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**Sermons Preached
Upon Several
Occasions. Vol.
VII.**

Robert South



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Sermons Preached Upon Several Occasions. Vol. VII.

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SERMONS

PREACHED UPON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

BY

ROBERT SOUTH, D.D.

PREBENDARY OF WESTMINSTER,
AND CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,

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THE
CHIEF HEADS OF THE SERMONS.

VOL. VII.

SERMONS XLVII. XLVIII. XLIX. L.

ROMANS xii. 18.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. P. 1. 31. 64. 97.

Christianity the last and most correct edition of the law of nature: every precept of it may be resolved into a natural reason; as advancing and improving nature in the higher degrees and grander concerns of it. Christianity takes care for man, not only in his religious capacity, but also in his civil and political, binding the bonds of government faster, by the happy provisions of peace, 1.

I. The shewing what is implied in the duty here enjoined.

II. What are the measures and proportions by which it is to be determined.

III. What are the means by which it is to be determined.

IV. What the motives by which it may be enforced.

I. The duty here enjoined is, *live peaceably*; which may be taken,

1. For the actual enjoyment of peace with all men: and so he only *lives peaceably*, whom no man molests. But this cannot be the sense intended here, (1.) Because so to live peaceably is impossible, 1. From the contentious, unreasonable humour of many men, 2. 2. From the contrary and inconsistent interests of many men, 5. (2.) Because, though it were not impossible, it can be no man's duty, 6.

For a peaceable behaviour towards all men; which is the duty here enjoined: it seems adequately to consist of two things,

1. A forbearance of all hostile actions; and that in a double respect. (1.) In a way of prevention, 8. (2.) Of retaliation, 10.

2. A forbearance of injurious, provoking words, 13.

II. The measures and proportions by which it is to be determined are expressed in these words: *if it be possible*, 15.

Now *possible* may be taken two ways: 1. As it is opposed to *naturally impossible*, and that which cannot be done, 15. 2. As opposed to *morally impossible*, and that which cannot be done lawfully, 15.

But the observance of peace being limited by the measure of *lawful*, all inquiries concerning the breaking of it are reducible to these two:



1. Whether it be at all lawful.
2. Supposing it lawful, when and where it ought to be judged so.

Under the first is discussed that great question, whether war can be lawful for Christians, 17.

War is of two distinct kinds. 1. Defensive, in order to keep off and repel an evil designed to the public. 2. Offensive, for revenging a public injury done to a community. And it is allowable upon the strength of these arguments:

- (1.) As it (the defensive) is properly an act of self-preservation, 17.
- (2.) As it (the offensive) is a proper act of distributive justice, 19.

(3.) Because St. John the Baptist, Christ himself, and the apostles, judged the employment of a soldier lawful, 21.

The ground of the Socinians' arguments in this case, viz. that God, under the Mosaical covenant, promised only temporal possessions to his people, therefore war was lawful to them; but now, under the covenant of grace through Christ, has made no promise of temporal enjoyments, but on the contrary bids us to despise them, and therefore has taken from us all right of war and resistance. This argument examined and confuted, 23. And

The scriptures produced by those who abet the utter unlawfulness of war examined and explained. As,

I. [Matt. v. 39.](#) [Rom. xii. 17, 19.](#) 28.

II. [Isaiah ii. 4.](#) 31.

III. [Matthew xxvi. 52.](#) 33.

IV. [James iv. 1.](#) 34.

Under the second inquiry, supposing it lawful, when and where it ought to be judged so?

First, some general grounds, that may authorize war, are laid down. As when those with whom we are at peace,

1. Declare that they will annoy us, unless we cut off our limbs, &c. and upon our refusal disturb us, 37.
2. Declare war with us, unless we will renounce our religion, 37.
3. Injure us to that degree as a nation, as to blast our honour and reputation, 38.
4. Declare war with us, unless we will quit our civil rights, 38.

Secondly, some particular cases are resolved; as,

First case. Whether it be lawful for subjects in any case to make war upon the magistrate? 39.

Grotius's seven cases, wherein he asserts it to be lawful, 41.

David Parseus his arguments, in a set and long dispute upon [Rom. xiii.](#) examined and answered, 43.



Second case. Whether it be lawful for one private man to make war upon another in those encounters which we commonly call *duels*? 49. And here are set down,

1. The cases in which a duel is lawful. As (1.) When two malefactors condemned to die are appointed by the magistrate to fight, upon promise of life to the conqueror, 49. (2.) When two armies are drawn out, and the decision of the battle is cast upon a single combat, 50. (3.) When one challenges another, and resolves to kill him, unless he accepts the combat, 50.

