtues to be evil, unless she would sin against conscience. The cardinal would have us think, that he proceeds herein upon an improbable supposition, and that the pope cannot thus mistake, as to commend vices, or forbid virtues; but the world knows, that this is so far from being impossible, that he hath already actually done it, and this in such instances as may well persuade us, that it is not only possible, but likely, that there is not any virtue, but (if occasion serve, and his interest requires it), he may forbid it, and declare it a sin, yea, and bind the church in conscience to avoid it, as if it were a vice.

He may do it with as much demonstration of reason, holiness, and infallibility, in any case, as he hath already done it in too many. Since, then, that church hath so far subjected all the conscience and reason they have unto him, as they cannot without sin but believe him, if he should determine that light is darkness, and good is evil, he may take away all conscience of virtue, and the exercise of it, whenever he pleaseth; there will be no need of any act of virtue for any papist, if he list but out of his chair to say so; they cannot, without sinning against conscience, practise any, if he do but the same thing in the rest as he hath done in a great many already. This is enough to shew how needless they count the exercise of Christian virtues, and so how unnecessary they make all holiness of life; but it will be yet more evident, if their doctrine allow them to live in a course of sin, and make it not necessary to forsake wickedness, and abandon such evi ways as are condemned by the holy God. For continuance in sin is as inconsistent with holiness of life, as it is with hopes of salvation; and this is as clear in Scripture as if it were described with a sunbeam, 1 John 3:8, Acts 3:26, 2 Timothy 2:19, Galatians 5:16, and Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 6:9, &c. Notwithstanding, by their doctrine it is not necessary to forsake sin; this will be manifest, if we take notice, that there are many sins that they count virtues, and so not to be avoided; and many which they call sins, but think it not necessary for the salvation of any man to abandon them; and many sins also, which they have made to be no sins at all.

CHAPTER VII Many heinous crimes are virtues, or necessary duties, by the Roman doctrine

There are many horrid sins which they have transformed into virtues, or count high strains of piety and devotion; and thereby are so far from being concerned to forsake them, as they are obliged to live in the practice of them. I might instance in blasphemy, idolatry, perjury, robbery, murder, &c. Their blasphemies, in ascribing the peculiar excellencies of the divine majesty and the prerogatives of our Lord Jesus Christ to the blessed virgin, and other creatures, and to their popes (though divers of them, as themselves acknowledge, were monsters and incarnate devils), have been sufficiently discovered by others, and therefore, designing brevity, I here waive them. For the

same reason, I will not insist upon their idolatry in invocating saints, adoring the host, and worshipping images; only as to this last, let me observe what is less taken notice of, that their own doctrine, before opened, quite shuts out the best, and only considerable, plea they make use of, to excuse themselves from this crime. It is their common doctrine, that the same worship is to be given to the image and the exemplar, id est, the worship of God to the images of the Trinity, the worship of Christ to a crucifix, or a cross, or the image of the cross. They also define idolatry to be, a giving the worship of God to any thing else besides God. Who would imagine but they had hereby fastened the charge of idolatry upon themselves unavoidably? Yet they make account to escape by pleading that the worship they give to images is transient, not terminative, id est, it stays not in the image, but passes from it to the exemplar, the mind of the worshipper directing it to God. There is no need to ask what ground they have to imagine, that their giving the worship of God to an image transitively, is not idolatry; it is enough that they acknowledge it to be idolatry, if it be not transient, since whatever they pretend when they are pinched, yet they count it not requisite that their worship should pass from the image unto God, but think it safe to let it stop where it first fell, and terminate in the image. For they confess it passeth not to God without an act of the mind directing it to him. This is not, nor can be, when in the worship God is not minded; and they generally agree (as was shewed before) that they need not mind God in their worship. So the result of their own doctrine is, that they need be no better than idolaters. I know not what they will say here, unless, as Cajetan, that a virtual termination will suffice, id est, when they have an intention to terminate their worship on God, without doing it actually, and indeed. But if no more be necessary, the worship need not pass to God really, but may rest in the image, and actually terminate there; and so they will be real and actual idolaters, whatever their intention be. Yea, as to that, by their doctrine it is not needful to intend to worship God, as we saw before. Answerably in their prayers to saints, before their relics, or before an image (which is their usual practice); since, by their common doctrine, the person prayed to, whether God or a creature, need not be minded, the address may be actual to the image, and to that only; the mind not transferring the prayer, so much as by one thought, towards the saint, it will terminate in the image, if anywhere, and be as senseless idolatry as the most stupid amongst the heathen were guilty of. Thus, what they say, many of them do; by their common doctrine all may do, viz., apply themselves to a senseless image, as though it heard their prayers, and searched their hearts, and were no less than God.

Sect. 2. There is another branch of this crime which I shall stay a little on, viz., their worshipping of relics. Herein they are so liberal as to give religious worship to such things which they do but fancy to be relics; yea, such as it is absurd and ridiculous to imagine they are relics. For who can imagine (at least when he is waking) how they could catch or keep St Peter’s shadow, or bottle up Joseph’s cough, his toilsome breathing, when he was at his carpenter’s work? Yet both these, with others of like quality, are among the relics which they count worthy of such worship. The shadow of St Peter, says one, is not the greatest among relics, and therefore, if that be adored, why are not the rest to be honoured and worshipped? Bellarmine asks, What relic can be imagined to be meaner than the shadow of Peter?3 Possibly he might be resolved, near Blois, in France, where Joseph’s cough is honoured and worshipped as a relic. Baronius ascribes much to the shadow of Peter, for he makes it the ground, not only of their worship of images, but also of the honour and power of the popes. Who can doubt hereafter, but that the weightiest things in popery have a substantial foundation? They worship their relics, not only when they are whole and sound, but when they are corrupted and reduced to dust, or nothing else of them left but the vermin bred in

them. Not only the ashes, but the vermin too, may be worshipped, though some stick at the latter. Henricus, one of their school doctors, concludes, that the relics in the form of dust and ashes may and ought to be adored, but not under the form of vermin, and gives some reason for it; but their great Vasquez rejects this scruple, and the ground of it, as vain and frivolous, and concludes they may be worshipped as well when they are vermin as when they are ashes. A man, saith he, may with right intention, and sincere faith, apprehend a saint, and worship him in worms.5 If the question had been of the little worms in the ulcer of St Harry of Denmark, for which he had such saint-like love, as when they crept out of his knee, to put them in again, that they might be nourished where they were bred; or of the lice of St Francis,7 for which he had such a holy tenderness (it is recorded as an argument of his holiness), that when they were shaked off, he gathered them up, and put them in his bosom. I suppose Henricus himself could scarce have denied but those sacred creepers (having so near relation to, and being sanctified by such extraordinary contact of so great saints) might have been adored.

It cannot be denied but they are liable to gross mistakes about the object of their worship here; and some of them acknowledge, that the people herein are deluded with great and detestable impostures. What if the tooth which they worship for St Christopher's (as big as a man's fist),9 should prove the tooth of a beast? or the hair, which they worship as part of St Peter's beard, should be the excrement of some malefactor? or the shift which they worship as the virgin Mary's, should be the covering of some harlot? or the dust or the vermin which they worship as the remains of some saints, should have been in their original no more holy than a brute or a damned sinner? As great mistakes as these about their relics, the world has discovered, and themselves have been convinced of. Valla, a person of great learning and eminency amongst them, says plainly, There are ten thousand such things (counterfeit relics) in Rome itself. And if the seat of infallibility be so well stored with cheats, what shall we think of other places? They say, indeed, they have the attestation of visions, revelations, miracles to ensure them; but these they have, and produce as well for those that are confessed to be counterfeits, as for them which they take to be true. So that they are proved beyond all question to be all alike: the true ones, as very counterfeit as any, and the counterfeit as true as the best. Now, may they with safety venture to worship them for all this? Yes, their devotion is maintained to be not only safe, but meritorious, however they be deluded about the object of it. They may worship at all adventure, what they take to be a relic, though indeed it be no such thing; and yet be so far from idolatry or any sin, that they deserve highly at God's hand by so doing. If any man think, says one, that to be a relic of a saint, which indeed is not so, he is not frustrate of the merit of his devotion.2 Yea, a man may merit by a mistaken belief, though he should worship the devil, says another. So that they have not only a fair excuse, but great encouragement, to venture, though they may happen to worship the devil himself, and not only some limb of him, instead of Christ, or his saints, or their remains. When the Lord declares, Deuteronomy 32:1-52, 'that his wrath should burn to the bottom of hell,' for that the Israelites 'worshipped devils instead of God,' they might, if Baronius had been their advocate, have come off well enough with his plea, fides purgat facinus. The Israelites believed as firmly as the Roman catholics (only they were mistaken), that they did not worship devils, but that which was a proper object of worship; therefore, they were so far from the bottom of hell, or any danger of it, that hereby they might merit heaven and glory.

Let me add, that the miscarriages in their mass furnishes them with many sacred relics, and their orders about the disasters there create for them divers objects of worship, and help them to many right worshipful things of the vilest vermin, and that which is more loathsome. If the body or blood of Christ (so they will have it to be) fall to the ground, it must be licked up; the ground is to be scraped, and the scrapings, reduced to ashes, are to have place among the relics. If the blood be spilt upon the altar-cloths, those cloths are to be washed, and the sacred wash is to be enshrined. If a fly or a spider fall into the blood, it is to be taken out and burnt, and the ashes put into the holy shrine. But if the blood of Christ be poisoned, it is to be kept in a clean vessel among the relics; and so poison becomes a very worshipful thing. If a mouse, or a spider, or a worm, eat the body of Christ (I must desire pardon for mentioning such horrid things), these vermin, in their ashes, are to have the same preferment, and be put into shrines for relics. If a priest or other person do vomit up the host, even that (if no man's stomach will serve him devoutly to lick it up), being turned into ashes, is to be honoured among the relics. All these and more particulars are ordained and provided for in the cautels of the mass; and thereby we see what order is taken by holy church, that dirty water, the scrapings of the ground, venomous or loathsome vermin, yea, the vomit of a weak or gluttonous stomach, casting up that which they call Jesus Christ, may be enshrined among the relics which they adore. They tender worship to all, under the altar promiscuously; yea, their very prayers are so directed thereto, that you cannot discern whether it be more to the relics or the persons they relate to; for example, when they say, Oh you that are seated under the altar, intercede ye to God for us. For they may as well believe that these relics can intercede, as that Christ, or the glorified saints, are seated under their altar.

Sect. 3. Some of them would have us believe that they give not divine honour to relics, but a sort of religious worship, which they call δουλ■ια; but the Scripture (and secular authors too, as is acknowledged) make no difference between the terms of their distinction, but appropriate both to God. And the people make no difference in their practice, as is confessed, but worship saints (and so their relics), even as they worship God. And their teachers and learned writers encourage them to give that to relics, which is divine worship indeed, viz. to put their trust in them, to swear by them, to bring them oblations, to burn incense, and pray to them. So they are taught to give them the thing which is confessed to be divine worship, only they will not give it the name (for though they be real idolaters, yet it is not convenient to be called so). Nor is this all: there are a world of relics, to which they will have thing and name given, even λατρε■α, expressly; for it is their common doctrine, that the relics of Christ are to have the same worship with Christ himself. And under the notion of these relics, they take in (as of the saints also) not only the parts of his body, but all that belonged to him, yea, that touched him, or was touched by him. Accordingly Aquinas (whose doctrine is highly approved, not only by all the Jesuits, but in a manner by all their universities4) teaches that not only the cross is to have divine worship, because it touched Christ, but all things else that belonged to Christ, by virtue of this contact; and Damascene (whom he quotes) will have all things near to Christ, τ■ ■νακ■ιμενα, worshipped on that account. It is true they distinguish here; some things touched him innocently, others injuriously. Waldensis seemed loath to grant these latter should be worshipped, lest he should be brought to adore the lips that betrayed him, or the hands that buffeted him; but he is run down by the stream, both of their doctrine and practice, for the things which they worship especially, and will have worshipped as Christ himself, are the instruments of his sufferings. The knife wherewith he was circumcised, the pillar at which he was scourged, the cord wherewith he was bound, the twenty-eight steps of white

marble, up which he was led, in his passion, to Pilate's house; the purple robe, and the white one too, which he wore in derision; the keys and stones of the sepulchre, the sponge, the reed, the vinegar, the crown of thorns, the lance, the nails, and (which may serve for all) the cross, which is, never the less for the loss of so many pieces, as are ten thousand times more than the whole. All these (and who can tell how many more?), though they ministered to his pain, or reproach in his passion, have divine worship. But the things which they will have worshipped for the innocent contact might suffice, being numerous beyond account. To waive the rest, Damascene (whom Aquinas follows) of this sort reckons not only his clothes, and tabernacles, the cave, the manger, and sepulchre, but also Golgotha, and Sion, and the like, wherein may be included Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Egypt, the earth where he trod in every place being (if not deified, yet) sanctified by such contact. There is a divine virtue therein, says Baronius,2 and they were wont to bring earth from those parts for the working of miracles. And amongst the relics at Venice they had a stone translated from Chio thither, whereon, it is said, he sat at Tyre. The water also of the River Jordan, at least after it comes to the place where he was baptized, and there that was taken up, they say, which is enshrined at Cassino.4 And why not the air too, when it comes to any place, wherever it touched him? And so every element might furnish them with objects of divine worship; and they might have no need to content themselves with such petty idols as the heathen had, but have them in such extent and largeness as is proportionable to the vast improvement of this kind of devotion in the church of Rome.

Moreover, by virtue of this contact, not only things, but persons, are capable of divine worship, and such as touched Christ may be thus worshipped. The blessed virgin in the first place. Cajetan declares that, in secret, where it can be done without scandal and danger, she may have divine worship on that account; and tells us this is the sense of Aquinas. Later writers determine that she may be so worshipped as Christ himself, either upon the account of contact or consanguinity. Upon the same ground Simeon may have divine honour, for he once embraced Christ; and Joseph, his foster father, for he had him oftener in his arms, which their church has taken notice of in a prayer on his holiday. The apostles, and seventy disciples did probably sometimes touch him, and so, by the same reason, may have the same worship with their Lord;6 and no wonder, seeing they tell us the lips of Judas, for but touching him with a treacherous kiss, may be thus worshipped; the woman also with the bloody issue, and those many of the multitude that pressed him, Luke 8:45. Mary Magdalene especially, she has double honour, seeing they worship more bodies than one for hers. But this is common, and they had need of a prodigious faith to believe (if any of them believe) that the things they worship are not counterfeit; since the most of them may be convicted of imposture, even by their own practice and approved writings. They must either believe themselves deluded, or believe that one person had more bodies, and one body more heads than one, yea, more than two or three. Many of their most eminent saints are thus turned into monsters, but I instance only in those who may challenge divine worship upon the common ground of contact. John, who touched Christ when he baptized him, had three or four heads, if he had as many as they worship; for they worship his head in so many several places, and when they have it whole in some shrines, yet they will have several pieces of it in others. So that Herod had not beheaded him when one head was quite cut off; and when the damsel had it in a charger, it might be still on his shoulders. Longinus also, who, they say, pierced Christ's side, and had his eyes cured with a touch of his blood, must have four bodies, for in so many very distant places they worship it; and yet this their saint had never one body, nor being in the world.2 As for St

Christopher (who must needs touch Christ too, if, as they say, he carried him over an arm of the sea on his shoulders), there was no need to make him so many bodies, since they have made him one as big as many, and worship for him an effigies more like a mountain than a man. I need not mention those many thousand besides, who had an occasion to touch Christ for the space of three and thirty years, while he was on earth; the meanest of these might have divine worship, by that doctrine which makes contact a sufficient ground for it. Nor must this seem strange, since the very ass he rode on, when it could be done without scandal, might upon this account be religiously adored.4 Yet all these are not all that may have the honour of Christ, if we follow their doctrine whither it leads us. Hereby not only these persons, but their relics too, are capable of divine worship; for they commonly teach that the relics may have the same worship with the persons whose remains they are. Those are in the right, says one of their most absolute divines, Doctor Stapleton, who confer the like honour on the relics, as on the saints, since from both they hope to receive the like advantage.6 Thus they have huge shoals of objects fit for divine worship: those multitudes of relics which pass for the blessed virgin's, and all accounted to be the apostles', and the other persons fore-mentioned. They say they have the blessed virgin's hair in several places, which is no such wonder, since a monk could shew some of the hairs, which fell from a seraphim, when he came to imprint the five wounds in Friar Francis his body! Her milk too kept from souring, by a continued miracle, sixteen hundred years, and so much of it as if, with their St Catherine, she had had nothing but milk in her veins.8 Nor is this so wonderful, seeing an image of hers could let forth of its breast such a liquor in great plenty. Her nails, too, or rather the parings of them (worthy enough of divine worship), for the nails themselves she could not spare at her assumption. That one story has prevented a hundred other fables. If they had not believed the assumption of her body, it is like we had heard of as many bodies of hers, in several places, as Geryon had, twice or thrice over, and more heads than they were wont to shew of St Barbara. Her wedding ring,10 too (though they used none in her country), and her attire cap-a-pie, from her veil even to her petticoat and shift too. Whether she wore any or no is not material; the archbishop of Chartres2 wore it, and was thereby inspired with such courage in a battle against Rollo, that the dagger wherewith St Michael combated the dragon (if he had borrowed it of his neighbours in Normandy) could not have performed braver exploits, nor made greater slaughter, than his grace did; though some will ascribe less to his prowess, because being harnessed with such a shift of mail he might think himself invulnerable. Her slipper also, and shoe; yea, the figure also of the sole of her shoe is to be adored. Yet this is at a pretty distance from Christ (though its prime virtue be from contact), and derives from him, like the feathers of the hen which were of the brood of the cock that crowed when Peter denied him. They have Simeon's arm (mentioned in the Gospel) at Aken,4 which hinders not but they may have it at Hartsburg and other places too. They have not only Joseph's hem, but his breeches; and I hope kept less nastily than Thomas Becket kept his, which yet were worshipful, vermin and all, and that not per accidens (it may be), since it is one commendation of his saintship that his breeches ran quick. They have some remains of all the apostles, though nobody could tell them where divers of their bodies were interred, but things of this nature they still have by revelation. And how can such as these want revelations, who, in pilgrimage to holy relics, declared that a goose carried before them was the Holy Ghost.7 They have Peter's keys, his sword, his staff, his coat, his garment besides, and his girdle; part of his body is at Constantinople, half of it at Rome in one place, and yet the whole in another. They have martyred him over again (or some other bodies for his), and torn him into more pieces than their St Hippolytus was torn with

horses. They have his head (or some of it) in seven several places in Rome; only they want his brains, which were reserved in another place, and worshipped (or a pumice-stone instead thereof). And there may be some mystery in that; for they speak of some time, under Peter's successors, when their church should have caput sine cerebro. Setting that aside, we may be sure they have missed nothing that belonged to St Peter, since they could catch his shadow, and hold it as fast as they do his keys. And why might not this be done as well as the monk could bring with him from Palestine the sound of the bells that hung in Solomon's temple.10 I have not yet in their sacred lists discerned the lips of Judas, but they have his lantern, which shewed him the way to apprehend his Master, and thereby perhaps in time they may discover the other. They want nothing for this but some of the oil of the candle of the sepulchre, which can light itself, and this the monks at Casino can help them to. If they have not the ass upon which Christ rode to Jerusalem, they missed it narrowly when they caught the palm12 he then had in his hand (whether he had any or no); and a worshipful relic of the ass some shew; it is said his tail is enshrined in Liguria. And who can think but that may be as proper an object of adoration as the hay wherewith Friar Francis his ass was saddled. And every hair in that tail may make a complete relic, as worshipful as the whole; for by their divinity, the virtue of the whole is in every part. If it were but well distributed, this one might serve to furnish a hundred shrines, and entertain the devotion of as many votaries and pilgrims as come to worship at Loretto. But I need not insist on such relics as are to have divine worship by consequence; those which they say expressly should be so worshipped are enough, and as many as they please to imagine. For though they have no good ground to believe that they have any one true relic of Christ, or the least part of one, yet imagination is enough with them, both to give them being, and to multiply them in infinitum, and to warrant their worship of each of them as of Christ himself; even such imaginations as interfere and confute one another, and are each of them confuted by such miracles as are the ground of the whole imposture. The foreskin of Christ is more religiously worshipped among them than Christ himself; as Erasmus observed. It is kept and exposed in at least four several countries,3 and miracles brought to confirm the truth of its being there; and yet while it is seen and adored in so many places on earth, some of their chief writers say it is nowhere on earth, but in heaven; and must be so, otherwise the glorified body of Christ would be imperfect, and not entire. His shirt, and besides that (though he had no other shirt) his coat, which the soldiers disposed of at his death, was not found till the year 593; yet they had it elsewhere, and greatly worshipped it long before in a city of Galatia, says Gregory of Tours.5 It is much that they should have it before it was found, and something strange too, that as it was without seam so it should be without rent, though afterwards they found it in several places at once, many hundred miles distant. They have it in Germany, and they have it in France, and they may have it in all parts of the world at once, as certainly as they have it there; but whether they have it or no, that which they take to be it must have the same worship and honour with Christ. And we must not think it strange that it should be in so many places, since they say it grew on his back, and so not unlikely might multiply itself since. About the blood of Christ there is no less imposture, and as great idolatry. They pretend to have much of it in parcels; that which Nicodemus saved in his glove, that which Longinus brought in a vessel to Mantua, that which Joseph of Arimathea brought into England in two silver vessels, that which is kept at Venice with the earth it fell on, that which is shewed at the holy chapel in Paris, that which is adored at Rome on Easter day, that which may be seen in every country where popery hath left people no eyes. Yet the angel of their schools7 (whose doctrine they say was approved by a miracle, and which they must

not question if they believe their portess) is positive that all the blood of Christ that was shed before was in his body at his resurrection, and so ascended with him into heaven; and that the blood which is shewed in churches for relics did not flow from Christ's side, but miraculously from a certain wounded image of Christ. So that the blood which they worship as God is no better than that which an image can bleed; and this will scarce prove so good in England as the blood of Hales, which (how much soever worshipped) was discovered to be but the blood of a drake.

They have the reed, the sponge, the crown of thorns, in so many places as gives them reason enough to believe they have them in none, and yet they worship these in all. We must imagine (to have such things go down smoothly) that they grow more than any thorn hedge does, not only in length but in number. And something towards this, Gregory of Tours writes of those thorns: they are green still, and though the leaves wither sometimes, yet they revive again, and flourish. But the old bishop had not the good hap to see this, he had it only by rumour; and such rumours their annalist is wont to make much of; for it is not amiss to abuse others into a belief of that which they cannot believe themselves. The lance which pierced Christ's side was got into the West before it had left the East (its proper place). Otto the Great presented Athelstane, king of England, with it and other rarities, in the tenth age.2 Yet the dominical spear (the same, we may suppose, though some question it) was the same age in the possession of Rudolphus, Duke of Burgundy, of which Harry emperor of Germany was so covetous, that he threatened the Duke to destroy his country with fire and sword if he would not give it him; and, in fine, gave him a good part of his country for it. Much worship it had, and brave feats it played then, and I know not how long before, for Charles the Great, they say, had it too;4 yet for all this it was still in Asia (if anywhere), and not found there till two hundred years after, for the Latins having taken Antioch, were blessed with the revelation of it in St Peter's church (for holy relics was the adventure which those knights errant sought, and they were concerned in point of honour either to find or make some). But this was confirmed by miracle, else it had not been worth a rush. Peter, the finder of it, to prove the truth thereof,6 walked through a mighty fire with the lance in his hand. It is like this champion had something of the metal of that hermit's marvellous pot, in which, though it was of wood, he boiled his meat constantly, how hot soever the fire was, without burning; but that of the pot it seems was better tempered, for that endured many years, do the fire what it could, but the man could not long survive that hot brunt, dying shortly after. The nails wherewith Christ was fastened to the cross were three or four at most.8 Baronius dare not say they were four, though he does not always speak with the least in this matter of miracles. These, as the rumour was, being sent by Helena to Constantine, lost quite the form of nails, being used for the making of a bridle and a helmet for the emperor. In this, Theodoret, Sozomen,10 and Socrates agree, but they tell us not how the nails which pierced Christ were known from those which fastened the two thieves to the other crosses. If they had foreseen that such things should have been worshipped equally with Christ himself, they would have thought this necessary, or rather to have said nothing at all without better ground, lest the nails of the thieves might have divine worship for those of Christ's. Gregory of Tours, who will have a fourth nail, says one was thrown into the Adriatic Sea, where it seems it spawned, and from thence came the multitude of nails which were shewed and adored for the true one. (This is as satisfactory as the shuffling account which their great annalist gives thereof.) If Constantine had lived in times of popery, his horse had been in danger of divine worship for his bridle's sake, and his helmet could scarce have defended itself from being made an idol; but seeing his religion was of another strain than that now in request with Romanists, it is well if he escape reproach for

converting that, the counterfeit of which they think worthy of the worship of God, to a profane use. However, they would not long endure such abuse, for upon a time one of them (whether reassuming its old form or no, I know not) skipped out of the bridle (or helmet, as you please, into Constantine's sword hilt, and that from thence, sword and all, into these western parts; and that we may not question this, it was given by Otho the Great to our Athelstane.2 But this was nothing to the spear which Count Sampson gave to Rudolph of Burgundy, and which Harry the emperor (or king, as Baronius calls him) forced from Rudolphus; for there were I know not how many of these nails artificially fastened to the spear, say some; others will have it wholly made of them,4 and then these nails had need be twenty times more than ever touched the cross, or else they must be such as were fit only for the use of their giant Christopher, whose saintship they make full twelve ells high. For all this they had still many of these nails at their shrines and altars. To waive the rest, the bishop of Metes, officiating at Tryers6 for Poppo, who was turned pilgrim, slily filches away from the altar one of those sacred nails, conveying another very like it into the place; and he had carried it clearly, but that, as ill luck was, the holy nail fell a bleeding (and it is like the nail had more tenderness than the consciences of those who coined such stories). However, this holy bishop, who had so dear a love for relics, must not suffer under the bad character of a thief, much less as sacrilegious, for stealing of relics was then the practice of the best (and no wonder if theft got reputation, when cheats were in so much request). Besides, there was something more than ordinary in the case, for such thieves, with the receivers, cheated themselves most of all, and those that were robbed made account (as they had reason) that they lost nothing, but worshipped what was gone, as still in their possession. So they at St Dennis believe that they have still the body, as well as the name of St Dennis the Areopagite, though Pope Leo the Ninth declared by an authentic bull, that it was stolen from thence, and carried to Ratisbon in Germany. And no wonder if the French will not be baffled out of their faith by the pope; for is it likely that he who carried his head in his arms (after it was smitten off) 8 for two or three miles together, and would not die till he came to the place where his body should rest, would not keep it from being carried from that place, signalised with such a miracle? And the remains of St Bennet's body were stolen from Cassino in Naples, and carried, as they say, to Fleury in France, and the monks there offer proof of it by miracles; and yet those at Cassino believe they have it, and accordingly worship it still, confirming themselves and others in that confidence of miracles too. Whereby the world may judge of their miracles, for since God works none upon such occasions, to be sure, not for the confirming of contradictions, these must be the fictions of cheating knaves, or the feats and illusions of Satan. And some of themselves2 confess that multitudes of them are no better as to their original. Indeed, they make such use of their miracles, that it is enough to blast the credit of a thing to have a miracle alleged by them for it, since it is their common practice to confirm one lie with another, and the confirmation is more intolerable than the first fiction, because they will have the divine power interposed, thereby to delude the world. Not to digress further, they tell us of the oil, or liquor which drops from the knots of the true cross. No wonder if this be thought worthy of no less worship than the rest, since they ascribe to it a divine power. Besides many marvellous feats, it can cast out devils; for it must be of no less virtue than the oil of the sepulchre of St Martin, which, duly administered to a man possessed, gave him such a purge that he squirted out a foul fiend behind, and voided the devil for a stool.4 In short, that the cross itself should have divine worship is their common doctrine. This at first was no more than one man might well bear, but by the good housewifery of that church (who scruples no cheats in this sacred traffic) it is retailed out for

worship in so many pieces, that together would sink a ship of a good burden;6 so that there are many, many cart loads of Roman gods, which are really no better than common chips. In all this there is not any one bit, which they can upon good ground believe to be part of the true cross. They cannot be more confident of any than that piece which, with Pilate's inscription on it, they say is reserved and worshipped at Rome; but that is detected to be a counterfeit by Baronius his own words; for he says, that on the true cross the Latin inscription was first (and so the Greek next, and the Hebrew last), and confirms it by no less authority than that of a pope, Nicholas I.; whereas in that piece at Rome, the Hebrew is first, and the Latin last. By this we may judge of the stories concerning the invention of the cross by Helena. This now mentioned was a considerable piece of the discovery; nor would the cardinal himself have us believe, that what is said to be sent to Constantinople, or reserved at Jerusalem, were more real parts of the true cross than that at Rome. However, true or false, here is enough, one would think, to glut the most ravenous devotion of any Egyptian. But when they will have this worship given to the images of the cross,8 in any matter whatsoever, or immaterial either, they give warranty to turn all things in the world into idols, any sticks or straws, yea, a man's own fingers laid across may be worshipped by him; or let him but move one finger across in water, or oil, or the air, anywhere, and instantly he has of his own creating what he may worship as God. For those relics to which they give divine worship under another name, they are yet more numerous. So that, upon the whole, if the Philistines had worshipped not only the god of flies, but the flies themselves too, they would scarce have outvied these in numbers. The idolatrous Israelites, who worshipped the host of heaven, had a fair company of idols; but the Egyptians might have more, who could sow gods in their gardens, and make them spring up on their backsides; but both put together would come short of the Romanists herein, both for number and quality, though they of Egypt became the scorn of the world for the vileness of what they religiously worshipped. How they came by so many, when for three hundred years after Christ we hear of none, we have an account from their own authors. Out of covetousness, says their learned and ingenious Cassander, false relics were daily forged, feigned miracles were published, superstition thereby nourished, and sometimes, by the illusion of the devil, new relics were revived.2 So that, in brief, to use the language of their own author, the devil helped their church to some of them, and covetous knaves to others. This stuff might be had cheap, and sold very dear; this encouraged many to take up the trade, and monks are noted as prime merchants for this traffic. They were such who, in Austin's time, being employed, as he says, by Satan (whose factors they were, and for whom the trade was driven), sold the members of martyrs, or what they pretended to be so. He was of the same profession4 who declared he came out of Spain into France with relics, which, being looked into, proved to be roots of trees, the teeth of moles, the bones of mice, and the claws and fat of bears. And they were monks who, as the same author tells us, were found at Rome, near Paul's church, digging up bodies, and confessed their design was to make relics of them. As for him whom Glaber speaks of, who furnished France with innumerable relics, it may seem strange that he should be counted a cheat when he was thus trading in another country, since his stuff had the very same mark which makes their other relics current as good ware, unquestionably good, and than which their best have no better; for he wrought wonders (or the devil for him), and by one carcase, which he feigned to be a martyr's,6 he freed many that were sick from variety of diseases; but I suppose he was not free of the company, and they like not interlopers. The court of Rome can furnish altars with holy relics out of common graves, and none must count them cheats for it. And if this huckster had but

procured a commission from thence, he might have transubstantiated the bones in any churchyard, yea, those of a sheep or a hog either, into the bones of martyrs or apostles, as well as others. By this we may judge what their relics are, the best of them mere cheats; and consequently, how criminal it will be to give them worship, the highest of all; and yet they are so far from abandoning this, that it is in a manner the sum of their religion. And so it is expressed by some of their own communion. The whole of religion is almost brought to this, to wit, their religious treatment of relics, through the covetousness of priests, and the hypocrisy of monks, fed by the foolishness of the people. Thus their great Erasmus, in his Annotations, approved by Pope Leo X. his brief.2

Sect. 4. Let us see, in the next place, if perjury may not prove as blameless and as necessary. Breach of oaths is no less with them than a virtue, or a necessary duty in many cases (of which a further account hereafter). Let me now instance but in one. Suppose a prince that has protestant subjects should, for their satisfaction, give them the security of his most solemn oath, that they should not suffer for their conscience either in life, estate, or liberty; that religion does oblige the prince to break all such oaths, or to count himself no ways obliged by them, because they are against the laws of the church, against that particularly of the general council of Lateran under Pope Innocent III., which forbids all favour to be shewed to heretics, under the severest penalties, and decrees that favourers of heretics are under excommunication. So that in this case it must be the prince's duty to be perjured, and to break his oath made in favour of his heretical subjects, and that by the sacred decree of the church. He must forswear himself, if he will not be excommunicated, and consequently deposed, and thereby exposed to the violence of every hand; yea, he puts himself into the state of damnation, and sins mortally, if he be true to his oath. So Pope Martin V. declared in writing to Alexander, Duke of Lithuania: Know, says he, that thou sinnest mortally if thou keep thy oath with heretics. Hereby it appears that no papists, princes or subjects, can possibly give any security which may be trusted, that protestants shall enjoy anything which is in their power to deprive them of; for the greatest securities that can be given in this case are engagements of faith and truth, God being invocated for confirmation in solemn oaths. But by the principles of their religion they are so far loosed from all such bonds that they are not at all to be trusted by any but credulous fools, unless it can be supposed that they will act as other men than papists, and contemn all the authority of that church, which leaves no hope of salvation but in obedience to it; for another general council, that of Constance, has determined that no faith is to be kept with heretics. In the nineteenth session of that assembly, it was decreed that no safe conduct given by emperor, king, or secular prince to heretics, or any defamed4 for heretics, though with a design to reduce them, by what engagements soever they have obliged themselves, shall hinder those heretics from being prosecuted, unless they recant, though they come to the place of judgment relying upon such security, and would not have come otherwise. And it is declared further, that one thus bound by promise was not hereby in the least obliged. And what they decreed and declared they immediately practised; for the emperor Sigismund, having given safe conduct to John Huss, and so engaged the public faith and his own honour that he should come and go safe to and from the council; and Pope John XXII., then present in the council, having given his promise and engaged his faith (if he had any) for his safety, yet the honour and faith of the emperor was borne down by the principles of their church, and the pope (as soon as the poor man was drawn into danger past escaping) made nothing of his promise, pretending, when he was urged with it, that he was overruled; and so, notwithstanding all the

security an emperor and a pope had given him, he was first miserably imprisoned, and after cruelly burnt to ashes. Hereby the world, protestants especially, have this plain and useful admonition, that they must trust to nothing among papists (those that will be true to that church), but what will keep them out of their power. The principles of their religion (for such are determinations of general councils) bind them to observe no faith, or truth, or common honesty with those whom they count heretics, no, not when life is concerned. Their religion obliges them to violate the most sacred oaths and the most solemn engagements of faith and truth, rather than an heretic shall be safe in any of his concerns where they can reach him. It is a virtue, a duty in that religion to snap asunder all securities (by which the world and human society hath hitherto been preserved) to ruin a heretic; no fear of perjury or any other perfidiousness must be a hindrance in the case. Nor is perjury so necessary or innocent only when it is mischievous to us, but when it does mischief to themselves, and the world also. The practice of their popes for many ages may satisfy us herein, and to those who are acquainted with history, which gives an account thereof, it is no improbable observation that the bloody wars and massacres that have been for many hundred years in those places which the papal influence could reach, cannot be imputed to anything more, for the most part, than the perjuries of the popes themselves, and of those whom they involved in that guilt by discharging them from the obligation of their oaths.

Sect. 5. And this brings me to some other crimes forementioned, robberies and murders, which the wonderful power of papal holiness hath transformed into Christian and virtuous acts. By the doctrine of their church, to deprive those whom they count heretics of their estate and lives is a virtue, and a meritorious act. There is too good evidence for this. A decree of Pope Innocent III., recorded in the tomes of their councils, by their own writers, as an authentic act of the general council of Lateran under that pope, and inserted by Gregory IX. into the decretals, which is the law of their church, and part of that which passes with them for divine law. There is, there can be, no act of their church more authoritative and obliging than such a decree as this. There, first of all, heretics are excommunicated and condemned; and then it is decreed that the estates of those condemned are confiscated. But that is not all; the secular princes or lords are to be compelled (if they will not do it otherwise), and bound with a solemn oath, to endeavour to the utmost of their power utterly to destroy them all. They are to labour in good earnest with all their might to root them all out.2 And, further, if any temporal lord proceed not to such ruining execution within a year, the pope is to absolve those that are under him from their allegiance; the land is to be seized on by catholics, who, having exterminated the heretics, are to possess it without control. Here it is plain that, by the highest authority the Roman church pretends to (that which is no less with them than divine), the papists are bound to destroy all whom they count heretics, and to take possession of their estates. And this barbarous decree (which has so much force with them, as the word of God with any) was put in execution in the days of that very pope; for he employed armies against the Albigenses (the predecessors of the protestants in France), who destroyed above two hundred thousand in the space of some months.2 It was executed in the age before this in France, where so many thousands were treacherously and cruelly murdered, that the channels run down with blood into the river; and this magnified as a glorious action, honoured with a triumph at Rome, and the unparalleled butchers rewarded with his holiness's blessing. We have known it executed in our days upon some hundred thousands of the protestants in Ireland, where that bloody tragedy was acted by the pope's excitement and concurrence, just according to the tenor of that decree, the Irish papists endeavouring, with all their might, utterly to destroy all the protestants, that their

estates and the whole land might be in the possession of Roman Catholics. And in all countries about us, wherever they have been powerful enough, or but thought themselves so, they have effected or attempted it. Such outrages were and are to be committed by warrant of the Romish doctrine. They are bound to act thus by all the authority of that church, which not only enjoins this by her decrees, but gives all encouragement thereto; such robberies and butcheries are virtuous, yea, meritorious acts. Those that will engage therein to the utmost (as their church requires) are assured by the pope, of these indulgences and privileges, which were granted to the adventurers for the recovery of the holy land, and these are expressed, in an appendix to that council, to be full pardon of all their sins here, and a greater measure of glory hereafter.4 At no less rate do they value the blood, and utter destruction of such as we (whom they count heretics); with such, and no less hopes, do they engage all papists, to endeavour, as far as possible, our utter extermination. It is true, there are good-natured persons amongst them, as there are amongst other sorts of men, and such as have a great aversion to such barbarous cruelty, but their religion tempts them to it, not only with hopes of heretics' estates, but of the greatest rewards that can be propounded; yea, and forces them to it, even beyond their inclination, with threatenings of the most dreadful import, expressed in that decree, which signifies also, that they must act at this rate of inhumanity if they will be counted Christians, and must not expect to pass for faithful Romanists, unless they will act as monsters. But if it be their duty, as they are Roman catholics, and they bound in conscience, as far as their religion, and all the power of it, can bind them, to destroy the protestants amongst whom they live, and seize upon what they have, why do they not fall to work, and make an end of us, that all may be their own? How is it that they live quietly and peaceably in this, and some other places? To satisfy us here, they use plain dealing (though we must not always expect it), and tell us in express terms they do it not, merely because they have not power to do it. Though the church have made it their duty to destroy protestants, yet when they are not strong enough to do it, and where the attempting of it, because they are a weaker party, would endanger them, there they are excused, they may wait the happy hour till they have sufficient power, to shew their obedience to the church in executing her exterminating decrees, without apparent hazard of their own interest. So Bannes, a Dominican, determines that catholics in England and Saxony are excused from rising up against their protestant princes with their subjects, because they commonly are not powerful enough, and the attempt in such circumstances would expose them to great danger. Bellarmine speaks it as plainly; if it were possible to root out the heretics, without doubt they are to be destroyed root and branch; but if it cannot be done, because they are stronger than we, and there be danger if they should oppose us, that we should be worsted, then we are to be quiet.2 So that the reason why protestants in such places are not presently ruined, is because the papists are not there strong enough; we and others have the privilege to live, because they are not yet able to kill us, and to seize on what we have. When they have once power enough (or but think they have it), let us look to ourselves; for if papists have any conscience, that anything in their religion can touch, they must then destroy us utterly, and leave us neither liberty, estate, nor being, unless they will resist conscience, and rebel against the authority of that church which they count most sacred and sovereign; or, which is all one in their catholic sense, they must either exterminate us, or be damned themselves. And to deal thus with us would be so far from being a sin, that by their most infallible doctrine (the decrees of popes and councils) it would be an act highly meritorious, though in the common sense of mankind it be robbery and murder. They may become the best catholics, by abandoning justice, mercy, and humanity itself, and procure pardon of all other sins, by the

most detestable injustice and cruelty, and obtain higher degrees of glory by such crimes, as (to use their own expression) deserves all the fires of heaven, and earth, and hell. If Satan could inspire all other sects with this catholic doctrine, it would be an expedient to satiate his enmity to mankind; this would turn the world into a shambles, and no sort of men should escape unbutchered, but such who could find no party able to force them to the slaughterhouse, yet this is the way to heaven, and transcendent glory, for those who will follow the Roman conduct, and believe what passes for most infallible amongst them!