2. The cases in which duels are utterly unlawful. As

(1.) When they are undertook for vain ostentation, 52. (2.) To purge oneself from some crime objected, 53. (3.) When two agree upon a duel, for the decision of right, mutually claimed by both, agreeing that the right shall fall to the conqueror, 53. (4.) When undertaken for revenge, or some injury done, or affront passed, 54.

But other arguments there are against duels, besides their unlawfulness. As,

1. The judgment of men generally condemning them, 57.

2. The wretched consequences of the thing itself; which are twofold: (1.) Such as attend the conquered person, viz.]. A disastrous death, 58. 2. Death eternal, 59(2.) Such as attend the conqueror. 1. In case he is apprehended, 60. 2. Supposing he escapes by flight, 61. 3. Supposing by the intercession of great friends he has outbraved justice, and triumphed over the law by a full acquitment, 62.

Third case. Whether it be lawful to repel force by force, so as to kill another in one's own defence? 64.

If a man has no other means to escape, it is lawful upon two reasons. 1. The great natural right of self-preservation, 65. 2. From that place where Christ commands his disciples to provide themselves swords, 65. Add to this, the suffrage of the civil law, 66.

Yet so to assert the privilege as to take off the danger, it is stated under its due limitations by three inquiries.

1st, What those things are which may be thus defended; namely,

1. Life, 66. 2. Limbs, 67. 3. Chastity invaded by force, 69. 4. Estate or goods; which case admitting of some more doubt than the others, the opinions for the negative are stated and answered, 69.

Whatsoever a man may thus do for himself, the same also is lawful for him to do in the same danger and extremity of his neighbour, 73.

2dly, What are the conditions required to render such a defence lawful; which are these:

(1.) That the violence be so apparent, great, and pressing, that there can be no other means of escape, 75. (2.) That there be no possibility of recourse to a magistrate for a legal protection, 76. (3.) That a man design only his own defence, without any hatred or bitter purpose of revenge, 78.

3dly, Who are the persons against whom we may thus defend ourselves, 78.



Fourth case. Whether it be allowable for Christians to prosecute, and go to law with one another?

1. The arguments brought against it are examined, 81. Which seem principally to bear upon two scriptures, (1.) [Matt. v. 40.](#) (2.) [1 Cor. vi. 7.](#) The arguments against going to law being drawn from the letter of these scriptures, they are examined and explained according to the sense of them, 81-87. The third argument is the strict command that lies upon Christians to forgive injuries. Here prosecutions are distinguished as they concern restitution or punishment, and going to law with regard to the first of these shewn to be just and allowable, 87.

The arguments for the proof of the assertion are next considered. Which are,

1. That it is to endeavour the execution of justice, in the proper acts of it, between man and man, 90.

2. That if Christian religion prohibits law, observance of this religion draws after it the utter dissolution of all government, 91.

The limitations of law-contentions are three:

1. That a man takes not this course, but upon a very great and urgent cause, 93.

2. That he be willing to agree upon any tolerable and just terms, rather than to proceed to a suit, 94.

3. Supposing great cause, and no satisfaction, that he manage his suit by the rule of charity, and not of revenge, 95.

III. The means by which the duty of living peaceably is to be effected, are,

1. A suppression of all distasteful, aggravating apprehensions of any ill turn or unkind behaviour from men, 97.

2. The forbearing all pragmatistical or malicious informations against those with whom we converse, 104.

3. That men would be willing in some cases to wave the prosecution of their rights, and not too rigorously to insist upon them, 112. As (1.) When the recovery of it seems impossible, 113. (2.) When it is but inconsiderable, but the recovery troublesome and contentious, 115. (3.) When a recompence is offered, 116.

4. To reflect upon the example of Christ, and the strict injunction lying upon us to follow it, 118.

5. Not to adhere too strictly to our own judgments of things doubtful in themselves, 120.

IV. The motives and arguments to enforce this duty are,

1. The excellency of the thing itself, 122.

2. The excellency of the principle from which peaceableness of spirit proceeds, 124.

3. The blessing entailed upon it by promise, [Matt. v.](#) 124. Two instances of this blessing, that certainly attend the peaceable in this world: (1.) An easy, undisturbed, and quiet enjoy-



ment of themselves, 125. (2.) Honour and reputation, which such a temper of mind fixes upon their persons, 126. Their report survives them, and *their memory is blessed*. Their name is glorified upon earth, and their souls in heaven, 128.

SERMON LI.

ROM. vi. 23.

The wages of sin is death. P. 129.

A discourse of sin not superfluous, while the commission of it is continual, and yet the preventing necessary.

The design of the words prosecuted in discussing three things:

I. Shewing what sin is, 130. As it is usually divided into two sorts:

1. Original sin, 130.

2. Actual sin, 132. Which is considered two ways:

(1.) According to the subject matter of it: as, 1. The sin of our words, 133. 2. Of our external actions, 134. 3. Of our desires, 134.