Sect. 6. There is another crime which passes for an eminent virtue with them, and is so esteemed and practised, that is, sorcery and conjuring. In the books of devotion published for the use of their exorcists, there are such horrid practices in and upon the devil as fully answers the titles of the books, one of which is called Horrible Conjuration, and another Devilish Exorcisms. He that has not seen them can scarce believe that such things should be practised by any that bear the name of Christians; nor can they be heard without conceiving a horror at them. But they have been mentioned by others, I will only insist on that which may seem more innocent, but has indeed too much of sorcery and enchantment, and that is their sacramentals, with things of like nature and supposed virtue. Of this quality is their consecrated water, salt, oil, bread, waxen tapers, branches of trees, roses, bells, medals, and Agnus Deis. To such things as these they ascribe marvellous and supernatural effects, a virtue to save and sanctify souls, to blot out sins, to expel devils, to cure diseases, to secure women in travail, to preserve from burning and drowning. Pope Alexander, in the decrees which they ascribe to him, asserts that water, mixed with salt and consecrated, does sanctify the people, purify the unclean, break the snares of the devil, and bring health to body and soul. The form of exorcising salt, which we have in their authorised books, tells us it is exorcised, that it may be to all that take it both health to body and soul.2 The exorcised water is to chase away all the power of the devil and root him out. The virtues of an Agnus Dei are described by Urban V. in verse, wherewith he sent some of them to the Greek emperor. If you will believe a pope, who may be infallible in rhyme as well as in prose, it drives away lightning, and all malignancy, delivers pregnant women, destroys the force of fire, secures from drowning, and, which is more, destroys sin, even as the blood of Christ does. Bellarmine says5 they are of power for the blotting out of venial sins, for the chasing away devils, for the curing of diseases; others ascribe to them a power to excite gracious motions, even ex opere operato. Now, it is acknowledged, that the natural power of these things cannot reach such effects, and that there is no virtue in or of themselves to produce them, no more than there is in such things by which magicians and conjurors work their strange feats; nor has the Lord instituted them, or anywhere promised to empower them, for such purposes, no more than he has promised to make the charm of any sorcerer effectual for marvellous operations. Bellarmine confesseth that such things have their force not by any promise of God expressed. And Suarez8 says the effect thereof is not founded in any special promise of God, because, as he had said, it does not appear there is any such promise. And they confess there is a tacit invocation of the devil in using things for effects, to which they have no power, natural or divine. There is such an invocation of the devil, says Cajetan, when one uses any thing or word as having power for such an effect, for which it appears not to have any virtue, either natural or divine, for then he tacitly consents to the aid of the devil. And so Sylvester10 after Aquinas; If the things made use of for such effects appear to have no power to produce them, it follows that they are not used for this purpose as causes, but as signs or sacramentals, and consequently they belong to some compact with the devil; and this, even the

Jesuits will acknowledge. Thus cardinal Tolet, It is to be generally observed that there is a tacit invocation of the devil when a man attempts to do anything by that which neither of itself nor by divine power produces such effects. And Filliucius, declaring the several ways whereby a magical operation may be discerned, most of which are applicable to their sacramentals, gives this as the reason of them all:12 because when the effect cannot be expected from the power of such causes, since they have it not, neither from God, who has not instituted them, it follows that it must be expected from the devil, who is therein tacitly invocated. They take it for evident, that the efficacy of such things is not from God if he did not institute them; not from God, says Filliucius, since he was not the instituter. So Sylvester2 will have the magical signs referred to diabolical compact, because, having no such power of themselves, they are not of divine institution, plainly signifying that if their sacramentals were not instituted of God, they could be no better than what he refers to the devil. Now, what evidence is there that their sacramentals are of divine institution, and appointed by God for such purposes? They say so, and that is all, and so may the magicians say, if they please, and prove it as well too; for from the word of God, the only proof in this case, neither of them have a syllable. The author and original of this strange power may hereby be discerned, and the means they use to derive it helps the discovery. They have it, they say, by virtue of their exorcisms, but if they can consecrate or exorcise a thing into a power which is above itself, and yet comes not from God, their consecrations hereby will prove no better than conjuring. And, indeed, he that reads but their consecrations may have cause to think they are no other; for instance, their form of consecrating salt in these words: I conjure thee, creature of salt, by the living God, the true God, the holy God, that thou mayest be made a conjured salt, for the salvation of believers. And the like conjuring they use for the making of holy water and other things. There is a charm in Alexander Trallianus, a magical doctor, which is exactly like these, in what the form of an enchantment requires, to convey a virtue into an herb for the cure of a disease: I exorcise, or conjure thee, by the great Jah and Sabaoth, the God that founded the earth, &c.; take the spirit of thy mother-earth and its virtue, and dry up the flux of feet and hands.4 He that will count this a charm, will have no reason to deny but the papists' form of consecration is an enchantment; and indeed the common notion of enchantment is applicable hereto. They define it to be the conveying of a marvellous power into a thing by virtue of the words of an enchanter. Now, it is a marvellous power which they will have conveyed by their consecration, since it is a power above the natural capacity of the things, and such as enables them for spiritual and supernatural effects; and they think it conveyed by virtue of the words of the consecrator, as in the other case by the words of the magician, for as soon as the words are pronounced, they believe the things so consecrated are endowed with the power. They will say, indeed, that they expect the power from God, and use his name accordingly in their consecrations; and so might enchanters and magicians say, with the like reason, for they were wont to use the name of God in their charms and incantations, as Origen assures us. Many, says he, of the Egyptians, when they are conjuring devils, insert in their incantations 'the God of Abraham;' and he says, not only the Jewish exorcists did invocate the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,6 but almost all others who meddled with conjuration and magic. Oh, but this virtue comes from the church's prayers, says Bellarmine! By these prayers, I suppose he means their forms of consecration; yet in them there is no praying, but rather plain conjuring, for the words are all of them directed to the things consecrated, and not at all to God, as is evident to any that reads them. And if they should use some prayers besides the forms of consecration, a magician may do so too besides his charm, and yet be no less an enchanter.

Origen tells us that some invocation of God and use of his name is often found in conjuring books. And what would it mend the matter for either of them to pray to God to bless an enchantment, or make his conjuring effectual? If the Ephesian magicians should have invocated God at the recital of their γρ■μματα; or the conjurors among Jews or Gentiles, in the use of their suffumigations and other magical tricks;3 or the Simonians for their agogima; or Eleazer in the application of his ring and root;5 the practice had been no better on this account, it would be still, at least, a tacit invocation of the devil, from whom alone such virtue must be expected, as is neither in the nature of the thing nor from God's appointment; yea, it would have been worse to make so bold with God as to invocate him for the service of the devil. But, indeed, popish prayers themselves, as they use them, are as like charms as they can look. In their prayers there are barbarous, i. e. unintelligible words (like those of the magician in 2. Pausanias), which the people, or priests many times, understand no more than the hard words in the charms of conjurors were understood: such as Jah, Zebaoth, Elohim, Sadai, or those which Cato says were used in a charm, for curing members out of joint; or the name Abraham, which though the conjurors in other countries used, yet they knew not what it meant, says Origen.8 They are tied to the same syllables, as conjurors are in their charms, and that they may not vary, must, as the Persian magician, read all out of a book, yea, though they have it by heart. It is not requisite by their doctrine, as we saw before, to mind the God of heaven in their prayers more than the prince of darkness. The mere muttering of the words they count effectual, as in charms and enchantments, yet they have no promise from God, that the bare recital of their forms, without any inward devotion or attention, shall prevail, more than a magician has, that such a pronouncing of the words he uses in conjuring will be prevalent; or more, that the words of a prayer which one carries in his pocket,10 another charm in use among the papists, will be effectual. So that Salmeron had more reason than he expressed, to say that their prayers were like the words of a charmer. They had need first excuse their prayers from this crime, before this will serve to excuse their sacramentals.

Sect. 7. There is another crime, no less heinous than the former, and yet in their account it is a necessary duty and a most excellent service, and that is, the destroying of Christ, which by their doctrine and laws of their church they are to do daily in the mass. To clear this, take notice of these severals: they teach that Christ is really in the mass, not only as he is God (and so everywhere), but as he is man, soul and body, flesh and blood, and there not only mystically in signs and representations, or spiritually in virtue and efficacy, but as to the very substance of his body, some say corporeally, others after the manner of a spirit; but all say the true substance of his flesh and blood is as really on the altar as his body was on the cross when nailed to it; yea, that it is there visibly, and may be (though it be not ordinarily) seen. 2. They hold that Christ is truly and properly sacrificed in the mass, and his body and blood there offered, as much as any bullock or lamb was sacrificed under the law. The council of Trent declares that the sacrifice in the mass, and that offered on the cross, is the very same for substance, and differs only in the manner of offering; and denounces a curse against any that shall say that this is not a true and proper sacrifice, or that Christ in these words, Do this, did not command the disciples, and priests after them, to sacrifice the body and blood of Christ. 3. They maintain that in every true and proper sacrifice, that which is sacrificed is really destroyed. So Bellarmine: To a true sacrifice it is required that what is offered to God in sacrifice should be plainly destroyed.3 And if it be a live thing that is offered, that it may be a true and real sacrifice, it must of necessity be slain and deprived of life. A true and real sacrifice, says he, requires the true and real killing of it, since in the killing of it the essence of the sacrifice

consists. Hence it clearly follows, and it is their own inference, that Christ being truly and properly sacrificed in the mass, he is there really consumed, killed, or destroyed; he is as really consumed in the mass as incense when it was burnt for an oblation. The body of Christ, says the cardinal, for the honour of God, is laid upon the table that it may be consumed. He is as really destroyed as the whole burnt offering was destroyed when it was totally burnt. The consumption of the sacrament, says the same author, as it is done by a sacrificing priest, is an essential part of the sacrifice; for it is a real destruction of the sacrifice, and is counted correspondent to the burning of the holocaust.5 He is as really killed in the mass, by their doctrine, as a bullock that was slain for a sacrifice. If in the mass, says he, there be not a true and real killing and slaying of Christ, it is not a true and real sacrifice; adding this reason, because the essence of a sacrifice consists in the killing of it. So also Doctor Allen says, Christ is killed there indeed, and sacrificed to God.7 And Vega, Christ is as truly slain and offered in the sacrament of the eucharist, as he is truly in the sacrament; and they think him to be as truly there as they believe him to be in heaven. Aquinas9 favours this opinion, and Gabriel insinuates it; Soto, Ledesma, Canus, and the modern Thomists do plainly deliver it, besides Bellarmine and other Jesuits. Canus says they believe that to the perfect sacrificing of an animal it ought to be destroyed and slain, if it be truly sacrificed. He says also, that the body of Christ, in the mass, is a living and breathing body, even the very same that is in heaven, and that it is truly sacrificed. What, then, can follow from hence, but that the living and breathing body of Christ in the mass is truly killed? This is not denied, only they say it is an unbloody death. And this indeed is their doctrine, Christ is put to death in the mass as he was upon the cross. It is the same death for the substance that he dies by the priest, as he died by the Jews and Romans, only with some difference in the manner of it: it was a bloody death on the cross, it is an unbloody death in the mass, but he is put to death in both. And why should they say it is an unbloody death that he suffers by the priest, since they profess that his blood is there shed and poured forth, the very same blood that was shed on the cross?2 This may seem strange, and they cross themselves here sometimes; but nothing must seem strange in the mass, for it is such a heap of absurdities and contradictions as ever entered into the fancy of any men waking and in their wits; nor could have entered into theirs, if the spirit of delusion and the dream of infallibility had not distracted them. However, this they do, and must hold, whatever come of it, that Christ is killed or destroyed in the mass. They are as much concerned to do it as all their religion comes to; for if Christ be not really destroyed in their mass, they have no true and proper sacrifice; and they tell us (to prove us altogether irreligious), where there is no proper sacrifice there can be no religion. Hereby it is very manifest that the office of their sacrificing priest is daily to offer deadly violence to Christ; that Christ in their mass is every day slain or consumed, and that the highest devotion of the Romish church is the destruction of Christ. It is true, Christ is above their reach; whatever they fancy, they cannot offer him this violence, or destroy him as they do his members; but they really design to destroy him when they would make a sacrifice of him. And they verily believe they do it, and they do all which they count requisite in order to it; and therefore they are destroyers of Christ by their own rule: to will to do it is the same wickedness with the doing of it.4 The horridness of this will be more apparent if we take notice wherefore they will thus use Christ. Their church does it for the honour of the saints and of his mother. In that part of the mass which is called the offertory, they say, We offer thee this oblation in honour of the blessed Mary, for ever a virgin, and of all the apostles, and of all the saints, that it may be for their honour. So that they sacrifice the Son to honour the mother, and destroy the Lord in honour of his servants. If one

under the law had but offered a pigeon, or the meanest sacrifice, in honour of Abraham or Moses, it would have been counted a crime worthy of the worst of deaths, for this had been an advancing them into the place of God; and yet to sacrifice the Son of God, that is, to destroy him in honour of a saint of the pope's making, is a meritorious act. Further, the priest will not venture on such a fact for nothing; he has no reason to destroy Christ, more than Judas had to betray him, without some valuable consideration. He is to sacrifice Christ for the living and the dead: for those that are dead, if they have bequeathed anything to the church for this purpose, or if their friends hire him to do it; for the living, those that are frugal, may be secretly mentioned in the momento of a common mass for a piece of money, but if any will go to the price of a particular mass, the priest is ready to sacrifice and destroy Christ on purpose for them in particular. In fine, they do not offer this to Christ for spiritual respects only, but for temporal and worldly advantages, and such often as are of no great moment.2 Christ is to be destroyed for the health and safety of any body that is catholic; yea, for the curing of a diseased horse, or the recovery of a sick pig, or the preserving of their fruit from frost or a blast. They think it not amiss for such matters as these to make a sacrifice of Christ, and to destroy him; it is done amongst them many thousand times daily. And though the apostle seems to make it a horrid crime for one to 'crucify again the Son of God,' yet for them to do that daily which, for the substance of the thing, is as destructive to Christ as the first crucifying was, is the principal part and office, and the most eminent and meritorious act of their religion.

These and such like are the prime virtues of the Romanists, most needful to be observed and practised; and if things of such a quality be so far from being relinquished, where shall we find anything which God hath made a sin that can be thought worthy to be forsaken? But I have stayed long enough here; let me proceed to the next head propounded, to satisfy us that they count it needless to forsake sin.

CHAPTER VIII Crimes exceeding great and many are but slight and venial faults by the Popish Doctrine

Sect. 1. There are innumerable evils which they call sins, yet they count it not necessary in point of salvation for any to forsake them; but give all encouragement to live and die therein, as sins for which they can never be condemned. Such are those which they count venial. Let me shew you what sins they are which they reckon to be of such a quality; and thereby it will be discerned how far their doctrine gives warranty to sins of all sorts, and to continue in the violation of all the commands of God. And this I shall do out of their own authors, such as are unexceptionable, declining the Jesuits; and thereby it will be more manifest how little reason there is to excuse the practical doctrine received in their church, by charging their impious and licentious principles upon the Society. To hate God, if it be out of inadvertency, and not with deliberation, is no mortal sin: and this they say of actual hatred; for habitual enmity against God is, with them, no sin at all. Acts of infidelity, when they are led thereto by fear,4 or worshipping an idol (such as not only we, but themselves, count idols), are no worse than venial. Unbelief, and perplexing distrustfulness of God about the things of this life, is as innocent. To present the body only before God, in all religious exercises, in prayer, the sacraments, yea, the eucharist itself, without any actual disposition suitable to the nature of the duties, without any good motion in mind or heart; without any inward attention, reverence, or devotion; without any act of faith, fear, love, desire, or any other grace or holy affection, though the want of these be voluntary, is but a venial fault. It is no worse, not only to make base and earthly things the end why we worship God, but to make that which is a sin our

design in any part of his service, yea, to propose it as the chief and principal end why we worship him; though this be no less than to prefer sin, and the pleasure of the devil, before God and his honour. To make use of a witch to dissolve some witchcraft, is scarce so much as a venial sin. And so to use the devil's assistance instead of God's, and employ others disposed thereto to act as witches, and to practise with the prince of darkness by a deputy in diabolical arts, is not unlawful. To deal with the devil for to get some knowledge by him, or obtain other things of him by such converse, is but a venial fault. For example, if an exorcist require the devil to satisfy him in some curious questions (such as tend nothing to the expelling of him); if he believe him not, but does it out of lightness and curiosity, he offends but venially.2 To use adjurations to God, or man, or angels, or devils, or irrational creatures lightly, without reverence to the name of God, or any necessity, is but a slight fault.

Sect. 2. By virtue of their doctrine concerning venial sins, they have formed rules to encourage men in the practice and constant use of all sorts of profane and wicked oaths. They acknowledge that the oath is sinful, unless it be made in truth, and judgment, and righteousness; when that which is sworn is not true, or not just and righteous, or not with reverence and discretion; yet they teach it is but a venial fault to swear without5 reverence or discretion, or without righteousness also, if that be not much. So that, though swearing be an act, as they tell us, of God's worship, wherein divine honour is given to him whom we swear by, yet this may be done without reverence and discretion (as the rest of their worship is), and God may be solemnly called to witness that the man intends to sin against him, if it be not much; and this without any great fault. A habit of swearing thus, or worse, is no sin, for habits of what wickedness soever are not forbidden. To use this habit frequently, so as to swear customarily, almost at every word (tertio quoque verbo), unless he regard not at all whether he swear true or false, yea, though he regard not that as much as he ought, is no more a fault. So to swear8 out of lightness and vanity, upon any the slightest occasion, without any advantage or the least necessity, is as innocent a practice, according to all their doctors. And the common practice of their catholics is correspondent to these conscientious rules. You can scarce find any one, (says Soto) who will either begin or end the least discourse without an oath; for they use oaths for ornaments of speech at every word. But should they not at least endeavour to leave this custom of swearing? No, never to endeavour; it is but a small fault. Although (says one of their most approved casuists) he sins venially who swears true without any necessity, and so the custom of swearing be evil and pernicious, yet he sins not mortally who labours not to break off that custom, because it is but an occasion of falling into venial faults. Hereby they have encouragement, not only to accustom themselves to this impious practice, wherein so much profaneness, irreverence, and contempt of God is expressed, but also never to give it over, yea, never to endeavour it. And the reason whereby they warrant this, reaches all the wickedness which by those conscientious divines is counted venial; they may commit it customarily, continually, and need never go about to do better; all will be but a fault so small as is next to nothing. They need not regard in what terms their oaths are dressed. They may swear [by the] body or blood of God, by Cajetan's leave;2 yea, though they swear by such parts of Christ's body, or such members of the saints, or the virgin mother, as are not to be named (per inhonesta membra), it is but venial, if without contempt and scandal, which will make an act, in itself lawful, to be criminal. And though they seem to give caution that what is sworn be not false, since this cannot be excused by any artifice from being damnable, yet they try what may be done to make this go down as easily as the rest. If the thing sworn be false, and he knows it, yet swears it by his

faith, or troth, or this fire, such perjury is venial, non peccant mortaliter cum perjurant (Angel. after Aureolus v. perjurium). To swear that which is false in jest is a harmless venial, by the gloss upon their law. Commonly to swear that which is false, without considering whether it be false or no, or whether he swear or not, is as harmless.5 This is the judgment of Aquinas and their common doctrine: so that if a man heed not what he does, he may do what he will, and, as it were, wink a damnable crime into a slight fault. By this expedient he may swear false as commonly as true without any considerable hurt. This is enough, one would think, to render their worse sort of swearing, perjury itself, practicable in ordinary, with ease and safety. Yet, as an overplus, they add, he that swears what is false through gross or careless ignorance, thinking it to be true, though if he use due diligence, he sins not at all; yet if he used some diligence, but not enough, he offends no more than venially, if Aquinas or the common doctrine may be credited; for this is it, saith Navarre. And that, which way soever a man turn himself, he may have liberty to be perjured, they teach that he that swears the truth, believing it to be false, and takes notice that he swears, but minds not what he swears, sins not mortally; or if he neither regard the one nor the other, but does both without consideration, it is only a little fault,2 unless this inconsiderateness was wilful and out of contempt, for then perhaps it may be worse upon the account of contempt; probable error will excuse perjury from mortal guilt, as if one appeals, thinking there is reasonable cause for it, though he has sworn before not to appeal. So Panormitan. and Angel. Sum. v. Perjur.

He that hears a thing from a person of credit, may swear it is true, only not in court, unless he express his reason (Bonacin. tom. ii. disp. iv. q. i. punct. iii. n. vii). But as if it were not sufficient for a man to swear false himself, they conclude he may without harm draw others to do it also; for, 1, they say he may induce others to swear, when he is not satisfied whether they will swear true or false; that is the opinion of Aquinas and their common doctrine. Further, he that knows another will swear false, may yet put him upon it, if he be a public person; that is also the opinion of Aquinas, and commonly embraced by their doctors;4 yea, moreover, any one whosoever may put him to swear whom he fears, or knows will forswear himself, if he be disposed to swear. Let us see in the next place, whether they may not be as perfidious in promissory oaths, as they may be false in others, and upon as easy terms: in all cases, good, or bad, or indifferent. He that swears he will not go to or pass by such or such a place, though he do it for no end that is honest or profitable,6 sins not mortally if he go contrary to his oath. He that swears he will do a thing lawful, and does it not, sins but venially if it was a small matter; this is the common opinion which Navarre attempts to prove with several reasons. As if a woman swears she will give her children apples to quiet them, and gives them none; or swears to chastise them, and does it not (which are Cajetan's instances, though he vary from the rest in the general conclusion); or if a man swear he will say an Ave-Mary, and says it not; or swears to say a Pater-Noster, or to give a small matter, and gives it not; or not to take place of his friend, and yet does it; or to game no more, and plays a little: in such cases any breach of promises, confirmed by oaths, is but a small fault; and consequently it will be no worse in all matters, not only small but great, for the obligation of an oath rises not from the quantity of the matter sworn, but from the concern and interest of God in an oath, he being invocated therein as witness. Now this is always the same, whether the matter be less or more; and so if they be not obliged to keep oaths in less matters, neither are they bound in greater. But by their rules of conscience they are set at liberty to break all. He that swears to give a whore one hundred crowns for the act of fornication, is only bound to give her that part of it which persons of his condition are wont to give such women, because a prodigal engagement confirmed by oath obliges only to that

proportion in which there is no profuseness (Bannes et alii in Diana, v. promiss.). If a man swear to be true to a whore, and she to be faithful to him, so as to entertain no other, the oath doth not oblige either of them to such honesty (Idem, v. juram. n. x). Whether the matter be small or great, when one is drawn by fear, or brought by law to swear, if he break his oath that is promissory, he sins but venially (Pet. Aureolus, Joh. Andreas, et multi alii; et placet Angel, sum. v. Perjur. n. vii.). He that swears he will not observe some evangelical counsel3 (that which is not only lawful, but excellently good, and better in their account than what the law of God requires), offends but venially; so their authors generally. And yet to these counsels they have reduced a great part, almost all, which God has made our duty, as we shewed before; so that a man may call God to witness, that he is resolved not to do what he has made his duty. As for one to bind himself by oath that he will not lend to his neighbour, nor be surety for any, nor give alms to any in great necessity, nor do any of those important things, which they count works of supererogation, is but a small venial.5 Such oaths, they say, do give obstruction to the Spirit of God, yet they may be kept without sin. He that swears he will return to prison and does not, is no more guilty, if he was not duly imprisoned. He that swears he will commit any sin if it be but a venial, offends but venially; this is the common doctrine, well declared by Cajetan and Navarre, as he tells us.7 As if a man should swear that he would never use to speak without an oath, or never avoid any of those horrid acts which they mince into venials. To call God to witness that he purposes thus to dishonour him, is, it seems, no great contempt of him, or else a great contempt of God with them is but a trifle. This is to threaten God to his face, and call upon him to take notice of it, that they will do these evils against him. Soto and others say, it is such a threatening of God when they swear to commit mortal sin, and no difference can possibly be here discerned, but that the one is a threatening God with a greater evil, the other with a less; however, this is their common doctrine, Assertio posita communis est. They give as much liberty for fraudulent oaths, whereby God and man are abused; to swear with equivocation or mental restriction, so as those to whom oath is made are deluded, is with them, in many cases, not so bad as a venial evil, of which in due place. To take an oath outwardly, without an intent to swear, is but a small fault, though it seem a mocking of the divine Majesty, and is cross to the end of an oath, if it be unduly required. So they determine also in case one swear without an intention to oblige himself. Angelus inquires, whether he sins who takes an oath with a mind not to be obliged; he tells us2 Panormitan affirms, that if he be a perfectionist (id est, a votary) who so swears, he sins venially, otherwise not; but himself says, Whether he be perfect or imperfect, he sins not so much as venially, and proves it by their law. He takes an oath, which in its own nature obligeth, without an intention to be obliged; he calls God to witness when he is deluding men; he abuses the name and authority of God for a cheat; and yet offends but venially, whoever he be, says one; and sins not at all, says another, but then he explains it: Understand this when in swearing, he had a mind to use an oath for reverence to God, but not for obliging himself. So that must be for reverence to God which mocks him, and he must be invocated in a way that is most obliging, without any intent to be obliged. And further, to prevent falseness (where there is nothing but fraud), he must swear with a mental reservation. For example, I promise thee an hundred (pound), with this inward reserve not expressed: If I be bound to pay it; for such concealments, says he, are lawful, and quotes their church law for it, as allowing that, which all other laws of God or honest men condemn.4 It is plain by the premises that their doctrine encourages the Roman catholics to venture upon all sorts of oaths, in many cases, whether they be rash, or injurious, or fraudulent, or false, as slight and trivial faults. No more do

they make of perjury, though it be frequent and customary. If more evidence be desired, take notice only of the determination of Dominicus Soto (a grave and learned doctor, and one who was a principal divine in the council of Trent). He having premised something concerning the heinousness of perjury, that the Lord forbids it, with a particular emphasis more than other sins; that it is a greater crime than murder, and is most grievously punished both by God and man; his tamen non obstantibus, all this notwithstanding, he lays down two conclusions, in which he maintains perjuries of all sorts, id est, both in promissory and assertory oaths, to be no worse than venial: 1. Every assertory oath, though it be vain and unlawful, and in a sort perjury, is not a mortal sin, but oftentimes venial. 2. There are many promissory perjuries (promissoria perjuria) which are no greater faults than venial, and reduces these perjuries to four general heads (under which many thousands of particular cases may be obtained), and all must pass for venial. Then, for customariness of such perjuries, how commonly, how often soever a man is guilty thereof, that makes them not mortal; he speaks of some mentioned by Scotus, who thought that a light perjury was no worse than venial, but if it were customary, it would be mortal; but he confutes this opinion by a principle generally received, that a multiplication of the same acts, do not change the nature thereof, that is, ten thousand venial acts do not make one mortal sin; and concludes,4 if the perjury be but venial (as it may be by his determinations now mentioned in many thousand instances), how habitual and customary soever it be, it is not thereby mortal; so that if a man, how talkative soever, should never speak while he lives but with an oath, or such perjury as he here excuses, yet all the perjuries of a whole life would not be a mortal sin.

Sect. 3. They determine in their schools, that of all sins those are the greatest and most heinous, that are against the theological virtues and religion. Of those against religion (which are counted sacrilege), there are three degrees; and in the highest of all (containing crimes against the deity and being of God), as the most grievous, they place perjury, blasphemy, and the sins against the Holy Ghost (and those in the same rank with these), yet for practice how little they make of perjury we have seen. Blasphemy meets with the same measures; they teach it may be but a venial fault in any of those cases wherein they describe it: whether by denying God's infinite perfections, his wisdom, goodness, justice, providence, &c.; or by charging what is reproachful to him, as injustice, partiality, impotency, cruelty, ignorance, &c.; or by ascribing his incommunicable excellencies to others, as calling a friend our God; or attributing the divine perfections to the devil; or else, by way of detestation, decrying, renouncing, cursing God, with imprecations against his blessedness or being; or else by way of derision, &c. Now it will be but a venial fault to blaspheme the divine Majesty in such a manner, (1) when it is out of lightness of mind; or (2) when it is sudden from passion; so Sylvester2 after Aquinas. And Navarre after Angelus adds, that it is not material though the passion be without just cause, or in gaming, or from drunkenness, or any unlawful employment, such passion and excess will be so far from being great sins, that they will lessen the greatest. Or (3) when it is from wicked custom, with contempt of one's own salvation;4 when one is so habituated in the practice of reproaching God, that blasphemies break from him without observance or consideration. So Cajetan and Sotus, and Navarre after Sylvester. Thus, by their rules, the more a man sins in the most horrid instances, the less will his sin be. To blaspheme God customarily, may be a slight fault, when to do it rarely will be a most deadly crime. Here is a course described, to make such blaspheming of God, as a soul that has any sense of his majesty, can neither think nor speak of without horror, to be familiar and practicable without danger. Let him, then, blaspheme God at first out of levity or passion, he may do it thus customarily with safety; and

the oftener he does it, the more he secures himself; for when he hath so perfected this habit of wickedness by custom, that blasphemies will issue from him without his notice or observance, he may, when he is not heated by passion, reproach God at every word while he lives, and breathe out his soul with blasphemies when he dies, and yet be saved, for all this will amount to no more than such faults as never endanger the soul of a Roman catholic. There needs no more to make mortal sins venial but to get the perfect habit of them; that is, if a man be but wicked enough, there is no great danger.

Sect. 4. For the sanctifying the Lord's day, or any other which they count holy, all that is necessary is the worship of the mass only, with abstaining from servile works; this is enough on any festival for the avoiding of mortal sin. It is their common doctrine, and there is not anything wherein they more generally agree. So it is to be observed, that the total sum of all the holiness which is necessary for these catholics, even at those times when it should appear, if ever, and all which they are obliged to exercise, consists in their being at mass, and avoiding servile work. What holy attendance at the mass they count necessary, we saw before; they may spend the time in sleeping, or talking, or laughing, or scoffing: only with some little intermissions, that they may stand at the gospel, and kneel at the consecration, and bow at the elevation; but therein no inward act being necessary, all the holiness requisite lies in their legs, which should be ordered as the priest gives the signal; yet even this they are not obliged to, who neither hear nor see what is done; and it is not needful, at the mass, for any of the people so much as to use their senses. When the mass (which may begin at break of day, or before) is despatched in such a holy manner, with such attendance as would scarce be counted civil, at least sufficient, at a stage-play, they may spend the rest of the day according to this beginning.2 Those (says Cajetan) who, after mass, vainly consume the rest of those days in sports, in jesting, in idle vagaries, in hunting, in seeing shows or plays, and anything of this nature, by such acts, because they are not servile works (upon which account, they say, that no other acts of wickedness are a profaning of these days, or a breach of that precept), they incur no mortal sin. But then he (who is more precise herein than the generality of their divines) brings an after reckoning. Yet, says he, hereby, because they neglect that divine worship for which these days were instituted, they sin greatly.4 How can that be, since he said immediately before, that they sin not mortally? Why, there is a latitude in their venial faults, some are great and some less; and so with him, to neglect all worship but the mass is a great sin of the little size. He gives the reason, because hereby they give not to God the things that are God's, and as much as in them lies make the festivals of Christians ridiculous, according to that Lamentations 1:7. So that, by him, those who, after morning service, spend this day in such pastimes, they rob God of his due, and they render Christians, in their pretences to the sanctifying of the Lord's day or others, ridiculous to the world; and yet this is but a venial sin; or at worst, but a great little fault, not so great as any man need fear; no, not he who is most afraid of damnation. Navarre adds another reason why it should be a sin, though but a venial, to consume these days but in recreations; because in such employments many mortal sins occur, according to Antoninus, who says, The blindness of Christians is to be lamented with the tears of all men, who more grievously offend God, on the days appointed for his worship, than the whole week besides. Notwithstanding this is their way of sanctifying the Lord's day, and all other times for devotion of their own; with profane and irreligious divertisements, such as render their pretences to religion ridiculous (as the cardinal notes), accompanied with such debaucheries, as make their holy days the profanest of all others. It is but a venial fault at most (for many count it not so much), to consume the whole day herein

without any other religious act, or exercise of any sort whatever. They need hear no sermons, nor attend their vespers, nor use any prayers, public or private, nor read the Scriptures, nor sing the praises of God, nor meditate on him; nor have any one act of love, or contrition, nor any other act of inward worship at all, nor of outward either, but only part of the mass. This will serve for all, so highly divine and religious a service it is; though they declare themselves not obliged therein, either to mind God or divine things. Yea, though they hear mass (when nothing else is needful for the sanctifying of the day) out of contempt for the day; yet the precept is satisfied. But if they be not at mass on those days (though presence at mass may make all other holy duties unnecessary in other cases, yet) should they not make up that defect with some other prayers or religious exercise, lest God should have no service at all, nor show of it, in public or private, on those days which alone are set apart for that purpose? No; if they neglect mass, either upon reasonable or damnable occasions (to wit, if they spend the time when they should be at it, in any other wickedness), yet are they not obliged to prayer, or any other act of worship, on those days afterwards.2 This is the doctrine, not only of their famous Navarre, but of Pope Adrian, and their St Antoninus, with others. Yea, after all other holy exercises are cashiered as needless on any of their holy times, the mass itself may be dismissed too for company. And because all their religion necessary for the people consists in this, at all times, when anything religious is by their doctrine needful for them, it will not be amiss to observe how easily they may be excused from this. Thereby we may discern of what moment it is in their account to have nothing at all of religion amongst them. Cardinal Cajetan will satisfy us herein: he determines that it is no mortal sin to neglect the mass on a reasonable occasion, though it be but such an occasion as is not urgent. Yea, he says, it is but a venial fault to omit it, upon no sufficient reason, and universally it is no great fault to neglect it, if a man thinks really he may be excused from hearing it, or if, besides his intention, out of some negligence it be omitted.4 Yea, they may be excused by custom; for so, he says, maids are excused from hearing mass till they be married (and their mothers, too, who are obliged to stay at home with them), because so is the custom. If so were the custom, it seems, all the rest might be excused. So many ways, at least, may these catholics be excused from all their religion; by custom, or necessity, or opinion, or (which alone may suffice) by an insufficient reason; it will be but a venial fault at most, together with all religious exercises, to omit the mass too; and that at those times when alone (if ever) they are obliged to them. Such being their doctrine, we need not wonder if religion be starved to death among them; the life of it cannot be sustained (no more than God can be honoured by mankind) without some acts of worship and religious exercises in ordinary practice. Their teachers assure them that they are not ordinarily obliged to any of these on common days; and to none of them all, but the mass, on their days of worship; nor to any religious attendance on God or their souls, in that; nor to any attendance on it at all, but what they may decline, without mortal sin. If the life of religion be preserved amongst any, without its necessary supports and proper nourishment, it must be by a miracle; but they seem so far from regarding the life or the power of it (on which the honour of God and the salvation of souls depends), that they are not concerned for the carcase of it, in exterior acts; no, not that of the mass (when they have reduced all to that), further than the fear of a venial sin will oblige, ten millions of which cannot, as they teach, damn a man. As for servile works, abstaining from which they make the negative part of this precept, the avoiding of these is but that we may with more leisure attend on divine worship; it cannot be expected they will much insist on the means, when they have so overturned the end. In short, they determine that they who do any servile or

forbidden works on the Lord's day, if they do it not with a design to profane it, offend but venially. Thus, if they never all their life perform one religious act which God has commanded, on his own day or others, they scarce sin venially; or, if they neglect that, which themselves have made the religious duty of these days, they may do it without greater fault or danger. And for the negative part, if they consume these days in servile works (without an intention needlessly perverse), or, which is worse, in profane divertisements; yea, or in acting the most enormous wickedness (as we shall see in its place); yet by their doctrine they do nothing against this precept, or nothing which any of them need regard. Thus their doctrine of venial sins is improved to possess them with a conceit, that they may make what breaches they will upon the commandments of God, without doing anything at all (or anything dangerously) against them, and so to render all sorts of ungodliness practicable with safety. We have seen it in instances against precepts of the first table; let us see if those who make so bold with God, in the duties which more immediately concern himself, will be more tender as to those which respect man.

Sect. 5. The duties which children owe their parents (to instance, for briefness, only in those which the Lord hath made the exemplar of the other, and by which we may pass a judgment on the rest), they reduce to these three: reverence, love, and obedience. In reference to the first, they conclude that those who have no more respect for their parents, than to count it a disgrace and a shame to be their children, if it be for the inconveniences of a sinister opinion, or such like cause, sin not mortally; and the fault may be less still, if the parents consent to it expressly, or tacitly, to avoid some inconvenience. It seems the command calls for no such reverence from children; but they may be ashamed of their parents if they be poor and low in the world. Children may curse their parents, if they do it but with their lips, and this whether they be alive or dead, the offence is but venial. And, indeed, they allow parents to give their children occasion enough to curse them, when they will not have them obliged, under mortal sin, to teach them any more than the sign of the cross, the small creed, and paternoster; nor teach them these in a language they understand.3 However, parents may come even with their children, and if they love and reverence their father and mother, so much as to curse them, their parents may curse them again, upon as easy terms, only they should not desire mischief to them in their hearts, though their words express that desire. When parents curse their children, having no inward desire of their mischief, it is never a mortal sin, says Soto5 (and it may seem strange, considering the account of it immediately added): Although it be indeed a wicked custom, and not at all for correction; besides, that the heat of cursing often raises anger into hatred, and so alters the mind, that they often desire that all the mischief imprecated may befall them; besides, the appellation of the devil can scarce be excused from a mortal evil, for it is a kind of blasphemy and scandal to wish eternal death to any. Yet all this, it seems, may be excused from deadly sin, though not very easily. For love, they may rejoice at the death of their father, because of some outward advantage they gain thereby; they may accuse their parents of heresy, though the effect of that will be a cruel death to those who gave them life.7 As to obedience; in things that pertain not to paternal government, it is no mortal sin to disobey them. In any things whatsoever it is but a venial fault to disobey them, out of negligence or sensualness;9 and so there is room enough for a continued disobedience while they live. In matters of great importance, where, if ever, disobedience would be mortal, they exempt it from such guilt. They may enter into a monastery before they are at age, though their parents charge them not to do it; they may dispose of themselves in marriage without their parents' consent, because, according to Aquinas, in the choice of their condition they are not subject to their

parents, and their parents' concurrence herein is for decency, not out of necessity.11 Not only in things of great consequence as to this life, but in matters necessary to their salvation, it is but a venial fault if they disobey them; so it be not out of contempt, that is, out of obstinacy and pertinaciousness. Thus Sylvester and others. De Graffiis is more particular herein: a son should not be disobedient to his father in things which belong to the family, and his salvation, as in avoiding pernicious company, and unlawful games, and whores; he should not disobey him herein out of contempt, by which (says he) I understand obstinacy and pertinaciousness, so that not to be obedient (herein) out of inconsiderateness, or negligence, or sensuality, would be venial.2 They encourage a maid not only to dispose of herself in marriage without consent of parents, but also to give up herself to uncleanness. If she willingly be deflowered, they conclude it is no injury to her nor to her future husband, nor to her parents. Their reason is, because she has the disposing of her own body, and so may use it freely, for the satisfying of lust, though not lawfully; yet lawfully too so far that they will have this lewdness to be no wrong at all to the parties most concerned, herself or others. If she be unchaste herein, yet not unrighteous, she owes not so much obedience to her parents as to keep herself honest; nor have they authority to oblige her not to be a whore, no more than not to be a nun. By this we may take an estimate of the honour which other superiors must expect, by their rules of morality. I must not descend to other particulars, fearing tediousness.

Sect. 6. They hold that he breaks not the sixth (in their account the fifth) commandment, who desires, or procures, or does any mischief to another's soul. It seems it is no murder to kill the soul. It is a rule with them, that sins in heart, word, and deed are of the same kind.5 So they yield to Christ in this, that anger and hatred may be a kind of murder; yet they think fit to exempt these, for the most part, from mortal guilt. When there has been such hatred and enmity betwixt two, as neither of them will be induced to speak to the other, yet both are to be absolved (says de Graffis) when there is such indignation that will admit of no affability or converse. It is a fault, says Cajetan, for the inordinancy of the passion, yet commonly venial.7 They would reconcile us to anger when both the measure and the effects of it seem intolerable, when it is so extravagant as that it both burns excessively within, and flames out no less in external significations of its excess, yet such an excess is a small fault. It will be as harmless, though it be revengeful too, if it seek not a great revenge; yea, a man as innocently seeks and takes the greatest revenge, if he do it inconsiderately. This they deny not when they tell us withal that the passion may be but venial when it makes a person inconsiderate; so that a man may destroy all that he is angry at if his passion be but quick, and great enough. To desire that he whom we count our enemy were killed, or to rejoice that he is murdered, if it be for some good that ensues upon it, is no crime.2 No more it seems than it is for the cannibals to delight to have others killed; it is for the good they reap thereby, they have the advantage to feed on them. They will scarce be able to persuade one that it is unlawful to act what he may lawfully desire; yet they count it no sin to desire the death not only of those that are mischievous, and do or may do them hurt, but of such as are innocent; nor only of strangers, or of such they count enemies, but even of their nearest relations. A woman may desire the death of her daughters because they are unhandsome or poor, so that she cannot marry them according to her mind; and the reason (which must clear this from guilt) is, because this is not a hatred of enmity to their persons, but only a hatred of abomination as to their unhandsomeness and poverty. Thus she may hate her own children to any degree of abhorrence, so far as to will them the grandest evil in this world, death itself, because they are not rich; or because they are not comely; she may kill them, so far as her mind and heart can do it, upon this account, and sacrifice

them inwardly to her covetousness, or ambition, or curiosity, and this very innocently. An affecting to kill one's enemy without consent is but a venial fault with Cajetan. If he actually kill him, so it be done indeliberately, he does no great harm. The rule received by them without exception will warrant it, surprise and inconsiderateness excuses from mortal sin.4 Thus, if a man kills any he meets with, without any deliberation at all, through natural hastiness, drink, or passion, it is no mortal sin; yea, it may be done as easily, with some deliberation, if that be not full and perfect; and there are so many things which they tell us of to hinder it from being full, that killing of others may be a common practice, with little or no fault. But when it is more voluntary, there are more cases, wherein they make murder no sin at all, than so much as a venial fault, of which in its proper place.

Sect. 7. Proceed we to the next command. Some of their doctors have determined that fornication is not intrinsecally evil, nor forbidden because it is evil, but only evil because it is forbidden. So Martinus à Magistris, and after him Durandus, held that fornication is not condemned by the law of nature as a sin deserving eternal death, but is only prohibited by a positive law, Deuteronomy 23:1-25, Ephesians 5:1-33, and so it will be no worse, nor deserve any more than a venial fault, since a positive law neither adds to the penalty nor makes it a greater evil, but only declares the native evil of it more expressly. Not only fornication, but also adultery, even in the clergy, has passed amongst them as a lesser sin, and is so expressed in the pontifical law. For some crimes clergymen were to be deposed, for others the bishop might dispense with them, to wit, when they were lesser faults. Amongst these lesser, Pope Alexander III. reckons adulteries; but for adulteries, says he, and other lesser crimes, the bishop, after they have done penance, may dispense with the clergy. They teach that for a whore, though she be a married woman, or a nun, to seek or receive a reward for prostituting herself, is but a venial fault, if any, only they differ how she should have it. Some say as a gift or gratuity,2 but others as a hire, legally due in justice; by which it is evident that either they must think such uncleanness not to be intrinsecally evil, or else that it is as warrantable to seek and receive rewards for other such acts of wickedness (as for slandering, robbing, assassinating men, or firing houses, &c.). The use of matrimony before the marriage be solemnised, if it be without contempt, is no mortal sin, says Cajetan,4 because neither the violation of rules nor of custom, through the weakness of passion, can be mortal. Others concur with him herein. Nor do Antoninus and John Tabienna much mend the matter, who will have the first act to be a sin, but none of the rest after. He or she who first contracts marriage with one privately, and after with another publicly, sins not mortally, if they lie with the former without scandal, but is bound to live with the latter, the church commanding it, if there be no danger of coming together. As though they could cohabit together as man and wife without such danger! This is in effect to determine they may lie with both, and they that have a mind to it may have warranty from the master of sentences6 for the latter, and from the master of the sacred palaces, and others, for the former. A woman whose chastity is attempted with some force,8 though she cry not out, though she call not for help when it may be had, though she make no resistance at all with any part of her, though she do not so much as any way move to hinder it, yea, though she take natural pleasure in the act, yet if her will do not deliberately consent (though they say in any court she could not in such circumstances but be presumed to consent), she sins not mortally; thus Soto with others. They confess that a woman can scarce ever do this and be honest, and yet give this encouragement to all to do it. Here is a way to have all women corrupted that are but attempted with eagerness, if the rules of those who have the guidance of their practice and consciences be but complied with. Impetuous lust may make the essay upon any without fear of so much as a

check or any resistance, and those who are engaged by the laws of nature, God, and man, to make opposition, may innocently give place to it without struggling; yea, they may be chaste enough though they yield to such lust with pleasure, so it be no more than sensual, and these delights be not jumbled together in practice, which in the doctrine of their teachers is sufficiently distinguished and parted for them. They bid fair also to make that uncleanness to which persons are drawn by the power of courtship and insinuation pass as innocent; for they say that is no sin which is involuntary, and that is not voluntary to which we are necessitated; and Cajetan tells us (in a case much akin to this) that our passions, excited by exterior persuasion, do, as it were, offer us violence; after he had informed us that what whores extort by flatteries more than their hire is an involuntary gift, the mind being this way necessitated; and sure flatteries in reference to the act, as well as the reward, may as much necessitate, and make the one as involuntary as the other; further, if man or woman need neither force nor importunity, but be ready to commit uncleanness without more ado, one may without sin invite them to it. Self-pollution is no mortal sin in any that desire it may befall them in their sleep for the ease of nature;2 nor is it a sin to be pleased with it when it is past for a good end, and so Aquinas, Paludanus, and the common doctrine; nor to be pleased with it as future, if the pleasure do not cause it, nor to be pleased with it when it befalls them awake,4 if the pleasure be but sensual, and not rational. Under the favour of this distinction they may act uncleanness, either natural or against nature, and that with delight too; for though the lower faculties take pleasure therein, yet if the superior either check it, or run not into a full compliance therewith, they are safe. They encourage them to venture upon, and continue in, such occasions of uncleanness, as those who think it needful to avoid the acts cannot but judge necessary to be abandoned. They that eat hot meats, such as provoke and cause uncleanness, or otherwise eat excessively, if they do it not with such an intention, but to satisfy their gluttony, or for other cause, yea, though they doubt uncleanness will be the issue of it, offend but venially. Carnal touches,6 used for sensual pleasure, without designing the act of uncleanness or the delight of it (though it be confessed that of all other occasions this leads most directly and most dangerously to the consummation of the act), yet are they but venial faults with many of their writers. To go to the place or company where is danger of sinning mortally, by reason of the sights, persuasions, opportunities, or anything of this nature, though it be done without any cogent necessity, is not a mortal sin with them; and the reason is, because it rests in the man’s free will not to sin mortally, though such occasions of sinning be offered. Filthy discourse, when it is out of lightness and curiosity, without any other ill design, or when it is merely for the pleasure taken in the obscene talk, without any further intention, is no worse than a venial fault.2 The filthiness which the apostle forbids, Ephesians 5:4, Bellarmine, understanding thereby filthy words, will have it be but a venial; and the same he determines not only of filthy talking, but scurrility; and Cardinal Cajetan4 before him, says, in its own nature it is not a mortal sin, though he describes it to be shameless mirth; and Alensis refers it to lascivious affection; and in Angelus,6 it is a provoking others to laughter either by idle or obscene words. A woman sins not mortally, who, being moved with the affection of a little vain-glory, without any other deadly intention, does paint or adorn herself, although she believe that some who see her in such a dress will be inflamed with mortal lust, when it is certain also, that without any disparagement or inconvenience, she might abstain from such a garb; yea, though she so trick up herself, that some may be induced to love her honestly but carnally, or with a dishonest affection either, only not beyond the bounds of venial uncleanness. This being their doctrine, no wonder if Christian purity be abandoned in their practice. Navarre,8 tells us there is

such a deluge of unbridled luxury amongst them who are so near a kin, that he dares not express it; and amongst the married and unmarried, amongst virgins consecrated and unconsecrated, that divine and immense goodness may send upon them a horrible deluge of all calamities, not only corporal, but spiritual. And because it is not lawful for one to take the profession of a nun if she have committed uncleanness before, he says that there are few grown up that without caution can be lawfully consecrated for virgins.

Sect. 8. For theft, they teach that to steal anything of small value is but a venial fault; for this is the rule they universally proceed by, the smallness of a thing in all causes excuses from mortal sin; and thus far all are encouraged to steal, not only strangers, but children from their fathers, and wives from their husbands, and servants from their masters.2

1. A servant may be excused from mortal guilt if he steal from his master by little and little, though in time it come to a considerable sum, provided he convert it to his own use. He should not, it seems, steal for others too, unless he do it out of charity.

2. A son may steal more from his father than strangers or servants may do; he must be regulated herein by his father's estate. This love and indulgence to him, the greater that it is, the more he may steal from him. They excuse him if he steal from his father the sum of three crowns; they say not that it may not be a greater, but only that it should not be a far greater sum.

3. Accordingly, he may spend what he gets from his father in gaming, or in recreations, not only such as are honest, but also luxurious, without any more guilt.

4. If his father allow him not what others of his condition do, he may filch from him privily what a prudent confessor thinks fit. Thus men's estates will be at the confessor's discretion, and as much may be stolen from them as their priests please.

5. Or if he do business for his father, his expenses deducted, he may keep to himself as much as a stranger would have for such service.

Now, that we may know when theft will be a mortal crime, it must be known of what value the thing stolen must be to make it so; and this not being determined by any law natural, divine, or human, they agree, that this must be determined by the judgment of a good man; and who better than the Casuists, since they ought, and are presumed to be, both knowing and conscientious? Let but them conclude (and they have done worse in many cases) that things of great worth are not of value sufficient to make the stealing thereof to be a mortal sin, and then theft, neither little nor great, will be criminal. Thus this command of God (as the rest are) will be made of none effect by this distinction. An engine which (as they work it) serves to destroy both law and gospel, and to sink Christianity, in morals, many degrees below heathenism. Let us see what progress they have made herein, and whether they have not done it in effect already. They teach that to steal anything, though in itself small, yet of great value in the account of the owner, and of much consequence to him; so that the damage he suffers by it, and the trouble it gives him, is really great, yet if the thief did not, or could not know it, it is but venial.9 Yet the reason why they count the stealing of a small thing, to be but a little fault; is because the owner is presumed not unwilling the stealer should have it, it being no considerable loss, or trouble to him; but this cannot be presumed in the now mentioned cases. And if theft, whether of small or great consequence, whether with or without that which makes little theft to be venial, be still no worse than venial, then

will no theft be mortal. They also teach, that those who are in need, though it be not extreme, but such only as would be counted great, may steal from others for their relief;2 nor are they bound to make restitution, when they have got a good estate. Thus theft will be made as common as moderate indigence; and the practice being continued, as long as there is need, it may amount in a while to a considerable sum; yea, when the necessitous are grown rich, those whose estates are impaired by such thefts shall have no reparation. Thus a wide door is opened for common thievery in considerable quantities, without any restraint, either from respect to sin or to satisfaction. Further, when so many persons in no necessity take each of them a little fruit from a vineyard or an orchard, or a little corn from a field, that there is nothing at all left for the owner, yet if they did not conspire together to do this, it is a small fault.4 And thus any men of estates (since it holds in other cases, no less than those specified) may be utterly impoverished; and yet those that ruin them be guilty of nothing that they need regard. Moreover, when any one without any need continues so long in the stealing matters of less worth from one person or many, that in time they rise to a great value, and the thief thrives into a good estate thereby, without designing it, this altogether is no more than a venial fault; nor will it be worse, though he never make restitution, if there was any considerable interval betwixt the acts of theft, say some; no, nor if there were no such intervals, say others.6 The consequence of which is, as Lopez observes, that any innkeeper or tradesman may grow rich, and raise a fair estate, without mortal sin, by defrauding all that buy of them, a little, in false measures, and so fleecing a whole town. And why might not they as well conclude, that he who beats another, so it be but with little blows, though he beat him to death, offends but venially? These of old were thought alike.8 They conclude also, that such a quantity may be stolen as is sufficient to make it a mortal sin, without sinning mortally, if it be for a good end. These are some of the instances they give: 1, A man may steal to give alms. We need not wonder at this, since they think not much to rob Christ of his honour in all their good works, and so commit the worst kind of robbery (the highest sacrilege) in their best acts, arrogating that to them which is Christ's peculiar satisfaction and merit. And then, that the charitable thief, if he become rich, is not bound to restore what is stolen, is the common opinion. Also, one may steal money from another, rather than he shall venture it in gaming;2 for it is good divinity with them (whatsoever it was with the apostle) that one evil may be done to hinder another, and that not only in other sins (as friar Joseph would limit it), but such as are intrinsecally evil; for example, if one be about to commit adultery, it will be a lawful, a holy act, to beseech and persuade him to commit fornication. Or nearer the matter in hand, if one be ready to steal an hundred pounds, I may advise him to steal fifty, and so persuade to a mortal sin with some moderation. They think it not only lawful to persuade a thief to a smaller robbery, but also to accompany and assist him therein. Further, a woman, if her husband be profuse, may against his command take away his goods, and conceal them to provide for the future.4 If a man be distracted, or if he be absent, his wife may spend more of his estate than he would do if he were sober or present (Bonacin. ibid). Finally, they all agree, that to steal anything, of what value soever, inconsiderately, that is, without full and perfect deliberation, is but a venial trespass. And how he can be obliged to restore it, by their principles, I understand not; since they hold that no man is bound to make restitution but for a mortal offence. If in a matter that is weighty, the fault be venial, for want of full consideration, it will not be so much as a small fault, not to make restitution, how much soever be stolen inconsiderately.6 By these and such like rules, they have opened a way to make thievery, small or great, practicable, without any sin or danger, but what is small and inconsiderable in their account.

Scholars, and those who count good books their treasure, are by their doctrine exposed more particularly, for they teach, that to take away heretical books from such as have not licence to read them, is no theft (Bonacin. de restit disp. ii. q. viii. punct. i. n. i.); so that it will be no fault at all to rob one of the best part of his library, how valuable soever.

They open as wide a gap, and give as much encouragement to cheating, and like unconscionable practices. They teach there is no necessity to be regulated in bargaining, by the just value of things; but they may sell for as much as they can extort, and buy answerably; and this they take for a general rule, a thing is worth so much as it can be sold for. Hence Sylvester concludes it lawful for any one to sell as dear, and buy as cheap as he can; which, unlimited, gives liberty to all to prey upon one another, without equity or conscience. So one may buy a thing of great value,2 though he knows it, and the owner understands it not, for a small matter; nor needs he declare it, when he apprehends that it is much more worth, since that may be inquired of others. They conclude, that false measures and weights may be used, though the buyer be hereby deceived and damnified, and the custom itself to be a corruption; yet they are excused who use them, if they do it for their own security, or for moderate gain, as if in case they should give full measure, the price would be greater, and consequently they would have few or no customers.4 So, by their rules, they may further deceive those that deal with them, by selling one thing for another, or adulterating what they sell; and so cheat them not only in the measure, but in the quality, yea, or the substance of the commodity. Instances hereof we have in Soto. Corn or wine, when it is more worth than the set rate, the merchant may sell it by false measure, thereby to get his price. If a man have very good wine, but people, if they did not take it for Rhenish, would not give so good a price for it, he may sell it at the rate they would give for Rhenish, though it be not.6 So he may mix his wine with water, and sell it for pure, taking but a just price; as, for example, in case wine were so dear, that scarce any would buy it at the price it is worth, he may mix it with water, and sell it at the rate they will give.8 So cloth or silks may be sold for that of such a country which is most esteemed, though it be of another. These conclusions, he says, are collected out of Aquinas; and to complete these cheats, he tells us,10 that if perhaps the seller should lie too, in these cases (for example, if he should affirm that to be Rhenish wine which is not, or that to be pure which is adulterated, or that to be full measure which is short of it, &c.) it would not be a mortal sin. And Sylvester determines, that a man with perjuries and lies, denying the badness of his commodities, or making them better than they are, the lies, if they do not much damnify the buyer, are but venial. They allow persons also to deceive those who entrust them to dispose of their estates or goods; as, if one be employed to sell what is another's at a certain price, if he sell it for more, he may keep the overplus to himself; yea, say some,12 though he had a reward for his pains in selling, yet he may retain to himself the overplus of what is sold.

Further, Panormitan takes notice, that their canon law allows of deceit, if it be not extended beyond half the worth of the thing bargained for (that is, if a man be not cozened of above fifty per cent. in a bargain). But then, to salve the reputation of the law (which he, like a true canonist, says was formed by the instinct of the Holy Ghost), he will have it understood of deceit in the thing, not of fraud in the persons, and others after him; but Sylvester, who sees no ground for that, uses another shift: he says it may he understood, either of deceit in the thing or fraud in the persons, which their law tolerates, but approves not.2 Cajetan grants so great deceit is lawful by human constitution; but says, it is condemned by the law of God. And so we leave this shameful deceit,

lawful by the pope’s decrees, but damnable by God’s word.

Sect. 9. Let us see, in the next place, what truth may be expected in popery, or those that profess it; and whether their rules tend not to leave neither truth in the world, nor amongst themselves, by giving liberty to all falseness and lying in words and deeds. A lie, as they define it, is an asserting of what is false, with an intent to speak falsely, and to deceive others. Now they teach that to deliver what is false,5 if not on purpose, though it be without any care whether it be true or false; if it be a fault, is such as needs not be regarded, unless where it is in testimony or upon oath (and there they will excuse it too, by and by), because this is but a material lie, and not in its formal perfection. But then a perfect lie, with a design to speak what is false, and to deceive the hearers, is as innocent, if it be for pleasure or in sport,—ridentem dicere falsum quis vetat?—to make a sport of violating truth, or in offering it such injury to please himself or others; any one may do it out of habit, and make a practice of it, and tell lies when he list, out of mere pleasure to be telling lies; yea, or out of malice,7 (though that be the highest aggravation of sin). An officious lie is with them as harmless, they have warrant enough for the most complete and perfect lies, when they are of any advantage to some, and no hurt to others, how much soever truth be injured, or others deceived thereby. So that their true catholics need leave no place for truth, either in their heart or words, when the excluding of it from both will, without hurt, serve either their pleasure or profit. However, herein they use true and plain dealing, in letting the world know that, in these cases, they are never to be trusted, either in matters of conversation or religion. This being their principle,9 received by all catholics, and universally acknowledged, we need not wonder that it hath been their common practice in several ages, and that they make no conscience of it still, to counterfeit false miracles, to forge false stories, to shew false relics, to divulge false visions and revelations, to obtrude on the world supposititious writings, to corrupt the monuments of former times, and expunge out of them all the truth that makes against them, to make even the dead speak lies, or disguise the truth. For all this falseness is officious; it serves the interest of the church; it is to commend her doctrine, and to maintain her authority over men’s consciences, and it does the world no hurt; for it is (they say) the duty of all men, and would be their advantage, to entertain her doctrine, and subject themselves to her authority. Now if the rest of mankind, Jews, Turks, heathens, had retained no more conscience nor reverence for truth than these catholics; if upon their supposition (that their way was the best) they had proceeded by their rules and methods to broach any lies for them, or falsify any records against them, who sees not that this had been a direct course to have left no truth at all in the world, nor means to come to the knowledge of it? Yet this practice with the Romanists (so great friends are they to truth) is but a venial fault. Did I say they count it so bad? I do them wrong; it is a great piece of piety to make lies for their religion, as some of themselves do acknowledge it has been accounted. To proceed, there are five or six several sorts of lies (that they may have room enough still to avoid truth) which they may make their practice without danger.2 It is the pernicious lie only that need be avoided, that which wrongs others, and is against justice; and thus no violation of truth, no injury to it, how great soever (so tender they are of it) will be a crime, unless, withal, it be against justice; and a lie (be it as gross as can be) will not of itself, and in its own nature, be more than venial, but only by accident, when it so falls out that it does mischief. And it may be as innocent to tell lies as truth, and as criminal to speak truth as lies. There will be no difference as to mortal guilt in their own nature, and by accident they may do hurt alike. However, considering that truth and their religion are so much at odds, the world is obliged to them for being so indifferent as to truth and lies, and

that these have no more the preference. But then, though none but pernicious lies need be shunned, yet not all of this sort neither; they give liberty to tell mischievous lies, as many and as oft as you please, so the mischief they do be not great, though it prejudice others in spirituals or temporals; or though ye do the greatest mischief that can be done,4 yet, if you did not intend it to be great, or if you should not or did not observe and consider that it would be so, in such cases even pernicious lies will be harmless venials. They may, by their rules, lie to the prejudice of others in soul, body, or estate, and that deliberately, and with design to do it, provided the damage be not great; but when it will be great, their casuists cannot well determine. This is not confined to a point; there is a fair latitude, and liberty enough given for less or more, it is much left to discretion; and if he do much mischief instead of little, the liar cannot be charged with mortal guilt; for who can condemn any for transgressing bounds that are not set? And how can they think that any injury done by lying can be great, who count it better than innocent (as we saw before) to abuse the world with lies in point of religion? Sure if the injury be not great there, any will be small. And in other matters, they have fair leave to do great hurt by lying; so they do it but by degrees, and be not so hasty as to do it all at once. Take but an instance of it in commerce. To use lies, says de Graffiis, in bargaining, to get a good price, or the using of them to deceive others in a little, is but a venial fault, though it were a daily practice. Hostiensis thought that this lying to cheat others, if it were their continual practice, might prove mortal; but he is confuted by the common judgment of their doctors, who hold that a venial, how much soever multiplied or continued, can never become mortal. We see they may lie, and deceive those that deal with them, if they wrong them but a little at once; this they may do daily and continually, and so in time, that little will be much, yet the sin will be no more; the pernicious lie, which does great injury, will be as innocent as any.

Others teach that lying is venial in trading: for example, if one affirm falsely that his wine is so many years old, or of such a country, which, if the buyer know to be a lie, he would not buy it at all, or would not give so much for it, this seems no mortal sin, provided, all circumstances considered, it be as good, and as much worth, or not much less (Bonacin, de contract. disp. iii., q. i., punct. ii., sect. ii., n. vii.); or if the sellers affirm with a lie, that the thing cost so much, or was sold to others at such a rate, that they may draw the buyer to a rigorous price; by thus lying, for the most part, they sin but venially, and regularly they are not bound to restitution; because such lies are customary, and men commonly know that these are the tricks of sellers, to which those who deal with them give no credit; and for the same reason the same must be said of buyers, who affirm (falsely) that they bought the thing cheaper, or had it offered them for less, that they may get it at the lowest rate (Idem ibid., disp. iii., q. i., punct. iv., n. xxxi.) after others; yea, if they not only lie, but swear false too with some equivocation, they may be probably excused from mortal sin, if no great damage be done thereby to another. But though they have no more regard of truth in common conversation, or in commerce, yet it may be expected that they will be more tender of it in judgment and courts of judicature, since they cannot but acknowledge that the perverting of truth in judgment is destructive of human society, and tends to throw the world into confusion. Notwithstanding, they maintain lying there also, and that in many cases; I shall but mention some of them. 1. To lie in court, if the end of it be but delight, is harmless; also, witnesses may lie there seriously, if they do it not as witnesses, and in matters judicial;3 and the judge too, if he lie not as a judge. Further, they may bear false witness in favour of another;5 a false testimony for my neighbour is not mortal with them; and the reason is, because the precept forbids false witness aqainst another, not for him. And upon the same account, Soto says, a false testimony may be excused, when it is to hinder

one from doing injury. Likewise, when the matter in judicial process, is not of great consequence, a lie is venial, whether it be for or against another. So Navarre, and in him Ledesma (whom he calls the glory of the Dominican order), with Soto (of the same order and no less renown), maintain that no lie is mortal in any court exterior (that of the judge) or interior (that of the confessor), which is but venial out of court; so that if the lie be not signally injurious, it is not mortal, however or wherever it be delivered, though by a witness in a trial before a judge in the face of the country. Moreover, it is as innocent in all those cases, wherein the liar is not obliged to speak truth, which are not few. A lie, says Sylvester,2 in judicial matters, is pernicious and mortal, because it subverts the truth of judgment, which tends to the ruin of the universe. But then he adds, this is to be limited to things in which the liar is bound to speak the truth, and not extended to any other. Now they hold, there are very many cases in which they are not obliged to speak the truth, no, not in courts; and in all these, by their common doctrine (not that of the Jesuits only), either they may lie plainly, or (which is all one as to the justice of the practice, and as to the subverting of judgment) secretly, by equivocation or mental reservation. Antonius Corduba determines, that a person otherwise virtuous, being unduly interrogated, whether such a thing was done, which confessed might endanger him, he and the witnesses too, if they cannot otherwise evade (by saying, I know not, or I remember not), may say, though it be false, that it was not done, with this reserve, to discover it unto thee, and says, such interrogatories may be answered or evaded, by any, with equivocal words in usual form; so that he is not bound to tell the truth, though he be sworn to declare it. Navarre holds that not only virtuous, but any person whatever, may so answer in like case, denying that to be done which was done, secretly meaning, in such a month; and this he asserts after Gabriel, Paludanus, Adrian, Vincentius Justinianus, and Lopez after him. Sylvester6 concludes, when the process is not judicial, or the accused not subject to the judge, in this case mentioned, or any other cause whatsoever, though a lie be not lawful, yet it is not mortal; yea, it will not be so much as venial, if answering cautiously, and, as they say, sophistically, he speak that which is false in the judge's sense, and true in his own, since not being under him, he is not obliged to speak truth in his sense; and alleges Henricus de Gandavo, with his reason for it. Soto allows him to use equivocation. Cajetan permits him to deny his complices though he had them. If the judge demand of a priest upon oath, whether he knew such a thing by confession?2 Aquinas, and all the doctors conclude that he may swear he knows it not, though it hath been confessed to him, because he knows it not as a man; and according to Vervecellus, if he cannot otherwise decline the judge, he may answer he knows nothing, with this inward reserve, as a man; and in this Richard. de Sancto Victore, Bonaventure, Scotus, and Panormitan agree; yet Angelus thinks, when he swears he knows it not, it had better be with this reserve, to discover it, because it cannot be denied, but that he knows it as a man; but this, says Sylvester, is said against the judgment of all his doctors, and against the canon law, understood according to their common doctrine, because the priest is there said to know it as God. This needs no aggravation; a priest rather than speak the truth (though the discovery of it may be necessary to secure a prince or a nation from ruin), may with mental reservation delude authority and blaspheme God, and lie and swear falsely in open court; and be justified in all, by the authority of the chief saints and doctors that church has had, and such as she gloried in, before Ignatius had any disciples.

But, though truth suffer so much by them in civil things, it may be she may find sanctuary in their divine offices, and be secured there from such shameful violations; no, even there she is prostituted before their altars, in their pulpits, and at their penitential tribunals; their liturgies have

been stuffed with fables, and lies made both the ground and part of their public devotion; their own writers take notice of plain lies recited in their daily prayers.6 And what store of them there were in the whole, we may guess by a part. Peter Abbot of Cluny declares, that in a church-hymn in praise of Saint Bennet, though reading it cursorily, and not marking all, yet he found twenty-four lies at least. Some reformation hereof was thought requisite, for shame of the world; but though the old sore smelt noisomely even to the sense of those amongst themselves who had any; yet it must be touched tenderly, and not all the corruption let out, lest nothing at all of the old service should be left. Melchior Canus (a bishop from whom better things might be expected than most in the Council of Trent, where he sat) acknowledged, some years after, that there are things read in their church-service that are uncertain, counterfeit, frivolous, and false too; but yet he thought it not advisable to have this thoroughly purged. Those that attempt it, in his account, want prudence; they cure a sore nail, but mischief the head; they bring in grave stories instead of what were false, but they change the church-service so far from what it was, that scarce any show of the old religion seems left in the daily prayers, whereby he lets us understand what their old religion or religious service is, since so little or nothing of it would be left, if no lies or forgeries were left therein. Another learned bishop of their church, who survived the Trent Council, and all the orders there made for reformation, not only complains still of false and foolish things there, but of something worse too, in these words: If the Bishop of Lyons, says he, who declared that he had corrected superfluous, and ridiculous, and blasphemous things, in their missals and antiphonaries, were now alive, and did behold them, oh, with what terms would he set them out? for our prayers are defiled with most filthy corruptions; but the rest will admit of no reformation through the fault of the bishops. He signifies that there was something worse in their service-books than that idle, false, ridiculous, and blasphemous stuff which that ancient bishop, Agobardus, corrected in the old missals and antiphonaries; declaring expressly that their prayers now were polluted with most filthy corruptions, and that without hope of amendment. Nor is truth more secure amongst them in the pulpit, though that (where it bears any sway at all) is its throne. A preacher may lie, by Cajetan’s leave,2 if he does it not as a preacher, or in things which belong to him as such. In other matters, it seems, he may take his liberty, and lying when he is preaching, will be but venial, unless it be scandalous. He may lie in the pulpit if he can do it wittily, he may mix his sermons with false stories, (if they be facetious) to please his auditory, that is commonly a venial.4 He may tell a tale in his sermon, or anything ridiculous, if he do it with some wit, this is commonly no worse than venial; no, nor so bad, if it be done succinctly, to make the people merry, so the mirth be honest. He may lie too, as a serious divine, and instil false doctrine into the people, without any fault but what is venial, if it be done without contempt or scandal, so Summa Angelica, and Rosella, with others, conclude.2 They limit it, indeed, to matters under counsel, but this does not much straiten them, for practical divinity being the most proper subject for sermons, and virtues, with Christian duties (and the opposite sins), being, by their common doctrine, in a manner all reduced to counsels, some way or other (as we have shewed before); they have liberty enough left them to do nothing else but lie instead of preaching. But in any matters of divinity whatsoever, speculative or practical, enjoined or but advised, they may lie at as easy a rate, if it be but done out of a fluent faculty, or without danger and design of doing signal mischief. Their practice publicly allowed, has outdone their rules; for these, though licentious enough, must have now and then some show of modesty and caution. Sylvester takes notice of those who held it was no mortal sin to lie in the pulpit,4 and acted accordingly, and thought themselves concerned, only to avoid such monstrous

lies as the people would smell out. But this cautiousness was not always thought needful; he that reads the legends, which served the people heretofore for sermons, will find there multitudes of such stories, so absurdly, ridiculously, horridly false, as may fully convince him that the spirit which acted them was seven times worse than that which inspired Ahab's prophets; and where they are now disused, it is not with any acknowledgment that such notorious lies were not fit to be preached, but for shame of that part of the world which they could no longer delude and abuse. And, even after their reformation, they could not quite leave their old habit; their priests since, have this testimony from one of their own doctors: The law, says he, is perished from priests; for history they recite fables; for serious things, jests; for truth, lies; for the power of God, feigned miracles, not to say the prodigies of devils. That such doctrine should have some confirmation is no more than needs; they provided such as was answerable to it, such are their false miracles, which their (now mentioned) Espencæus calls, devilish prodigies. And false relics, or miracles, they allow to be shewed or published;6 it is not a mortal sin with them, unless it be done for filthy lucre, and it is not filthy lucre, if it be done principally for a good end, and less principally for gain. And now I cannot devise where there can be any expectation that they will be restrained from lying, unless in their sacrament of penance, that is, in their account, the holiest rite, wherein the partakers have liberty of speech. Here they confess sin, and profess to do it with a sincere abhorrence of it, as before God, in order to pardon, which they then expect. One would think, in this act, at least, they should count themselves obliged to be far from such a crime as offering violence to truth; but hereby it appears that truth can in no wise be fastened to any part of their religion, they let us know that there is nothing so holy amongst them where they will not find a place for lying and deceit, and that wherever they have liberty of speech they must have leave to lie. It is the common doctrine that they may lie in confession, which yet they say is directed principally to God, and they look upon the confessor's chair as the divine tribunal. The confitent may deny that ever he committed those venial sins which he is guilty of,3 or affirm he is guilty when he is not, or he may deny either venial or mortal sin to his confessor, if he be not sufficient.5 Or he may deny that ever he acted those mortal sins which he has committed, if he has confessed them to another. And thus he may without mortal sin delude and cheat his confessor, even when he is upon his knees before him, and looks upon him as God and not as man (for so they are taught to do, as we said before). To this purpose, when their purpose is too shameful to be made known to a sober priest, a person may have two confessors;7 one a lewd fellow like himself, to whom he may, without shame, confess the worst debauches; and the other more civil, to whom he may confess his lesser sins, denying, if he be asked, that he is guilty of any greater. And as they may abuse their confessors with plain lies, so likewise with equivocations. Joh. Sanchez (no Jesuit) offers us several instances (Select. Disp. ix.) He that is not able to make restitution, may affirm he has done it, if he think his confessor be ignorant, and would not absolve him without it. He that is accustomed to some wickedness, and thinks the confessor would not absolve him if he confessed it, may with equivocation deny it is his custom; to this sense, I have no such custom, not absolutely, but which I will confess at present, n. vii.; yea he may deny it, though he believe the priest would absolve him, n. viii. Also he that is in the next occasion to sin, which he cannot avoid without great inconvenience or scandal, may, using equivocation, deny it, n. ix. Or if the penitent be known to the confessor, who well understands that he has a sister with whom he commits uncleanness, not removed out of his house, and so will not believe but he is in such occasion to sin, he may feign himself to be another, changing his voice, habit, name, country, and the like, without plain lying,

yet using equivocation (n. x. after Navarre); yea, though he be a religious person he may do thus, and deny his order with equivocation (Ibid). And as the penitents may thus delude their confessors, so they may have their satisfaction on them, and delude them likewise; pretending to absolve them when they neither do it nor intend it (Idem. disp. xxxv. n. i., n. vii. and viii.; Antonin. Dian. resol. v. equiv). Let the world judge where we may be assured of truth and honesty in Romanists, that walk by these rules (which the holiest of their doctors give them), since they think not themselves obliged thereto in any of the cases specified. If by their doctrine they may without danger be false to private persons, to magistrates, to their priests, to their God, where can they have credit? If they may practise lying and deceit in common conversation, in commerce, in doctrine, in worship, in courts of justice, and before that which they count God's tribunal, where may they be trusted?

Sect. 10. They give as much liberty to violate faith as truth, and no less encouragement to perfidiousness and breach of promises; either where faith is engaged mutually, as in compacts and agreements, or singly, as in pollicitations. They distinguish perfidiousness as they do lying, and accordingly make the like decisions for both. There is a pleasant perfidiousness, another which they call officious, and a third pernicious. To be perfidious merely for delight is venial; to deal perfidiously, if it be for the advantage of any, and no great hurt to others, is as harmless; and they have ways enow to make that which is pernicious pass for innocent. Cajetan gives this reason why the two former sorts of perfidiousness are but venial: because from a simple promise no duty ariseth but that natural duty of not telling a lie; for in each is a moral duty, without which moral honesty cannot be preserved; and both are reduced to the same virtue, to wit, that of veracity; and both respect others, being for the society, and advantage, and conversation of mankind. One would think those who regard natural duty, moral honesty, or veracity, and human society, should for this reason rather judge both to be great crimes, than either of them petty faults. But let us take notice of their rules for conscience in this matter. To make a promise without an intent to be obliged, is but venial,2 if no great hurt be done or intended to others. He promiseth, but while he is doing it intends not to perform, though he make others believe so, nor to be obliged to it by that which should engage any one who has faith and honesty; and yet offends but venially. If all men should take the liberty which this rule gives Roman catholics, human society would disband; all confidence on promises and assurances vanisheth, thereby I can never be sure of another, nor he of me. That which Navarre, after many others, determines elsewhere, does it more fully. He that promiseth anything outwardly without any intention to promise, if he be asked whether he promised, he may deny it, understanding that he made not any promise that was obliging, and he may swear it too. He may promise, and yet not intend to promise, and so cheat; he may deny that he promised, and so lie; and swear that he did it not when he did it, and so be perjured innocently, because he promised as a perfidious knave. Sylvester inquires, whether one by a promise alone or a compact be obliged in conscience? He answers he is bound, under pain of mortal sin, if it be of important matters;2 signifying that in other matters it is no mortal sin to break promises or agreements. And Navarre expresses their common opinion when he tells us, that the violation of a promise in a small matter is not mortal, though it be venial. But why should perfidiousness be a crime in great things and not in lesser; since it is no less perfidiousness in one than the other, and faith and truth is equally violated in both? The reason they give is, because in great matters there is injustice; great wrong is done, and so by accident perfidiousness becomes criminal;4 from whence it follows, that perfidiousness, how great soever, without the addition of injustice, is no

crime; a man may be as treacherous, and faithless as he will, if he be not withal unjust too, there is no danger. And so the world must believe that they would oblige men to be just, though not to truth or faithfulness; as if those who may by their rules without scruple be false and faithless, will make any conscience, or find any more reason, to be just and righteous. However they teach that they who promise but small things, and perform not, are excused from mortal sin, though they confirm the promise with an oath or a vow. Whether the thing promised be little or great, if it be an internal promise, though an oath be added not to revoke it, yet it obliges not, but may be revoked without mortal sin. (Panormitan. Jason. Rebellus et alii cum Bonacin de contract. disp. iii., q. xii., punct. ii., n. i. and iii.) Yea, if it be made in the form of a vow, yet when it is of a thing indifferent or less good; as if a man inwardly promise to marry such a woman, and promise it to God, too, it does not oblige him (Idem, ibid., n. ii.). And how can it be expected they should be faithful as to any engagement to man, who think they are not bound to observe truth or faith with God, how much soever concerned, either as a witness (in oaths) or as a party (in vows)? Well, but when the matter is of great importance may they not then break promises, bargains, or compact, may not perfidiousness, which themselves account pernicious, pass commonly for an innocent venial? Yes, they have ways enough ready to make this current at so easy a rate. The worst perfidiousness in the world may be excused from mortal guilt, according to Cajetan, through ignorance of the fact, or through forgetfulness (if one forget to be honest, he may be innocently a knave); or out of confidence in him to whom he is engaged (the good nature of one party concerned may be a warrant to the other to break faith with him); or for any cause which he thinks reasonable. He need have said no more than this, any one may violate all truth and faith, not only when there is some reasonable cause, but when there is any that seems but so to him, when anything will seem so to him who is disposed to play the knave. This is enough to license a world of perfidiousness; but this is not all. Sylvester after others tells us a man is not obliged to perform promise or compact, if he had not a mind to oblige himself thereby, yea, or if he had a mind to dissemble (to feign that he is engaged when he did not mean it); for, says he, though he offend, yet he is not obliged, unless there was a cause from some command which of itself would oblige him; as for example, if he had promised clothes to his father, and he is now starving for cold.2 In such a case (would ye think it?) one may be bound to keep his promise, to wit, when he would have been a monster if he had not done the thing though he had never promised it! He tells us elsewhere, that a promise does oblige when it is made to a city, or an university, the clergy, the church, or the poor of a certain place, in case it be for some cause, to wit, for the honour of God, or the like; but if there be no cause it does not bind, though it be made to those fore mentioned; and it does not bind, when it is made to any other besides those, though there be cause for it. Others4 maintain that a promise or compact does not oblige in conscience to performance, if the cause why it is made be not expressed; so Panormitan, Angelus, and Rosella, with others. So that if a man forbear but to mention the cause (which is most commonly done, and may be always); though he bind himself with ten thousand promises or covenants, he may with a safe conscience break them all, by their rules. They hold that the firmest promise does but bind under venial guilt. (Cajetan, Armilla, Rebellus, Garzias, in Bonacin. ibid., n. xii.) Or if it did of itself oblige further, yet he that intends to bind himself no otherwise, may break any promise without any more than venial guilt, whether the matter be small or great which is promised (Ibid., n. xii.). Lopez, that a promise may bind under mortal guilt, concludes it requisite that he who makes it should have a mind to be so bound by it; and so in promising (as he says), unless there be an oath to confirm the promise,

or a writing, as is usual, they are not thought to oblige themselves to mortal sin; and by this, says he, a multitude of scruples is removed. And he says true, for hereby a man may without any scruple break any promises that are not under his hand or oath.2 But what if he had no mind so to oblige himself by his oath or writing? Why, then, by his own rule, he is no more bound by his written or sworn promise than by any other. To this purpose he concludes again, that he who promises in word, without mind or intention to oblige himself, is not bound in conscience to perform it; and this is their common doctrine. So that if a man intend not to be honest, he need not be so, whatever he promise. These rules observed are more than sufficient to excuse men from all faith and honesty in contracts and promises of all sorts; to fill the world with cheats and perfidiousness; to take away all confidence and security from men in dealing one with another; to ruin human society; and to render Roman catholics less conscientious, and more faithless and intolerable to mankind, than sober heathens; nor are they more like the rules of Christianity than those which bid defiance to it.

Sect. 11. Hitherto, thus much of deceit and lies, in word and promises, &c. Hypocrisy is a lie, indeed; both are equally sinful. Aquinas, after some of the ancients, asserts that it is all alike to lie in deeds as in words: as that is a composing of words, so this of acts, to signify and make one believe what is false: both are used as instruments of deceit, and it is all one which way you cozen another, so he be but cheated, as it is all one whether you kill a man with a sword or an axe, as they express it; and both by their doctrine are made venial. Sylvester inquires whether to make a false show of sanctity be a sin?5 He answers that if it be for the honour of God, and the profit of others, it is no sin; but if it be to palliate his own wickedness, and that he may be accounted good, then it is a sin, because it is a false ostentation of sanctity. But so is the other too, which yet with him is no sin; either both must be acquitted, or neither. So Cajetan will have it to be evil, though the end he good; because we must not do evil, that good may ensue. But they agree, and it is their common doctrine, that bare hypocrisy, when one feigns he is good and is not, or better than he is, is no mortal evil, though it hath the force of a lie,7 and be designed to deceive others, otherwise it would not be so bad as a venial.2 Although he delight in thus playing the hypocrite, it will not be worse; this is but vanity, not wickedness, unless it be for an end mortally wicked, such as will make an act, otherwise indifferent, to be criminal. But if he made this false and deceiving show for an evil end, to wit, for vain glory, so long as it is not made his last end (to wit, his God), such vain glorious hypocrisy will be no worse; for though the sin, says Cajetan, be here doubled, yet the double sin is but a single venial. And if he do those works which are naturally ordained for the service of God with an intention not to serve him,4 but for glory from men, it is but such hypocrisy, and that with some extenuation; it is not so bad explicitly, seeing the intention to deceive is but implicit. They have a reverence for hypocrisy as a holy art: they honour it and their church with the same title, both being holy alike (so much alike, some will think, that it is hard to know the one from the other). They extol their great saints from their holy hypocrisy. It is amongst the commendations of Saint Dominic himself. Vincentius, Bishop of Beauvois, in his praises, spends one chapter upon this subject, de sancta ejus hypocrisi, shewing that it was not only the practice of their saint, but that he commended the holy thing to his brethren, the friars predicant. Hypocrisy being such a holy quality in their account, and a special ornament of their greatest saints, no wonder if they be so far from branding it as a crime, that they declare it meritorious. A religious person that feigns himself to have more holiness than he hath, that others may be edified, sins not, but rather merits (so Rosella v. Hypocr. n. i.) Thus they give us warning not to trust any shows of sanctity or

mortification amongst them, since they are so far from counting it a sin, that they conclude it meritorious even for their religious to deceive others, with hypocritical ostentation of what holiness they have not. Indeed the Romanists are concerned to speak favourably of hypocrisy, and treat it with kindness; for since they require no more truth and sincerity in their dealings with men, and make no more than exterior shows of piety (if so much) needful in the worship of God, and yet would be accounted the best or only true Christians on earth; if they should condemn hypocrisy as a mortal sin, that religion and righteousness, which their church counts sufficient, would be branded by themselves as damnably criminal.

Sect. 12. Disgracing and defaming others to their face by contumelies, or behind their backs by detraction; reproaching them with charges true or false, to the impairing or ruining of their esteem or credit (though some of them say this is worse than theft or robbery, and others make it worse than adultery; and in the canon law such are called murders; yet) is allowed under the notion of a venial in so many cases, that he who is addicted thereto may satisfy his humour fully in the practice of it without scruple. It is a maxim with them that the quality of sins in words is regulated by the intention. It is this that gives this sin, and others besides, their formality (which Cajetan often inculcates); and without that they are no sins, or but venial. Hence he tells us that the contempt of our neighbour is a mortal sin, speaking formally, that is, with an intention of contemning him; for no man formally contemns another, but he that despises him, that he may despise him; so no man is a detractor formally, but he that backbites, that he may backbite; and no man is formally contumelious but he that speaks reproachfully that he may reproach.2 So that if he intend not thus to sin, let him say what he will against his neighbour, he is not guilty of the sin formally and in deed. Accordingly he tells us that materially (i. e. without intention of dishonouring another) contumelious words may be spoken, either without any sin, or any but what is venial. It is true, some of them say words may be a crime, if they grievously defame a person, though they be uttered without a design to do it; but then withal they allow of such reproaches as venial, which are of no better consequence, but tend to disgrace him effectually. To reproach him with natural defects of mind, or body, or birth, is regularly but venial. All agree in this, says Sairus: To charge him with ignorance, to say he has little wit and small judgment, to call him a fool, or an hermaphrodite, or a bastard, though the charge be false. To report one to be infected with the French disease is but venial, because that is no great disgrace. (Pet. Navar. Sairus, et alii communiter in Bonacin. ibid. n. ix.) Also to charge him falsely with any wickedness which they count venial.5 Thus they may calumniate any man, and without crime charge him falsely as a blasphemer, a thief, a liar, a perjured person, a cheat, &c., since they count these in many degrees venial; and if they be consistent with the honour and reputation of Roman catholics, yet others, either Christian or heathen, will think their credit blasted with such imputations. Likewise to revile one in such terms as may signify either great or lesser crimes, to accuse him as one greatly proud, covetous, wrathful, or anything whatsoever which may denote either the natural inclination and first motions or the outward acts, this is not mortal, because the hearers are to put the better construction on it. And here is liberty enough to calumniate in such terms as may ruin any person’s reputation, upon a presumption that all who hear the slander will be always so wise and good as any rarely are. Or if a man be noted for wickedness already, you may charge him with crimes that are not known, and yet offend but venially, because you cannot hurt his reputation, which is hurt already; as if, when a man has dangerously wounded himself, you might give him more wounds and despatch him, when life and fame are of like account; or you may charge those falsely for

committing a crime when they did it not, if it hath been their practice before;2 or you may charge them with any crimes that are secret, if they be less than those that are known; as if one had been guilty of murder, you may accuse him of theft, and if he hath stolen, you may accuse him of fornication, and if he be a heretic you may charge him with anything, since with them nothing is worse than what they count heresy. Or you may accuse others of any wickedness, which such sort of persons seem to make nothing of, as some young men of fornication, and others of adulteries.4 Further, any terms tending to defame others may be used in passion, such as hinders full deliberation, for these will excuse blasphemy against God, much more the worst reproaches of men; or you may do it in jest, with moderate facetiousness, when the reproach is set off neatly; then it is a virtue with those who learn their divinity, of Aristotle rather than the apostle, and think if a man hath wit he needs herein have no conscience. Or you may do it out of levity or pleasure in tattling, unless the words be so exasperating as to occasion some other deadly evil;6 or it may be done by way of recital, suggesting what tends to blast them as reported by others; or when the defamer is not believed, or gives no just cause of belief;8 or for correction, for they may defame others to amend them and reform them by making them worse than they are. Or through some want of cautiousness, as amongst women and persons of inferior rank, who vent what reproachful language comes next, how injurious soever;10 or when their reputation does hurt, and may seduce others, to defame them is absolutely lawful, eos defamare esse licitum, absolute respondet Adrianus in Soto, ibid. q. x. art. ii. Or (to add no more) if one accuse others whom they think he ought not, though he impute nothing to them but what is true, they may charge him with false crimes; this will be no worse than a venial fault (Bannes, xxii. q. lxx. art. iii. p. ii.) Thus, as in other cases, so when anything is said or writ to the disparagement of their church or themselves, how justly and truly soever; if they fix upon the authors the most odious imputations that can be invented (such as Bolsec and Cochleus would have fastened upon Luther and Calvin), and divulge them with a design to delude the world into a belief thereof, though their own consciences tell them there is not a syllable of truth therein, yet they incur no fault thereby that a good catholic need fear or make conscience of. This is not only the opinion of the Jesuits, but the common doctrine of Aquinas his disciples, as Ledesma, a Dominican, assures us; and so we may spare those more than twenty doctors, which, Caramuel says, assert it. Hereby they give warning to mankind, that they are no more to be trusted in their charges against their opposers, to vindicate the reputation of themselves or their church, than such persons will be trusted in a court which openly sentenced them to the pillory for false testimony; yea, in this maxim they have as good as set themselves upon a pillory, and done that justice to the world as to fix this inscription upon their own foreheads, We are they who declare it no crime to calumniate most odiously and falsely whoever speak ill (how truly soever) of us and our church. These are some of their methods for destroying the honour and reputation of others, without any fault which they regard; they deliver them in great variety, so that every one so disposed may serve himself of such as suit his humour. And as a man may defame others, so he may do the same good office for himself, not only by blazoning his secret wickedness, but by charging himself falsely with crimes he never acted; thus to impair or utterly ruin his own credit, is but regularly a venial fault, according to Adrian and Sotus and others; for prodigality is but a venial, and this is but to be prodigal of one’s credit.