(2.) According to the degree or measure of it: as 1. When a man is engaged in a sinful course by surprise and infirmity, 135. 2. Against the reluctancies of an awakened conscience, 136. 3. In defiance to conscience, 137.

II. Shewing, what is comprised in death, which is here allotted for the sinner's wages. And

1. For death temporal, 138.

2. Death eternal, 140. Which has other properties besides its eternity, to increase the horror of it. As (1.) It bereaves a man of all the pleasures and comforts which he enjoyed in this world, 141. (2.) Of that inexpressible good, the beatific fruition of God, 142. (3.) As it fills both body and soul with the highest torment and anguish that can be received within a finite capacity, 143.

III. Shewing in what respect death is property called *the wages of sin*.

1. Because the payment of wages still presupposes service and labour, 144.

2. Because wages do always imply a merit in the work, requiring such a compensation, 147.

Now sin is a direct stroke, 1st, At God's sovereignty, 149. 2dly, At his very being, 150.

Having thus shewn what sin is, and what death is, the certain inevitable wages of sin; he who likes the wages, let him go about the work, 151.

SERMON LII.

MATT. v. 8.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. P. 152.



It may at first seem wonderful, that there are so few men in the world happy, when happiness is so freely offered: but this wonder vanishes upon considering the preposterous ways of men's acting, who passionately pursue the end, and yet overlook the means: many perishing eternally because they cannot eat, drink, sleep, and play themselves into salvation. But this great sermon of our Saviour teaches us much other things, being fraught with the most sublime and absolute morality ever vented in the world, 152. An eminent instance whereof we have in the text, which is discussed under four heads:

I. Shewing, what it is to be *pure in heart*.

Purity in general cannot be better explained than by its opposition, 1. To mixture, 154. 2. To pollution, 155.

Purity in heart is shewn, (1.) By way of negation; that it does not consist in the external exercise of religion, 156. There being many other reasons for the outward piety of a man's behaviour. As, 1. A virtuous and strict education, 157. 2. The circumstances and occasions of his life, 159. 3. The care and tenderness of his honour, 160.

(2.) Positively, wherein it does consist, viz. in an inward change and renovation of the heart, by the infusion of such a principle as naturally suits and complies with whatsoever is pure, holy, and commanded by God, 162. Which more especially manifests itself, (1.) In the purity and untainted sanctity of the thoughts, 163. (2.) In a sanctified regulation of the desires, 164. (3.) In a fearful and solicitous avoiding of every thing that may tend to sully or defile it, 166.

II. Explaining, what it is *to see God*.

Some disputes of the schools concerning this, 168.

Our enjoyment of God is expressed by seeing him; because the sense of seeing, (1.) Represents the object with greater clearness and evidence than any of the other senses, 170. (2.) Is most universally exercised and employed, 170. (3.) Is the sense of pleasure and delight, 171. (4.) Is the most comprehensive and insatiable, 171.

III. Shewing, how this purity fits and qualifies the soul for the sight of God; namely, by causing a suitableness between God and the soul, 172.

Now during the soul's impurity, God is utterly unsuitable to it in a double respect.

1. Of the great unlikeness, 173. 2. Of the great contrariety there is betwixt them, 173.

IV. The brief use and application is, to correct our too great easiness and credulity in judging of the spiritual estate, either of ourselves or others. If we would prevent the judgment of God, we must imitate it, judging of ourselves as he will judge of us: for he who has outward purity only, without a thorough renovation within him, and a sanctified disposition of heart, may indeed hereafter see God, but then he is like to see him only as his judge, 174.



SERMON LIII.

GAL. v. 24.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. P. 178.

As all sects and institutions have their distinguishing badge, or characteristic name, that of Christianity is comprised in the crucifixion of the flesh, and the lusts thereof, 178.

This explained, by shewing,

I. What is meant by *being Christ's*: it consists in accepting of, and having an interest in Christ, as he is offered and proposed in the gospel, under three offices; his prophetic, his kingly, and his sacerdotal, 179.

II. What is meant by *the flesh*, and *the affections and lusts*: by the former we are to understand the whole entire body of sin and corruption, the inbred proneness in our nature to all evil; by the latter, the drawing forth of that propensity or principle into the several commissions of sin, through the course of our lives, 180.

The text further prosecuted in shewing two things:

I. Why this vitiosity and corrupt habit of nature comes to have this denomination of flesh: and that for three reasons:

1. Because of its situation and place, which is principally in the flesh; concupiscence, which is the radix of all sin, following the crasis and temperature of the body, 181.

2. Because of its close, inseparable nearness to the soul; being, as it were, ingrafted into it, and thereby made connatural to it, 186.

3. Because of its dearness to us; there being nothing we prosecute with a more affectionate tenderness, than our bodies; and sin being our darling, the queen-regent of our affections, 188.

Hence is inferred,

1. The deplorable estate of fallen man, 191.

2. The great difficulty the duty of mortification, 191.

3. The mean and sordid employment of every sinner, 192.

II. What is imported by the crucifixion of the flesh: under which is shewn;

1. What is the reason of the use of it in this place: it is used by way of allusion to Christ, of whose behaviour and sufferings every Christian is to be a living copy and representation, 193.

2. The full force and significancy of the expression: it imports four things: (1.) The death of sin, 196. (2.) Its violent death, 198. (3.) Its painful, bitter, and vexatious death, 199. (4.) Its shameful and cursed death, 201.

3. Some means prescribed for the enabling us to the performance of this duty: viz.

(1.) A constant and pertinacious denying our affections and lusts in all their cravings for satisfaction, 203.



(2.) The encountering them by actions of the opposite virtues, 204.

IV. What may be drawn, by way of consequence and deduction, from what has been delivered: and,

1. We collect the high concernment and absolute necessity of every man's crucifying his carnal, worldly affections, because, without it, he cannot be a Christian, 205.

2. We gather a standing and infallible criterion to distinguish those that are not Christ's from those that are, 206.

An objection, that "it is an hard and discouraging assertion, that none should be reputed Christ's, unless he has fully crucified and destroyed his sin," answered by explaining the doctrine to mean, an *active resolution* against sin, 206.

SERMON LIV.

PREACHED JANUARY 30th.

HABAKKUK ii. 12.

Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood. P. 209

A short account being given of this whole prophecy, which foretells the great event of the Babylonish captivity, 209. the words of the text are prosecuted in five particulars.

I. The ground and cause of this woe or curse; which was the justly abhorred sin of blood-guiltiness, 212.

II. The condition of the person against whom this curse is denounced: he was such an one as had actually established a government and built a city with blood, 214.

III. The latitude and extent of "this woe or curse; which includes the miseries of both worlds, present and future: and, to go no further than the present, is made up of the following ingredients:

1. A general hatred and detestation, fastened upon such men's persons, 217.

2. The torment of continual jealousy and suspicion, 219.

3. The shortness and certain dissolution of the government, that he endeavours so to establish, 220.

4. The sad and dismal end that usually attends such persons, 222.

IV. The reasons, why a curse or woe is so peculiarly denounced against this sin. Among many, these are produced:

1. Because the sin of bloodshed makes the most direct breach upon human society, of which the providence of God owns the peculiar care and protection, 224.

2. For the malignity of those sins, that almost always go in conjunction with it; particularly the sins of fraud, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy, 226.



V. An application of all to this present occasion, 227. by shewing how close and home the subject-matter of the text comes to the business of this annual solemnity.

1. In the charge of unjust effusion of blood, considered, 1. As public, and acted by and upon a community, as in war, 228. or, 2. Personal, in the assassination of any particular man, 229.

2. In the end or design for which it was shed; namely, the erecting and setting up of a government, 230.

3. In the woe or curse denounced, which is shewn to have befallen these bloody builders. 1. In the shortness of the government so set up, 231. 2. In the general hatred that followed their persons,

SERMON LV.

1 JOHN iii. 8.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. P. 234.

This divine apostle endeavours to give the world a right information about this so great and concerning affair in this chapter, and particularly in these words; wherein we have,

I. An account of Christ's coming into the world, in this expression; *the Son of God was manifested*. Which term, though it principally relates to the actual coming of Christ into the world, yet is of a larger comprehension, and leads to an enumeration and consideration of passages before and after his nativity, 234.

II. The end and design of his coming, which was *to destroy the works of the Devil*. In the prosecution of which is shewn,

1. What were those works of the Devil that the Son of God destroyed, 238. and these works are reduced to three: 1. Delusion, his first art of ruining mankind; which is displayed by a survey of the world lying under gentilism, in their principles of speculation and practice, 239. 2dly, Sin. As the Devil deceived men only to make them sinful, some account is given of his success herein, 243. 3dly, Death: the inseparable concomitant of the former, 247.

2dly, The ways and means by which he destroys them. Now as the works of the Devil were three, so Christ encounters them by those three distinct offices belonging to him as mediator. 1st, As a prophet, he destroys and removes that delusion, that had possessed the world, by those divine and saving discoveries of truth, exhibited in the doctrine and religion promulged by him, 248. 2dly, As a priest, he destroyed sin, by that satisfaction that he paid down for it, and by that supply of grace that he purchased, for the conquering and rooting it out of the hearts of believers, 250. 3dly, As a king he destroys death by his power: for it is he that *has the keys of life and death., opening where none shuts, and shutting where none opens*, 251.