Sect. 13. Flattery also (that falseness of every sort, even the vilest, may not miss of their favour and encouragement) is reconciled to common practise under the notion of a venial. To praise one for the virtue which he has not, or the good that he does not, is little or no fault. To extol the good

he does above measure and desert, is as innocent; yea, when a man is to be praised for a good work, though you know he will thereby be transported with deadly pride, such as will destroy his soul, yet you should not desist, but may and ought to lay aside the sense of his future ruin, because (says Cardinal Cajetan) there are twelve hours in the day, and a man may in an instant be illuminated and changed by divine mercy.3 To applaud one for his sins, if they be not mortal, is as harmless, when it is out of a design to please the sinner without ruining him, or to gain some advantage by such flattery; so that when it is both wicked and sordid at once, yet will they scarce count it a fault. There is no more hurt in giving flatterers reward and encouragement. Sylvester inquires if this be a mortal sin? and in him Aquinas answers No, unless a man affect, as Herod, to be extolled as a god, or design and desire to be magnified for mortal crimes. But it is a virtue to give consent to false flattery, as when a woman who is secretly an adulteress is praised for faithfulness to her husband, that scandal may be avoided and others deluded by a good opinion of her.2 And so we may understand how the praises of the church of Rome for her faithfulness to Christ come to be a virtue. Or if one be not in so complacent a humour as to flatter others, he may curse them at as easy a rate, for it is but a venial fault to curse in words (if not from the heart) any thing, any person, one's own father not excepted; to imprecate any mischief or misery to them; to wish God's curse on them, or an ill end might befal them, or the devil might have them.4 And when he is at it he may curse the devil too. It is no sin at all if it be for his fault, and gives the devil but his due. Cursing may be one's usual practice as innocently.6 It is scarce so bad as a venial, when cursing is used for honest recreation. And he may curse the irrational creatures or the elements, and if he do it with his mouth only, or with both mouth and heart, without respect either to God or man, in these cases it is only a venial fault.8

Sect. 14. I have been long in viewing their account of venial sins; the pernicious use made of it to corrupt the whole body of practical Christianity, and to give liberty to the acting of all sorts of wickedness, with this modification, will excuse me. They venture hard to leave in a manner no mortal sin, and so none needful to be avoided. This will be further manifest by what they determine concerning those few sins which they style mortal or capital; they are reduced, in their ordinary reckoning, to seven. Some of these they conclude to be in their own nature, or regularly venial; in others of them they state the mortalness so high, that those who will be satisfied with wickedness which is not rare and prodigious, may live in the sins, and not reach the mortalness, and so wickedness which is deadly, in their speculative account, may be practised without mortal danger.

Covetousness is one of these capital crimes, which in general they heavily aggravate, and inveigh against, as most pernicious; yet when they come to direct conscience, and give particular rules for practice, it is shrunk into a harmless venial. Covetousness, says Cajetan, simply and absolutely, is not a mortal sin in its own nature, because it is not against, but besides charity. To deliver themselves more distinctly, they consider this sin, either as it is opposed to liberality or to justice; as it is opposite to the former virtue, they generally determine it is but a venial fault; so the same cardinal, As it is contrary to liberality, and signifies an inordinate desire of money, so commonly it is a venial sin.2 Thus Navarre, and Sotus,4 and all after Aquinas. So that by their doctrine, if a rich man should be so sordidly, so monstrously tenacious, as not to perform one act of liberality to himself or others, in all his life, yet would not this be a mortal sin, since the vice, which is opposite to all liberality, and wholly exclusive of it, is but a venial fault. Only when it is opposed to injustice,6 it may be a mortal sin, that is, when a man gets riches by unjust practices and methods, or detains

what he has unrighteously. Thus covetousness, however it comes into the account of mortal sins, yet it will stand there as a cipher, and signify no such thing, unless injustice be added to it. Let a man have the most extravagant passion for riches, let him be as greedy as hell or the grave, and penurious as the worst of misers can be, yet if he be not withal a thief, or a cheat, and attempt not to get or keep an estate by fraud or violence, there is no guilt upon him that he need regard. In their sense only thieves and robbers, extortioners or cheats, are covetous, when covetousness is a crime. They speak of covetousness as little worse than an indifferent thing. Injustice added to an act, otherwise lawful, will make it criminal, and this vice will be no crime upon easier terms. But is covetousness a mortal sin, indeed, with them, when it is accompanied with injustice? They would seem to say so sometimes, but then they unsay it again in their other decisions. They allow men to gain unrighteously, and to keep what they have so gained. They declare them not obliged to restitution of what they have got by sinful practices, yea, and such as are most abominable. I have shewed before what unjust and fraudulent methods of gaming8 they encourage under the favour of venial faults; let me here instance in gaming only. This with them is venial, though it be not only of an ordinate, but of an excessive desire of gaining, if there be no other mortal ingredient; yea, though not only the subservient, but the principal end be lucre, and so that which is only for recreation be turned into a trade. And this is not only the opinion of some particular doctors, but seems to be the persuasion of them all; for, says Navarre, we see in all parts of the world, all sorts of people play for great sums of money, and the greatest part of them principally for gain; and yet the confessors absolve them, though they signify no intention to give over the practice, which they could not do, if there were any mortal sin in it. And such gaming is allowed, even that which they call diabolical,2 in any place, though in their account sacred; at any time, for whole days, even the holiest, that little time excepted which will suffice the people to hear the chief parts of the mass; or in any person, even their cloistered pretenders to perfection, so they omit not divine service. Their mode of devotion needs be no hindrance, for with them it is lawful to make a game of their prayers. Lopez inquires (an licitum sit ludere preces sacras) if it be lawful to play at prayers. He says it is the practice of devout persons, and that Navarre seems to approve it, part ii. c. xxxii.; so does Bonacina after Navarre, Rebellus, and others, De restit. disp. ii. q. iii., punct. i. n. viii., and not only at Ave Marys, but other prayers also, and that it will be no irreverence against God to play with their prayers, if they do it reverently, ibid. To say nothing that their clergy and monks may be spectators of games, and shows that are mortally wicked, if they continue not a long time at it, and yet offend but venially. They teach further, that it is not needful to restore what is wickedly gained.5 Sylvester, after others, says, that filthy lucre (that is, dishonest or shameful gain) is not necessarily to be restored, it is but matter of counsel. But he that hath lost much at unlawful games may take another course for his satisfaction; for pope Adrian and others allow him to steal it from him that has won it, Vid. Lopez, ibid. Or to save himself the trouble of stealing, he may refuse to pay what he loses; or if he have bound himself by oath to pay it, not only the pope, but any bishop may release him from the obligation of his oath, and that without the citation of the party. So Navarre, Corduba, Sotus, Penna., et alii in Bonacina, ibid, punct. iii. n. ii. Yea, they will not have those obliged to make restitution who have received anything for acting enormous wickedness, for example, a judge for passing an unjust sentence, or a witness for false testimony and perjury, or a man for satisfying the lust of a lewd woman, or any sort of woman for prostituting themselves, or an assassin for murdering, or a rogue for firing houses or towns, all are comprised in this conclusion, that which is unjustly received, freely of the giver, where there is wickedness on both

parts (as in giving, so in receiving), is not, by virtue of any command, to be restored to any. Only (for the encouragement of covetousness, and injustice together) where money is given for the perpetrating of such crimes, if they be not acted, it is to be restored; but if the wickedness be done, the villanous actor may conscientiously detain it. As the judge that receives a bribe for a false sentence, if he pass a just one, he is obliged to restore, but not if he make an unjust award. And a witness, if he receive money for a true testimony, is bound to restore it, but not for a false deposition.2 He that is promised a reward for murdering a man, may not receive or keep it before he kill him, but after the murder is done, he may take it (and need not restore it) upon the account of his labour and hazard in killing him, and because therein he has done a fact profitable and delightful to him that hired him, Idem ibid. n. v.; Pet. Navar. et alii. So an astrologer, who takes money for telling things which he cannot know but by the help of the devil, is not bound to restore it, after diligence and pains to get the devil's assistance therein, because that diligence and pains (with the devil) is valuable, though it prove ineffectual. But he that pretends but to this skill, and makes no use of the devil, is bound to restore, Pet. Navar. et alii cum Bonacin. ibid. n. x. And that the poor may be cut off every way by covetousness, whether it be with injustice or without it, though they say what is received for the perpetrating of wicked acts, may be restored to the poor; yet it is a rule with them that restitution to the poor, in this, and other cases, is only a counsel, not a command, so that he who is hired to do villany may restore what he received to the poor, if he will, but if he will not, he needs not; he may conscientiously enjoy the fruits of his villany, and the poor have nothing. In short, not only disquietment of mind through the tumult of worldly distracting cares, and the restless agitation of a covetous humour,4 but also hardness of heart against the poor, and unmercifulness to them in their distress (the natural effect of extreme covetousness) is as innocent as its cause, no worse than venial, unless when one is obliged under pain of mortal guilt to afford relief. And when is that? Only in extreme necessity,6 when the starving man may sell his own child to get bread; or when it will be lawful to steal from him who would otherwise part with nothing;8 or when he may be compelled by law to part with something; then his heart must relent so far as to let go what he cannot keep; but it is like he may never meet with such a case while he lives, and then the miser is excused; no moment of his life need be embittered with one act of charity; he may enjoy the felicity of a petrified heart all his days, and not suffer by one dint in it. Or if he should unhappily meet with one in such extremity, yet may he escape without giving a farthing; it will be enough to exchange or to lend; yea, he may be excused from either giving or lending,10 if it be but likely that any other may do it. In fine, this unmercifulness, which admits no compassion for the distress of others, is scarce ever mortal, unless it become so (accidentally) by some other mortal acts, and so there is no need to confess it as a sin. How well does this indulgence to such monstrous covetousness as quite swallows up at once Christian charity, mercy, and liberality, become those who cry up themselves as the sole assertors of the necessity of good works? But that they may not be partial, they shew themselves as favourable to the crime in the other extreme: pure prodigality is no mortal sin, because it is a less fault than covetousness, contrary to liberality, which is manifestly of itself no mortal sin; and the reason of both is, neither of them is against charity to God or others, but only besides it; so Cajetan and others. So Navarre: prodigality (including both that of a man's credit and his estate) is regularly no mortal sin;3 and this after Aquinas.

Sect. 15. Pride is another capital crime; they style it the queen of mortal sins; but then they will have it advanced so high before it be mortal, that the proudest person amongst Christians can

seldom reach it. And so all pride which is not of an extraordinary size, and such as is rarely found, must pass for venial. In Aquinas it is an aversion to God, in that he will not be subject to him and his will; not upon other accounts (to wit, desire of pleasure or profit, &c.), but out of contempt;6 so Cajetan also, and others after him. Navarre says they make it an actual contempt of being subject to God; and adds, thanks be to God, this is but found in few Christians, though all are truly proud.8 So that mortal pride, by that account which the oracle of their school and his followers give of it, is rarely to be found in the Christian world. It is questionable whether Scotus did count that pride mortal which Aquinas judged to be so; he says, few learned men know in what degree it is deadly, and others are not bound to know it. However, Cajetan ventures to tell us what pride is venial, and his account is worth our view. It is thus at large: He that shews himself so irreligious and ungrateful, as if he had not received all from God, is proud (says he) in the first kind; for of a like effect the apostle says, What hast thou which thou hast not received? why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received? whereby glorying, as the effect, the inward pride is manifested, as though he had not received it. Likewise when one is so affected as to be secure concerning the good he hath, or querulous for the good which is lost, or wonders that he is not heard of God, this is the second kind of pride, because such a one makes account that such things are due to him. But he that prefers himself before others, and is prone to spy in his mind or fancy the defects of others, or to excuse his own naughtiness and to aggravate that of others, has a third sort of pride, when he will have himself to be great as if he alone were great. Further, he who caring little for the heavenly country, for the members of Christ, for the expiation of his sins, passing his days as one dreaming or scarce awake, has a fourth kind of pride; for he presumes he is a heavenly citizen, a friend of God, a son, a member, when such negligence and carelessness are no evidence of his favours, the love of God, where it is, producing (those) great things. And likewise in reference to his neighbour's crudeness of mind, and incompassionateness to others, counting injuries intolerable, impatience, not enduring to be slighted, indignation, and the like, do shew that the man thinks better of himself than he is, &c. So great a litter of this monster he exposes to our view, telling us its issue is much more numerous; and then strokes all gently over, calling them venials. These, says he, and many others, are a sort of imperfect pride, and are commonly venial sins for the imperfectness of them, since they occur in the manner of passions, without injury to God or others.2 Yet (that we may be the more amazed to see all this pass for a little fault) such sins, he adds, hinder spiritual life exceedingly, being of the stock of pride, when it is written that God resists the proud. As for that pride which they count mortal, and grown to its full height, Aquinas out of Gregory, and others after both,4 give an account of it in some particulars. The prime are these: When one thinks that good he has is from himself; when he thinks that what he has from God is for his merits; and when he boasts that he hath what he has not. If their great Azpilcueta could see none of this most deadly crime amongst Christians, having the merit of congruity and condignity before him, either his sight failed him, or his church was not visible. Others, with his eyes, can see not only mortal pride, but (as deadly a sin) infidelity, where this is part of a creed.6 To make up one article of two deadly sins, must be a sure mark of the only church. Seriously, finding so many of their authors on this head, charging the opinion of merit, with mortal pride; and therein following not only the greatest of their doctors, but the most infallible of their bishops, I have wondered why they did not either make that none of their faith or this no such sin. What salvo they will find against deadly sin, when it is in their faith, I know not; but if part of their belief had proved arrogance (though that sounds like the worst of pride), they might have come off well enough, for arrogance

is a venial sin, except in some rare cases. It is, says Cajetan, frequently venial, when without prejudice of others a man values himself as having more knowlege, or goodness, or authority than he hath; and again, It is a sin, but it is not mortal, unless when it usurps against God; as the king of Tyre, when he said, I am God (now none are observed to do this except the pope, who has the law in his own hand), or against others by tyranny (which is so odious as all disclaim it; and affecting it is no worse than affecting to kill men without consent, which with him is not deadly), or unless it be made one's ultimate end (which none will own). Accordingly, Angelus determines that arrogancy is commonly a venial fault, unless upon the account of something else that is mortal, as when it arises from mortal pride; but that (as he and others define it we heard before) is scarce to be found amongst Christians.2

Sect. 16. Ambition was wont to be counted a deadly crime; the world and the church too has reason to judge it so, since the most of their miseries and ruins may be imputed to it; but the church of Rome and her champions are concerned not to think so ill of it, stilo curiæ, in the sense of the court it may pass for venial. Angelus inquires whether ambition be a mortal sin? He answers negatively, it is not so simply, but may be so in respect of its end, and so may anything in itself lawful be, if its end be criminal; or it may be so, if the thing affected be a crime, but that is accidental, and still ambitiousness, the inordinacy of the affection is excused, and may transgress all bounds if the honour and power affected be lawful. Thus Cajetan, he will yield it more than venial,4 when one will be honoured for a crime, or would be counted a god; accordingly, it is resolved by Sylvester, with Navarre, regularly an inordinate appetite or greediness of honour exceeds not the bounds of a venial fault.6 Indeed, if pride and ambition had been branded as damnable, two cardinal virtues had been concerned, and, which is more, the Vatican 'throne, both in its foundation and supports.

Sect. 17. Vain glory is another capital crime in their account, and pregnant with many others. They define it to be an inordinate affecting of human glory, and yet determine, that an inordinate affecting of praise, or favour, or honour, or reverence, or glory, is but regularly a venial sin; only it may happen to be mortal in some case, as when one would inordinately have glory from others for a deadly end, or for a mortal sin, or that which he makes his last end; in all other cases this capital evil is but a slight fault. According to their common doctrine, Cajetan will have it to be mortal then only when one glories in mortal sin8 (but to glory in venials they count it a small fault), or sets his ultimate end in vain glory. Angelus collects out of Alexander and Aquinas, that vain glory of itself imports not anything contrary to the love of God or man. Aquinas himself says, that if love of human glory, though vain, be not perfectly repugnant to charity, it is not mortal. And Sylvester delivers this as the sense of their oracle, that the desire of vain glory in its own nature is not mortal.2 Angelus concludes, that this may be a man's end in all things but the Scripture and the sacraments; but this limitation is too strict in the judgment of their doctors which are of greatest repute: for they determine, that he who does those things which are principally instituted for the honour and worship of God, and the salvation of souls, for vain glory as his chief end; as for example, he that in preaching, or praying, or celebrating, makes vain glory his principal end, and aims at nothing higher, sins but venially.4 Angelus had made it worse, but others had confuted him effectually, and Navarre after them. Aquinas, the angel of their schools, was, it seems, of this persuasion, that vain glory may be actually our principal end in worshipping God, without any mortal sin: for Sylvester tells us, that Angelus did contradict, not only the truth, but St Thomas, in

saying it is a mortal evil, when those things which were ordained for the glory of God, are done principally for a man's own glory, as the sacraments and the Scripture. And they are highly concerned to maintain this, for, says he, if this were a mortal sin, the whole clergy in a manner were in an ill condition;6 he means they were in a state of damnation: so that it was high time for the Roman doctors to form a divinity of new maxims, since those of Scripture and antiquity left them in a damnable condition. One would think, that to count it but a peccadillo, to make vain glory the cause or motive without which a man would not preach, or pray, or perform any worship, should be a prodigious thing for any that calls himself a Christian; but he that will allow it, under no greater censure than that of a petty fault, to be the principal end of worship, and the great concern of salvation, advances it higher. He that takes a church living or spiritual benefice, principally for honour or temporal profit, offends but venially, unless he be unworthy because of his ignorance or other defect.8 So that in their church, for any or all of them, from the pope to the meanest officer, to make honour and profit their chief end in taking the charge of souls, or other place or employment, which concern the worship of God, or the the salvation of the people, is so slight a thing as needs never trouble them; ten thousand faults of this nature, ten thousand times over, would never hazard their souls. These two last conclusions will help us to discern of what complexion popery is, upon what it is founded, for what ends they may think it safe to maintain it, and persist in it, without or against any conscientious or spiritual consideration: and why they may make religion all along serve a worldly interest and truckle under it. There is no danger in all this; it is a harmless venial by their doctrine, to thrust the great God and his glory into an inferior place, below their honour and profit, even in those things which they say were principally instituted for his sovereign honour; this is a fault with them next to nothing. If they should, in the worship of God, aim at him in the first place, and at their own glory and profit in the next, there might be some danger lest they should too much oblige him: for thus to join God and their carnal interest together, as their end in any religious concern, is a meritorious act, according to Aquinas. Further,2 vainglorious boasting, though it be with irreverence to God, and injury and scandal to others, if that be not much, is only venial, according to Aquinas and Alensis. And a man may vaingloriously praise himself for something that is good, though it be false, or something that is evil, if it be not deadly, and yet offend but venially, when he does no great mischief to others.

Sect. 18. Aversation to, or grief at, spiritual and divine things, is another capital crime in their reckoning, which is called acedia. The object is God, as to man's friendship and communion with him, and the spiritual acts and duties requisite thereto; the act they express by sloth, and loathness to meddle with these things, coldness, tepidness about them, not caring for them, nauseating and accounting them a grievance. This some of them do not deny to be a mortal sin, but they will have it mortal only upon such strange terms, that any one may have a great aversation for God, and the things of God, without danger of deadly guilt; for they define it by an aggrievedness at what is spiritual and divine, quatenus est divinum, as it is divine, and not otherwise; not because it is laborious or troublesome to the flesh, or any impediment to its pleasures, which are Aquinas's words;5 but under that formality, in that it is divine, as his followers understand it. So that the greatest disaffection to spiritual things, if it be because they are unsuitable to corrupt nature, not agreeable to the flesh, its ease and pleasure (which is the common and ordinary cause of it), if it be not on an account that rarely falls out, as they acknowledge, and which a man can scarce ever deliberately be subject to;7 it brings him not under this guilt. So Cajetan tells us, If a man, not as to his affection, but in effect, be grieved at this, viz.,

that he is to be a citizen with the saints, and one of God's family, because he little cares for the happiness of this divine friendship, neglecting to attain it, because he gives up himself to other delights, he is not guilty of this sin. Angelus, that he may discover when this disaffection to spiritual and divine things is mortal, and when venial, tells us, that when it consists in the omission of things not necessary to salvation, it is venial;2 that is, it is little or no fault, if all the duties of real worship, all the acts of grace and Christian virtues, are omitted; for we cannot yet discern that they account any of these necessary to salvation, and by the premises it appears they do not. It is venial, says Sylvester, when a man counts the doing of it grievous, but yet omits not what he is bound to. Angelus expresseth it more significantly: By this it appears, says he, what is to be said of him who counts grievous, and abominates divine and spiritual things, since unless they be necessary to salvation, and he declines them, or is deliberately disposed to decline them, he sins not mortally.4 So that spiritual and divine things (all that they account not necessary; that is, all in a manner which is requisite for a Christian) may be abhorred, without any mortal guilt; and herein the two sums agree well enough, though they seem to be at some odds. It is false, says Sylvester (not limiting it to things necessary) that abominating of spiritual things is always a mortal sin. Accordingly he determines, that rancour against those who would induce us to spiritual things (that is, would draw us to God, or the things of God), is a venial fault.6 It is no mortal sin (say others) to conceive an indignation and loathing of those who persuade to what is spiritual (so as not to endure to hear or see them), whether preachers or others. We see by this (as by other instances) that sins so stated, as they are scarce ever practicable, they can be content to have them counted mortal; but common provocations, and such of which there is most danger, must pass for venials; yea, there are some amongst them who will have this capital crime, though it have such a deadly aspect, both in itself and in its effects, to be no mortal sin.—Laisius Turrian. ibid. sect. iii. n. ii.

Sect. 19. Anger stands in their general account as another capital crime. I have touched it before; but here let us see how criminal they make it, when in particulars they bring up their reckoning. It is considered in respect of the mode or degree, and the tendency or effects of it. As to the degree of it, how high soever it rise, to what excess soever it transport one, inwardly or outwardly, it is not in its own nature mortal, unless it be so vehement as to bear down both love to God and man, and leave the passionate person neither, which yet it will not do, though it sally out furiously into curses or blasphemies against God or man, if this be but merely verbal, as we saw before.2 The tendency of it, that which it leads to, is revenge; and as to that, it will be venial if the revenge be but little, or it may be great when it can be taken legally; or it may be great and illegal too, if the passion be but quick and great enough. The more excessive it is, the more mischief it may do, and be innocent, if the passion prevent deliberation when it comes, and hinder it while it stays; both it, and the effects of it, how horrid soever, will be venial. So that, if one be angry enough, he may blaspheme God, renounce Christ, perjure himself, kill or burn whom or what he will, with little or no fault. Thus, by their doctrine, this capital crime seems more like a virtue than a vice, since the greater is the better; or at least the less it has to do with reason, the more excusable and venial. Other extravagant passions meet with as favourable measures. Indignation, which makes a man disdain others, as unworthy of his conversation or affable treatment, it is commonly venial.4 Audaciousness, in itself, is no worse; nor excessive wrath and immoderate fear, because they are not contrary to charity, but exorbitant from the right measures of reason. So intimidity or fool-hardiness is venial, when it proceeds from tolerable foolishness; but the folly may be so great, that the fault will be none.6 Also incontinent desires, or lusts; love likewise, whether of the flesh or

the world. Of the former, thus Angelus: Immoderate self-love, when one excessively seeks the delight of the body and ease of the flesh, it proceeds from luxury, yet it is commonly venial, when it causes not other mortal acts or neglects.8 As for love of the world, to love it for necessity, is no sin, and to love to stay a long time in the world, for the pleasures of it, is but a venial fault.

Envy is another capital crime, and in general they inveigh against it, as a devilish wickedness; yet when they come to give particular rules for conscience and practice, they leave room enough for the entertainment of it in the hearts and lives of their catholics. The general notion of it is an excessive grief at the good of others, but all are acquitted from mortal quiet who grieve at others' good, because it may be prejudicial to themselves, or because they want it. So far a man may envy all in the world who have more worth, honour, or power, or prosperity than himself. This may be good or evil, but evil in no other degree, than the desire of temporals,2 which, when it is excessive, is of itself, by their doctrine, but venial. Or they may grieve at others' good, because they think those who have it unworthy of it. Grief or indignation at the outward happiness of others, upon this account solely, is of itself a venial fault with Aquinas and Cajetan. But why evil at all? The reason is because, since that which is grieved at is neither an evil of sin or punishment, it seems in a manner to reprove God, and to grieve, as though there were injustice in the dispenser of these things. All the envy in the world may find shelter and security in these decisions, as a harmless venial. If this last-mentioned be not envy, what is? why, a grief at the good of others, as it lessens and obscures our proper worth or excellency. But he that thinks others more unworthy, and himself far better, will think it a lessening and obscuring his own worth to have it so overlooked, and that which they distinguish and mince in speculation, will go down together in practice. However, two limitations they add, which will commonly excuse envy: it must be betwixt equals,4 and so grief at the prosperity of inferiors, or superiors at least, will be acquitted; also, if it be for little things, it is venial. Now all temporals are little things to him who has the eternal in his prospect; so way is made to acquit all envy for outward prosperity, which yet they make the only object of envy.6 And if envy, upon a small ground, may be excused as a little fault, envy upon a great occasion will be excusable, as less; except when they derive the sinfulness of an act from its exorbitancy as to reason; that will be less sinful which is more unreasonable. They might as well have concluded directly, and without circumlocution, as Lorca the Dominican doth, that envy is no more a mortal sin than vainglory or covetousness, which they count venial, unless heightened with some such circumstance as will make an act otherwise good to be a deadly evil.

Sect. 20. Intemperance, which they call Gula, comprising both gluttony and drunkenness, may well pass for a cardinal crime, yet both together, by an after reckoning, make but a poor venial. They define it an inordinate appetite of eating and drinking, viz., to excess, not for necessity, but for pleasure. This, when it is excessive every way, in the charge, the time, the quality, the pleasure, the quantity, is not in its own nature a mortal sin, according to the doctrine of Aquinas, though it be a capital vice, and the cause of many other. But then it may be deadly by accident, if it be grievously hurtful to the body;2 so it becomes those to determine, who are more tender of the concerns of the body than of the soul. Yet that we may understand how the pleasure of sensuality may be preferred before either soul or body, they tell us, that if the damage done to the body by intemperance be not grievous, or if it prove so great, yet if the glutton do not observe it, or if the great prejudice done to his health be not so frequent that he is bound to observe it, it will be venial still. But Cajetan troubles us not with this respect to health, but concludes it may be venial (and of

a large size sometimes), not only when it brings upon us other inconveniences, but other sins, and particularly when it is prejudicial to health.4 He has but one case wherein it will be more than venial; then only is it mortal, says he, when this pleasure in eating is a man's chief end, and his belly his god; that is, when for the pleasure of it, he not only transgresses all rules of temperance, but has no regard of any command of God, or the church, as if a man will steal to play the glutton, &c. It seems this sensual lust will never be criminal, unless one be so much at its devotion, as to contemn God,6 and make nothing of any other wickedness to gratify it. And though there be no danger here, but when one makes his belly his god, yet there is no great danger of that, since a man may be a perfect epicure, like the rich glutton in the Gospel, and yet escape. When one, says Angelus, for delight of his appetite, resolves to give up his whole life to such (gluttonous) pleasures as Dives, &c., this is near to mortal sin. It seems, then, it is not deadly, but only near it; though it brought the epicure not only near hell, but into the torment of its flames. Yea, further, if intemperance proceed to beastliness, and pollute not only the soul but the body loathsomely, if the glutton load himself with more than he can bear, and so burden nature, that it is forced to ease itself in nasty ways, this will be no more a fault. Intemperance, says Navarre, is regularly venial, though without any profit, and out of design, one stuff himself so full with meat and drink, even to vomiting.8 If he eat so much till he vomit, on purpose that he may be at it again the sooner, and so may be still gormandising, it is no worse. Uncleanness, says Angelus, which is the issue of intemperance, when one provokes himself to vomit, that he may eat the oftener, or when he eats so much that he must of necessity vomit, is commonly a venial fault. Cajetan more fully: Uncleanness is used for the sin of voiding excrements excessively, as of meat by vomiting, and the like, proceeding from intemperance; it is frequently a venial sin, since it is neither against the love of God nor man; yet it is filthy, since it brings with it even bodily nastiness.2 So that intemperance, even when it bewrays itself, and vents its filth by all the passages that oppressed nature can find in the glutton's body, is but a small fault. To be half drunk is no mortal sin. So Lopez, after Aquinas;4 herein they all agree, says a learned cardinal; take their sense in the words of Cajetan.6 Drunkenness not complete (when one by drinking wine is made too merry, or is disturbed in his fancy, so that the house seems to whirl round, or the like effect of intoxication befalls him, but he does not quite lose the use of reason), without doubt is a great sin (but not big enough to be feared), unless it be done for medicine; because it is excessive drinking in quantity or quality, when fallen into it knowingly or negligently; but it is worse when it is out of design (when one drinks too much, with an intention thus to disorder himself), because then it is almost mortal (there is no danger in all this, since he adds) but yet it is not mortal, since it reaches not the complete notion of drunkenness, and is without signal damage to reason. So that if a man be not dead drunk, and utterly deprived of the use of reason, he falls short of that perfection which is requisite to make this a deadly evil. In fine, however the Scripture, ancient Christians, and all that are sober, brand drunkenness as a most deadly vice, yet the Roman doctors have discovered two admirable virtues in it; one is that the full dose (perfect drunkenness), will make the highest impieties, the greatest outrages and villanies, to be no sins at all. So Angelus, who proves it by the canon law. So likewise Rosella, after others. Those of their writers which seem most cautious,8 except culpable drunkenness, as to this only, when such outrages are the usual effects of it. So that unless both drunkenness, and the criminal issues of it, be customary, this will not be sin, or imputable to the drunkard. Hereby they furnish the Christian world with a new argument to prove Mahomet a false prophet, seeing he was so greatly mistaken in making his law so severe against

wine, which, in its greatest abuse, is of such sovereign efficacy as to drown so much mortal sin, and to make all crimes whatever lose their deadly quality. But that impostor's head was not so intoxicated but he might discern that such who are guilty in the cause, are chargeable in the effects; nor was he so much a prophet as to foresee, that in after times, anything under the disguise of divinity should stumble at this. The other virtue of this sin is, that the moiety of it (half drunkenness) will make any the most horrid crimes to be but small faults. Weakness of judgment, says one, such as they who are half asleep, or half drunk, though it be enough to make a sin venial, yet not mortal.2 When those, says another, that are half asleep, or half drunk, perpetrate any wicked thing whatever, since they are plainly under weakness of judgment, they are quitted of mortal guilt. So that if any one will but make himself half drunk every morning early (and it will be no worse than a venial to do it purposely), he may, whatever wickedness he acts, be free from mortal sin all his life; and thus, he that lives all his days like a devil, may escape hell notwithstanding, and be saved by being daily half drunk.

There are multitudes of particular sins which they comprise under these seven capitals, and call them their daughters, after Gregory and Aquinas; but they need not be taken notice of as mortal by common confessors, much less by their confitents, for such confessors need not know whether they are mortal or no, as Angelus tells us after Henricus; and so must absolve sinners, though they never resolve, or think of leaving their sins.

Sect. 21. By the premises we may see what, and how many, sins may pass for venial in the church of Rome, and they have presumed to make them so without evidence from Scripture, as even a Jesuit will acknowledge. The maxims they proceed on therein (though eternal life or death depend on it) are purely their own conceits; no wonder if they leave them at great uncertainty. Many sins are believed to be venials which are mortal, says Bonaventure, and it is most difficult to discern them.6 So that they have no sufficient direction from any rule, no, not their own; but they are encouraged to venture upon all this wickedness in the dark and blindfold. The instances I have given may serve for a test; there is a world more, nor have I picked out all the worst; more time and diligence may discover more as bad or worse. But by these we may discern, that whatever the Lord hath forbidden in his law, they have ways to reduce it to the rank of venials; for the whole matter of the divine law is, in itself, either of less or greater weight: if it be small, or they please to count it so, they conclude presently, Upon that account, it is not mortal. Whatever appears not to be a grand enormity, whether it be against God, others, or ourselves, must be venial, according to that of Richard de Sancto Victore. Mortal sin cannot be committed by any, but by a grand corrupting of himself, or contempt of God, or grievous mischief of others; all the rest are venial. Whatever is not, in their apprehension, grand and grievous, is next to nothing. Yea, one member of the three is, in a manner, wholly shrivelled away into venials. A man can scarce do anything against himself which will be big enough to make a mortal sin of.2 Indeed, it may seem no more than requisite to make it no crime for a man to damn himself, when they animate him to venture on so many damnable things, as if they were nothing. Thus they serve whatever the great God hath forbidden, which they have the confidence to count small; but if they cannot choose but think it great, they have other expedients to level it (according to the exigence of men's lusts), and diminish it into a venial. To make it more, they require so very much, that a sinner may make shift enough to be without some of it, and so escape the mortalness (as they will have him dream) though he practise the wickedness. That any sin may be mortal, there must be judicium integrum,

an entire judgment, not distracted, not weakened, not disturbed, as they prove out of their canon law. Also, there must be perfect deliberation;4 it is venial (how grievous soever otherwise) where there is not perfect deliberation. If, by any means, deliberation not only in itself, but in its perfection, be either prevented, and the thing be done before the mind take due cognizance of it, or hindered while it is under debate, it cannot be mortal. And that deliberation may be perfect, there must be a sufficient presenting of the evil in its object and its circumstances. If the mind only consider the advantage or pleasure, and not the sinfulness and danger, it is but a semi-deliberation, and not full enough to make a sin mortal. Besides, it will require time to perfect it,6 and here they may favour the sinner as much as they please, by determining what time is sufficient for human frailty; but if he be in haste, and do not stay this time, because he is so forward to sin, he will but sin venially. Finally, there must be full consent of will. If the inferior and sensual part take never so much complacency in a wicked thing, yet so long as the superior takes no notice of it, there is no harm; it is certainly no more than a venial. Or if the superior part takes cognizance of it, and be some way inclined to the wickedness, yet that may not make it criminal, for every inclination is not sufficient for this purpose, but full consent of will, such as is perfectly deliberate; neither is a tacit and constructive consent sufficient.2 A neglect to repel or suppress the delight in sin, with some reluctancy of reason, is with Bonaventure constructive consent, which, in the opinion of many doctors, is no mortal sin. Now if there be not a concurrence of all these, the horridest crime that can be perpetrated will be a venial. If a man should blaspheme God, or curse Christ, or renounce the faith, or murder his own father, or ravish his own child or mother, or fire cities and countries, yet if he did it not with such perfection of judgment, deliberation, and consent as is expressed, it would be a petty fault. And he may be easily furnished with many things, which will any of them so weaken this as not to hurt him. Ignorance, drowsiness, disorder by drink, inconsiderateness, negligence, forgetfulness, precipitancy, natural or accidental, levity, passion, custom or habit, and the like, will serve to excuse any wickedness from mortal guilt. Let me but add one more (which serves to make clear work): the opinion of their doctors, one or more, will make any crime not to be mortal to him that follows it. Any person upon this ground may venture upon the most deadly sin as if it were venial. It will be no more dangerous, for he is to be absolved, by their doctrine, though he declares that he will not forsake such a sin. The confessor ought to absolve him, though in his own opinion, and the judgment of other divines also, it be a mortal crime.4 This is their common doctrine, delivered by multitudes of their writers; so that hereby a fair way is opened to leave no mortal sin in the world, at least in the consciences of all that will regard their doctors. In the mean time, the far greatest part of sins the world is guilty of are, by this and their other maxims, become peccadilloes, and they bid fair for all. The principles, by virtue of which they have done so much already, a little improved (though extended no further than they will reach), would go near to leave no deadly sin at all. To be sure, he that will regulate himself by their maxims, may act any wickedness in the world without fear of deadly guilt. And hereby it appears plainly how very needless holiness of life is in that church (which pretends to a monopoly of all the holiness on earth), since by their doctrine they may not only neglect acts of piety, righteousness, and common honesty, but may live securely in practices opposite to, and inconsistent therewith. They may continue in customary blaspheming of God, in common swearing and perjuries, in perfidiousness to God and men; in a neglect of all that is acceptable in divine worship; in a total profanation of all time which is indeed, or in their account, holy; in impiousness and disobedience to parents or superiors; in divers degrees of uncleanness and murder; in variety of cheats and

stealing; in unfaithfulness as to breach of promise and compacts; in all falseness and lying, everywhere, and upon all occasions; in slandering or detraction, in covetousness or prodigality, which they will; in unmercifulness and outrageous passions; in pride and ambition; in vain glory and hypocrisy; in flattery or cunning; in gluttony and drunkenness, &c.; in sins against God and man, against godliness, righteousness, mercy, charity,—in any of these, a little modified in all of them, and many more than I can reckon. They may persist in them impenitently to the death, and yet (if impostors may be trusted rather than the word of God) not fall short of salvation; their doctrine gives them encouragement to live in them without conscience, and die in them without repentance. It takes off the motives which might work upon either fear or love (the main principles of such motions in us) to forsake them. They are taught by their best authors that these sins may stand well with their love to God; that they do not so much as impair the habit of charity; that they do not hinder the increase of grace, or the effects of their sacraments;2 that they do not stain the soul; that they hazard not God's favour thereby; that they displease not God, that they are not against his will;4 that they are consistent with a perfect fulfilling of the law; that they have not perfectly the nature of sin;6 that they are not against the law, but only beside it; or if they be against it in any respect, as some of them think,8 yet against no precept, the observance of which is necessary for salvation, or not against the end of the law, which is charity; that they are but as specks or motes,10 we may look on them as nothing, that without the interposal of mercy they are such in their own nature,12 as ought to be passed by, they deserve pardon. They do not (as they teach) deserve eternal punishment, and the Lord (as they blaspheme) would be unjust, if he should condemn any for them. So that not only as long as God is merciful, but while he is just, the practice of these sins is safe. Neither love to God, nor fear of his displeasure, nor dread of hell, nor desire of heaven, nor a design for perfection, need move them to abandon any one of these sins. They need not fear, how much soever they multiply or abound in them; if they should commit millions of them in a day, and continue the practice all the days of a long life, this would not damn them; for all the venial sins in the world, if they meet in one man, would not amount to so much as one damning sin.2 They may commit them not only out of ignorance or infirmity, but with a high hand out of contempt. They may praise themselves or others for them,4 they may boast of and glory in them, they may perpetrate them out of malice.6 They may be so far from resolving to leave them, as it will be but a small fault, to bind themselves by oath to commit them, and call God to witness, that they will thus sin against him. They may die with resolution to continue therein,8 if they might live; yea, they may breathe out their souls with delight and complacency in these sins, and yet be saved. To conclude, mark how they may act and multiply, and persist in them, and then view the nature and quality and number of them, or guess thereat by the severals premised; and then suppose a man living after the rules of these conscientious doctors and casuists, and taking but part of that liberty which the Roman divinity allows, such a man would pass for a good catholic with them, and be holy enough, according to the holiness left among them, and made necessary by them; yet, even by the rules of heathen morality, he would appear little better than a monster. So faithfully do they retain, and so much do they regard the rules of Christ in forming the maxims of their new divinity, that sober heathenism would be ashamed thereof; and so like is practical popery to true Christianity, in that wherein the reality and triumphant splendour of it consists, innocency and purity! If an atheist had a mind to render the Christian name odious, and to represent Christianity with a black and detestable visage to the sober part of the world; if he had a design to make men believe that Christ was a minister of unrighteousness, and the gospel a

licentious doctrine, tending to debauch mankind, he would need no more, but persuade them that the maxims of the Roman divines were conformed to the rules of the gospel; but then, if he should attempt to prove this conformity, he might as easily demonstrate that darkness is light, or the Alcoran the Christian gospel.

CHAPTER IX Many enormous crimes are no sins at all in the Roman account

Sect. 1. I proceed to those sins which they will have to be no sins, but need not stay long here, having given a large account of those which they make venial; since betwixt these, and no sins, there is little difference in their doctrine, and none in their practice. I need not stay to shew how it is no sin with them to vilify the Scriptures (the written word of God), or to rob him of the sole glory of his mediation, and to give much thereof to others, in all its parts and specialities, merit, satisfaction, intercession; or to put their trust in others besides God, for things which he alone can give, and for which he only is to be relied on, and this not only in saints and angels, but their images, and their imaginary relics. And how it is no sin in their account to abide in ignorance, unbelief, impenitency, or to live without the love and fear of God, and the exercising of other graces; by what is already premised this is sufficiently manifested. To resist the inspirations of God, drawing us to the observance of his commands, or withdrawing us from wickedness, is no special sin, i. e. we contract no other kind of guilt thereby, than if we had sinned without any such inspirations to withhold us from it. Thus it will be no fault at all to quench the motions of God's Spirit, inducing us to turn to him, to love him, to repent, &c., or dissuading us from blasphemy, perjury, adultery, murder, or any other crime. And yet if a man be ready to commit any wickedness, it will be no sin for another to invite him to do it. Thus far men may promote all sin in others, and resist the Spirit of God, moving against it. As for evil spirits, they conclude it no sin, for good men, by special instinct or revelation, to make use of the ministry of devils;3 they tell us that to apply themselves to devils to know, or obtain any thing of them, is to have some familiarity and society with those damned spirits (unless it be the better to expel them out of the possessed), yet they teach it is no sin to inquire of the devil in a possessed person, what his name is, and wherefore he vexes that person, and what devils are his associates, and the like. But he must not believe the devil, though he tell him (for this would be as bad as necromancy);5 yet if he believe him not, none can tell how the devils answering him in those inquiries can contribute any thing to his expulsion. They declare also, that it is lawful to use adjurations to the devils who possess no person, not to assist those that do, or to apply themselves to the great devils, to cast out the less.

Sect. 2. So far we see (and further) they may deal with the devil; how they may deal with God we saw before. Though the whole body of popery be corrupt, yet there is nothing more leprous than their worship. They think it not needful that it should be conformed to the divine rule in any thing, either as to the end, or manner, or matter, or object, yet it is transcendently good in their own eyes, no sin in it, even when there is nothing else. For what sordid and wicked ends they think it fit to worship God, we have discovered already, and also in what an irreligious manner. To this latter, let me add, what I meet with in Angelus, when he is inquiring, whether attention or devotion be necessary in their divine service (a strange question it might seem among any called Christians, if their divine service were the worship of God), he tells us their gloss maintains that it is sufficient to say it (their service) with the mouth, though not with the heart, and that many other canonists agree therein. Thus it seems they understand the pope's law for divine worship; so as to approve that in plain terms which Christ expressly, and the prophets before him, condemns; so as to

declare to the world, that the church of Rome makes no other worship necessary, than what Christ hath openly branded as vain, false, and hypocritical, Isaiah 29:14, and Matthew 15:7–9. The sense of their divines agrees so well with the canonists, and as little with Christ (though it be expressed in other terms), that the contradiction to him is not so open though it be as full. Angelus himself, and Sylvester after him, with others, determine that wandering in one that observes it, when it is but as to the inward act, though it be temerarious and grievous, is not mortal unless it be out of contempt,4 the plain English of which is this: the departing of the mind and heart from God in worship, willingly and wittingly, how great soever it be, is a small fault, if any, unless to this neglect of God a greater contempt be added, whereas the contempt of God herein is very great. His reason is that which others give, because the church is not to judge of mere inward acts; and therefore, if a minister of the church, when he is at service, mind something else, he seems to be no transgressor of the precept by that act.6

He tells us out of Aquinas (what we saw the rest of them do before) that they need not continue actually attentive in worship, but only virtually, id est, if they intend to perform service when they are going about it, that will make them pass for attentive enough all the while, though their minds be carried away after other things when they are at it, and never heed the worship in hand. This is the common sense of their authors, as if they should gravely tell us that a man who goes into company with some intent (actual or virtual) to be sober, but presently falls to his cups, is overcome and continues drunk divers hours, yet he may be said to be sober all the while he is drunk, by virtue of his first intention. And so we should wrong the Romanists if we did not think they would have as much of true worship and religion in their service as that man has of sobriety all the time he is dead drunk.

Sect. 3. But there is not any more horrid abuse of divine worship than that which they are guilty of in reference to its object; for besides what they determine concerning divine worship to be given to other things besides God, it is no sin with them to worship the utensils of their worship, the vessels, books, tables, linen, and priestly vestments, being once dedicated to divine service, and made holy by the charm of a consecration. Antonius Corduba says they are to be worshipped for themselves, and in the judgment of Clychtovius they are to have a worship distinct from his worship, to whose honour they are dedicated.3 Vasquez will have them worshipped relatively (as images, to whom he gives divine adoration) with respect to him in whose service they are used.

It is no sin to worship the word Jesus, whether it be pronounced or written, and some will have honour given to the word for itself; so Corduba and others. Some will have the word worshipped together with him that it signifies, as the image and the exemplar are both worshipped together, so that they will have the word Jesus to be worshipped as the image of Jesus.

It is no sin to worship the accidents of bread and wine in the eucharist, where the object worshipped is not only Christ there, nor is it the substance of bread and wine (for they say there is no substance left), but that which they worship is the colour, figure, or taste of the elements. The colour, when there is nothing that is coloured; the tartness, when there is nothing that is tart; the roundness, when there is nothing that is round. To these wonderful (not to say monstrous) accidents, some will have a single worship due, but that, the very same worship that is due to Christ, and besides that divine adoration, which is common to them with Christ, will have also a proper worship given without reference to Christ; but all of them agree that they are to be adored

with divine worship, and some say that this adoration is terminated on them, as the worship of the exemplar upon the image. They will not only have the manger wherein Christ lay, and the thorns wherewith he was crowned, and the spear that wounded him, to be worshipped, but the picture of these when they are but painted;2 they are to have the same worship which the true cross has, that is, divine adoration; and so are natural thorns or a common manger or spear to be worshipped, when they are made use of to adorn the cross or to set off the passion of Christ, as they are wont theatrically to represent it.

It is no sin to worship anything that Christ touched, or that touched him, how injuriously soever. Therefore, they teach that the ass upon which Christ rode is to be worshipped. Hereby it appears, says Vasquez, how rightly the ass upon which Christ did ride may be worshipped, and that the very lips of Judas (that traitor and devil as Christ calls him) for kissing Christ, when he betrayed him, for that very act wherein he shewed himself a traitor and devil, are to be worshipped.4 If they had but that traitor's lips they would reverently and devoutly kiss, that is, adore them; and it is strange if they have them not among their sacred relics, since they say they have the foreskin of Christ cut off at his circumcision, and his very countenance impressed by him upon a white cloth,6 for one would think these as hard to come by; however, in diverse places they worship something at a venture which they count so.

It is no sin to worship the imaginary blood which flows from a crucifix or image of Christ, when it is wounded, for they, being given up to believe the most ridiculous lies, do believe that such blood hath issued from a mere picture or image, they keep it as a most sacred relic,8 and it is to be worshipped with the same worship they give to Christ himself.

It is no sin to give divine worship to any man, not only the saints in heaven or holy persons on earth, but any men whatever in the world (the wickedest not excepted), may, together with God, have divine worship, as the image has with the exemplar, since every man is the living image of God. This is not only the doctrine of Vasquez, but of Alensis, of Waldensis, and of Cardinal Cajetan, only in the practice of this there must be caution; for Albertus Magnus and Aquinas say there is danger lest a man being of more excellency than an image, divine worship should be given him, not for God's sake but his own dignity, but where this danger is not, they would not deny but any man may be so worshipped, even with divine worship; so that if Paul and Barnabas, with the Lycaonians,2Acts 14:1-28, had but proceeded with the caution of these doctors, and taken care that those people should so worship them only for God's sake, they might lawfully have admitted the worship offered them, though they (not learned in this kind of doctrine) chose rather to be stoned than so honoured.

It is lawful to worship not only rational creatures, but anything else in the whole world, whether living or lifeless. Any beast or creeping thing may be worshipped as the image of God, which they hold is to be honoured with divine worship; so that not only the planets, stars, the queen, and the host of heaven may be thus adored (for which the Lord condemns Israel and Judah as idolaters), but the vilest creature that lives on earth, a fly, or a frog, or a serpent, or a toad may be thus worshipped; yea, meaner creatures than any that have life, any inanimate thing whatsoever, though it be but a wisp of straw. That is our author's own instance: whereas, says he, the Wickliffites object that Christians who worship images may as well worship a wisp of straw (modulum straminis). The same Leontius (upon whose authority he grounds all) would as freely

grant this of a bit of straw, as he does it of everything else in the world, so far is it from being counted absurd; yea, they may worship not only vile, but sordid things; and not only God, but angels and saints in them, quævis alia res mundi; anything whatever in the world, whether lifeless, unreasonable, or rational, may rightly have divine worship with God. And this is not only the judgment of their famous Vasquez, but of Cardinal Cajetan, and in consequence, of them all; for those great wits well discerned that the adoration of other things, approved and practised by the Romanists, could never be defended, without extending their principles to such a latitude. Thus it is manifest that whatsoever the apostate Israelites adored, or the Egyptians worshipped, or the Laplanders do worship, or the grossest and the most ridiculous idolaters in the world, ever made an idol, all that, with much more and worse, may lawfully be worshipped by popish principles; there never was any idolatry so absurd or horrid in the world but may have patronage or excuse by this doctrine. And now heaven and earth being furnished with their idols, one would think they need go no further, but be satisfied, without seeking hell for any, yet there is an inquiry which reaches that too. It is a question amongst them, if the devil should appear in a beam of light, or the form of a crucifix, whether that apparition may be worshipped? Antisidorensis, Alexander, Aquinas, Marsilius, Adrian, and others, will not allow it should be worshipped, unless conditionally, and with a condition expressed; but Vasques is for adoration hereof absolutely, no condition expressed;2 and he has those who are otherwise minded at a great advantage, because they conclude for worship absolutely in a parallel case; for they will have a consecrated host to be worshipped without condition, though the devil were in it, or lurked under it; and if they think he would be worshipped in the former without the interposal of a condition, he will be worshipped in the latter, where they will have no condition to exclude it. I conclude this with what Holcott determines: a man may merit by a mistaken belief, although it so fall out that he worship the devil.

These decisions were necessary to justify their devout persons who have met with such adventures. A great part of popery is grounded upon visions and apparitions. These were much affected and admired by their reputed holy men, and women too, who were admired and adored for them. Satan, in the darkness (wherein this mystery did best thrive), had the advantage to put store of cheats upon them. Many monks and hermits (says à Lapide) were deceived by him. Particularly, among the rest, Valens the monk was thus deluded, the devil frequently appearing to him as an angel. In fine, Satan in an apparition feigned himself to be Christ, and the monk went, and for Christ worshipped the devil (Idem in 2 Corinthians 11:15). They are concerned to plead for that worship, which had the same original with much of their religion.

Sect. 4. For oaths or perjury, I will only instance in those which are fraudulent. First, they determine that he who takes an oath, and intends not to swear, the oath binds not, it is no sin to go against it.

Secondly, when a man intends to swear, but intends not to be obliged by swearing, there he is not obliged, but may lawfully break it, as the ancienter casuists and school-doctors generally determine.

There is real evidence for the practice of this from the conclave; for, as their excellent historian tells us, in the vacancies of the see, the cardinals use to compose certain capitulations to reform the papal government, which all swear to perform if they be assumed to the popedom, though it appear by all precedent examples that every one sweareth with a mind not to keep them in case

he shall be pope; for so soon as he is elected, he saith, he could not bind himself, and that he is at liberty by gaining the papacy. This was remarkably exemplified in Paul IV., who, resolving to break one of the capitulations he was sworn to a little before, and some of the cardinals being ready to put him in mind of his oath, he declared in consistory, that it is an article of faith that the pope cannot be bound, and much less can bind himself, that to say otherwise was a manifest heresy,3 and threatened the inquisition to any that hold it. It seems it is damnable error, deserving something like a hell upon earth, to believe that his holiness intends to be honest whatever he swear. It is true, every one has not the privilege of a pope to have it counted heresy for any to believe that he can be bound to keep any oaths, or ever to intend it; but all have this liberty by their doctrine, that they may take oaths without any intention to keep them, and are not bound to keep them if they do not intend it.

Thirdly, to elude an oath, and deceive those who give it, or are concerned in it, by equivocation, or other artifice of words, yea, or by mental reservation, is no sin, and that in many cases. As when a man has no mind to swear, and thinks he is not bound to do it; when he is drawn to it by force, or induced by fear, or brought to it by importunity; or when the judge is incompetent (as they count all that are heretics or excommunicate, and that have not lawful jurisdiction), or if the judges are competent, yet when they proceed not juridically.5 In these and other cases, either for avoiding harm or inconvenience, or when it may be for their advantage in any respect, they think it lawful to use these methods of deceit in swearing. Indeed, the reason they give to justify the practice in these cases, will make it as lawful in any other; for they say what is so sworn is true in their own sense, though not in the sense of the hearers, and so they will have it in strictness to be neither lie nor perjury, nor any mortal sin, even when there is no honest nor reasonable occasion for swearing or promising in this fraudulent manner. And that you may perceive the Jesuits are not the prime masters of these arts, I shall instance in other authors who were either before them, or not addicted to the Society. For equivocations, or other sleight of words in swearing, they are justified by multitudes of their writers, viz., Sairus after Aquinas, and their Gloss, Paludanus, Gabriel, Johannes Major, Adrian, Hen. Gandavensis, Angelus, Sylvester, Soto, &c. The instances which Soto gives may serve for a test; as for example, when one instead of saying I swear, uses a word which signifies another thing, but so pronounces it as the difference is not discerned; or if the word God in the language wherein the oath is taken may signify some other thing, he that swears may mean something else by it, when he that gives the oath understands the God of heaven; or if the oath be formed in this order, I swear to you to pay so much money, he that swears may mean not to pay him but some other, when he to whom the oath is made, understands it intended for himself. Such an oath, says Soto, is true, just, prudent, because then simulation is profitable,5 having said before that it is lawful, with such fraud to deceive one who forces him to swear, since he who puts him to swear hath no right to do it; and these fore-mentioned are the very same instances which Sanchez uses7, by which we see the Jesuit was not the inventor hereof, but learned them of a Dominican. Of mental reservations, justified by their chief authors, who were no Jesuits, instances might be given in abundance; for example, if a man will have his wife swear that she is not an adulteress, though she be guilty, she may deny it with an oath, and swear what is false in his sense, if it be true in her own, by the addition of some secret reserve. If a man swear to give another a hundred crowns with this inward reserve, If he owe it him, he sins not, though he swears false in the sense of him who is to have the money. A woman who, because of some secret impediment, will not live with her husband, and is excommunicated for it, she at the point of

death, that she may be absolved, being put to swear, that if she recover, she will live with him, may swear it absolutely in show, with this conditional reserve, If she may do it without sin; yet if she do it not, she is not forsworn; so Sylvester and Navarre, according to the determination of Aquinas and Jo. Major. He that in the time of pestilence comes to a town where the officers, before they admit him, will have him swear that he came from no infected place, though it be not true he may swear it, if he think himself have got no infection.4 If you have not a mind, or are not bound to give or lend anything in your possession which another desires, you may lawfully swear that you have it not, with this inward reserve, that you have it not, to give or lend. If a man threaten to kill a confessor, if he will not tell him, whether his wife hath confessed her adultery to him, though she have confessed it to him, yet the priest may absolutely say and swear that she has not, with this reserve, So that he should be bound to tell it. He that is examined upon oath concerning crimes that he knows, and swears to declare all he knows, may, concerning some that are not known to others, though they be to him, swear without perjury that he knows them not, with this secret reserve, he knows not to discover them.

If one promise to another, or contract with a woman outwardly, without an intention of promising, and is demanded of a judge upon oath whether he promised or contracted, he may plainly deny it, because he may have this sense, I promised not with a promise obliging me; and he has just cause so to answer, because since he cannot otherwise prove his want of intention, he will be condemned to pay what he owes not, or to cohabit with her whom he truly contracted not. A witness, either when he is not interrogated juridically, or when he has good occasion not to bear witness in judgment, as if he fear great damage to himself thereby, may answer, that he knows not, or saw it not, or the like, with a mental reservation;3 he that out of necessity, or for any profit, offers himself to swear of his own accord, may therein use such fallacy. He that hath good occasion to hide his goods, lest they should be seized by his creditors, being for his livelihood, and to keep him from beggary, may swear that he has not hid any, understanding not any that he could not hide, or any that he is bound to discover. The same may the witnesses swear for him (viz., that he hid none), knowing that he hid them lawfully; such fallacious oaths may be used also in contracts and bargaining. Those who cannot otherwise get a just price of the buyer, may swear in a sense that he perceives not, that the commodity cost them so much.6

Here are a few instances, but they have rules (some of them are premised) which license it in cases innumerable, so that it may be a common practice, and they may use it upon any occasion which they think reasonable.

These things considered, with others authorised among them, I cannot devise what course can be taken to bind those who follow their doctrine, or to get from them the least security by an oath. They have declared that if you put an oath upon them which they think ought not to be imposed, they may lawfully deceive you if they can, and put a cheat upon you even in a solemn oath. Contrive then what oath you will for your security, they will take it so far as you can judge, as much as any man in the world takes an oath; yet if they did not intend to swear (which none can tell but themselves) by taking this oath, they have not sworn, they are not obliged. Or if they had a mind to swear as well as to make you think so, yet if they did not intend to oblige themselves thereby, their conscience by their principles is free, the oath does not touch them; or if they have a mind to be obliged by that oath, yet need they not bind themselves to that it was designed for, but to quite another thing, for they may swear in a sense vastly distant from what you intend or imagine; and

thus they are taught to do, and it is practicable, either by the sly and undiscerned change of one letter in a word, as they may pronounce it, which will turn the sense as far from yours, as burning is from swearing, which is plain in a former instance. Or else by the ambiguousness of some word in the oath, affording another sense than you are aware of, they may fix upon that and leave yours to yourself, and so bind themselves to nothing you are concerned for, when you think you have them fast bound to all; or if such care be taken that in the oath there he no ambiguous terms which may give them the advantage to delude you by a sense foreign to your intendment; yet, do what you can, they may put such a sense upon it by a mental restriction; for thereby adding something reserved in their mind, to what is expressed in the oath, the sense is quite changed, and the thing they swear is nothing at all of what you would have sworn.

Yea, or if they swear that they will observe the contents of your oath, according to the plain and natural meaning of the words, without any equivocating or mental restriction; yet at the same time they may mean, without any mental restriction that they will tell you of, and so delude you with a mental reservation when they are swearing against it. Nor is this an imaginary supposition of a thing that they never practised; for thus their priests and others have taken the oath of allegiance, and by this art eluded it; and so they are instructed, and may do still, and defeat any oath that can be devised. Yea, by their doctrine they may do it lawfully, and without sin; for in all this juggling they teach that they do not swear false, but by the artifice specified, it is true in their own sense, though not in theirs who give the oath. Indeed this is a cheat (where God is called to witness), nor do they deny it. But they say such deceit is lawful, as in many other cases, so always when the judge is incompetent. And that is our case in England; we have none from the throne to the lowest bench that, in their account, have any jurisdiction;2 we have none that have power to put an oath on them; they may choose whether they will swear or no, or whether they will cheat them all in swearing. No oath which can be given them can oblige them, but in their own sense, how distant soever from the true sense of the oath or of the imposer of it. This our Roman Catholics were assured of long since, by instructions sent them from Rome in Queen Elizabeth’s time. So that they need make no conscience (if they will follow the best guides of their consciences) to practise all their contrivance upon us in oaths (much more in promises, contracts, &c.), even such as the light of nature has ever condemned in the world, as not only impious in point of religion, but destructive to human society, and those which tend to subvert the main grounds and foundations of it. We can never oblige them by oath at any time but when they please, nor any further than they list. We can never tell when they swear, though they take oaths, nor when they are obliged, though they swear. We cannot possibly know when we may be sure of them; when we think them fast, by all the rules that men of conscience and common honesty proceed by, yet they can juggle themselves loose by the Roman rules at pleasure, and make sport with God and man, even in oaths where God himself is a witness, and the greatest of men concerned as parties.

Sect. 5. There needs no other demonstration of the irreligion of the Roman church, and its utter regardlessness of God and the souls of men, than their doctrine concerning the observance of the Lord’s day, and all other which they pretend to be set apart for holy employment. If any man would understand what religion is left among them, he may see it there in short, and needs look no further, since there he may be satisfied that they have no design for the honour of God or the salvation of souls. For when they have discharged the people from all duties of religion at any other determinate times, and reserved all which they make necessary for them to holy days; yet

even on these days, by their doctrine, nothing is made their duty to which any regard of God or of their souls is needful. All that they are obliged to is only to be present at mass,2 no other act or duty of religion or worship is necessary; no internal act at all, nor any external,4 either public or private, but only the mass. And that may be so external that neither God nor any divine thing need to be minded in it. For this I have produced evidence enough already, let me only add this; they are wont to speak of a three-fold attending at mass (as before was shewed at their divine service). One, to what is said and done by the priest, as sacred; a second, to the meaning of what is said or done; and the third, to God and divine things. Now the first of these, they say, is enough, though it be the worst of all; therefore the second (to regard the meaning of what is said or done); and the third (to mind God or divine things) is more than needs. So that plainly all that is required of a papist, by their doctrine, in order to the honour of God and the salvation of his soul, on any of those days when these ought to be most minded, is only being present at mass, without understanding what is said or done, and without minding God or anything divine. Such is their worship of God and care of souls in the church of Rome; this is the sum of their religion, when it appears set forth to greatest advantage, in its solemn exercises; he that understands it, and can be in love with it, must be under the power of some other consideration than that of God and his soul.

Having seen how these days are sanctified, or profaned rather, by their worship, we might view what observance they have in reference to servile works. And here they have little but what may be done without sin; and indeed, as they order the matter, it may seem less sin to follow the works of their callings than to forbear them, since their abstinence from them is not that they may better attend the worship of God (for they think it not needful to worship him, unless he can be said to be worshipped when he is not heeded), but that they may be idle, or worse employed than in their daily business. However, whether it be to indulge their ease, or serve their lusts, or to make show of some rest (though far enough from a holy rest), they will have some works forborne; but herein they will be regulated by custom, not the divine law. Paludanus and others will have them excused who use manual labours on these days, if they omit not the mass.2 And Sylvester says, this is reasonable, because custom, the interpreter of laws, will have it so. This may so far regulate them, that every province and city must observe those days, and those alone, in that manner, and so far only as custom requires. Yea, it must so far prevail, that if it were the custom to observe these days no longer than till noon, or only till mass were ended (which may be dispatched in half an hour, and that before sunrise), the rest may be spent in servile works.4 They account it worse to spend these days in servile labour than profane divertisements; for this, with them, is only a venial fault, or none, but that may be a mortal sin; yet they declare there is no sin in the worst but what custom makes (they are like to make conscience of it, when their own wills and practices are their rule). This, as many other, by their doctrine, which makes void the commands of God at pleasure, is but a sin at discretion; they may make it none when they please, and render all days alike, as easily as they can bring up a custom, such a one to which nature is forward.6 But no wonder they think not these sacred days violated by working, since they teach they are not profaned by any acts of wickedness. Their divines generally agree herein. Contrition for sins, and the avoiding of other sins, is not enjoined, says Cajetan.2 The day is not profaned by fornication, says Soto; nor by lying, murder, or blaspheming, says Bellarmine;4 nor by any wickedness whatsoever is holy time profaned, but only by those opposite thereto, viz. not hearing mass, and bodily labours. So that the days may be sanctified well enough, according to the holiness of that church, if after an

irreligious presence at mass for half an hour (the precept for which may be satisfied without minding God or abstaining from wickedness while they are at it), the rest thereof be spent in beastly drunkenness or gluttony, in perjuries, blasphemies, or cursing God or man, in murders, whoring, sodomy, or bestiality, or the most enormous debauches. And though they are not bound, as they teach, to be at the pains of one good act of mind or heart in serving God at the only time set apart for his service, Scotus is almost worried by the herd of their divines for seeming to think that a good act of mind towards God was enjoined on these days; yet they may spend their bodies, and toil themselves more in the service of their lusts, without profaning them, than in servile works. The reason why they hold that no excess of wickedness does profane these days, is because wicked acts are not servile works.6 It seems slavery to Satan, and the service of the vilest lusts, is not servile; whatsoever Christ or the apostle thought thereof, John 8:34, Romans 6:16, that is consistent enough with the liberty and honour of such Christians as they are. However, hereby it is manifest that their religious observation of all holy times (and so all the religiousness which that church requires of her catholics) is consistent with the lewdest acts of ungodliness and debauchery. In fine, God can have no honour from men, nor they salvation from him, without religion; this cannot be kept up in the world without the solemn exercises of it; these cannot (or will not) be performed without time for that end; therefore hath the Lord appointed time to be set apart for these purposes; the church of Rome hath reduced all religious exercises, at the times appointed by God or themselves, to the people's hearing of mass, and there will not have the precept oblige them to any real religiousness, not so much as to a thought of God or any thing divine, yea, or the forbearance of wicked thoughts and acts while they are at mass. Thus far is religion (upon which the interest of God and man so much depends) sunk among them. And it must of necessity sink (all but the shadow or froth) in any part of the world where these principles prevail. But though they declare them not obliged to serve God any better at this, or at any other time, yet they maintain for them as much liberty to serve the devil and their lusts on these holy times as any other. Let all concerned judge of the Roman religion and holiness hereby; if there were nothing else by which the measures thereof could be taken, this would suffice.

Sect. 6. In the next place, in reference to heretics, to go no further (for that is far enough, since in their charity the far greatest part of Christians are no better), all relatives are discharged of their respective duties enjoined them by the laws of God or man. Their decretals (the law of their church, which presumes to over-rule all other law, natural, divine, or civil) deprives heretics immediately of all due fidelity, right, duty, observance, which any whosoever do owe them. They lose all which they have by civil right.2 Subjects owe no allegiance or duty at all to princes or magistrates. Children owe no duty to their parents;4 they have (by their law) no power over them, and this from the first day of their heresy. Wives owe not conjugal duty to their husbands; and if they knew they were not papists when contracted, they lose their dowry.6 Servants are freed from all fidelity to, and observance of, their masters. Yea, debtors are freed from paying what they owe to heretics, though bound thereunto either by penalty or oath.8 They hereby oblige their followers to make nothing of such duties, without the observance of which mankind would become worse than brutes. But this may seem a smaller matter to them; they go higher, and allow any one to kill a heretic, as though murder were no sin; they may be killed with impunity, says De Graffiis, and proves it out of their church laws. Pope Urban II. declared that they are not guilty of murder who kill any that are excommunicate.10 Now all heretics are excommunicate by the Council of Lateran, under Innocent III.; and the sentence which lies dormant there is roused once a year; the pope in

person denouncing it in a solemn manner, and very gravely, with a peacock-tail on either side his head. We in England particularly are under excommunication to this day, and Cardinal Barbarin thought fit, not long since, to give special notice of it in a letter to some of the Irish. They forget not how obnoxious we are; and we may remember how much we are obliged by them, that any of us are suffered to live, when they may kill us without murder.

Sect. 7. But we may the better bear with them in this, because they seem not very tender of killing one another. A man is not to be punished who kills his wife, taken in adultery, and the adulterer together with her. He may kill his own daughter in like case, or his sister, yea, or his own mother, if his father give order for it; and he may do it as safely though these his female relatives be quick with child. For the child in the womb (say they) being the same morally with the mother, he that may kill the mother may kill the child too. Thus a private person may be judge in his own cause, and proceed to mortal execution without trial, and sacrifice the guilty and innocent both at once, to his own or another's passion, and destroy together the body and soul of his nearest relations, and all this with impunity. They deliver it for certain, that a mother in danger may lawfully use a medicine which tends directly to her cure, though it be probable that it will make her miscarry. And because she may take such a course to secure her life or recover her health, they conclude it lawful to do this to preserve her state or reputation.2 So that, if a maid or married woman have prostituted herself to another's lust, she may procure abortion, when otherwise the crime might be discovered, and her life or credit in hazard. Thus neither families, nor parishes, nor monasteries need be pestered with natural children, how many soever be got; the shame of their birth, and the pain too, may be prevented, and the trouble and expense of their education avoided, by a receipt approved by the Roman doctors, if it be but taken in time. As for the censures of their church in this case, or worse, there is no fear, for even a nun got with child may procure abortion, and not be excommunicate4 (so much more favourable is new Rome to her vestals than the old was, though their crimes be doubled); any who are so disposed, have encouragement enough to venture upon both. For as to the murder, they are secured from the laws of God by this doctrine, which makes it no sin; from the laws of the church by her natural indulgence; and may be from those of the state, by their own private conduct. And as to the whoredom, they may be quitted upon as easy terms as they would wish. For the priest, if he get the child, is empowered to absolve the mother, and he need not be so strict as to enjoin for penance the avoiding of the sin; yet for all this, they seem so tender (which may amuse us) of unborn infants in other cases, that they will have it lawful to cut up the mother quick, and she obliged to suffer, yea procure it, that the child in her womb may not perish unbaptized. Thus their doctrine will have them more regard the reputation of a whore than the life of an honest woman; yea the child may perish without regard of its wanting baptism, when the credit of a strumpet is concerned; but a chaste woman must be killed in the other case, that the infant in her womb may have it. Yet one would think the issue of whoredom in as much danger for want of baptism as the fruit of lawful matrimony.

They teach further, that a man may kill another, either to secure his own person, or his goods, or his reputation. In defence of his person, they hold it lawful to slay any one; a servant may kill his master assaulting him unjustly, or a monk his abbot, or a subject his prince, or a child his own father. This is their common doctrine, and thereby there is warranty for it, not only to secure one's life, but to avoid a wound or a blow.3 Any one may do this at any time, even a priest while he is celebrating, may kill one that invades him, and when he has shed his blood, may go on with his

other sacrifice, which will be unbloody notwithstanding. If he that assails him be frantic, or in drink, yea, or asleep,5 and has no sense that he offers any wrong, he may innocently kill him for all that, whoever he be, if he cannot otherwise avoid the injury; yea, though the aggressor have had the highest provocations, by intolerable reproaches, or the loss of his estate, or the defiling of his bed; yet in this case, he that has given the occasion, and done the wrong, may kill the sufferer; the thief may lawfully slay him whom he has robbed, and the adulterer may kill the husband after he has abused the wife, or deflowered his sister, or buggared his child. He may not only kill the aggressor, but an innocent person also, to escape himself.7 As if he cannot be secured from Peter, without killing Paul, he may be the death, of them both; or state it thus (and they cannot stick at it), if he cannot escape his father without killing his mother, he may slay both father and mother at once. Thus they may deprive any of life, not only when they are actually assaulted, but before any blow is given. When a man perceives one coming towards him with his weapon ready, and fears he is not able to deal with him, he may shoot him dead at a distance. Nor need he be hindered by the consideration that killing him in such circumstances (since he is in mortal sin), will be the destruction both of body and soul together. Soto objects this to himself, but abates nothing of his conclusion notwithstanding. Yea, he answers, that to hold it not lawful to kill in this case (with the destruction of the slain man's soul too), is both to pervert the law of nature, and to render the sweet and easy yoke of Christ intolerable. They give further instances wherein they will have it no sin to kill a person that has not yet touched them; it is sufficient, in their account, if they know that he is prepared for it, yea, or does but design it. In case one be shut up in a house or a city, so that he cannot get out, and knows there is one in the town that designs upon his life, and waits but an opportunity to execute it, he may prevent the designer, and fall upon him unawares, and kill him.2 They declare it lawful for a man to kill his wife taken in adultery; but then they allow the adulteress to be beforehand with her husband, and kill him first if she can: she may despatch him with the poison prepared for her, or stab him with the weapon he has ready, and so secure her adultery by murder, and yet be innocent.

They maintain it is lawful to kill others to secure their goods; so it is no sin with them to take away the life of him that would take away part of their goods by night or day; yea, if he that steals makes no resistance or defence, but flies, he may be pursued and slain, to recover what he has taken. And although the goods may be recovered otherwise, and in a legal way, yet if it be not certain that he may get them with the greatest ease, but doubtful that it may give him some trouble, he may use his liberty, and send him to hell to save himself a little trouble.5 But of what value must the goods be (that we may discern at what rate they set the life and soul of a man)? It must not (says Soto) be a vile thing; it should not be so little worth as two or three ducats. So that it seems, if what is stolen be of the value of about twenty shillings, a man may be killed for it, and his body and soul destroyed together; and since a crown or a shilling may be more to some than twenty to others, those who follow him might well infer from hence, that a man's life might be taken away for a crown or less; yea for an apple, since to some persons, that may be of more value than the sums mentioned. Accordingly, they conclude expressly, that he who takes a thing, the owner or keeper of it seeing, and offering to hinder him, may be lawfully slain for it, though it be but of the value of one crown or less either,7 because thereby he offers an affront. That is another ground of their lawful murder. A man, they avow, may kill others for his honour or reputation; for though it be so slight a thing, that it will be scarce a fault in a man to throw it away himself (as we heard before), yet they will have him maintain it at the expense of the blood and life of others, and his own too.

For example, if he sees one approach to assault him, though he might avoid the danger by retiring, yet he may kill him rather than so avoid it;9 because it would be a disparagement to him to fly, and so rather than suffer the least, in the repute of the injudicious rabble, he may be the death of any person, and be a man of blood, that he may be the master of such honour, as a truly generous spirit must despise. They advance further yet: if one should offer to give a person a blow with a cudgel, or a light switch; he that is offered such an affront may lawfully kill him for it, especially in Spain, where this is counted a great injury, says Soto. And elsewhere, a box on the ear may be resented as such an injury. Accordingly, others determine that he who gives it may lawfully be slain for it, yea, or he that does but offer it.2 If he be any person of any moment that is thus attempted, he need not stay till he feel it, but may prevent it by killing him that offers it, if there be no other honourable way to avoid it. He need not fly to avoid it, if that would be a disgrace, for he is not obliged to suffer such an inconvenience, though by retiring he might save both his own life and the aggressor's, says Bonacina after others. In this manner, when one smites them on the cheek, do they turn the other; and thus do they comply exactly with Christ's advice, by stabbing him to the heart, who smites their cheek, or does but offer at it! The same they determine of ill language; that is with them a sufficient ground to kill men. In the judgment of all, says Navarre, it is lawful to kill him that gives reproachful words, when there is no other way to avoid the injury, and the words being once past, there is no preventing them. Thus, killing men may be as common as provoking language, when such language, by their doctrine, may be as common as any they speak. They teach that it is but a venial fault, ten thousand of which he may commit every day or every hour without endangering his soul, to give one the lie, to call him a fool, a bastard, &c.4 And then they declare it lawful to slay men for such words, as if it were their design to have it thought tolerable for men to do nothing else but kill one another; and shedding man's blood were no more to be avoided than such faults as they encourage the continual practice of. They proceed further yet, and conclude it lawful to kill one, not only for contumelious words, but for mere signs of such import, when an ill word is not spoken, suppose such motion of the tongue, or lips, or nose, or fingers, as are accounted an affront. This is after the Roman mode to imitate Christ, and comply with the apostles' rule in laying down their lives for their brethren, when they take away their lives for a foul word or an untoward gesture. But what if one who gives such a blow, or such language, or the like affront, should run for it when he has done, is it lawful to pursue him to force satisfaction from him, though it be by the loss of his life? Yes, say they, the person affronted may pursue him, and strike him till he have reparation of his honour, though it be by killing him.6

They speak favourably of duels. Cajetan says, princes may permit them lawfully among their subjects, as the stews are permitted upon reasonable considerations; so that it seems they may farm out this liberty, as the pope does the other. Bannes determines that an innocent person may either accept or offer combat, not only to secure his life or estate, but his reputation, when he cannot otherwise do it. Such a person, when one goes about to accuse him falsely before a judge, and he is like thereby to be defamed, may challenge him and kill him lawfully. This he reports as Cajetan's opinion, and counts it more than probable. But there is no need of duels in the case; they discover a way to despatch men more effectually with less notice and less hazard to the murderers, allowing them to kill any privily to secure their repute. The same Dominican, in the case mentioned, concludes, that if the accuser, being admonished, will not desist, the aggrieved person, in defence of his concerns, may kill him.2 Not only judicial accusations, but more private aspersions, are counted a sufficient ground to kill men. He who, by whispers and detraction,

endeavours to wrong and bespot another, if the infamy and disgrace cannot otherwise be avoided, it will be lawful to slay him. So Pet. Navarre, who gives reasons why he thinks it more advisable to kill a defamer privily than in a duel; nor need he stay till he be actually aspersed, but when one threatens, or signfies he will do it, he may lawfully prevent it by killing him. Forty-nine doctors are produced in favour of this. Prado, an eminent Dominican, says it is the common doctrine of Aquinas his followers.4

These are some of the maxims which serve so much to furnish those who design upon men's lives with lawful occasion to murder, and tend so plainly to fill all places with blood and slaughters, without leaving any man security of his life, that even some Jesuits, though they deny not that they may be probable in speculation, yet seem shy to allow their common practice. But this is rejected by others, and so the Jesuits' cautiousness and moderation counted unreasonable, seeing that in matters of morality, what is speculatively probable, i. e. safe and lawful, in point of conscience, must, as such, be admitted in practice. Indeed, though there be no charge more odious upon the Society than their doctrine of murder, yet, so far as I can discern, they are outdone here by others, both in numbers and extravagancy. However, the maxims, to diminish the horror of which the Jesuits seem solicitous, are now the common doctrine in that church; the divinity of her schools and doctors generally being advanced to such a pitch as to bid defiance to common humanity. And if the civil laws did give as much liberty to murder as their rules for conscience do, desolation would soon be brought upon the face of the earth.

Sect. 8. For uncleanness, they are very favourable to it, they seem to condemn the consummation of the act, but scarce anything else, and not that neither in every kind. They give up the outworks which should secure them from this sin; they admit its approaches, they encourage sinners to venture upon the occasions, even such as have very often ensnared them in this wickedness. Any confitent, they teach, ought to be absolved, though he do not purpose to avoid any occasions which lead to it, unless they be such as he does or ought to believe, he can seldom or never use without perpretrating the deadly act. So that, though he very frequently fall thereby into uncleanness, yet unless he believe they will, quasi semper, in a manner always overthrow him, he may make bold with them. To go into place or company, where the sight of any, their persuasions or opportunities, expose him to the danger of sinning, though he do it without necessity, is of itself no great fault, says Cajetan;3 and if he find, that he can for some time withstand the temptation, and do not in a manner presently fall, statim aut quasi statim, though he find himself weak, yet he may venture on them without any necessary occasion, as the cardinal leaves us to conclude from what he there adds. A confessor does well who absolves those who will not express any purpose to avoid converse with such women, by which he hath very often sinned every way, both by desire, words, shameful touches, yea, and the very act of uncleanness; because this is such an occasion as is not deadly in itself, nor does make them, fere semper, commit deadly sin. Those women or servants who have committed lewdness with their masters or others in the house, yea, though they be their kinsmen, may be absolved, though they still live together, if they cannot leave them without great inconvenience or damage;5 provided if they be truly sorry for what is past, and intend to sin no more, and think they shall not; yea, though after this they fall many times into the same wickedness,7 of fornication, adultery, or incest, and do not avoid the occasion, yet still they may be absolved. And this liberty is not restrained to houses where they live together, he extends it to other houses also. He that hath secretly committed filthiness diverse ways, with a friend or a

kinswoman in another house, may be absolved, though he do not intend to forsake that house.9 Or if the occasions he meets with in private houses do not satisfy him, he may venture into the common stews, but then it ought to be with a good intent. A man may go to a common whore, with confidence that he may convert her, though there be danger, and it is probable that he will commit filthiness with her. And so any, their religious brothers or fathers not excepted, may seek the conversation of common whores, though they see imminent danger that they shall make no better use of the strumpets than those who come to them with the worst design.

They are as indulgent to unclean thoughts, as to lewd and ensnaring company. To entertain filthy thoughts, to delight in those thoughts, and to consent to that delight,3 is either no sin, or but venial; says Sylvester and others. They distinguish betwixt the unclean act and the thought of it. Cajetan, though he would not have the act to be the object of delight, yet he allows any to take pleasure, not only in the thought, but in the special manner of the act. If a man do not observe what he is delighting in, while he is pleasing himself with such thoughts; yea, if he do not fully consider it, though he entertain himself with this mental pleasure a whole day together, it will not be sinful delight.5 Lust, with a perfect inadvertency, will not be mortal; when the delight of it so invades the mind, says Lopez,7 nor needs he resist such delight, or repel these thoughts, if he believe they will not engage him further, or if he thinks that by resistance they will grow upon him; or if it would hinder him from some necessary, or profitable, or honest employment, such as the study or reading of filthy things, which provoke such delight, is in their account.9 They are no more rigorous as to obscene words, filthy songs, lascivious writings and discourses. They sin not, says Navarre, whether they be men or women, who see, or read, or hear, or speak any filthy things, men to women, or women to men, such as provoke to uncleanness, if it be upon an honest occasion; now, it must needs be an honest occasion when this is done, while they are at church for divine service; and there they have used it. Church music is now so licentious, says one, that filthy ditties are sung to the organ, and keep time even with the canon of the mass, the most sacred part of that which they count most sacred; and Cajetan informs us, that in their church this is the practice everywhere, to sing to the organ amorous and filthy songs;2 and that such cleanly stuff is in the person of the church offered to God, instead of responsals and divine praises, and that experience witnesses that the hearers are thereby excited to profane and filthy things.4 He allows not this indeed, but in some, and with limitation, laying the blame of the rest upon the pastors of their church, who seek not, as he says, the things of Christ; and would have us believe the church approves it not, when yet he allows it to be the common practice everywhere.6 It seems, she does but tolerate filthiness in the church, as she does in the stews, that she may be holy uniformly everywhere. However, if any one should, out of simplicity, think it lawful to mix profane and filthy songs with divine worship for recreation sake, because he sees that this custom hath commonly prevailed, Navarre would excuse him from mortal sin, as Lopez tells us. And so will Lopez excuse him too, provided the songs mixed with divine service be not too grossly filthy, and excessively lascivious. And so he may well excuse those who sing obscene or lascivious songs in the church, but not in divine service, as he seems to do those who sing to one another filthy rhymes on the evening of the nativity, when they are asking benedictions. It seems that is the usual way to get their church blessings; but the custom of that church needs no timorous advocate; this can plead for itself, and is wont to stand as good as any law whatever, that of God not excepted.10 Their sacrament of penance also is an honest occasion; and there in confessions, as one of their bishops informs us, the priests inquire after such obscene and shameful things (instilling thereby

into their ears unheard of filthiness and lasciviousness) as cannot without the blushing of the confitents of either sex, and without provoking the wanton appetite of the confessor, be well expressed in any words.