SERMON LVI.

MATTHEW ii. 3.

And when Herod the king-heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. P. 253.

It having been the method of divine Providence, to point out extraordinary events and passages with some peculiar characters of remark; such as may alarm the minds and engage the eyes of the world, in a more exact observance of, and attention to, the hand of God in such great changes; no event was ever ushered in with such notable prodigies and circumstances as the nativity of our blessed Saviour, 253. Some of them the apostle recounts in this chapter; which may be reduced to these two heads:

I. The solemn address and homage made to him by the wise men of the east. Under which passage these particulars are considered:

1. Who and what these wise men were, 255.
2. The place from whence they came, 258.
3. About what time they came to Jerusalem, 260.
4. What that star was that appeared to them, 262.
5. How they could collect our Saviour's birth by that star, 263.

II. Herod's behaviour thereupon, 266. Herod is discoursed of,

1. In respect of his condition and temper, in reference to his government of Judaea; which are marked out by three things recorded of him, both in sacred and profane story. 1st, His usurpation, 266. 2d, His cruelty, 267. 3d, His magnificence, 268.

2. In respect of his behaviour and deportment, upon this particular occasion, which shews itself, 1. In that trouble and anxiety of mind that he conceived upon this news, 270.

2. In that wretched course he took to secure himself against his supposed competitor, 271.

3. In respect of the influence this his behaviour had upon those under his government.

The question, why Christ, being born the right and lawful king of the Jews, yet gave way to this bloody usurper, and did not assume the government to himself, answered:

1. Because his assuming it would have crossed the very design of that religion that he was then about to establish; which was, to unite both Jew and Gentile into one church or body, 273.

2. Christ voluntarily waved the Jewish crown, that he might hereby declare to the world the nature of his proper kingdom; which was, to be wholly without the grandeur of human sovereignty, and the splendour of earthly courts, 274.



SERMON LVII.

MATTHEW x. 37.

He that loves father or mother better than me is not worthy of me. P. 275.

Our Saviour here presents himself and the world together, as competitors for our best affections, challenging a transcendent affection on our parts, because of a transcendent worthiness on his, 275.

By *father* and *mother* are to be understood whatsoever enjoyments are dear unto us, 276. and from the next expression, *he is not worthy of me*, the doctrine of merit must not be asserted: because there is a twofold worthiness, 1. According to the real inherent value of the thing; and so no man by his choicest endeavours can be said to be worthy of Christ, 277. 2. When a thing is worthy, not for any value in itself, but because God freely accepts it as such, 277.

This being premised, the sense of the words is prosecuted in three particulars.

I. In shewing what is included and comprehended in that love to Christ here mentioned.

It may include five things. 1. An esteem and valuation of Christ above all worldly enjoyments whatsoever, 278. 2. A choosing him before all other enjoyments, 279. 3. Service and obedience to him, 281. 4. Acting for him in opposition to all other things, 284. 5. It imports a full acquiescence in him alone, even in the absence and want of all other felicities, 286.

II. In shewing the reasons and motives that may induce us to this love.

1. He is the best able to reward our love, 291.

2. He has shewn the greatest love to us, 294. and obliged us with two of the highest instances of it: 1. He died for us, 296. 2. He died for us while we were enemies, and in the phrase of scripture, enmity itself against him, 298.

III. In shewing the signs and characters whereby we may discern this love.

1. A frequent and indeed a continual thinking of him, 300.

2. A willingness to leave the world, whensoever God shall think fit by death to summon us to a nearer converse with Christ, 301.

3. A zeal for his honour, and an impatience to hear or see any indignity offered him, 302.

SERMONS LVIII. LIX. LX.

EPHESIANS iii. 12.

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. P. 305. 321. 337.

Prayer is to be exercised with the greatest caution and exactness, being the most solemn intercourse earth can have with heaven. The distance between God and us, so great by



nature, and yet greater by sin, makes it fearful to address him: but Christ has smoothed a way; and we are commanded to come with a good heart, not only in respect of innocence, but also of confidence, 305.

The words prosecuted in the discussion of four things.

I. That there is a certain boldness and confidence, very well becoming of our humblest addresses to God, 306.

This is evident; for it is the very language of prayer to treat God with the appellation of Father. The nature of this confidence is not so easily set forth by positive description, as by the opposition that it bears to its extremes; which are of two sorts.

1. In defect. This confidence is herein opposed, 1. To desperation and horror of conscience, 307. 2. To doubtings and groundless scrupulosities, 308. Some of these stated and answered, 309.