Further, they allow persons to entertain themselves with pleasure conditionally, upon supposal that they were married together, if the act be not respected as present. They grant liberty to make use of such things as provoke lust. He may be absolved who, by eating of hot meats, hath fallen into grievous temptations of the flesh, and has been drawn to consent to pollution or fornication, though he hath no purpose to avoid such provoking meats, this being done with the provisoes before mentioned.2 They are no more severe against immodest touches or shameful sights. To suffer touches from one who is thought to do it out of honest love or custom, is no great fault; but if it proceed from lust, in order to the act of uncleanness or impure delights, she sins if she avoids them not; and this holds if she can avoid them without scandal (say they) which signifies they account it no sin to yield to this impure treatment, since none are obliged to give way to sin for the avoiding of scandal. He that by ensnaring sights, viewing another's nakedness, &c., hath been often drawn to sin, may be absolved, though he do not propose to avoid such temptations, with the forementioned cautions.4

Men and women viewing one another's nakedness (pudenda vel partes vicinas) may be excused, if it be but for curiosity, and a short time, without danger of great commotion. The beholding of filthy sights, for natural or sensual pleasure, when there is no danger of passing into unclean thoughts (id est, passing through the mire when there is no danger of being dirtied), is no crime. Those who, upon pretence of spiritual mortification, make women strip themselves naked, to discipline them, sin mortally, if lust were the principal cause of it, says Sylvester,7 leaving us to think, that if lust be but a less principal motive to do it, it is but a small fault or none. In fine, they account it no crime to offer no hearty opposition unto temptation. He (says De Graffiis) who coldly resists temptation, so that it returns upon him, and invades his soul a second and a third time, because he resists so coldly, sins not mortally, if there be no danger of consenting; as if there could be no danger to consent when there is little or no mind to resist.

They teach that a man, suspecting his wife is an adulteress, may with a good intent offer her the occasion to commit adultery without sin. Also that a servant is excused (when declining it would be a great inconvenience) if he accompany his master when he goes a-whoring; because here is a just occasion, and the action is of itself honest. And a maid too, if she go along with a whore to the house of her lover, to act filthiness with him, or opens the door for him on such occasion. And so is a servant likewise to be excused, when he is sent to bring a whore to his master's lodging, or carries presents, or an epistle, or a message, or writes letters, when the contents are to have a whore come to him, at such a time; or any such (with them) indifferent thing, unless there be an express desire of the filthy act.2

Such encouragement they give to use the preparatives, and play with the incentives, and dally with the temptations to lust and actual uncleanness. For the act itself, how little they make of self-pollution we have seen before, they conclude that single pollution (though a sin against nature) is of itself no sin at all, and so they may desire it beforehand,4 or delight in it when it is past, for an honest end, and use the incentives, if it be but for gluttony. Moreover, whoredom itself has excessive favour and encouragement from this holy church. This is too plain by their authors,

and their practice, to be denied; and too heinous to be excused by any but those who have a mind to have mortal sins to pass for small, or no faults. It seems it is no sin to build stews for the entertainment of common whores, and the best accommodation of them for their trade of uncleanness. Pope Sixtus did it, as Cornelius Agrippa tells us,6 and they were so multiplied long since, that as one of their doctors observes, under Christ's vicars, and Peter's successors, urbs est jam tota lupanar, now the whole city is one whorehouse. It is no sin to farm out whoredom, and to take so much a-head of the strumpets weekly for their practice.8 The pope's holiness hath done it long at Rome, and does it to this day; and the whores daily commit lewdness, not only for themselves, but for the pope, their benefactor's, advantage, who is to share in their gain: they drive this trade for him. And the number of his farmers was so great long since, that they brought him in yearly an intrado of above twenty thousand ducats, a great sum then, and probably very much improved since. Such an abominable tribute, nature, even corrupted, blushes at; but that Holiness at Rome thinks it no shame to maintain his honour and state, as Christ's vicar, by the hire of whores. Evagrius extolling Anastasius the emperor for abolishing such a detestable practice, brands it as a wretched tribute, abominable to God, and shameful to the most barbarous people; as that which was a reproach to nature itself and the civil government; as that which did, as it were, by a law authorise this wickedness. Nor do the popish writers deny that it is as bad as he represents it; and yet, since the pope hath made it a custom, they have the confidence to justify it. Hear one of their prime penitentiaries: The gain, says he, or tribute for whoredom, is by the common law a deadly crime; and Nicephorus says it is a filthy gain, detestable, absurd, hateful, and which the most savage barbarians may be ashamed of.2 What then? Is he or the great bishop ashamed of it? You may know how by what he adds immediately. Yet, says he, because of the custom, which passes for a law, the pope consenting to it in the lands of the church, non est peccatum, it is no sin, it ought to be paid. So that the pope's will and interest, passing into custom, can make that to be no sin, which nature, law, history, and their own consciences condemn as a most horrid crime, and that well becomes his holiness, which the worst barbarians would detest. No wonder, then, if they conclude it lawful for any to let their houses to harlots, though they know they take them for the practice of whoredom; the trade is so good, they can pay higher rents than others. No wonder their casuists and divines determine so many things in favour of whores; what they receive for their detestable practice is not to be accounted a reward only, but a lawful debt;4 thus their divines conclude, while their conscience extorts this from them, dolendum tamen est, debitum esse ob scelus putatum. And so they may demand it, and recover it, and have patrons and officers for their assistance; that whoredom may be practised by rules of justice, and they may force the payment, though there was no price agreed on, nor is the whore bound to make restitution, though she take more than her due,6 nor is it necessary she should give any of it to the poor. And they are as punctual in resolving prostitutes and their customers about the price of this staple commodity, as about the lawfulest negotiations in the world.8 Who may sell themselves to serve the lusts of others, at what rate, what liberty they have to take a price, answerable to the just value, how the value may be computed, and how they may improve it, &c. Though filthiness in a woman be a fault, yet it is no fault filthily to set it to sale. A man may satisfy the lust of a female at a price; and he is so far from being obliged to restitution, that it is more than equal it should be paid him; he parts with more for it2 (there is not only justice, but equity, and conscience for him in the case); and there is invincible proof for it, since Alexander himself took hire upon this account, and the Amazons were wont of old to hire men to do this work.

Any whores whatever may retain the price of their filthiness; only a whore is bound in conscience to restore what is given her by their religious persons.4 This, it seems, is the peculiar privilege of their votaries, that harlots must serve their turn gratis; and they have so much encouragement more than others to practise whoredom, since in conscience it must cost them nothing. But if a secular person give a religious man money, or anything else for the religious man's whore, that is not to be restored. It would be too hard to part with his whore for nothing. Yet one encumbrance there is, but very gently laid on them: if the religious man have goods in his power to dispose of, he may (it is not said he must) satisfy a wench when he has deflowered her, &c.; for this is a pious use.6 A woman that commits lewdness secretly may take the price of fornication more justly than a common harlot (though she does it justly enough), because in her it is more valuable; the price may rise, being an honester whore. If a married woman fall into adultery once and again, she may take her price without charge of restitution (it is more lawful gain than to have any such burden annexed), and the adulterer is bound upon his soul to lay it down; for though adultery be illegal, yet to buy and sell it is no sin, if the price be not excessive, and much above the just value of the thing, the quality of the persons considered.8 And it must not be forgotten that the adulteress is not to be accountable to her husband for what she gains by this traffic, or a maid to her parents when she prostitutes herself for hire in her father's house, but may convert it to their own use, as that which they earn by hand labour, unless they grow very wealthy by the trade. And if these women do but take moderate sums for this filthy traffic of those who are not at their own disposing, they are not bound to restitution; because it is presumed that those who have the charge of those minors do allow such expenses.10 This was necessary to be added, that harlots might not be discouraged from admitting boys under age among their customers. Lastly, a nun playing the whore may both do it for hire, and with a good conscience keep it when she hath done. It had been hard measure for their votaries if some provision had not been made for them, that their trade might be gainful, when their own authors tell us it is so common. There was no reason to be partial, and make much difference betwixt them and other prostitutes, when their Clemangis could see no difference betwixt their nunneries and the common stews.2 But to proceed with the latter, while they are giving rules for conscience, they tell us the law countenances fornication so very much, that it compels public whores to commit lewdness with any one whomsoever giving her her hire. And so indulgent is the church to whoredom, that harlots who live there many years (even as long as they can get custom), do incur no ecclesiastical censure.4 So that at Rome, made so purely Christian by its popes, whoredom is as lawful as when it was most heathenish, and is objected as the shame of it by St Augustine, that there the use of whoredom was a lawful practice. Hereby the people under popery are so well edified that they cannot easily know whether fornication committed with common prostitutes be a sin, as one of their doctors tells us;6 for many of the common people (says he) who know not how to distinguish betwixt sin permitted or not forbidden as to the punishment, and not as to the sinfulness; because that simple fornication is not punished, and whores have the privilege of impunity, they make account it is no sin to deal with them (at the pope's rate); and this is very common in cities otherwise well instructed in the faith and religion (of Rome) as those who hear confession well know. It seems confessors have something to do to persuade the people that that is a sin which the pope publicly allows; and they might have more to do if the people did not suspect that the pope is a man like themselves, and for all his infallibility may, in matter of whoredom, err as they usually do. But if any man be not disposed to take this liberty, so freely offered, of haunting the common stews, he is encouraged by the law of their

church to have a concubine at home, and that without any great hazard. It will not cost him so much as the loss of the communion, for the canon law provides, that he who has not a wife, but instead of a wife a concubine, shall not be kept from the communion, so that he be satisfied with one woman, either a wife or a concubine. Now, since they tell us sometimes that none who are in mortal sin may partake of the communion, it should seem that with them to live in fornication is either no sin, or none that is mortal. Their doctrine is as indulgent to those who will not put away their concubines as such persons need desire. Absolution is not to be denied him who, having lent his concubine whom he keeps in his house one hundred crowns, has no hope to recover it if he put her away. Or, on the contrary, if the woman be not like to recover the like sum owing her, if she leave the house of the whoremaster; for, as was said before, none are bound to avoid the next occasion of sin, to their great loss. Nor is he bound to put away his concubine if she be very useful for the gaining of temporal goods by way of traffic. It is enough that he intends not to sin hereafter. Yea, if the concubine be very serviceable for the delight of the whoremaster, so that his life would scarce be pleasant without her, and other cates would be very distasteful to him, and another woman, so much for his purpose, would hardly be found, the whoremaster will not be obliged to put her away.3 Neither is absolution to be denied if he might lose his reputation by quitting his whore; yea, or if the concubine would be disgraced thereby. It is enough if he firmly promise not to sin more with her, since it is in his power not to sin, although there be present danger of it while she stays in his house. But what if he sin with her still, after such promises to the contrary? That will not hinder if he repent still; and he may truly repent (in their way), and be absolved, when there is no appearance of amendment. So he determines in a like case after others. Accordingly, Bonacina determines a confessor may absolve one who keeps a whore, and will not put her away, if he cannot do it without much disgrace, or scandal, or other great inconvenience.6 And him also who sins but seldom with his whore, three or four times in a year (or thereabouts), and hopes he may not relapse further. And so may a youth be absolved who keeps a whore in his father's house, with whom he sins customarily, though he put her not away, so that he have a firm purpose to desist.8 But what if after such a purpose he relapse still? He may be absolved still (as we heard before), even innumerably innumerable times, because so oft we are to forgive our brother. Or if a concubine at home will not satisfy an unclean person, but he commit fornication with others, yet if he make but himself drunk before, that fornication will be no sin, or but an inconsiderable fault, if he be but half drunk. Nor will adultery be a sin in that or many other cases. Christ teaches that 'he who puts away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery,' Matthew 5:32; yet they teach that where the marriage is both firm and consummated by conjugal enjoyment, yet the parties may be separated as to cohabitation, and as much divorced as they can be for adultery (by their doctrine), either for outward danger, or when one tempts the other to mortal sin, or for that which they call heresy, or if either of them will enter into a monastery. And if there had not been carnal knowledge after the marriage, though it be firm and valid, yet if either of them will make the monastic profession, the other is at liberty to marry another, and live together as man and wife, the parties whom they first married still living. So that if a wife will turn nun, she may put away her husband (doing it eo ignorante vel invito2), and he may marry another wife. The Council of Trent confirms this to purpose, when it curses those who hold that lawful matrimony, not consummated, is not dissolved by a solemn religious vow. It is acknowledged by Boniface VIII.,4 and Gregory XIII., that this of matrimony is a bond made firm and indissoluble by God himself, and the other, of a vow, but a church constitution; yet (as was observed long since) the Trent prelates

will not only have a human bond to dissolve a divine, but will have those accursed who will not believe that an institution of man, born many hundred years since the apostles, should prevail against a divine institution, made at the creation of the world.6 Thus in behalf of their pretended chastity, they have opened a broad way for real adultery; and who could expect more reasonable decrees in such a case? This for their laity; then for their clergy and monastics, their doctrine is, that adultery is not so much a sin as marriage, no, nor incest, or sodomy, or bestiality, so that they may better venture upon any of these abominations than upon that state which the Lord hath authorised and honoured. And he is more capable of orders amongst them who hath kept two whores, than one who hath been twice married, or but once married a widow.8 An incestuous person, says Erasmus, is admitted to be a bishop, a murderer, a robber, a sodomite, a sacrilegious wretch; a parricide, is admitted, and who not? Solus digamus, one that has been twice married, is only excluded from this honour, though he alone be blameless. The apostle commends marriage to prevent the heats of lust, which he calls burning; but burning lust is with them innocent. To burn, says Valentia, does not signify to burn with the flames of lust, for this in itself is not evil. The apostle determines it better to marry than to burn; but Bellarmine says, it is worse to marry, however our adversaries gainsay (where he puts the apostle with us amongst his adversaries), especially for her who is under solemn vow; and a little after he tells us, she that marries after a simple vow,11 in a manner sins more than she that commits fornication; his reason is, because the one makes herself uncapable of keeping her vow, which she does not, who plays the whore. Where we see what their vow of chastity is (the argument wherein they triumph to prove the holiness of their church), it is a chastity which consists well enough with whoredom, and is only violated by marriage. Accordingly, the clergy have liberty to haunt the public stews. It is in reference to those who are unmarried (to wit, the clergy) that the stews are held to be so very necessary;2 that no consideration could move the pope or his council to think any thing more fit to be done against the common whores, but only some diminution of their pride and luxury, as one of their doctors intimates. And as if that would not serve, they have been heretofore allowed to keep whores at home, paying a yearly rent for that liberty; yea, those priests that would not keep whores (that they might not want temptation to it), were forced to pay the rent, because they might have had the liberty if they pleased. For a monk or friar to lay aside his habit is a crime, by which he incurs excommunication; and yet if he lay aside his habit that he may commit fornication the more expeditely, without the incumbrance which his monkish weeds would give him in the act, they declare him upon that account freed from censure. Excommunication is not incurred, says Navarre, for every leaving of his habits which is temerarious or deadly, because he incurs it not by laying it aside that he may the more readily indulge himself in fornication.4 Sylvester had made such a decision before him, so understanding Paludanus, that he is under excommunication who puts off his habit to disguise himself in reference to others, that he may not be known, but not he that lays it by with a respect to himself, viz., for the pleasure of fornication. So that the censured dismissing of habit is, as he distinguishes, that which is fraudulent, so as to put on another, but not that which is for an hour’s pleasure while he is quite stripped.6 Panormitan concludes that an oath is never to be given to him of whom there is vehement suspicion that he will not observe it, and he that gives it in that case sins mortally. Hence Pope Alexander would not have priests bound by oath to forsake their concubines, because it seems there was strong presumption they would venture on perjury rather than leave their whoredom. Hence Erasmus had so much cause to complain, that among so vast multitudes who were unmarried, and under the vow of chastity, so

exceeding few did live chastely, so innumerable many did wallow in uncleanness. And Cassander, another moderate papist, says that a man could not find scarce one in a hundred of them that abstained from women.2

Before these, the gloss on the Canon Maximianus, dist. lxxxi., tells us, it is the common opinion that no priest should be deposed for simple fornication, because there are but few priests free from it. If all fornicators had been deprived, their church would have been made desolate, and left in a manner priestless. This was a great reason then, and is, it seems, of the same force still; for at this day, a priest is not to be deprived for simple incontinency. The congregation of cardinals (much concerned for the propagation of the holy church) declared it to be law, that the penalty of deprivation proceeds not for simple incontinency, as Garzias observes; only they must not keep whores in the capacity of concubines.4 It may be that came too near marriage to have so much favour as vagrant whoredom. Yet if a priest keep a whore at board and bed, and use her constantly as if she were his wife, he is not therefore irregular; indeed, if he marry her, or an honester woman, all the world cannot excuse him; for though such whoredom never disables a priest, yet chaste marriage utterly spoils him; yea, if he keep in that capacity more whores than one (I know not how many more, for they are not limited to numbers), yet still he is not irregular (as innocent bigamy would make any one though he were an apostle), but the bishop may dispense with him. So Pope Innocent III. determined, and it is now as good law as their church has any; and the more remarkable, because the doctor's gloss on it would have it noted as admirable, that whoredom has with them more privilege than chastity. Where we may suppose the gloss speaks the sense of such as are strangers to Rome; for that uncleanness should be preferred before chastity is in that church nothing wonderful nor strange at all, but ordinary and obvious. That pope (whom they magnify as the singular glory of their law) decrees that the bishop may dispense with priests who keep many concubines to exercise their office, as he doth also with those who are noted for simple fornication.6 And how the bishops were wont to dispense with them is known, their own writings declaring it the custom, as before, to let out those women to them at a yearly rent; and that they were so hard—lords, that if a priest had no mind to the bishop's tenement, and did not take it, yet he must pay for it no less than the forwardest farmer.

Sodomy abounds most in Italy (for it was requisite that Rome should be, as it is in the prophetic style, Sodom, and not incongruous that the vilest wickedness should thrive best under his holiness' wing); yet, as if they would have it as common everywhere, and more there than it is, their decisions are exceeding favourable to it, and treat it very indulgently. Married persons may practise sodomy together, the beginnings of it, all of it, bating the last complement of the act, without mortal guilt. Unmarried persons, their clergy, may act it without restraint to the uttermost, and be neither suspended nor irregular. There is no danger of it if they do it but two or three times now and then, yea, they are safe unless they make a custom of it.2 The strictest decree that we find any pope ever made against sodomy is that of Pius V., which was yet formed in such terms, on purpose that it should not reach any ecclesiastics, but such only as made a trade of it by continual practice. This Navarre had from the mouth of Gregory XIII. And if they do make a trade of it, yet still they are secure if it be not notorious and public; and it will not be counted notorious, though it may be proved, though it be commonly reported, though it be confessed; nor public, unless it be manifest to all. Thus, if any ecclesiastic will practise sodomy, provided he do it not continually, or if he will make a daily trade of it, yet so he do not keep an open warehouse, the

pope has taken special care (even in the severest order that his zeal against this wickedness could ever be brought to make) that the sodomite shall have his liberty without any fear of losing office or benefice in holy church.

Further, they declare that mental heresy is a greater crime than sodomy. As, suppose a man should believe that the public worship of God ought to be in a known tongue (such a heresy as they cannot acquit the apostle Paul of), the secret belief of this, though never manifested by expression or practice, is in their account worse than sodomy. What conscience are they like to make of this while such is their judgment? Moreover, some of them say that the stealing of thirty rials (about fifteen shillings) is a greater sin than sodomy.6 Yet theft is wont to be counted one of the least crimes, and this is none of the greatest theft. Of what value the thing stolen must be to make theft a mortal sin, is, they say, to be determined by the judgment of a prudent man. Those who have the reputation of great prudence amongst them, declare that to steal one hundred crowns, in some case, is no mortal crime. If they should any of them determine that the stealing of twenty-nine rials, or thereabouts, is but venial, there will but be about sixpence difference betwixt sodomy and a venial fault. It is true they do not commonly deliver this conceit in the terms expressed, but it is clearly inferred from the doctrine of Aquinas, and Scotus too, generally embraced; for he concludes that justice is a more excellent virtue than chastity;8 and that the sin is more heinous which is opposite to the nobler virtue; upon which ground not only sodomy, but copulation with a brute or a devil will be a less sin than petty theft. In short, if their divines (whether followers of Thomas or Scotus, betwixt whom they are all in a manner parted) will be true to these principles, since they cannot deny but there is injustice in stealing one rial, they must hold that sodomy is no more a sin, nor more conscience to be made of it, than of stealing sixpence, when their doctrine of theft has left no conscience of that. Thus far they have advanced to secure sodomy against the laws of God and by those of the church; as for any secular laws, they may laugh at them, for sodomy has ecclesiastical immunity. By the special care of Pope Gregory, sodomites were not mentioned amongst those who are excluded from that privilege. The civil law (I suppose before the unmarried clergy were law-givers) ordains that sodomites should be burned, but the church has provided that no fire may touch them if they can escape that from heaven. Besides other sacred places, the palaces of cardinals and bishops, all monasteries, yea, the house of every parish priest and ecclesiastic, are all sanctuaries for sodomites. They could not well proceed further in favour of this crime, since the eyes of the world was open about them. It is not now so seasonable for the pope's legate (as he did before) to praise sodomy in print as a pious act. These rules and examples considered, who can think that they count uncleanness of any sort a sin much to be avoided? Or who can wonder if Rome became hereby, in a literal sense, 'the mother of harlots and abominations'? or yet think strange that they should be most taken with papal holiness who are most addicted to whoredom and uncleanness?

Sect. 9. Further, it is no sin for the Romanists to take from those whom they count heretics (from protestants particularly) all that they have. This will not be theft or robbery, but an act justified by the laws of their church, which oblige them to do it; for this is one of those many punishments which that law will have inflicted on us; the goods of heretics are by sentence of law immediately confiscated. There is no question of this amongst them, only as to the execution there is some doubt, whether heretics are bound in conscience, as soon as they are such, to give up their possession themselves, and deliver all they have to Roman Catholics; or whether they may not,

without mortal guilt, keep possession, till the papists see it fit to put them out, and seize on all they have. The famous Panormitan concludes that the heretics are bound, under the pain of deadly sin, to do this execution upon themselves, not expecting any other sentence or executioner.3 And there is a pretty army of doctors (longa doctorum phalanx) do maintain this with him, but Soto and some others determine that they need not be so hasty to give up all they have of their own accord, but may stay for a declaratory sentence, and seizure upon it; but then a general sentence will serve, without particular process or examination who are personally guilty, and a sentence by some ecclesiastical person may suffice.5 But all of them agree in this, that heretics lose all title and property in whatever they possess, and that for them and their heirs; and this before any declaratory sentence, even from the first day of their pretended heretical pravity, as the Directory for the Inquisitors determines.2 To lose all title to their estates may seem a small matter, considering that they lose all power and jurisdiction, all right to honour and fame (they and theirs being infamous), to liberty also, and life itself; but because loss of property is great in consequence, let us stay a little on it. All that these pretended heretics have, being confiscated, they are liable to a seizure presently, and though their convenience will not serve them to seize on all, a long time after, yet in the interim the poor heretics are responsible for all the mesne profits (it may be in our case for a hundred, or two hundred, years past); and all this while they have no power to alienate or dispose of their goods or estates by gift, sale, will, or otherwise; yea, not of any of it by way of charity, for they are not their own to dispose of. Hence all wills, sales, contracts, for this purpose (it may be for some ages together) are null and void.4 And if the heretic will venture to alienate anything he has, he that buys it does it at his peril; for though it pass from hand many years, yet it may be taken away from the purchaser, with whom it is found, without restoring the price that was paid for it,6 and he that sells it is a cheat, and sins mortally, if he gives not the purchaser notice of the hazard, and tell him, that when he sells his estate, or goods, he has no right to sell them. If the pretended heretic die, and leave what he has to his children, it is no better than if he left them another man’s goods which he had no title to.8 Yea, though the children be catholics, they lose their portion. But who are those that may take from protestants (or others whom they count heretics), what they possess? Why, any that will; authority is given to all whoever to rob, spoil, or bereave us. So Sylvester, and others, quoting the Rabbies of the pontifical law for it. It is their determination, that in point of law and conscience, all that will have authority to spoil us of what we have. What he adds is matter of caution for more plausible proceedings in the spoil and robbery. It seems safe that this be not done but by special edict of the prince, or of the church; this is convenient, lest otherwise one might seem to do it rather out of covetousness or revenge, than out of justice and obedience. By this we may understand in what condition protestants are by the laws of the Romish church, and how papists are obliged to look upon us, and demean themselves towards us. No protestant, from the prince to the meanest subject, has any title to lands, houses, money, or anything else which they possess, or can justly call it their own. All rules of righteousness, which concern property, are void; papists owe them no observance. In reference to us, we are not capable of injury upon this account; whatever they do against us, in respect of our estates, they wrong us not, they sin not, for we have no title. If they take from us anything, or all we have, they steal not aught from us, they rob us not, because they take nothing from us that is our own. If they burn our houses over our heads, and fire towns and cities (as they have done, and their famous Simanca says they may do),3 they do us no injury, they sin not on this account, because the houses and goods consumed are none of ours. If they deprive a protestant prince of

his throne and dominions, they sin not; he is by their law and doctrine but a usurper, and had no just title to his crown. If they draw any of his subjects into war against him, at home or abroad, they do him no wrong, for they are not his subjects, no more than the popish clergy, who are sworn to another sovereign.5 Or if he entrust them with the commands of forts or garrisons, they may betray them to the Romanists, and not wrong him, because they were not his. If they take all places of trust, or profit, from nobles or commons, they do them no wrong, because they had no right to them, nor had the children after them any, for some generations.2 If they pay no debts to protestants, though they were not only under the obligation of a promise, but of solemn oath, they may justify it, they owe them nothing. If trust be reposed in them, or anything be deposited in their hands, or they borrow anything of us, they may detain it; they need not restore it, for they have nothing of ours.4 In a word, there can be no parliaments, or convention of the three estates of a nation, because there are none in that capacity. As there are no persons of honour for peers, all being infamous, so can there be no freeholders to choose, or to be chosen, for commons, since there are no proprietors. And as no laws can be made, can be valid, there being none who have any power to make them, so there can be no aids or subsidies granted, or required, since they cannot be given or required of those who have nothing of their own to give.

Thus, by the popish principles, the foundations of the civil constitution in England, and other countries in like circumstances, are quite blown up, as if they had been at the mercy of a Faux. And those who will follow their conduct, must hold that we have no government, no king, no subjects, no parliaments, no laws, no liberties, no property, and, indeed, none of the rest, because not this last. And all that will be true to the doctrine and laws of popery must believe this, and may lawfully deal with us accordingly; they sin not if they do, there is no conscience in the case to hinder them, or secure us; nay, they are bound to do it, if that which they account most sacred can oblige them, and that as soon as they can. That which restrains them is not the fear of God, but of the penalties of our laws, which yet are of no more force by their determination, than the agreement of a company of robbers, or the constitutions of mere usurpers, which will stand in their way no longer than till they can master the power which bears them up, against that which the Roman decrees and edicts have made equity and justice, in despite of the laws of God and nations.

Sect. 10. Moreover, they may bear false witness, either privately or in open court, for their advantage; and if it do not much wrong another, it is but a small fault, so that if it do no wrong at all, it will be less than a small fault. On this account they may bear false witness against a protestant, or any other, whom they count heretics, even when estate or life is concerned; for by their laws and doctrine his life is forfeited, and his goods confiscated, and so though by false testimony he lose both, yet he has no wrong, because he had no right to either. They may use fraud and deceit in bargains, to get what a protestant sells, for little or nothing, yea, or to cheat him of all he has, for the deceit is not considerable in point of conscience, but for the wrong it does; and here is no wrong in the case, for he cheats the heretic of nothing that was his own, and so does him no injury. They may use perfidiousness in breaking compacts, agreements, or promises; for perfidiousness, when it is officious, and does but a little injury to those concerned, is one of the least sorts of faults, by their doctrine; therefore, when it does no injury at all, it is less than the least; but by breaking promises, or any such bond of faithfulness which concerns the estate of a heretic, they do him no injury, because he has no estate of his own, by their account. So that if a

papist should make a thousand promises, and confirm each of them with an oath to a heretic, that he will pay what he owes him, or restore to him what is his own, he sins not, though he never pay, nor restore a farthing of it, because nothing is due to a heretic, nor is there any thing he can call his own. And this is not my inference only, but they themselves declare it to be the consequence of their principles, and what they deliver in express terms, amounts to as much as this charge comes to.2

Sect. 11. Thus they leave little that can be sin in papists, one towards another, but less towards protestants. It is no sin not to keep peace or faith, not to observe either truth or honesty, towards heretics. It is no deceit to equivocate with them in private dealing, or public transactions; it is no dishonesty to cheat them of what they have; it is no perjury to break oaths with them; it is no theft to rob or spoil them; it is no inhumanity to burn their houses over their heads; it is no murder to kill them; in a word, it is no sin for all relations to deny them what God hath made their respective duties.

Sect. 12. Finally, natural corruption, after baptism, has nothing in it that can be charged with sin, no, not in wicked men, who afterwards by mortal sin are quite destitute of grace. So that by their doctrine, a fixed averseness and contrariety to God and holiness, an habitual enmity against him, a propenseness to all ungodliness and unrighteousness, is no sin; an inward temper and disposition, though it be most impious, atheistical, rebellious, filthy, treacherous, and bloody, has no sin in it; an inclination to deny God, to speak all evil of him, to depose him, to advance lusts and the devil before him; an inclination to adulteries and beastly uncleanness, to murder and barbarous cruelty, to the most prodigious wickedness against God or man, is no sin. Yea, though it be not transient, but constant and habitual, though it be strong and impetuous, though this corruption be reigning, not subdued or mortified; though it be active and fruitful in all the powers of the soul, though it hurry the lower faculties into rebellious commotions, and follow the superior with frequent and strong impulses, and exert its power and malignancy both in thoughts and affections, yet if the inward motions have not consent, there is no more sin in their acts than in their principles. In all these evils papists may live and die, and in many more, which I purposely posely waive, lest I be too tedious, and many more too, than I have taken notice of, even in plain violations of every part of the divine law, the rule of righteousness and holiness; and yet wipe their mouths, and say they have no sin at all, but are as holy as their church requires them, and as sure of salvation as their doctrine and the power of delusion can make them. Though any protestant, who allows himself but in a very small part of these enormities, we will give them leave (or they may take it from Scripture) to count him an Ungodly and unrighteous wretch, who can have no good conscience towards God or man, nor any hopes of heaven (continuing so) but such as will delude him.

Sect. 13. But if they have not legitimated wickedness enough already, they have expedients at hand to do it, for much more; they are furnished with devices to justify all the sin in the world, or at least in their church, when they please to use them. Let us instance in two or three. That power which they challenge for the pope herein, is notorious. We heard Bellarmine tell us before, that if the pope should command vice, the church must practice vice, or else sin against her conscience. And he says expressly elsewhere, that in a good sense, Christ gave to Peter a power to make that which is sin to be no sin, and that which is no sin to be sin; and what he gave to Peter, they will have us believe he gave to popes. So that it seems, Christ hath given Peter, and consequently his

successors the popes, power to authorise any sin and wickedness; only we are to understand this in a good sense, which let any man do if he can. They declare, that he can dispense not only with positive but divine laws, and so make the transgressions thereof to be no sin. To omit the many testimonies for this, produced by others (and which some of themselves count extravagant), let us hear Sylvester, who seems modest in comparison: The pope has power in all things purely positive, and in some pertaining to divine law, because he has all laws in his own breast, as to interpretation and dispensation.2 Where, what in his assertion seems restrained, in the reason of it (fetched from the canon law), is unlimited, he has all laws in his own breast; it seems to import that they are all in his power and at his pleasure, so as he may either interpret them, or dispense with them, as he thinks fit. Some of them, in reference to natural and divine laws, make show of denying this in general; but then they grant in particular instances, what is sufficient to make good the general charge. There is no command of the first or second table, wherein they do not hold the pope may dispense, unless it be the first, and to question his power of dispensing there, is no great disparagement to him, since they deny it to God himself. There is no doubt amongst them, but he can dispense with oaths, and make it no sin to break them, though they acknowledge the obligation of an oath to be by divine law.4 And no wonder it has been so ordinary a practice, since they hold that this condition is still presupposed in the oaths, if it shall please the pope. And though they conclude vows to be more obliging than oaths, yet they teach, the pope may dispense with the accomplishment of solemn promises made to God, and so can make both sacrilege and perfidiousness to God lawful enough. The pope can dispense not only with rash oaths or vows, but those that are best, and their obligation most unquestionable. If any (says Rosella, after others) do vow or swear anything that may lawfully be observed, the pope should not alter it when there is no cause; yet if he do release such (though without cause) the release holds good, because he is above positive law, and also can dispense against the divine law, so that he dispense not against the gospel and articles of faith, Sum. v. juram. i. ii. 4. But if he do that too, he may stand to it, for many teach that the pope is not forbidden to dispense against the gospel, but only not to destroy the gospel (v. papa. n. 3), and we must conceive (if we can) that he may take away the obligation of the rules of the gospel without destroying it.

However, as to oaths and vows, he can totally (they say) dissolve the obligation, quemadmodum potest ipse Deus, even as God himself can, because it is likely that God, as he had cause, gave his own power to his vicar, otherwise he had not been a good father of his household, if he had left his flock without a shepherd, who could, as occasion serves, provide for them in all (even to license perjury and perfidiousness to God himself), as Pope Innocent argues; but whether with more reason or blasphemy, let others judge. Whereupon, Hostiensis saith, that seeing God and his vicar have the same consistory, the pope can do in a manner all that God can do, the key not erring, for Christ says generally to Peter, ‘Whatever thou shalt bind;’ and saying whatever, he excepts nothing, ibid. n. i.

There is not any thing in the world which they count more inviolable than their vow of religion, yet he may dispense with this, and the reason is considerable; because religion derived its being from the authority of the Roman bishop, he therefore who gave it may take it away. So Pope Innocent and their canonists generally, ibid. n. iv. Hostiensis and others, seem to speak extravagantly when they say, the pope can do as much in a manner as God himself. But this may pass for a modest speech, if they will have him to do more, and more he can do if he can make contradictions to be

consistent. One instance of it we have in the question, whether the pope can dispense with a monk to have secular property. Rich. de S. Victore says, it is essential to a monk to want it, and so a contradiction to be a monk, and have it; yet others say the pope can do it, and render those consistent enough, and so make one to be a monk while he is none, Idem. ibid. So for sanctifying of the Lord's day, there can be no doubt of the papal power herein, since they count the command for it positive, for that he can dispense in all positives,3 is with them unquestionable. Nothing is necessarily required by the precept for sanctifying of this day, but the hearing of mass, and abstaining from servile works. The pope, if he please, may turn these into working days, for he can abrogate them. And since the people, by their divinity, are not obliged to any other public worship but the mass, and that only on these days, he may discharge them from all conscience of public worship, and disengage them from tendering any unto God, for he can dispense with the mass. They make it, indeed, sometimes a character of antichrist, to put down the mass; but it is not fit the pope should want power to be antichrist at pleasure; and why should they be angry with us for thinking him so already, since with them herein he may lawfully be antichrist when he list. And he may do as much for the clergy and monastics; all the solemn worship necessary and proper for them, is that of their canonical hours, but the pope can order that they shall not be obliged to say their service.2 So Sylvester, after others, concludes; he adds, indeed, that though the pope can discharge them from this service, yet he cannot disoblige them from making some recompence to their benefactors for not praying for them; but for this (he says) they need not trouble themselves; for the least prayer that can be will suffice for that. So an Ave Mary may serve (that serves generally on all occasions) a prayer (if it may be so accounted) of one petition to the virgin, and not a word to God, not a syllable for their benefactors, they may be as well without it. And so others leave them, determining without any reserve, that the pope may dispense with their divine service, and may do so validly without any cause, too. So that the pope, when he list, may leave no public worship of God in the whole Roman world; and when he does this, it will be no sin wholly to neglect it. He can dispense against the universal state of the church; so the law of their church will have it. Only, says Panormitan, he should not deface it;5 but there is no danger of that, though he should destroy it (as he has done indeed; they ascribe no power to him in this, but what he has given the world proof of effectually), for he cannot deface it, unless he change the universal state of it without reason; and this he can never want, so long as his will is good reason, as they say it is.

He can as easily discharge them from all righteousness towards men; he can make it lawful for a son to calumniate his father; or covet all he has, or to wrest it from him by force, yea, to attempt his life, and when he hath reduced him to want and misery, to leave him perishing for want of relief. This office he did for the emperors heretofore, and is commended for it. He can take away any man's right, and dissolve all bonds, contracts, obligations, whereby one man is bound to another;7 and so can make it lawful to act against all faith, truth, justice, and common honesty. Further, those whom God hath joined together in lawful matrimony, the pope (they say) hath power to separate, and sometimes, so as to marry others, and so live in adultery without sin, as he did with the son of the Conde D'Olivares.

If there have been no carnal knowledge, they make no bones at all of the pope's dissolving marriages, how firmly soever contracted, or solemnly celebrated. No, nor if they have had that full consummation with reluctancy. But there is one rarer feat that the pope can do, he has power to

dispense with persons to marry and continue so, not during life, but for such time as they desire, a year or two, or till they can have a child, and then be unmarried again, and freed from all bonds of that state, without any divorce or occasion for it. Jo. Andreas (a principal rabbi of their church Talmud) says, He had disputed this question, whether the pope might not dispense with a king's only son, being a monk, to marry for a while, till he could get a boy, and after return to his monastery and unmarried condition? He answers, That the pope, whose power is disputed, may resolve it himself, yet he may be advised to forbear, but many maintain, that if he should dispense, the dispensation would stand good (according to whom, the pope is not forbidden to dispense against the gospel, when he sees cause, but only not to destroy it, as before), and this holds especially, if the party would be content to be married for a while, rather than for ever. So Andreas, and the same, it seems, is defended by Jo. Antonius, bishop of Alexandria (in Millain), by Baldus, by Fulgosius, and Baptista Toruamala. Our author will not grant that the pope cannot dispense with a religious person to be married a little, but makes it a question whether he can let him marry during life.

Moreover, he can not only legitimate adultery, but incest; for they teach that he can dispense with marriages in those degrees which God's law forbids, even such as are acknowledged to be against the dictate of nature. They except no degree of consanguinity, but only the first in the direct line, viz. marriage betwixt parent and child; they say he can license it in the first degree in the collateral line, viz. betwixt brother and sister.

Some indeed stick at this, because they observe not that the pope has dispensed in this case. But the credit of their St Antoninus will not be questioned, who tells us that Pope Martin the Fifth dispensed with one who had married his own sister. Yea, he takes upon him to dispense with sodomy.4 Sixtus the Fourth gave license to the whole family of Cardinal St Lucy, that they should use sodomy in the three hotter months, June, July, and August. And Alexander the Sixth gave the cardinal De Valentia leave to buggar the Marquis De Zaneta, his own natural son.6 The most modest opinion at first blush (which yet ends little better than the worst) that I have observed amongst them, concerning the pope's power in reference to the laws of God, is that of Richard De Sancto Victore, as Angelus reports it, that the pope can dispense with the divine precepts when the reason of them ceaseth; otherwise, says he, God (if he had not so empowered him) would not seem to be a good master of his household (not wise, say some; not diligent, say others; for this is a common argument for the papal prerogative). We must take heed how we question the pope's power herein, for if we do, they may question the government of God. And herein he is followed by Sylvester,2 a Dominican, and Angelus, a Franciscan (though in other things they often clash) who tell us that besides divines, all the canonists agree in it, if well understood.4 And this the former extends to particular cases, whether in the natural or divine law, and the latter concludes it, not only as to the precepts of the second table, but as to all the commands, both in the Old and New Testament.6 All the question is, How one may know when the reason of God's law ceaseth in any case? To which he answers, That this we sometimes may learn by the examples of God himself, who many times dispensed with his own law. So that in such cases, it seems, the pope may do as much as God himself. But this may not prove enough to serve the pope's turn. So he adds, when we have not an example of that, or the like dispensation in Scripture, the declaration of it (that is, when the reason of the law fails) in any other case belongs to the pope alone.8 Accordingly Sylvester, He may, when there is any doubt, authoritatively explain whether or no in any certain

case the reason of the divine or natural precept takes place. The pope, if he were God (as they too often call him) needs not herein desire more power than this; he may declare that the reason of the divine law ceases when he pleases, and so he may dispense with it when he list. Thus the pope might discern the reason of the law for marriage to cease, when Olivares had declared Julian Naleasor his heir, and so gave him leave to marry another wife, when he had one already, lawfully married (yet his holiness might be hastier herein than some doctors would have him, who though they hold the pope can dispense with one to have two, or more wives at once, yet think it not so very fit to be done, while catholics are so plentiful).10 And he would have seen something more in Harry VIII.'s case, than he let the world know, if the emperor Charles V. had not stood in his light. And so in that against perjury, Clement VII. saw the reason of it cease, when he saw it his interest that Francis I. should break his oath. And Sixtus IV. could well see that the reason of that law against sodomy ceased in the hotter months, and so dispensed with it then, though not in cooler seasons. But what if the pope should mistake in his declaration about the law, and the reason of it, and so err in dispensing with it? This must not easily be supposed. I firmly believe, says Angelus, that if any one seeking a dispensation, in any case against the law of God, not interposing the importunity of gifts and solicitations, do put himself simply into the pope's hands, with a declaration of his case, that God will not suffer his vicar to err in dispensing. Yet if the worst should come to the worst, and the pope should err herein, that will make no alteration in the case before us; for though it may be a fault to dispense, yet the crime he dispenses with may be no sin to him who has his holiness's leave to commit it. I judge, says Navarre, that though the dispenser may be in fault; yet he that is dispensed with is excused, if, relying honestly upon the authority of his superior, he thinks it was granted upon just cause, till he be convinced that it was not justly granted.2 For all this, Bellarmine has the confidence to affirm that no catholic ever held that the pope could dispense any way with the divine commands, and yet what is it less that himself ascribes to the pope, when he says by his indulgences we are disobliged from the command of bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance? These fruits are, by their own account, all good works; and so in time the pope can make it to be no sin to live without the worship of God, righteousness towards men, and good Works, which respect either.

Sect. 14. But they need not make use of the pope's authority for this purpose; there are other expedients nearer hand will serve to make any sin lawful. One is probable ignorance, and that, when upon a probable ground, error is conceived to be truth, and that which is sin indeed is taken to be no sin. When upon such a ground one ventures upon a crime, it will not be criminal. Now, they give an account of several things, each of which will serve them herein for a probable ground.