2. In excess. Herein confidence is opposed, 1. To rashness and precipitation, 312. 2. To impudence or irreverence, which may shew itself many ways in prayer, but more especially, 1. By using of saucy, familiar expressions to God, 315. or, 2. In venting crude, sudden, extemporary conceptions before God, 317.

II. Is shewn, that the foundation of this confidence is laid in the mediation of Christ, 319. which is yet more evidently set forth,

III. In shewing the reason, why Christ's mediation ought to minister such confidence to us: which is, the incomparable fitness of Christ for the performance of that work, 321. and this appears by considering him,

1. In respect of God, with whom he is to mediate, 322. God in this business sustains a double capacity, (1.) Of a Father; and there cannot be a more promising ground of success in all Christ's pleas for us, 322. (2.) Of a Judge: now Christ appears for us, not only as an advocate, but as a surety, paying down to God on our behalf the very utmost that his justice can exact, 323. and besides God himself appointed him to this work, 324.

2. In reference to men, for whom he mediates. He bears a fourfold relation to them. 1. Of a friend, 326. 2. Of a brother, 327. 3. Of a surety, 328. 4. Of a lord or master, 329.

3. In respect of himself, who performs the office. 1. He is perfectly acquainted with all our wants and necessities, 331. 2. He is heartily sensible of and concerned about them, 333. 3. He is best able to express and set them before the Father, 334.

IV. Whether there is any other ground that may rationally embolden us, in these our addresses to him, 337.

If there is, it must be either, 1. Something within; as the merit of our good actions, 337. But this cannot be, 1. Because none can merit but by doing something absolutely by his own power, for the advantage of him from whom he merits, 338. 2. Because to merit is to do something over and above what is due, 338. It must then be,



2. Something without us: and this must be the help and intercession either, 1. Of angels, or 2. Of saints, 339.

Angels cannot mediate for us, and present our prayers; 1. Because it is impossible for them to know and perfectly discern the thoughts, 339. 2. Because no angel can know at once all the prayers that are even uttered in words throughout the world, 339-

The arguments some bring for the knowledge of angels, partly upon scripture, 340. and partly upon reason, 344. examined and answered, 341. 344.

The foregoing arguments against angels proceed more forcibly against the intercession of saints: to which there may be added over and above, 1. That God sometimes takes his saints out of the world, that they may not know and see what happens in the world, 346. 2. We have an express declaration of their ignorance of the state of things below in [Isaiah lxiii. 16.](#) 347.

The Romish arguments from scripture, [Luke xxi.](#) and from reason, stated and answered, 348.

The invocation of saints supposed to arise, 1. From the solemn meetings, used by the primitive Christians, at the saints' sepulchres, and there celebrating the memory of their martyrdom, 351. 2. From those seeds of the Platonic philosophy, that so much leavened many of the primitive Christians, 352. 3. From the people's being bred in idolatry, 352. But the primitive fathers held no such thing; and the council of Trent, that pretended to determine the case, put the world off with an ambiguity, 353.

Conclusion, that Christ is the only true way; the way that has light to direct, and life to reward them that walk in it; and consequently there is *no coming to the Father but by him*, 355.

SERMON LXI.

GENESIS vi. 3.

And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man. P. 357.

God, in the first chapter, looks over all created beings, and pronounces them to be good: in this chapter, he surveys the sons of men before the flood, and delivers his judgment, that they were exceeding wicked, nay totally corrupt and depraved. But amidst those aboundings of wickedness, God left not himself without a witness in their hearts: they had many checks and calls from the Holy Spirit, which, by their resolution to persist in sin, they did at length totally extinguish. God withdraws his Spirit, and the strivings of it: and presently the flood breaks in upon them, to their utter perdition, 357.

The words afford several observations; as first, from the method God took in this judgment, first withdrawing his Spirit, and then introducing the flood, we may observe,

1. D. That God's taking away his Spirit from any soul, is the certain forerunner of the ruin of that soul, 358.

2. From that expression of the *Spirits striving with man*, we may observe,

2. D. That there is in the heart of man a natural enmity and opposition to the motions of God's holy Spirit, 359.

3. From the same expression we may observe,

3. D. That the Spirit in its dealings with the heart is very earnest and vehement, 359-

4. From the definitive sentence God here passes we may observe,

4. D. That there is a set time, after which the convincing operations of God's Spirit upon the heart of man, in order to his conversion, being resisted, will cease, and for ever leave him, 359.

This last doctrine, seeming to take in the chief scope of the Spirit in these words, is here prosecuted in four things.