First, a probable reason, when there are arguments pro and con, all probable in his judgment that views them, if he follows that which seems to him most probable, he sins not, though it lead him into sin. They lay great weight upon authority, and think it safe to follow the herd in a common opinion; yet one good reason, they say, is to be preferred before the common judgment of their writers, and one may venture against the stream, being backed with it.5 Nor is there need to be very scrupulous about the probability of a reason; it is enough if it seems but probable to him that weighs it, yea, though it seem but so, out of affection to him that offers it. And that may as well pass for more probable, which is more favourable to the inclination of the inquirer, and he may be his own judge in the case, and act against the scruples of his conscience when he has probable reason. But when there are more reasons against it, and but one probable for it, must not the more

sway us, since that is safer, and that which is safer is to be chosen, according to the common rule? No, we are not obliged, for that rule even in matters of faith and practice is only a counsel,7 not a precept; we are only enjoined to do what is safe, not to what is safer, and a practice upon a probable reason is safe enough.

Sect. 15. Secondly, custom is another probable ground which (with them) will secure a person from sin in doing what is unlawful. It is ordinary with their casuists to conclude a practice innocent when there is custom for it, though otherwise they condemn it as a sin. So Navarre determines that if it were a custom to observe the Lord's-day only till noon, or till mass were ended in the morning, it would be no sin to spend the rest of it in servile works. And that of Cajetan is observable: he takes notice that it is a practice in the church of Rome to sing to the organ profane and filthy songs when they are at church for worship. This the cardinal reflects upon severely, condemns it as a mortal sin, and a crime of sacrilegious superstition; yet in the conclusion, thinks something of it excusable upon the account of custom and probable ignorance.3 Those who in dancing use habit, gesture, or songs which are notoriously lascivious, as immodest women who wantonly lay open their breasts, and men who expose without due covering their shameful parts; they sin mortally. So De Graffiis had concluded (as any person that is not past shame would do); but then he presently corrects himself: Yet of this, says he, we can pass no certain judgment, but must stand to the custom of the country.5 Though so much wantonness seem a mortal sin, yet if it be the custom he cannot certainly judge it any. In like manner Sylvester determines of a habit that will not suffice to hide their shame; if it be a custom, though not laudable, and without ill intention, no general rule can be formed against it. In positive precepts, where things are evil because prohibited, custom will excuse.7 And so fornication, which, in the judgment of Durandus and some others, is of this nature, needs nothing but custom to excuse it from being a sin. So much they ascribe to custom that they will have the Scripture not to direct and regulate it, but to follow it and be conformed to it even in its changes, so that the sense and obligation of the divine rule shall be changed, as the Romanists change fashions. This Cardinal Cusanus affirms. The Scripture (says he) is fitted to the time, and variably understood, so that at one time it is expounded according to the current fashion of the church, and when that fashion is changed, the sense of Scripture is also changed; and again, no wonder if the practice of the church do take the Scripture, one time one way and another time another, for the sense of it keeps pace with the practice.9 This was urged in the Council of Trent, and judged to be the meaning of the Lateran Council, when it decreed that the Scripture should be expounded according to the doctors of the church, or as custom has approved. Thus it must come to pass, that what the word of God, in its true meaning, did once condemn as a sin, if it become the Roman practice, the divine precept will change its sense, and the act will be no sin. It was a sin once by the word of God to deprive the people of the cup in the eucharist, but since it was the custom of Rome, the Scripture has changed its meaning, and it is now no sin. To worship images was a crime condemned in Scripture, as that which God most abhorred, but being once the practice of the Romanists, the Scripture renounced the former sense, and it is now far from being criminal. It has not only made a change in the word of God, but in the nature of the thing, and the same thing which was idolatry is now no such matter. Of the law against idolatry (says Sylvester), nothing must be said, because now by the grace of Christ it is not in use.2 It is not in use, because it is their custom; it is not the same thing that it was to all the world besides, because they use it. And what custom has done in these instances, it may as well do in any other; when all sin is once the practice of that church (as the worst is already), there will

be no sin in it.

Sect. 16. Thirdly, Another probable ground is a considerable authority, or the opinion of one whom we may trust; hence this is their doctrine, that he who does what is sinful, following the judgment of an able doctor, is excused from sin. This principle is without ground appropriated to the Jesuits, with the pernicious consequences of it; it was current in the church of Rome before the fathers of that society were infants. Panormitan thus determines: He that follows the opinion of any doctor, not curiously examined, which afterward appears false, is excused from sin, so long as it appears not to be false. In Sylvester, this is confirmed, and he directs to several proofs out of their law for it;4 removes what, by mistake, is alleged out of Aquinas against it; and shews that both their great saint and their great abbot agree with others, that this is safe in points which concern either faith or manners, when they are not evident (not clearly and manifestly determined). To him, one doctor may be sufficient. In morals, we must be satisfied with probabilities; and, according to the rule amongst them, a man may probably follow one doctor.6 And by a multitude of authors we are not to judge what is better or more equal; the opinion of one, and he worse than the rest, may be preferred before many in some particular. So he, and Angelus8 before him, after others. They conclude, in reference to Joachim, who was not accounted a heretic (though his opinions were against the faith), because not condemned by the church, that he is much more to be excused who follows the opinion of a doctor not rejected by the church; and if he thought it not true, would not adhere to it. Certainly (says Angelus) in him there can be no contempt, and so no sin of disobedience.2 It is true, that which is maintained by more and better authors seems more probable; but they will not have us always bound to follow that which is more probable; for though this be more secure, yet the rule, that what is safest to be followed, holds not (they tell us) but in points that are properly dubious; and where there is opinion, we are not properly in doubt. Thus Navarre also explains it,4 having told us that it is not always necessary to choose what is safer, because it is enough for the fulfilling of the precept to choose that which is safe, even in those things which concern faith and manners; for in other things, it is not so much as under counsel to follow the safest. Accordingly, Metina (in Lopez) says: The opinion of expert divines may be held without sin, although the contrary be more clear and more safe.6 In short, that an opinion which is less probable may be followed, is asserted (we are told) both by the greater part and the graver sort of their divines; above forty of their grave doctors are alleged for it, and amongst them, Martin Navarre, Medina, Peter Navarre, Arragon, Bannes, Du Vallius, with others, besides Jesuits. At present, take only the words of Navarre, who speaks fully: In the court of conscience (says he) it is enough, for the avoiding of sin, to take his opinion for true, whom we probably think to be a man of sufficient knowledge and conscience; and quotes their Gloss and Panormitan for it.8 To whom let me add Sancta Clara, who not only tells us (as we have heard before) that at this day it seems to be the common opinion of their schools and doctors, that the people erring with their teacher or pastor are wholly excused from all fault, but also, when any has a probable ground for what he does; as when a countryman believes anything to be lawful, induced thereto by the testimony of the parish priest, or of his parents, although he mistake, yet his mistake is void of sin; according to the rule in law, just and probable ignorance ought to be excused.2 So that, to make a sin to be no sin, not only the judgment of a grave doctor so determining, but of a parish priest (who are known to be sufficiently ignorant), yea, of parents also (more ignorant than they) will suffice; and herein (says he) the doctors generally concur. In fine, if it be the common opinion that invincible (as divines) or probable ignorance (as the canonists call it) is excused from all sin, and that it is an

instance hereof when one is misled by a sufficient author, then this is the common doctrine of the Romanists, and not the extravagancy of some particular sect or order amongst them.

If, then, this principle be so destructive to religion, the souls of men, and human societies, as some of the French Romanists brand it in reference to the Jesuits, the charge falls upon the common doctrine of the Roman church; for there it is generally taught and received, and was so before Ignatius had founded his order. And this prevents their ordinary exception against our alleging particular authors against them; they cannot with reason or modesty make use of this shift longer; for a single doctor is so far authorized by the common doctrine of their chief writers (and so of their church), that any, or all in their church, have warrant to rely on him; and so, in producing a particular author, in esteem with them, we do, in effect, allege their common doctrine. And indeed, by the premises, the opinion of a grave doctor is the doctrine of their church so far, that any of their church are allowed to follow it, both as to belief and practice. Their church (if we know her sense by the declaration of the generality of her approved authors) does allow all Romanists to follow the opinions I have charged them with, though they be plainly destructive of worship, faith, and holiness, both of heart and life. For I have charged them with nothing without a considerable author; and what is so grounded is with them probable, and what is probable is safe, and allowed both as to faith and manners. Or if there be any particular in the charge in which there is not a common concurrence, or which is contradicted, though by a multitude of their writers, yet since there is at least one grave doctor for it, it is in their account safe; and any Romanist has liberty, by the doctrine now insisted on, to follow it (if he please), rather than that which, upon the account of more assertors, may be thought safer. But as to the purpose for which I now take notice of it, this principle serves to rid their church of all sin, that is, of all conscience to avoid any; for if that be safe which is probable, and that will be probable, which is countenanced by the opinion of particular doctors, then all the sins which they, or any of them, have already concluded to be no sins (and these are an infinite number) may be safely committed; and all that any of them hereafter may determine to be no crimes, may be practised with as little conscience, and as much security. So that a train is laid hereby to blow up the whole rule of Christianity, and all innocency and holiness, which consists in conformity thereto. It has done horrible execution already, and what has hitherto escaped is at the mercy of it, being wholly under the mine, and may be despatched whenever the casuists (their engineers), who are daily at work about it, shall think fit.

Sect. 17. Let me but add some of the rules they lay down for the direction and relief of scrupulous consciences. They must persuade themselves that they sin not, though they break the law in a strict sense, if they observe it according to some complaisant interpretation. A benign sense is rather to be put upon any precept, than that which is strict; for the precepts of God and the church are not against that pleasantness which a scrupulous interpretation takes away: and that a person may the better be pleased, he may make the interpretation himself, and so make it as benign as he desires, and as favourable as his inclination and interest would have it; for though, in other courts, the interpretation belongs to him who makes the law, yet, according to their St Antoninus, in the court of conscience, it belongs to every one to do it for his own practice.2 Or if he will be so over cautious, as not to rest in his own sense, but inquire the opinion of others (and he may easily meet with those amongst them, who will either make that which he has a mind to, no sin; or will mince it for him so small, that it may go down without hurt), yet he may choose that opinion which is most for his purpose (that which is most complaisant, and so will best serve his turn); and if he

thinks it probable, though he fear the contrary, and it be false indeed, yet he may act according to it, and sin without fault.4 Nor is he concerned whether the doctor's opinion be true or no; for though it be false, he may notwithstanding thereupon cast off all scruple, and break the law without sin. Thus if either himself, or any other will give him liberty to sin, when the law gives it not, yet he may take it, and his sin will be no sin.

Secondly, he must persuade himself he sins not when he breaks the law, not only if it be impossible, but if it be very difficult to keep it. Now it may be very difficult to avoid sin, when his employment leads, or when his complexion inclines him to it, or when he has got a habit of sinning, or otherwise when he is under temptation; and if it will be no sin to break the law in these and the like cases, he may make wickedness his daily practice without danger of sinning. But they seem to take difficult or impossible in a great latitude, as though it might be no more than incommodious; and so Sylvester explains it in the place to which he here refers us. Now it may be judged incommodious to observe the commands of God, when they suit not his fancy, or humour, or inclination, or interest, that of his ease or advantage; and if then, it will be no sin not to obey the divine commands, a man may go near to be excused from sinning all his life, though he do little or nothing else but sin. The obligation of the whole law, and gospel too, will be superseded by our conveniences; he may omit what is enjoined, or practise what is forbidden, and it will be no sin, if he judge the observance of the rule too difficult or incommodious.

Thirdly, He must make account that he sins not by breaking the law, when he may be thought a fool for keeping it, or when the observance of it may be ridiculous. Now, when sin is general, and the common usage of the times and places where he is, it may be as ridiculous to avoid it, as to be out of the fashion, or to appear in an antique garb. And those who reap pleasure and advantage by sin, will be ready to account them fools who abstain from it; as Nic. de Clemangis says they did in his time. A blessed time when there could be no sin, because piety and virtue were grown ridiculous!3 He must not think he sins who observes the law according to the common usage of good catholics, and makes that his example and rule, and what conscience he is like to make of sin by this rule, we may understand by the character which the count of Mirandula gave of the good catholics (the chief of them) to Pope Leo. Amongst the most (says he) of the most eminent in our religion, to whose example the silly multitude should be conformed, there is either no worship of God, or certainly very little; no regard at all of good life, no shame, no modesty; righteousness is declined into hatred or favour, and godliness even sunk into superstition.5 And if there be danger, it will be accounted folly indeed to expose himself; and whether it be accounted so or not, the apprehension of danger may excuse a man from sin in any case, so Sylvester after others.

There is no need to insist upon their other rules, as that the scrupulous ought to exercise himself in choosing what is less safe (more dangerous) amongst probable opinions, and not to regard (though he cannot answer) the arguments against it; it is enough that he believe what another says. Or this, The confessor may tell him that he should count no sin mortal, but what is manifest to be such, and so manifest sometimes, that he cannot swear it is not; or any else, though they have store of like nature; the former are sufficient to leave no conscience of sin amongst them in ordinary practice, and to encourage sinners commonly to venture upon any violation of the divine rule, with warrant from their doctrine, that it will be no sin to them. Thus they take a course to ease men's consciences, by leaving them none. And what clearer way can there be to remove scruples, than to persuade them (who would retain some conscience, if they would suffer them) that there is

little or no sin to be scrupled at.

Sect. 18. This is abundantly sufficient to make it apparent that the popish doctrine is destructive to holiness of life, since they have warranty thereby, not only to neglect the proper acts and exercises of holiness, but to give up themselves to practices of all sorts, which are directly opposite thereto. It is true, they do not acknowledge those practices to be sins or dangerous; but they may with as good reason justify such acts, which they cannot but condemn for crimes, as they go about to excuse these from being criminal. A son of Belial, that has lived in the neglect of holiness, and in the practice of ungodliness and unrighteousness all his time, will scarce pass at the day of judgment for one that is holy or innocent, because he has had the confidence to think so, or has found out some shift to support his presumption; or because others like himself were of the same mind; nor is he like to escape because he had wit enough to cozen his conscience, or boldness to stifle it, or wariness to keep out the light which would have informed it, or self-love to believe those who flattered him, in what his corrupt inclination led him to, or facileness to follow those blindfold who had no mind to see. Those devices which they have found out to justify innumerable transgressions of the divine law (and may serve as well to justify them all), have no countenance from Scripture, nor from antiquity, faithfully following it. This is not only acknowledged, but charged home by some of the French Romanists, upon a supposition, that these pernicious artifices are peculiarly the Jesuits'; but since it is apparent that the divines and casuists of all orders, and those of universal repute, are no more excusable, the charge is justly fixed upon their church and practical doctrine in general. Nor is their acknowledgment needful, it is plain in the writings of those who have the conduct of their consciences, that they consult not with Scripture in these determinations, no more than with ancient writers; you shall find them very rarely meddle with either. An allegation out of their canon law is an authentic authority that passes for the text. A schoolman or casuist of note, that went before them, is a sufficient conduct; if there be a concurrence of five or six, it is then the common opinion, and they are as secure in it as if they marched with a caravan; but if they have a mind to be singular, and have but something like a reason for it, they supererogate, though the reason be such, that the next who examines it puffs it away as a trifle. Such are the foundations of their practical divinity. The masters of it (the casuists) are followed by the priests and confessors, and the priests are followed by the people; and so the blind follow the blind, and those that see not, those that will not see. But it may be, there was less need to be so long and particular, in shewing how unnecessary it is with them to forsake sin. It is manifest enough by their doctrine of repentance, before insisted on, that there is no necessity they should break off their sins till they be obliged to be contrite; and their doctors cannot agree upon any time for this (though some of them specify the point of death, though then indeed they do not account it indispensably necessary): the people may think themselves excused if they do not resolve to leave their sins till their teachers agree that they must do so, and so live in them, till they can live no longer. If any particular doctor fix a more early period, and bring some reason for it, though they may if they please, yet they are not obliged to believe him, for no reason is brought by any of them for a more timely turning from sin, but is confuted and rejected by some or other among them as slight and insufficient. And it is no sin not to believe him who proposes to them upon frivolous reasons; yea, it would be an act of imprudence to do it, as Sancta Clara assures us, out of Aquinas and Victoria; so they may hereupon go on in their sins till the approach of death; and he, whom they worship as a saint, and reverence as the angel of their schools, may encourage them herein, since he declares that continuance in sin unto death is not a special sin,

but only a circumstance of sin.2 Nor need they be afraid of this circumstance, as though it would make their case worse; for by their doctrine, to sin (and so to continue in sin) upon confidence that they shall have pardon by confession, is so far from aggravating sin that it extenuates it. So Cajetan and Navarre after him. And that nothing may discourage them from continuing in wickedness, the council of Trent declare (without excepting the sinner's perseverance in sin unto death) that if he be attrite, the sacrament of confession will secure him, though attrition is confessed not to import so much as any pious or ingenuous purpose to forsake sin.

CHAPTER X The Roman doctrine makes good works to be unnecessary

Sect. 1. But their good works possibly may satisfy for their other defects and extravagancies, and in these they glory above all, and have the confidence to condemn us, upon a pretence (though utterly false and groundless) that we deny the necessity of good works. Is it imaginable that alter this they themselves should hold them to be unnecessary, and so run into the heresy which they charge upon others? I will not desire any to believe this unless I let him see it; but their writings make it visible to any who have a mind to see. They reduce all good works to fasting, prayer, and acts of mercy, or alms-deeds. For their fasting I shall only say this, it is no fast, it is no good work, nor is it in their account necessary. To the making of a fast there must (as they tell us) be the concurrence of these severals. First, there must be no more than once eating. Gregory lies (though both a pope and a saint with them) if this be not true, says Cajetan. Secondly, this eating must not be a dinner. Bellarmine makes this good by scripture, a troop of fathers, and the perpetual custom of the faithful; concluding that it was never heard in the ancient church, that they did eat either till night, or before three at afternoon. Thirdly, what they take must be less nourishing and delicious than their ordinary fare. And so the church forbids that which in its nature, and for the most part, is more nourishing and more pleasing, the end of fasting requires it, which is (says he out of St Austin) to tame and subject the concupiscence of the body.2 All these are necessary to the being of a fast, as they affirm, and yet not one of these is observed in their fasting. For first they eat a dinner, a full meal, at noon, or an hour or two sooner if they please, at the same time, and in as great quantity, as they do any other day; yea, if they eat to great excess at a fasting dinner, yet they keep the fast. As to the quantity (says another of their cardinals, who can best tell what belongs to fasting) of a dinner at a fast, there is no certain measure; but though one be very excessive, and transgress the law of sobriety, yet he fasts well enough; and adds, it is lawful to eat more than ordinary at dinner upon a fast day. Others, not of the Society, may hit the sense of the church herein more unquestionably, when they teach, that one who, observing the quality of the meat, stuffs his belly so full as to be so far from any sense of the hardship of fasting, or from repressing the sins of the flesh, that he rather excites and cherishes lust thereby, yet fulfils the precept for fasting. So Covarruvius, Abulensis, Medina, Cajetan, and others, in Bonacina, and he after them,4 where, by the help of a distinction or two, intemperance both in quality and quantity, is made perfectly consistent with the fast and temperance of holy church. So that they fast, though they dine, and that lustily, whatever the Scripture, or the fathers, or all the faithful (in Bellarmine) say of the inconsistence of a dinner with a fast. But this is too little for a Roman fast (though many that never dream they fast eat constantly less); they may eat a breakfast too, and yet keep a fast after they have broke it. They may drink ale or wine, and eat bread after it, that the strong drink may not hurt them; or if bread will not serve them (though these together may make a breakfast for a festival) they may eat other things also after their morning's draught, if it be not beyond measure;

and these both at their first and second breakfast. Oh! but thus they eat twice, that the cardinal was aware of, where is then their fast, when it is, as they affirm, essential thereto not to eat twice? Why, says he, a pious construction must be put upon it, it is that the drink may not hurt them; and so taken it seems either they eat not twice, when they eat once and again, or they fast by a pious interpretation, when in the sense of the universal church, and the world too, they fast not.6 Thus, that they may be sure to afflict the flesh with a severe abstinence, they may eat a supper too. And no wonder, for if they can excuse the second eating, it will be, as they conclude, no fault to eat a third, or a fourth, or a fifth time, or as often as they please; but three meals may serve them for a fast, and so one supper may suffice. Indeed, they call it by cænula, and will have it pass under a little name, though the quantity allowed be great, even full as big as custom will make it, for that is their rule for fasting suppers, not to eat by any certain measure, but so much as others are wont to do; if it be excessive great, that which custom introduces will justify it. And those that tell us custom is their rule acquaint us also, that it is the custom in divers countries to sup with notorious excess.3 And so they may eat at supper not only for hunger, but out of sensuality, as Panormitan, and others after him. And thus sensuality and the severity of a popish fast, are perfectly reconciled.

Such a supper these fathers may eat in the morning, if they please. This will be but a small fault, though they do it when there is no occasion for it; and they may the better fast after, upon a full stomach, till noon at least; but they need not stay so long, for they may drink every hour, or oftener if they will, and whenever they drink they may eat something too, that the drink may not hurt them; and thus they may break their fast every hour of the day, or more, and yet keep it the whole day well enough. For the quality of their fasting-meat (to say nothing that some flesh is allowed) they may use the most delicious that they can compass, the most curious sweetmeats, the choicest wines, the rarest fish, and that dressed after the most delicate mode, and this at dinner, the meal most repugnant of all to fasting. Oh, how gladly would thousands of our people be condemned to such a maceration of the flesh, for more days in a year than the Romanists are thus pitifully mortified, and never trouble pope or prelate for a dispensation! Nay, they would purchase a license to fast, if any would accommodate them with expedients to do it at such a rate. Besides their meats, they may drink freely, not only at meals, but before or after, though they need it not, and be not thirsty; the drinking of wine out of sensuality breaks not the fast, says Sylvester.7 And thus they may drink before the meat they fast on be digested, for though that be intemperance in other cases, as Navarre tells us, it breaks not the fast. Sylvester thinks it possible that intemperance in drinking may be a sin; however, it is lawful for those that fast to drink often, on the same day, for drinking breaks not the fast, either before or after dinner; so he after others. A man may wonder what can break this fast, since neither drinking nor eating so often, and so much, even to excess, and the gratifying of sensuality, in so high a degree can do it. It is wine that they may drink so often when they fast, and yet they acknowledge that wine is more contrary to the nature and end of a fast than flesh. Though wine, says De Graffiis, be more nutritive, and the drinking of wine do more provoke to concupiscence than the eating of flesh, according to that: Proverbs 10:1-32. Wine is a luxurious thing, and Ephesians 5:1-33. Be not drunk with wine in which is luxury; yet, says he, he that on a fast day often drinks wine or water, either sooner or later, does not break the fast.

Thus, as they may eat like gluttons, so (by the doctrine of their chief authors) they may drink till they be drunk, and yet not break their fast, for no drinking (how excessive soever) can break it.

The church-fast (they tell us) consists not in abstinence from drink; consequently, he that drinks wine, or other liquor, before or after dinner, breaks not the precept for fasting, though he sin against temperance, and drink excessively. So Bonacina, after Aquinas, Abulensis, Navarre, and others, telling us it is their common doctrine).

I suppose this fast can never be broke; it will be a fast for ever, do what they can, if all they are allowed to do against it cannot make it to be no fast; for so far as I can perceive, they may break their bellies, and yet not break their fast. If one in the ancient church had spoke of his fasting after three such meals, and so much drinking, yea, or but eating a dinner, he would have been thought out of his wits; yet they must not be accounted ridiculous, who tell us gravely that this is fasting, and that they break not a fast unless they dine twice on a fasting day; and indeed some of their writers seem ashamed of this good work, as they do it in their church.5 But suppose this were a fast (when indeed it is no such thing), and observed by them, ■ν ξηροφαγ■α (as Epiphanius explains it), and so that they tasted nothing till three o'clock, or till evening as of old, yet by the Roman order it could be no good work. That it may be such, there must be something religious (for mere abstinence has no more goodness in it than eating); it cannot be religious unless it be subservient to some religious design or employment; but they disjoin it from all things of that nature; we hear not a word from them, of their taking notice of their sins, or confessing them, or afflicting their souls for them; they need not so much as pray when they fast, either in public or private; yea, they are not obliged to hear mass, though that be the employment of every day for worship, so that their fasts are no days for worship, or any religious exercise. They are discharged also from religious ends; two are commonly assigned, the taming of the flesh, and the elevating of the mind to God; but though the flesh be more unruly, and the mind move not in the least towards God on a fasting-day; though they never mind these ends in their abstinence, yet they entirely fulfil the precepts of their church for fasting, as they commonly conclude, upon this ground, because the end of the precept is not commanded.2 So that this practice which they call fasting, is a mere bodily exercise amongst them, and thus it is represented by Cajetan, applying that of the apostle to it, 1 Timothy 4:8, 'Bodily exercise profiteth but little,' &c. Where he denies it the character of a good work. And since it is neither a true fast nor a good work, if they made it never so necessary, it would be no proof, that by their doctrine there is any necessity either of real fasting or any good work. But, indeed, they declare their pretended fasts needless; for their best writers conclude it to be but a venial fault not to observe them; so that there is no more necessity with them to fast after their mode, than there is to avoid a venial sin, which is none at all. They have so many ways to excuse men from fasting, as leave no necessity of it. This one may serve any that have no mind to fast. If a man have tired himself with any employment (lawful or damnable) not only with honest labour, but with too much gaming, yea, or with excessive whoring, he is thereby exempted from the obligation to fast, though he so wearied himself on purpose that he might be excused. But one thing herein is more intolerable, that this ridiculous piece of mockery which they call fasting, has the glory given it which is peculiar to Christ alone, and is thought sufficient both to satisfy the justice of God, and to merit, by way of condignity, not only grace but eternal glory; an opinion of such malignancy as is enough to poison the best work in the world into deadly guilt. To hold that a person, because he eats not two dinners, or abstains for a day from flesh, though he stuff himself with other delicacies, even to excess, should be worthy of the glorious prerogative of Christ, is a conceit to be entertained with scorn and laughter, if the horror of it did not call for another passion. Yet such are points of faith in that church; and this surely is enough to cloy any man with their

fasting.

Sect. 2. Come we to the next of their good works, that is, prayer. This unquestionably is a good work, but then sure it must be good praying; but they are so far from judging it necessary to pray well, that they conclude it sufficient to employ themselves about this work in such a manner as cannot, upon a just account, be called praying at all. The only public prayers necessary for the people, by the Roman orders, are those of the mass, but how they pray therein, I cannot apprehend. They use not the words, they need not hear them, they cannot understand them. Now, can it be imagined that he prays, who neither expresses nor conceives any petitions? They do it not themselves, they join not with the priest, for no man can possibly concur with the words or the sense of him whom he neither hears nor understands. They cannot concur with the priest as men, with rational acts, much less as Christians. The church of Rome has made it not only needless, but impossible, for the people to pray in their public service; they must think something sufficient for them, which is not praying. Let us see what account their authors give of this. Sylvester, proving that it is not needful to pray on the Lord's day, or any of their days for public worship, tells us what will serve the people instead thereof. It suffices that they stand by the priest praying in the mass, and that is all that is requisite, by virtue of this precept. So that the church requires no more than the presence and posture of the body. And they that can make a prayer of this, may make an image in the church to pray; and if this would be a miracle, it would be as wonderful that the other should be praying; but thus it becomes those who will worship images, as if they were God, to worship God, as if themselves were images. Oh, but they must concur with the priest so far, as either actually or virtually to wish that his prayers may be heard.3 And if this be praying, a man may pray in the church while he is in his bed at home, for actually he may do this if he be awake, and virtually, though he be asleep. There is no prayer, but what is either vocal or mental; what the people do in the mass, is neither; they say nothing, nor do they understand anything, nor need they mind anything, of what is said; and it is much, if a man's mind can be employed about that which he not only understands not, but minds not at all. The mind must necessarily attend actually in mental prayer, but actual attention is not necessary to what they call praying. So it is neither vocal nor mental, not any at all, unless they can devise a mode of prayer without either voice or mind. They know not what to mind, nor whom, person or thing; they understand not whether the priest be in confession, or at prayer, or in his lauds; no, nor whether he be praying or reading, unless the dumb signification of a posture tell them; nor that way neither, for they need not see, no more than hear, the priest. They know not whether he be addressing himself to God, or to a creature, whether to another divine person than the Father (for they have prayers in the mass to Christ and the Holy Ghost, though an ancient council forbids it); they know not whether he be praying to an angel or to a saint, to a man or to a woman, to an image or to a crucifix, for they have addresses to all. They can in no wise be thought to pray, who do not, who cannot so much as say Amen to a prayer; and this they cannot say, who understand not what is prayed for, as Aquinas himself assures us from the words of the apostle. But the priest who celebrates seems to pray, though the people at mass do not. He seems so, but the church of Rome obliges not him to pray, unless he can be said to pray who only reads the words of a form, without minding anything else which they must necessarily be concerned in who pray indeed. Of the several sorts of attention requisite in prayer, none, with them, is necessary but that which respects the pronouncing of the words right. If the priest mind but this only, so as to read the words right, it is sufficient, he does all the church requires, and fully satisfies the precept of saying mass; this is their common doctrine.

So that unless he can be said to pray who neither minds the God he should pray to, nor the things to be prayed for, no, nor the sense of the words he uses, their church requires not the priests to pray, even when they are saying their mass-prayers. Nor is it more needful, on the same account, in the canonical hours, as we have seen before. So that praying indeed is not necessary for priest or people in all the public service of the Romish church; much less is it needful in their private devotions, which are not enjoined; for there they declare it lawful to be more neglectful of all the necessary concerns of prayer than in public. Now that they who mind nothing but the bare saying the words of a prayer do not pray indeed, they themselves will acknowledge in their lucid intervals. Cajetan tells us that if one be corporally present at mass, but lets his mind considerately wander after other things, he satisfies not the precept, because he is but so there as if he voluntarily slept at it; for to be far from the mass by voluntary sleeping and by voluntary wandering are both alike.3 Hence it is clear that priest or people whose minds voluntarily wander at mass, do no more pray there than if they were voluntarily asleep; and consequently, if they wander carelessly, without observing it, they pray no more than if they were carelessly asleep. Yet many of them think the church forbids not voluntary wanderings. He himself thinks she forbids not careless wanderings; therefore all of them must believe that she thinks it sufficient to pray as they may do who are fast asleep, one way or other. And yet none that are awake can well count sleeping to be praying. Bellarmine reckoning the several sorts of prayer, one (says he) is mental, another is both mental and vocal. But when he would add that which is vocal only, he will not have that accounted prayer. A third member of the division ought not to be added, to wit, that which is vocal only; and gives good reason, for that, says he, is of no use to please God, but rather to provoke him to anger, according to that Isaiah 29:1-24, ‘This people honour me with their lips,’ &c. Yet such is the praying in the Roman church, and no other needful in their divine service, as the cardinal himself declares sufficiently in the same book. And if no other praying be needful, no prayer that is a good work is necessary by their doctrine.

Sect. 3. Proceed we to the last sort of their good works, to wit, acts of mercy or charity, comprised in alms-deeds for the relief of the indigent; and we can scarce discover that these will ever be necessary by their doctrine. Cardinal Cajetan (one represented as more favourable to these acts of charity than divers others) tells us that to omit them is no mortal sin (and therefore to do them will not be necessary by any command), but only in two cases; first, when one hath superfluities, both of nature and state, that is, more than either nature or the quality of the person requires; secondly, when the poor are in extreme necessity (not in common want only, but such as is extraordinary). And these two are so described to us that themselves confess they very seldom fall out, and we may think hardly ever, so that rarely or never will this good work be necessary. For the former, that a person may be judged to have anything superfluous (without which he is not bound to relieve others), it must be considered what is requisite for the honourable expenses of himself, his children and family, and what for the munificence of his state and magnificence too, what for common events and casualties, to provide against them, and other things of this nature.3 Upon which he concludes, it will rarely fall out that a man living splendidly, according to his quality, will have anything superfluous. And so very rarely (if he had said never the premises would have borne it) will it be the duty of such as have enough to live gloriously to spare anything for the poor. Less pride and vain-glory, or prodigality, than they allow them to have without any mortal guilt, will leave nothing superfluous, and so quite excuse them from these good works. Navarre is of the same mind, and tells us there are few rich men who have anything superfluous, since neither kings

nor great princes can be thought to have superfluities; having said a little before, that it cannot easily be judged that any secular person hath more than is needful for his condition, for he may heap up moneys to purchase more, or to advance his condition higher, and so still have no more than is requisite for his state, and nothing at all will be due for charitable acts. He expresses it more fully elsewhere, and concludes, For all this he cannot be said to have any such superfluities that he should be obliged by any command to give to the poor. So that unless a man have so much as he neither has at present, nor may have for the future, occasion to use—that is, unless he has so much as no man will or can believe he hath,—an act of charity will not be his duty. If he do but desire to have more than he now has, or do but design to rise any higher than he now is, though but in such a degree as is found in all, and may innocently be in any; at least, if he have but anything of covetousness or ambition, though far less than they determine he may have without any deadly guilt (and so without any considerable danger), he is discharged from all obligation to this good work. The other case will make charity no more necessary; it is when the poor are in extreme necessity, and this is only when it is apparent they will die for want of necessaries if we relieve them not. Now such a case rarely happens, and a man may never meet with one in such extremity all his life; but if he do, yet he may be excused for want of evidence that his necesssity is so great; he need not take the party's word for it, no, not though in public places there seem to be also clear signs of it; he need not take the word of any other, no, not the judgment of his parish priest or confessor (though upon their opinion he may safely venture upon acts of wickedness), unless they can assure him thereof as eye-witnesses, or if he be morally certain of the extremity;3 yet if there be a probability that any other will relieve the person ready to starve, he may leave him to the mercy of others, without doing anything himself towards his relief (for that is another limitation which they add in the case). For example, if he thought it likely that a protestant would relieve the perishing party, a papist (by their doctrine of good works) might reserve his money and charity for another world, nor would it be necessary to exercise one act thereof while he lives. Or amongst themselves, while each one expects that another may do it, the poor may perish, and all that might relieve them are excused. Besides, in this case, they conclude it lawful for the person in extremity to steal, either secretly or openly, from those that have enough;5 so that acts of charity will not be necessary among them but when theft is lawful, and no man need relieve the indigent with anything he hath, till they may justly take it from him. But if it were possible in these cases whereto they confine it, to find any place for the necessity of this duty, yet one thing more, added by their prime doctors, dashes all, for they teach that it is not required to relieve the necessitous by giving them anything, but it is sufficient to let, or sell, or lend to them. Navarre concludes it lawful to buy persons in extreme necessity, and lawful for them to consent to it.2 His reasons, among others, are because a father in time of extreme hunger may sell his son; also, because no man is bound, to relieve one, though in extreme necessity, gratis, if he can do it sufficiently by loan, exchange, &c. So that if a man were in such extremity for want of food, that he might sell his son to get it for the saving of his life, yet no Christian, in that case, were bound to give him relief freely; by their doctrine it would suffice to let him have money or meat by the sale of his child. We cannot expect they will ever find it a duty to give to the indigent if not in such circumstances; and it is a plain case, where there is no obligation to give, there is no necessity to give alms. But if they did make it necessary to give alms, yet it is not needful by their doctrine to do it so as it will be a good work (or so to fast, or pray, or do any other act which have any goodness in them, or pretend to it; so good works will, by their principles, be still unnecessary. For that any work may be good, it must

be from a right principle and for a good end; but both these they make needless. As to the former, there is no necessity, as they teach, to act out of love to God; for though this be the intention of God, and the design of the law in all good acts, as they acknowledge from that 1 Timothy 5:1-25, Romans 13:1-14, yet they have a maxim generally received, The intention of the command is not commanded. Herein they follow Aquinas, and hence they conclude that such a mode of acting out of love to God is not required in any command of the divine law;5 but the whole, and every part of it, may be fulfilled, and sin avoided, if that which is required be done, though not out of love to God at all. And particularly Soto takes much pains to argue us out of the love of God in all our actings, and to prove that it is not necessary. And all generally conclude that it is not needful in any acts of piety, mercy, or charity required on their days of worship; since there they determine that there is no need of any act of love, as was shewed before.

It is no wonder therefore (as to the second) if they conclude it needless to act for God in what we do, and make him alone our chief end. In the theory indeed they determine that an act is not good unless there be a concurrence of all conditions requisite thereto, and that the end is the principal (as much in morals as the form is in naturals). So that without a good end that act must be naught, and no good end where God is not chief; yet for practice they discharge them from any necessity to make God their principal end. They conclude it lawful for a man to act principally for his own advantage;2 yea, they count it but a venial fault to do the best act principally for a sinful end. Now, to avoid a venial sin, they hold it not necessary by any command of God, and therefore it will not be needful to do anything but principally for an end so far sinful; and, consequently, unless the work can be good, whose principal end is sin, no good work at all will be necessary. But it is a more wicked end, which they openly avow, when they design by what they do to merit grace and glory, and make satisfaction to divine justice. This is to make Christ a leg, while they attempt his crown; to offer him a rush, with an intent thereby to invest themselves in his prerogative. They should shew us how it is possible such acts can be good, before they pretend to account good works necessary.

Sect. 4. But though they find no necessity of good works by virtue of any divine precept ordinarily, yet they seem to make some when they will have the priest to enjoin them for penance (and it is like in this as in other cases, they leave so little or nothing needful that God has commanded, to render their own devices more necessary). But good works, being enjoined as penance, become punishments, and it signifies the church of Rome is no good friend to good works when she counts or makes them punishments; for punishment is properly evil to us, and not to be done, but suffered, and thus she will have good works neither to be good nor to be done. To be sure thus they cannot be done so as to be good, or as becomes Christians to do them; for he that must think it a suffering to do them, does them with the spirit of a slave, not of a Christian. But let us suppose they may be good works, and well done too by way of penance, yet they are not necessary at all in their church upon this account, and so no way. For, first, the priest needs not enjoin good works as penance; he may enjoin nothing at all if he pleases;5 or some slight thing, that which is good for nothing, or that which is worse; or what the confitent must have done if he had not sinned;7 or he may dismiss him with this general, All the good thou doest, or evil thou sufferest, let it serve for satisfaction; or he may commend something by way of counsel, without obliging him by any injunction;9 or he may require him only to avoid the sin he confesses for a while (and when he shrives the woman that he has sinned with, it is like he may not prove very rigorous this way11).

Or, secondly, if he should enjoin this, or any good work, the confitent need not accept of, or submit to it, as many of their chief doctors determine. Or, thirdly, if he do accept it, yet he needs not perform it for all that; he may be released by himself; to omit it will be but a small fault (such as he needs not regard, be the good work little or great), if be not out of contempt. Or another may undertake it, and satisfy by suffering it for him;2 or a priest may release him, either he that enjoined it or another. However, indulgences will do it effectually, these serve to sweep away all good works (all necessity of them) on this account for ever. This is their special use, to relieve the pope's subjects from the sad penalty of good works; for though they have dealt hardly with good works, to make them a punishment, yet they will not deal so hardly with catholics as to have it necessary that they should be thus punished. And therefore to ease them of this grievous suffering of doing good, the church in great tenderness has provided indulgences, which they may have at easy rates; and thereby an acquittance, discharging them from the good works they were to suffer! And if the priest should be so rigorous as to enjoin a sinner to be doing good all his life, or so impertinent as to require it for an hundred years, he may meet with indulgences will quit him of it, every moment of his life; and if he will, many thousand years over and above. And if this cannot be had unless he pay for it, yet for his encouragement they teach that it is better to lay out his money for an indulgence that in deeds of charity. So that there is no such goodness or necessity in the best work a priest can enjoin, but it may be better, and more necessary, to give the pope money; and this done, through his indulgence, there may be no need to do any more.

THE CONCLUSION By the premises, it is manifest that popery, by its practical principles, is destructive to Christianity and the souls of men. As to Christianity, whether we consider it in general as religion, or in its specialties as the best religion, it is both ways by the popish doctrine ruined. This plucks up the fundamentals of it, and dissolves the whole structure, and buries and confounds both the necessary materials, and the peculiar excellences thereof, in its rubbish. There can be no religion in reality without real worship, this being essential to it; yet their doctrine declares it needless, either for clergy or people to be real worshippers of God, being so far from engaging them to be reverent or devout, or sincere, or affectionate towards God in religious addresses, that it will not have them obliged so much as actually to mind God when they pretend to worship him. There needs not so much as one act of true and real worship, to make them as religious, and as much Christians, as is necessary by their divinity; so that Christianity, as they form it, is a religion regardless of God, even when, if ever, he should be most observed and honoured, and thereby sunk lower than heathenism, and the notions of natural religion retained by infidels. Further, it discharges those acts and duties of Christianity which are necessary and essential to it; and allows and encourages all that it forbids, and condemns even what is most repugnant to, and inconsistent with it. It makes all Christian acts and duties needless, and all wickedness opposite thereto, safe and practicable, without fear of condemnation; and there needs no more to ruin the religion of Christ. A great part of those duties are by this doctrine mere matter of counsel, and thereby they are made no duties, all obligation to perform them being, in that notion, quite dissolved. The remnant (all conscience of which is not swallowed up in counsels) which they cannot but acknowledge to be duties, yet they will have them to be so but sometimes, and that very rarely, and when that is they cannot tell; it is not certainly known when, and the observance thereof must be correspondent: nobody knows certainly when. Or if they guess at the time, and point some out as probable, yet when the time comes, the acts (though the life of Christianity consists therein, and the salvation of the persons depends thereon) need not to be

done, something else will serve instead thereof, some natural act, or faint wish, or false conceit, something or other, though neither truly Christian nor virtuous (with the sacrament at least), will excuse them from all other Christian acts. It is not the accessories of religion only that they make thus bold with; but thus they handle the very vitals of Christianity, and make them unnecessary for Christians. The very acts of faith, and hope, and love, yea, repentance itself, and all the rest with these, are thus made needless, and they may be true Christians (at their rate), and saved (in their conceit) without ever exerting, in a whole life, so little as one act of grace or Christian virtue. The world never saw Christianity, into what hands soever it fell, more clearly stripped, not only of its lustre and ornament, but of its life and being. If this suffice not to make an end of all religion truly Christian, they not only dismiss, as more than needs, what the doctrine of the gospel makes most necessary, but advance and encourage what is most opposite to it, not only ignorance, unbelief, disaffection to Christ, impenitency, but therewith all disobedience unto the gospel. Instead of the holy rules thereof, they have formed a doctrine of licentious maxims, which give security to the practice of any wickedness, and take away (when they had left no other restraint) the fears of hell from those who live and die in damning sins. Whatever it is that Christ forbids, it is with them either no sin, or not dangerous, or the worst of all, by virtue of some devices of their own, not damning; so that they may venture upon any wickedness freely, and persist therein securely till death; and yet, by some evasions which they tell them of, escape the wrath to come (whatever Christ say to the contrary) without either the fruits or acts of repentance. There are many sins, and amongst them horrid and enormous crimes, condemned by the law of God and natural light, and such as the practice of them is reproachful to the Christian name, which yet, with them, pass for no sins; and they are furnished with expedients to make any other so too, when they see occasion, and in these they will discern no shadow of danger. There is a world of wickedness, which by their doctrine is venial, abundance more than enough, utterly to deface Christianity, and to make any who takes but part of the liberty given by their divines, to look more like an atheist, or a brute, a person of no religion, conscience or honesty, than a true Christian. They can gratify any vicious disposition, which way soever it leads, with impiety and debauches enough to fill up a whole life; and yet, if he will be satisfied with anything but the highest degree of wickedness, promise him security.