I. In endeavouring to prove and demonstrate the truth of this assertion from scripture, 360.

That it is the way of God's dealings still to withdraw his Spirit after some notorious resistance, instanced from several scriptures: 1. From [Psalm xcv. 10, 11.](#) 360. 2. From [Heb. iv. 7.](#) 361. 3. From [Luke xix. 42.](#) 361. And from [Gen. xv. 16.](#) 362.

Here note, that by a set time, is not to be understood a general set time, which is the same in every man; but a set and stinted time in respect of every particular man's life, in which there is some limited period wherein the workings of the Spirit will for ever stop, 364.

II. In shewing how many ways the Spirit may be resisted; that is, in every way which the Spirit takes to command and persuade the soul to the performance of duty and the avoidance of sin, 364. As,

1. Externally, by the letter of the word, either written or preached, it may be resisted, 365. 1. By a negligent hearing and a careless attendance upon it, 367. 2. By acting in a clear and open contrariety to it, 368. And this last kind of resisting is great and open rebellion; 1. Because action is the very perfection and consummation of sin, 370. 2. Because sin in the actions argues an overflowing and a redundancy of sin in the heart, 370.

2. By its immediate internal workings upon the soul. And here the Spirit may be resisted,

1, In its illumination of the understanding; that is, its infusing a certain light into the mind, in some measure enabling it to discern and judge of the things of God, 371. Now this light is threefold: 1. That universal light, usually termed the light of nature, 372. 2. A notional light of scripture; or a bare knowledge of and assent to scripture truths, 373. 3. A special convincing light, which is an higher degree, yet may be resisted and totally extinguished, 374.

2. In its conviction of the will, 376. Now the convincing works of the Spirit upon the will, in all which it may be opposed, are, 1. A begetting in it some good desires, wishes, and



inclinations, 377. 2. An enabling it to perform some imperfect obedience, 378. 3. An enabling it to forsake some sins, 380.

III. In shewing the reasons why upon such resistance the Spirit finally withdraws.

1. The first reason is drawn from God's decree, 382.

2. Because it is most agreeable to the great intent and design of the gospel, I. In converting and saving the elect, 385. 2. In rendering reprobates inexcusable, 386.

3. Because it highly tends to the vindication of God's honour: 1. As it is a punishment to the sinner, 390. 2. As a vindication of his attributes: 1. Of wisdom, 392. 2. Of mercy, in shewing it is no ways inferior, much less contrary to his holiness, 393. and not repugnant to his justice, 394.

4. Because it naturally raises in the hearts of men an esteem and valuation of the Spirit's workings: 1. An esteem of fear, 396. 2. An esteem of love, 396.

IV. In an application. We are exhorted *not to quench the Spirit*, but to cherish all his suggestions and instructions, 397. Because our resisting the Spirit will,

1st, Certainly bereave us of his comforts, 398. which are, 1. Giving a man to understand his interest in Christ, and consequently in the love of God, 399. 2. Discovering to him that grace that is within him, 400.

2d, It will bring a man under hardness of heart, and a reprobate sense, by way, 1. Of natural causation, 402. 2. Of a judicial curse from God, 402.

3d, It puts a man in the very next disposition to the great and unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; the foregoing acts being like so many degrees and steps leading to this dreadful sin, which is only a greater kind of resistance of the Spirit, 402.

SERMON LXII.

MATTHEW v. 20.

For I say unto you. That unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees; ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. P. 405.

Our blessed Saviour here shews, first, that eternal salvation cannot be attained by the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees; secondly, that it may be obtained by such a one as does exceed it, 405.

For understanding the words it is explained,

I. That these scribes and pharisees amongst the Jews were such as owned themselves the strictest livers and best teachers in the world, 406.

II. That righteousness here has a twofold acception. 1. Righteousness of doctrine, 406. 2. Righteousness in point of practice, 407.



III. That *the kingdom of heaven* has three several significations in scripture: 1. It is taken for the Christian economy, opposed to the Jewish and Mosaic, 407. 2. For the kingdom of grace, 408. 3. For the kingdom of glory, 408.

These things premised, the entire sense of the words lies in three propositions.

1. That a righteousness is absolutely necessary to the attainment of salvation, 409.

2. That every degree of righteousness is not sufficient to entitle the soul to eternal happiness, 409.

3. That the righteousness that saves must far surpass the greatest righteousness of the most refined hypocrite in the world, 409.

This proposition, virtually containing both the former, is the subject of the discourse, and prosecuted in three things.

I. Shewing the defects of the hypocrites, (here expressed by *the scribes and pharisees*,) 410.

As, 1. That it consisted chiefly in the external actions of duty, 410. 2. That it was but partial and imperfect, not extending itself equally to all God's commands, 412. 3. That it is legal; that is, such a one as expects to win heaven upon the strength of itself, and its own worth, 416.