If he could swallow ten millions of their venials every minute at a gulp, they would not (by their divinity) endanger him, though one that will follow the rules of Christ must choose death rather than venture upon some one of them. There is with them no danger in thus sinning, though the Christian doctrine never discovered anything else in sin; or, if their catholics will be outrageously wicked, and cannot be satisfied with less than the practice of the most mortal crimes, they will not disoblige them (the party must be kept up though their souls sink), they shall have their liberty upon easy terms; deadly sins shall be as free for them, and in a manner as safe as their harmless venials. That which makes venial faults seem less dangerous than mortal, is because they will not damn a man, though he never repent of them; but even herein they have made venial and mortal alike safe; for, by their doctrine he may live in all sorts of deadly wickedness, and die therein without any act of true repentance, and yet escape damnation. They commend to them several evasions to secure impenitent sinners, how damnable soever their neglects or practices have been to the last. But that of the Trent Council must not be doubted of; attrition (which they confess alone to be no sufficient, no saving repentance), with the sacrament of confession, will pass any sinner into a saving state. This one device of their own will serve instead of all that Christ hath

prescribed; if this be observed, though they live and die in the neglect of all Christian virtues, and in the practice of all wickedness which Christ condemns, they need not fear; this alone will secure them. The least natural or slavish remorse, and a priest, is all the Christianity that a papist need trouble himself for: if he can but make sure of these at last gasp, he is safe, though all his life he be more like a devil incarnate than a Christian. By this alone Christianity is utterly subverted, all the laws of Christ in effect repealed, and their observance rendered needless, the whole gospel made a cipher, and a way to salvation opened by bold impostors, not only without, but against the gospel, and quite cross to the way, the truth, and the life.

Sect. 2. No more is needful to manifest that the practical part of popery (however it hath passed for more harmless than the other more insisted on) is destructive to the souls of men. It leads them out of the way of salvation, if real Christianity be the way. It obliges them to neglect as needless not only the lesser, but the principal, parts of that way, without which heaven is altogether inaccessible. They that have discovered another hell, may as well fancy another heaven; but the way to that heaven which Christ hath prepared for his people, lies through the knowledge of Christ, love to him, faith in him, that repentance from dead works, and exercise of Christian virtues, that mortification of sin, holiness of life, and real worshipping of God, which, by this doctrine, is abandoned as unnecessary. It tempts them into the way of destruction, encourages them in such practice of wickedness as Christ hath declared to be the broad way. It promises safety therein, and hides the danger from their eyes, it covers the pits (whose descent is into that which is bottomless) with spiders' webs, and persuades them it is firm ground. It leaves them no sense, nor notice of many sins; no conscience of far the most; no fear of any, no not of the worst, such as themselves call deadly crimes. It gives as much security to such wickedness as a heart that, has sold itself to it need wish. For what need he desire more than assurance, that after a whole life spent therein, there is a very easy way for him to be saved, so easy that he need not trouble himself so much as truly to repent? Such grace as any priest can help a sinner to (an impenitent sinner) at last gasp, will bring him to heaven, though he never once thought of the way to it all his life.

Such being the rules which Roman Catholics have for the conduct of their hearts and lives, and the worst sort of them being as much approved by their church, as any practical doctrine current amongst them, let it be considered what regard that church hath of religion or salvation, which leaves them to such doctrine as is so inconsistent with both, and what regard they have of their souls, who, after notice hereof, will trust them to such a conduct. It gratifies the lusts and corrupt inclinations of the seduced, and serves the interest of the contrivers, drawing the world into the bosom of the pope's church, and entangling it there by all the charms of such a religion as dissolute persons would make for themselves; but if the God of infinite goodness and truth have given us any certain notice of the ways of eternal life and death, those that believe and practise it will certainly destroy their own souls.

CONTENTS OF THE PRECEDING TREATISE

Chapter I By the doctrine of the Romanists it is not needful to worship God really in public or private. True religion will have God to be worshipped really. Real worship requires the concurrence of mind and heart. In their divine service they require no act of the will, but an intention beforehand to attend their service is enough, though they be not attentive when they are at it. An intention to worship God there is scarce needful. Their intention may be effectual, though

they act contrary to it. They may employ both soul and body about other things when they are at their prayers. The act of the mind which they seem to require is attention, but this need not be either spiritual or rational; so that they need not mind God in their prayers, nor the things to be prayed for, nor the sense of the words they use, but only the pronouncing of them, nor need they actually mind that. The church's holiness supplies their defects, and makes those pass as such that pray devoutly who pray not at all. All due attention in worship is not only unnecessary, but impossible in their way. As attention, so inward reverence and devotion likewise, is not necessary in their service. Hereby their worship is no better than a profane irreligious exercise. They seem satisfied with less worship for God than for their images.

Sect. 1, to p. 234. In the mass, by their doctrine, God may be less minded than in their canonical hours, where they tell us he need not be minded at all. No inward worship requisite in the mass. It is enough if their attendance there be but an human act; nay, the use either of sense or reason is not there required. They may busy themselves in other employments while they are at mass. They may sleep a while, or laugh, if they be not too loud. Or talk of their worldly affairs all the while, say some; others would not have their discourse so serious; yea, it may be immodest, without transgressing the precept. And lascivious or very profane tunes to the organ at mass may be a small fault. The precept for mass (the chief part of their religion) may be fulfilled by mortal wickedness.

Sect. 2, to p. 241. Of their ends in worship. They may lawfully worship God for their own ends. Sin may be their end in worshipping, and that without sin, if not principally intended. It is but a small fault to worship God principally for vain glory. He that comes to mass or prayer with a design to satisfy his lust, or other mortal wickedness, satisfies the command of the church.

Sect. 3, to p. 244.

How unnecessary preaching is counted in their church, and hearing the word, in such circumstances where it would be accounted needful, if ever.

Sect. 4, to p. 245. In their sacraments no good motions or actual dispositions (such as are necessary in real worshippers) are required by that church in any that administer or partake thereof. This shewed as to baptism and penance, the sacraments for the dead; also in the other five for the living. In all, the precepts of the church may be fully accomplished by impious and wicked acts.

Sects. 5 and 6, to p. 248.

Even as to the eucharist (for which they profess they have the highest veneration) they may partake worthily who are without any the least good act of mind or heart. And to shut out good motions from their souls, on set purpose, when they are communicating, is but a venial fault, such as will not hinder the effects of the sacrament. Those vagaries which are inconsistent with attention and reverence, if they be not taken notice of, will be no fault at all; if they be deliberate, will be but slight ones. Not only reverence and devotion are accounted needless at this sacrament, but sobriety and the use of reason. To communicate out of ostentation and vainglory is but a peccadillo. And all holy fervour being excluded by voluntary distraction, to employ their souls vainly or wickedly during the celebration is no fault at all, in reference to the sacrament. Those that communicate unworthily to such a degree as is counted most horridly impious, do fully satisfy the

precept of their church for the communion.

Sect. 7, to p. 250. Their doctrine doth not more oblige them to worship God in private. Meditation not necessary, no, not on the holiest seasons or occasions. Reading the word of God scarce tolerated in the people, and that not so freely as the stews.

Sects. 8 and 9, to p. 250.

Private prayer rarely a duty with some, never a duty with others. Not at all by their common doctrine, but by accident, in the article of necessity, which many never meet with; so that many may never pray while they live, and yet be innocent. Some say there is no divine precept for prayer; others, who acknowledge a precept, will not have it oblige them at such times and occasions when, if ever, it would oblige. Even in their article of necessity, when it comes, they have ways to excuse them easily from the obligation, and to make it no special sin to neglect this duty all their life.

Sect. 10, to p. 254. Their church obliges not any to private prayers, not to the least or those of most account among them. Whenever they use private prayer upon any account, as required by precept, or enjoined for penance (for prayer passes commonly with them as a punishment), or voluntary as a work of supererogation, there is no need by their principles to worship God therein. Seeing they are to worship him no more anywhere, the world may judge what religion they have, since that worship is as essential to religion as a soul to a man.

Sects. 11 and 12, to p. 257.

Chapter II

Christian knowledge is not necessary for Romanists by their doctrine. They need not know what they are to pray for. Many of their priests, yea, of their popes, understand not their common prayers.

Sect. 1, to p. 258.

They need not know what they are to believe. The knowledge of all the articles of the small creed, nor of the Trinity, and incarnation of Christ, scarce necessary for all Christians. Ignorance and error in points of faith may not only be innocent but meritorious.

Sect. 2, to p. 263.

They need not know what they are to do. They may merit heaven by following their leaders out of the way. That is the most complete and perfect obedience which is next to brutish, without knowledge and judgment, when they obey their leaders as a beast doth his owner.

Sect. 3, to p. 265. The knowledge of the Scriptures (to which their doctrine and worship is confessed to be repugnant) unnecessary in a manner for all sorts; not only for the people and monastics, but their confessors and preachers. Their bishops afraid to look into the Bible lest it should make them heretics. Therefore very few of their bishops in the council of Trent (who decreed so many new articles of faith) had knowledge in theology. Their popes commonly no divines, many of them understood not Latin, though not only their church-service and laws, but their authentic edition of the Scripture be confined to that language. The people, the further they

are from knowledge, the more excusable, if they take no care nor pains to get it.

Sect. 4, to p. 272.

Chapter III Their doctrine makes it needless to love God. There is no command for habitual love to God. The acts of this love are as unnecessary. The imperate acts thereof not enjoined; neither God nor the church requires any to observe the commands of God out of love to him.

Sects. 1 and 2, to p. 274.

How needless the elicit acts of this love are. Some hold there is no command for this actual love (any inward act of it) that binds them, or no special command. Others, who acknowledge a precept, will not have it to bind them upon any occasion when, if ever, it would oblige. Not when they have sinned against him. Not when he expresses his love. Not when he discovers his infinite excellencies to them. Not when they are to worship him. Not at any sacrament, no, not the eucharist. It is too much to love God once a week, or once a year, or once in four or five years. One act of love once in a life may be enough; yea, and more than needs too, for when that time comes (if ever it come) when they will have any obliged to an act of love, yet they then assign something else which will serve instead of it, and so render it needless still. A love which is the issue of nature unsanctified may suffice. Or to love God less than other things, only more than mortal crimes, may be enough. Or to do nothing against this love, though there be no acts of it or from it, may be sufficient. Or external acts may satisfy. Or if a man believes that he loves God above all, though indeed he does not, it may serve the turn. Or attrition (which includes something repugnant to this love) with their sacrament of confession, may excuse him from loving God at the point of death, though he never once loved him in his life before. How extremely pernicious and ridiculous this their doctrine is.

Sect. 3 and 4, to p. 285.

Chapter IV By their doctrine no faith is necessary, but that which is neither justifying nor saving. That which they will have necessary for the ignorant is what they call implicit. A faith which they may have without actually believing any one article of the Christian faith. And is consistent with the belief of what is quite opposite to the Christian belief. And is but such a faith as Jews, Turks, and Pagans have. This was not thought sufficient for Christians till they were thought something like asses, and so expressed by some of their great saints and doctors. How many ways they have to exempt the people from the obligation of all precepts for any other than this brutish faith.

Sect. 1, to p. 289. The faith requisite in the more intelligent to justify them they call explicit. This, as described by them in its object, includes things uncertain, impertinent, false, impossible, and ridiculous, as points that must be certainly believed unto justification. This of itself (as themselves say) deserves not the name of a virtue, is an idle, dead thing, may be found in the worst of men, and in the devils too. Yet it is with them the Christian, the Catholic faith.

Sect. 2, to p. 290.

They see no great necessity of faith. The pope (the head of their church) needs it not. And the body may make a shift without it, if any one among all the members have it but. And one act of it in a whole life may serve. The ruder sort may be helped to this act (which will serve once for all) by making the sign of the cross, as their grave divines direct them.

Sect. 3, to p. 292.

Chapter V No necessity of true repentance for any sort of sins, by their doctrine. Of original sin, or the corruption of our natures, no man can be obliged to repent.

Sect. 1, to p. 293.

It is as needless for those many (and divers of them horrid sins), which they count venial. What pretty expedients they have to expiate these without repentance.

Sect. 2, to p. 294. For mortal sins some teach there is no divine command to repent. And so to live and die impenitently will be no transgression. No need of it any way, either as a duty enjoined, or as a medium.

Sect. 3, to p. 295.

Others who confess there is a command for it, will not have it oblige any sinner presently. No sin nor danger to defer repentance. Nor will they have it needful at such times and occasions which, if any, would be the necessary seasons for it. Not at solemn times of worship. Not on days of fasting. Not when visited with great calamities. Not when sins are brought to their remembrance. Not when they address themselves to their sacraments, no, not that of penance.

Sects. 4 & 5, to p. 299. No need to repent till one be at the point of death. Nor is it so needful then, or any time before, but something else may serve without it. A repentance without any sensible sorrow for, or actual resolution against, sin, is sufficient. Or a penance merely natural may suffice. Or a slight remorse in the lowest degree possible, one act of it, despatched in an instant, and never repeated, will be enough. Or if a man conceive that he truly repents, though really he does not, this may serve the turn. Or if he know that he does not repent sufficiently, yet if he signify that he would grieve more, and is sorry that he does not, this will be effectual. Or attrition with the sacrament will unquestionably justify him. Attrition with them is far distant from true repentance. Several sorts of it. Any of them seem sufficient by the Council of Trent. The general concurrence of their divines for the sufficiency of attrition, yet the best sort of it confessed to be morally evil.

Sects. 6 & 7, to p. 308. When they have excluded true repentance by attrition, they reduce attrition to nothing; yet will have it still sufficient. The least servile dislike of sin, in the lowest degree, though it be gone in a moment, though it be merely natural, is enough. Or if there be but a dislike that this dislike is wanting, Or a willingness to have it in those who have it not. Or a man’s thinking probably that he hath it when he hath it not. Or a willingness without it to receive the sacrament will serve the turn. Yea, even without their sacrament of penance, attrition with the eucharist, or extreme unction, or the mass, or without any sacrament at all, may procure pardon. What ways attrition may secure them when they cannot have a priest, or the rites proper to priests, while they live, or after they are dead without them.

Sect. 8, to p. 358. This doctrine, which makes saving faith, love to God, and true repentance needless, is established by the council of Trent. Their sacrament of penance hath no ground in the word of God. And being taught to depend on it for pardon, and to neglect the things of most necessary importance to salvation, it proves a most damning imposture. Their doctrine thus making repentance needless, plainly destroys Christianity, debauches the lives, and ruins the souls of sinners. And is one of the most pernicious heresies that ever was broached.

Sects. 9, 10, & 11, to p. 313.

Chapter VI Their doctrine leaves no necessity of holiness of life. It is enough to denominate their universal church holy, if there be but one holy man in it. One act of charity, the least of all, may make one a holy man. Other maxims of this tendency. How they destroy the necessity of holy life, by making it needless to exercise virtue and avoid sin.

Sect. 1, to p. 314.

How they make the exercise of Christian virtues unnecessary in general, more particularly hope (one of the three divine virtues) fares no better than faith and love. They leave themselves no good ground of hope. Their hope a conjecture, founded upon a delusion. The precept for hope obliges not but in the more grievous assaults of despair. So that not one of a thousand in popery need have any hope in God. No, not any, since the command for it may be satisfied by other acts.

Sects. 2 & 3, to p. 315. Their doctrine leaves no room for, no ground of, humility, no sense of sinfulness, weakness, unworthiness. It is pregnant with pride and arrogance.

Sect. 4, to p. 317.

Brotherly love unnecessary by their doctrine. No need of love to any, unless in necessity. Nor then, though the necessity be extreme, if we help them, though not out of Christian love. This extended not only to external, but spiritual necessities. If the acts whereby we should relieve their souls be neglected, it may pass for a small fault. Those who have no Christian love, if they believe they have it, may be excused from sin. No precept requires any special act of love to our brethren. No affirmative command for such love. It is enough that we do nothing against them.

Sect. 5, to p. 318. In destroying the necessity of those radical graces instanced in before, they root out the rest. Particularly those that depend upon love to God, viz., delight in God, desires to enjoy him, hatred of sin, sorrow for it as an offence to God, and filial fear. By their common doctrine, there is no special command for any fear of God. So that the want of all fear of God, filial or servile, is no special sin. Since they need not act out of love, they exempt themselves from all acts truly Christian, and any other Christianity than honest heathenism. All exercise of virtues opposite to acts accounted but venially evil, is with them needless. The monstrous consequences of this.

Sects. 6, 7, & 8, to p. 321. A special expedient, whereby they make the exercise of Christian virtues unnecessary, is their turning the commands of God into counsels, such as need not be observed. Such they count many of those excellent rules in Christ's sermon on the mount. These and many others specified. More instances in virtues which concern ourselves, God, and others, in acts of temperance and contentment, in acts of religion, and in acts of righteousness and mercy. Also mortification, crucifying the world, self-denial, taking up the cross, and all growth in grace, is but matter of counsel. So is every degree of grace above the lowest of all. Yea, all commands for good acts are no more than counsels, but only in the article of necessity. And all acts that have more than moral goodness. And all actings in a virtuous manner, and from a good principle. Exercise of virtue not necessary either in worship or common conversation. Not in those cases where, if in any at all, it would be needful. A way they have for any man to turn whatever precept pinches him into a counsel. There is no danger, nor any sin at all, in rejecting the counsel of God. No, not when conscience dictates that it is good to follow them. No, nor when God further calls

thereto by inspirations or motions of his Spirit. They may be neglected out of contempt. And with some abhorrence of them. They may boast and glory in such neglects. They may bind themselves by oaths not to observe God's counsels.

Sect. 9, to p. 331. No exercise of virtue necessary but only during the pope's pleasure, for if he should forbid virtue (as he hath done already in divers instances) the church would be bound to believe those virtues to be evils, and so to avoid them. Further, their doctrine encourages the continual practice of such wickedness, as is inconsistent with all holiness of life, reduced to three heads.

Sect. 10, to p. 332.

Chapter VII

Many heinous crimes are virtues, or necessary duties with them. Their blasphemies waived, because insisted on by others. Also a great part of their idolatry. Their plea in excuse of this crime, from the distinction of terminative and transient worship, removed by their own doctrine formerly opened.

Sect. 1, to p. 333. Their idolatry as to relics. These are to be religiously worshipped, though many of them be ridiculous and loathsome, though many thousands be confessed to be counterfeit, and great and detestable impostures be therein acknowledged. To worship false relics, or the devil upon a mistaken belief, is meritorious. What worshipful things miscarriages in the mass furnish them with.

Sect. 2, to p. 335.

They give divine worship to relics, though they give it not the name. They give both name and thing expressly to vast multitudes. All which they count relies of Christ are to have Christ's honour. Among these they reckon all things that were near him, or touched him on earth, even the earth, water, stones, &c. Not only the things, but persons that touched him, thereby become his relics, and are to have his worship. The Virgin Mary expressly, and thousands more may have it; by the same reason, they will not absolutely except the ass on which he rode. Yea, all the relics of such persons may have it. For they commonly teach that the relics may have the same worship with the person whose they are. The best of their relics impostures, that which passes for the foreskin of Christ, his shirt, coat, blood, the crown of thorns, lance, nails, cross, and its liquor. Their relics numerous beyond account. How they came to be so, their own authors tell us. The devil furnished their church with some of them, and crafty knaves with others. Yet their whole religion in a manner consists in worshipping such things as these, as some of themselves tell us.

Sect. 3, to p. 344.

Perjury necessary by their doctrine. If a prince swear solemnly not to prosecute his supposed heretical subjects, unless he break his oath, he is in danger to be damned. No faith to be kept with heretics. Their doctrine ruins all securities that popish princes or subjects can give to protestants. These can with prudence trust to nothing but what will keep them out of the papal reach.

Sect. 4, to p. 345.

Robbery and murder as necessary a duty. To deprive heretics of estate or life, a meritorious act. All papists, princes, or others, are bound in conscience by that which is most obliging in their religion, utterly to root out all they account heretics, and to seize on all they have. A decree of a general council for it, which encourages the execution with promises of the greatest rewards, and enforces it with threatenings of most dreadful import. They must not be counted catholics unless they do it. It hath been effected or attempted in all countries where the papists had power to do it, or but thought that they had it. The reason why they do it not in England and some other places is, as themselves declare, because they hare not yet power enough.

Sect. 5, to p. 347.

Sorcery and conjuration part of their religion. This manifested in their sacramentals, where by their own rules there is a tacit invocation of the devil. Their excuses here insufficient. Even their mode of praying too like conjuring.

Sect. 6, to p. 350. The chief act of their religion is to destroy Christ, by sacrificing him daily in the mass, which they maintain they do truly and really.

Sect. 7, to p. 353.

Chapter VIII Their doctrine tends to destroy holiness of life, by encouraging the continual practice of all sort of wickedness under the notion of venials. What hatred of God. What acts of infidelity and idolatry. What distrustful cares. What irreligiousness in all religious exercises. What use of witches. Or dealing with the devil. What irreverence towards God in adjuration.

Sect. 1, to p. 354.

What impious swearing almost at every word. In horrid terms. Without offering to break off this ungodly custom. Binding themselves by oaths, and threatening God that they will sin against him. And never comply with his will in things which he commends to them as most excellent. What fraudulent oaths. What perjuries of all sorts, both as to assertory and promissory oaths, not worse for being most frequent and customary.

Sect. 2, to p. 359.

What blasphemies. Out of levity, passion, or inconsiderateness. Or from wicked custom and contempt of a man’s own salvation. The more habitual and customary blaspheming is the better.

Sect. 3, to p. 360.

What profaning of holy time. Where it is manifest, that little or nothing at all of religion need be made conscience of amongst them; even at the only time set apart for the acts and exercises of it.

Sect. 4, to p. 363.

What irreverence in children to parents. They may be ashamed of them. And curse them; as parents may curse them again. What unaffectionateness. They may desire the death of their parents for some outward advantage. Or by accusations procure their death. What disobedience in all things, out of negligence or sensuality. And in matters of greatest importance as to this life. Or in matters which concern their salvation. Parents have no right to oblige their daughters not to

be whores.

Sect. 5, to p. 365.

What murder of soul or body. As to acts inward and outward. What hatred. What outrageous anger. What revenge. Desires of the death, not only of enemies, but nearest relations, because they are poor, or not handsome, may be innocent. Actual killing them without deliberation is no fault, when not fully deliberate (when ordinarily many things may hinder it from being so) is but little worse.

Sect. 6, to p. 366.

What uncleanness. Fornication in its own nature not evil with some. Adultery one of the lesser sins. To seek or receive hire for whoredom scarce a fault, even in a nun. The conjugal act before marriage venial. And also to lie with one contracted privately, after a public contract with another. A woman whose chastity is attempted with some force need not cry out, nor make any resistance, but may take natural pleasure in the act. How excused when drawn to it by courtship. Those who are disposed to fornication may innocently be invited to it. Self-pollution may be desired or delighted in as past or future for a good end. To venture upon the occasions. To use hot provoking means, carnal touches. To expose themselves to place, company, sights, persuasions, opportunities that are ensnaring. To use filthy discourse, or a tempting garb, all venial.

Sect. 7, to p. 369.

What stealing in all sorts, children, servants, wives. Mortal theft is so stated that they may make it venial when they please. They may steal little or much. Of these many instances. What cheating in false measures. Or the quality or substance of what they sell. They may promote the cheat with lies or worse. And defraud those who entrust them. Their church laws allow cozening, so it be but as to half of the worth of the commodity.

Sect. 8, to p. 374.

What lying. They may lie merrily, and do it customarily, out of mere pleasure in telling lies, yea out of malice. They may lie whenever it will be for their advantage, if it do no great mischief, or they do but think so. To tell lies for their religion is piety. No sort of lies mortal but by accident, when they do great mischief, as speaking the truth may do. Nor in many cases when they do such mischief. They may use lies in commerce, and confirm them with oaths, both together may be but venial. Also in courts of judicature. How both judge and witnesses may lie there. They may bear false witness in favour of one another. They may delude the court by equivocation or mental reserves. Even a priest may swear he knows nothing of what he has heard in confession, with this reserve, he knows it not as man, but as God. They have lies in their divine office. Abundance of such stuff, or worse, is confessed to be there. Nor would they have all purged out, lest none of their old service should be left. They may tell lies in the pulpit. But some of them would have such rank ones avoided as the hearers may smell out. They may do it even in confession, and delude the priest with lies in much variety. And he may delude them likewise, pretending that he absolves them, when he neither doth it nor intends it. Since they have such liberty to lie everywhere, when can they be trusted?

Sect. 9, to p. 382.

What perfidiousness venial. How they may be perfidious for delight, or advantage. They may make promises outwardly, without intention to be obliged. Yea, they may deny, with oaths too, that they promised. Internal promises, though made in the form of a vow, or with an oath added, oblige them not. How easily they may excuse the worst perfidiousness. The firmest promises bind not but under venial guilt, unless they be in writing or with an oath. Nor then, if they intended not thereby to be obliged.

Sect. 10, to p. 385.

What hypocrisy. To make false shows of sanctity for a good end is no sin. Bare hypocrisy venial, though one delight to play the hypocrite. Yea, when it is for a bad end, though the fault be doubled it is venial still. They reverence hypocrisy as a holy art. It is amongst the commendations of their great saints, and recommended by them to their religious. If they feign more holiness than they have, to edify others, it is rather meritorious than faulty. Their church much concerned for the honour of hypocrisy.

Sect. 11, to p. 386.

What calumniation. How many ways they have to ruin the reputation of others without mortal guilt. Amongst others, if one speak ill of them or their church, though truly, they may charge him with false crimes. A small fault for one to defame himself.

Sect. 12, to p. 389.

What flatteries venial. To praise one for the virtues he never had, or the good he never did. Yea to applaud him for his sins, to gain something by such flatteries. Cursing may be their usual practice. It is scarce any fault when used for honest recreation.

Sect. 13, to p. 390.

What capital sins are with them venial. All covetousness, unless injustice be added. Yea, and with injustice too. They allow them to gain unrighteously. They may gain out of excessive desire of lucre, and make it their principal end, and turn it into a trade. They need not restore what they win by unlawful, or what they call diabolical games. But the loser may steal it from him that wins. Or refuse to pay, though he have sworn to do it, his oath may be easily dispensed with. They may take hire for acting the most abominable wickedness, or unjust judgment, or false depositions, or murder, or consulting with the devil. But then they must be sure to do the fact. No restitution to the poor a duty. Hard-heartedness and unmercifulness to the poor venial. Pure prodigality a less fault than covetousness, though this be next to none.

Sect. 14, to p. 394.

All pride venial, but such as is scarce to be found in the Christian world. The numerous issue of this queen of mortal sins, as they style it, to which they are so favourable. To ascribe what they receive from God to their own merits, is confessed to be mortal pride, yet they make it part of their creed. Arrogance, commonly a venial fault.

Sect. 15, to p. 396.

Ambition venial, unless one would be honoured for a crime, or counted a god.

Sect. 16, to p. 396.

Vain-glory regularly a venial, it imports nothing contrary to the love of God or man. It may be their principal end in all things ordained for the honour of God, otherwise their whole clergy, they say, would be in a dangerous condition. They may take livings and spiritual promotions principally for honour or temporal profit. So we have an account why they may make religion all along subservient to a worldly interest.

Sect. 17, to p. 398.

Loathing of spiritual and divine things venial, unless it be on such an account as rarely happens. All in a manner that is requisite for a true Christian may be abhorred without mortal guilt. Rancour and indignation against any who would draw them to spiritual and divine things, a venial.

Sect. 18, to p. 399.

Anger, though extravagant and revengeful, may be venial. The more excessive it is, the more mischief it may do and be innocent. Disdain of others. Audaciousness, immoderate fear, or wrath. Fool-hardiness. Incontinent desires and lust. Love of the flesh or the world, venial. Envy scarce any worse.

Sect. 19, to p. 401.

Intemperance, comprising gluttony and drunkenness, in its own nature a venial. When they play the epicures like Dives, and resolve to give up their whole life to gluttonous pleasures, it is but near to a mortal sin. When it proceeds to beastliness, and the glutton so burdens nature that it is forced to ease itself by vomiting, or other nasty, loathsome ways, it is still venial. When he eats till he vomit, on purpose that he may be ready to eat again, it is no worse. Drinking till the house in the drunkard's fancy run round, is venial. Nor will it be worse till reason be totally drowned. The rare virtues of drunkenness; complete drunkenness will make any wickedness then acted to be no sin at all. And half drunkenness will make it to be but a venial.

Sect. 20, to p. 404. The multitude of particular crimes which issue from these seven capitals need not be taken notice of as mortal. They have no warrant from Scripture to count any sin venial. Yet they venture to reduce to this account what the law of God forbids, not only when it is of less but greatest importance. To make a sin mortal requires so very much, that the sinner may easily miss some of it, and so venture upon it without fear that it is deadly. This declared particularly. They shew them a way to pass any mortal crime as venial. How they represent venials as so very harmless, that all have encouragement enough to practise them continually all their life, and even when they are dying. Though some few of them may make any look like monsters in the judgment of a sober pagan.

Sect. 21, to p. 409.

Chapter IX

They conclude many crimes, inconsistent with holiness of life, to be no sins at all, and so warrant all to live in the practice of them. Some particulars of this nature before insisted on, here only pointed at. It is no sin to quench the motions of God's Spirit, drawing them to the observance of his

will any way. Yet may they invite others to wickedness when they are ready for it. They may lawfully deal with the devil divers ways.

Sect. 1, to p. 410.

It is sufficient to pray with the mouth, without the heart.

Sect. 2, to p. 411.

How it is no sin to worship the untensils of worship. Or the word Jesus pronounced or written. Or the accidents of bread and wine in the eucharist. Or the picture of the manger, thorns, or spear which touched Christ. Or the ass he rode on, or the lips of Judas for kissing Christ, though to betray him. Or the imaginary blood of a crucifix. Or to worship any person whatever as the image of God, or any other creature in the world, toad, serpent, or a wisp of straw. Or the apparition of the devil himself in a beam of light, or the form of a crucifix.

Sect. 3, to p. 414.

Perjury no sin. When one takes an oath and intends not to swear. Or swears and intends not to be obliged. Or swears in another sense than he knows is intended in the oath. So they may use equivocation or mental restrictions in swearing. And think this lawful either to gain some advantage, or to avoid any damage. Many instances of such artifice of words or inward reserves which they may use to elude oaths. They may swear with such ambiguities or reserves, when they are swearing not to use them. No oath can be contrived which they may not thus elude.

Sect 4, to p. 419. The irreligion of the Roman church palpable in the observance required of the Lord's day, and others set apart for holy employments. When the people are discharged from religious duties at other times, nothing is enjoined them on these days but presence at mass. At mass they need neither mind God nor divine things. It would be no sin to employ themselves in servile works on these days if it were but the custom. Nor to give them no observance at all after mass. This may be despatched before sunrise. These days are not profaned by any acts of wickedness. So that all the religiousness which that church requires of their catholics, when they make the best show of it, is consistent with the lewdest acts of ungodliness and debauchery.

Sect. 5, to p. 423. In reference to those whom they count heretics, all relatives are discharged from their respective duties, subjects, wives, children, servants, yea, debtors too. It is no murder to kill a heretic, or those that are excommunicated.

Sect. 6, to p. 424.

Upon what occasion they may kill one another. A man may with impunity kill his wife taken in adultery, or his daughter, or sister, or his own mother, and this though they be big with child. A woman married or unmarried, being unlawfully got with child, may procure abortion, not only to secure her life, but her state and credit. It is lawful to cut up an honest mother quick, and she bound to procure it, that the child in her womb do not want baptism. They may without sin kill any one assaulting them unjustly, not only to secure their life, but to avoid a wound or a blow (a priest may do it while he is celebrating) though the aggressor be frantic, or in drink, or asleep; or though he have had intolerable provocation and be the sufferer. They may kill an innocent to escape themselves. They may kill one before he actually assaults them, though his soul be like to perish

with his life, if they know he is prepared for it, or does but design it. So the adulteress may prevent her husband, and kill him first, with the poison or weapon prepared for her. They may kill one to secure their goods, or recover them, when they may be recovered in a legal way. Yea, though they be of small value, worth but three or four ducats, yea, but one crown or less. They may kill men for their reputation. If he sees one approach to assault him, he may kill him rather than retire. A blow with a cudgel or a light switch, yea, or a box on the ear, is a just ground to kill him that gives it, yea, or does but offer at it. They may kill men for ill language, though they allow it to be as common as any they speak. Yea, for an affront by mere signs, though he that gives such an affront runs for it. They speak favourably of duels. But allow them to kill men more privily, and by surprise, when they impeach their reputation publicly or privately, yea, or do but threaten to do it. Jesuits scarce so extravagant here as some of other orders. If the civil laws did but give so much liberty to murder, as their rules for conscience, no man near them could have security for his life.

Sect. 7, to p. 428.

How indulgent their doctrine is to uncleanness. They oblige them not to avoid such occasions of this sin by which they very frequently fall, unless they fall thereby in a manner always. Divers instances. What liberty they give to unclean thoughts. Obscene words. Lascivious writings. Filthy songs. Such ditties sung to the organ at mass. Offered to God in the person of the church for divine praises. This was the custom everywhere in Cajetan's time, and since. As intolerable obsceneness in their penitential confessions. What licence they give to use such things as provoke lust. Also to immodest touches and shameful sights. No need to be resolute in resisting temptations. How servants may minister to the lust of their superiors. Actual whoredom hath excessive encouragement. The pope builds stews for prostitutes. They pay him a weekly tribute for liberty and accommodation to drive their trade. This condemned as most abominable to God and man, even by barbarians; but the pope consenting to it, it is no sin, not indecency for his holiness to be maintained by the hire of whores. Many things concluded by their divines in favour of them. How punctual in deciding at what rates all sorts of women may set themselves to sale. They oblige them not to restitution, but when their religious make use of them, who are to have it gratis. Public prostitutes compelled by law to commit lewdness with any that will hire them. Hence the people (instructed in their religion) know not that such fornication is a sin. He that keeps a concubine at home is not to be denied the communion. Nor will they oblige him to put her away, if that would impair his estate, or delight, or his reputation, yea, or her's either. It is enough if he promise not to sin with her, though he keep not promise. Adultery no sin in divers cases. For the clergy, adultery, nor unnatural uncleanness, not so much a sin as marriage. Burning lust, innocent. Better to burn than to marry, whatever the apostle with their adversaries say. The admired chastity of their votaries consists well enough with whoredom, and is only violated by marriage. Their priests have been allowed to keep whores at home, paying a yearly rent for it. And those were to pay it who took not the liberty, because they might. Votaries incur excommunication for laying aside their habit, but not if they lay it aside to commit fornication more readily. Priests in no wise to be obliged by oath to forsake their concubines. Extremely few chaste, by their own confession, of those innumerably many that profess it. A priest not to be deposed for fornication, because there are very few not guilty. Priests who keep many concubines not irregular. How they favour sodomy. Married persons may practise much of it together. Their clergy may act it to the uttermost, and be neither suspended, nor irregular, unless they make a trade of it, and do that so publicly and

notoriously, as they can scarce do (by their description hereof), if they had a mind to it. Mere mental heresy a greater crime than sodomy with them. Yea, petty thievery a more heinous sin, with some of them expressly, and in consequence with most. Sodomy hath ecclesiastical immunity. All sorts of religious places amongst them are sanctuaries for sodomites, all sorts of uncleanness having such free and favourable entertainment in their church, no wonder if it be the sink of the Christian world.

Sect. 8, to p. 442.

It is no sin to take from protestants, or any counted heretics, all they have. All their estates are confiscated immediately, before any declarative sentence, from the first day of their pretended heresy. Though the papists make not seizure presently, yet those heretics are in the interim responsible for the mean profits. And they cannot any way alienate or dispose of their estates. All wills, sales, contracts for this purpose, are null and void. All may be taken from the purchaser, without restoring the price he paid. Children, though Roman catholics, lose their portions. Liberty given to all to spoil and bereave them. All rules of righteousness which concern propriety are void here, papists owe them no observance. It is no sin to burn their houses. To deprive a protestant prince of his throne. To draw his subjects into war against him. To betray garrisons to the Romanists. To pay us no debts. To detain what is deposited with them in trust. There can be no lawful parliament among protestants. No king. No peers. No freeholders. No laws that are valid can be enacted. No aids or subsidies can be granted. The fundamentals of the government in England, and other such like countries, quite blown up by their principles.

Sect. 9, to p. 445.

It is no sin with them to bear false witness against protestants, when their life or estate is concerned. Or to use fraud and deceit in bargains, to cheat them of all they have. Or perfidiousness in promises, compacts, &c. They leave little that can be sin in papists towards themselves; less towards protestants, Sects. 10 and 11, to p. 446. An aversation and contrariety to God and holiness, a propenseness and inclination to all ungodliness and unrighteousness in the horridest instances, when it is habitual, reigning, impetuous, active, is no sin at all in the temper and habit; no, nor in the acts and motions, without consent.

Sect. 12, to p. 447.

What expedients they have to justify all sin in the world, or make it no sin. The pope’s power herein. If he command vice, their church is bound to practise it. He can make sin to be no sin. He may dispense in all positive laws, and in the divine law (and against the gospel) at least where God can dispense, particularly with oaths and vows, such as are best, and most inviolable. With the observance of the Lord’s day, so as to turn it into a working day. With all public worship amongst them, both mass and divine service. And against the universal state of the church. He can discharge them from righteousness towards men. Take from any man his right. Dissolve marriages. Legitimate adultery. License persons to be married for a while, and not during life. Authorise incest (dispensing with marriage betwixt any but parents and children) and sodomy. He can dispense with any divine law when the reason thereof ceaseth, and can declare it to cease when he pleaseth. If he should err in dispensing, yet he that makes use of his licence to sin, sins not. He can free any from the obligation to fruits meet for repentance. Thus can he discharge all

from acts of religion, righteousness, and good works.

Sect. 13, to p. 452.

He is excused from sin, who ventures on it upon some probable reason, though it seem but probable to him, out of affection to the person that offers it, and there be more reason against it.

Sect. 14, to p. 453.

Custom will excuse from sin, and make it no sin. Divers instances. The sense of Scripture must be conformed to the custom of their church, and vary from what it was, as they change fashions.

Sect. 15, to p. 454.

He sins not who does what is sinful, following the judgment of a grave doctor. One such doctor may suffice (as multitudes of their divines conclude). And will secure him in following his opinion, though both less safe and less probable. This granted to be the common doctrine of their church. So it is unreasonable to except against our alleging the opinion of particular doctors against them, since their common doctrine allows any to follow the opinion of particular doctors, as to belief or practice. Hereby a way is opened to leave no conscience of sin amongst them.

Sect. 16, to p. 457. Their directions for the scrupulous of like tendency. He sins not who breaks the law in a strict sense, if he observe it in some benign sense. He may make the interpretation himself, and so such as will please him, or choose that of others which is best for his purpose, though he fear it is not probable, and it be false indeed. Or when the observance of the law is very difficult or incommodious. And ordinarily he is like to judge it so. Or when the observance of it is ridiculous, as the observing of the divine rule has been (by their acknowledgment) long since in their church. Or when there is apprehension of danger in complying with it. Or when he observes it but according to the common usage of good catholics, when amongst the most eminent of their catholics it is confessed, there is little or no worship of God, no regard of good life, righteousness, or godliness. Their devices for justifyings of much wickedness (to the excluding all holiness of life), where founded.

Sects. 17, 18, to p. 460.

Chapter X

Good works not necessary by the Roman doctrine. This shewed in fasting, prayer, alms-deeds, to which they reduce all good works. They do not, they need not, fast on their fasting days. Their church requires the observance of none of those things, which they say are necessary to the being of a fast. They may eat a dinner, a full meal at noon, may be excessive therein, so as to transgress the laws of sobriety, and to excite and cherish lust, instead of repressing the flesh, and yet fulfil the precept. They may break their fast in the morning (and yet keep it), with ale, wine, bread, or other things. They may eat a supper, too, and that excessive great, as big as custom will have it, when they tell us, it is their custom to sup with notorious excess. They may sup out of sensuality. And may take their supper in the morning. And drink and eat every hour. The quality of their fasting meat most delicious. They may drink at any time, and wine, too (though that is confessed to be more contrary to a fast than flesh). They may drink it till they be drunk, and yet not break their fast. Nothing religious in their fast. Neither religious ends nor employments. And so it can be no good

work, nor necessary in their account. Those that have tired themselves with gaming or whoring are excused. Yet this piece of mockery passes with them as satisfactory and meritorious.

Sect. 1, to p. 465. Their praying no good work. The people pray not in the mass. They neither express nor conceive any petitions. Nor concur with the priest, but by presence and posture of the body, as an image may do, or by virtually wishing the priest's prayers may succeed, which they may do when they are asleep. Nor do their priests pray better in their public service, unless the bare pronouncing of the words (which is all they count necessary) be praying. How far they acknowledge this.

Sect. 2, to p. 467.

Acts of mercy or charity not necessary with them, but in two cases, which seldom or rather never occur, at least together. One is, when they have superfluities both in respect of nature and state; but, they say, it cannot easily be judged that any secular person (no, nor kings and princes), have such superfluities. The other is when the necessity is extreme; except it be such, if any had superfluities, they would not be obliged to part with any thing. When it is extreme, they allow the poor to steal. So charity is not needful but when stealing is lawful. Or then he may be excused so many ways, that he need never find himself obliged to relieve any gratis. Good works not necessary with them, because to act from a good principle, and for a good end, is needless. Their design to satisfy justice, and merit grace and glory by what they do, makes their pretended good works deadly evils. No necessity of good works upon the account of their being enjoined for penance. So they are not done as good, but suffered as evils. Besides, the priest need not enjoin such. Or the sinner need not submit thereto, or need not perform it. But may be released many ways. Especially by indulgencies. It is counted better to give money for these, than in ways of charity Sects. 3 and 4, to p. 471. The conclusion; where from the premises in brief is inferred, that the practical doctrine of the Romanists tends to ruin Christianity, and the souls of all that follow it. To p. 474.

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