II. Shewing the perfections and qualities by which the righteousness that saves transcends that of the hypocrites.

Among many, four are insisted upon: 1. That it is entirely the same, whether the eye of man see it or not, 420. 2. That it is an active watching against and opposing every even the least sin, 423. 3. That it is such an one as always aspires and presses forward to still an higher and an higher perfection, 426. 4. The fourth and certainly distinguishing property of it is humility, 428.

III. Shewing the necessity of such a righteousness in order to a man's salvation. Which arises,

1. From the holiness of God, 430.

2. From the work and employment of a glorified person in heaven: and no person, whom the grace of God has not thoroughly renewed and sanctified, can be fit for such a task; for it is righteousness alone that must both bring men to heaven, and make heaven itself a place of happiness to those that are brought thither, 432.



SERMON XLVII.

ROMANS xii. 18.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

CHRISTIANITY, if we well weigh and consider it, in the several parts and members of it, throughout the whole system, may be justly called the last and the most correct edition of the law of nature; there being nothing excellent amongst the heathens, as deducible from the external light of nature, but is adopted into the body of Christian precepts. Neither is there any precept in Christianity so severe and mortifying, and at the first face and appearance of things grating upon our natural conveniencies, but will be resolved into a natural reason; as advancing and improving nature in the higher degrees and grander concerns of it.

And of so universal a spread is the benign influence of this religion, that there is no capacity of man but it takes care for; not only his religious, but his civil and political. It found the world under government, and has bound those bonds of government faster upon it, by new and superadded obligations. And by the best methods of preservation, it secures both the magistrate's prerogative and the subject's enjoyment, by the happy provisions of peace; the encomiums of which great blessing I shall not now pursue, nor forestall here what will more aptly be inserted hereafter.

The text, we see, is a vehement, concerning, passionate exhortation to this blessed duty, and great instrument of society, peace. *If it be possible, live peaceably.* It is suspended upon the strictest conditions, stretching the compass of its necessity commensurate to the utmost latitude of possibility.

The words are easy, but their matter full; and so require a full and a large, that is, a suitable prosecution; which I shall endeavour to give them in the discussion of these four particulars.

- I. The shewing what is implied in the duty here enjoined.
- II. What are the measures and proportions by which it is to be determined.
- III. What are the means by which it is to be effected.
- IV. What the motives by which it may be enforced.

I. And for the first of these, the duty here enjoined is, *live peaceably*; which expression is ambiguous, and admits of a double signification.

1. It may be taken for the actual enjoyment of peace with all men. In which sense he only *lives peaceably*, whom no man molests.

2. It may be taken for a peaceable behaviour towards all men. In which sense he lives peaceably, by whom no man is molested.

The first of these senses cannot be here intended by the apostle, and that for these two undeniable reasons.



(1.) Because so to live peaceably is impossible; and what cannot possibly be done, cannot reasonably be commanded.

The impossibility of it appears upon these two accounts.

1st, The contentious, unreasonable humour of many men. Upon this score, David complains of his enemies, that *when he spoke of peace, they were for war*. Many of the enmities of the world commence not upon the merit of the person that is hated, but upon the humour of him that hates: and some are enemies to a man for no other cause in the earth, but because they will be his enemies. The grounds of very great disgusts are not only causeless, but oftentimes very senseless. Some will be a man's enemies for his looks, his tone, his mien, and his gesture; and upon all occasions prosecute him heartily with much concernment and acrimony. And therefore that argument is insignificant, which I have often heard used by some men to others; who, when they complain of injurious dealings, think they have irrefragably answered them in this; Why should such an one be your enemy? what hurt have you done him? or what good can he do himself by injuriously treating of you? All which supposes that some reason may and must be given for that which, for the most part, is absolutely unreasonable. A little experience in the world would quickly and truly reply to these demands; that such or such an one is an enemy, not upon provocation, but that his genius and his way inclines him to insult, and to be contentious. And nature is sometimes so favourable to the world, as to set its mark upon such a person, and to draw the lines of his ill disposition upon his face; in which only you are to look for the causes of his enmities, and not in the actions of him whom he prosecutes.

There are some persons, that, like so many salamanders, cannot live but in the fire; cannot enjoy themselves but in the heats and sharpness of contention: the very breath they draw does not so much enliven, as kindle and inflame them; they have so much bitterness in their nature, that they must be now and then discharging it upon somebody; they must have vent, and sometimes breathe themselves in an invective or a quarrel, or perhaps their health requires it: should they be quiet a week, they would need a purge, and be forced to take physic.

And now, if any one should be molested and have his peace disturbed by such a person, would he be solicitous to find out the cause, and satisfy himself about the reason of it? When you see a mad dog step aside out of his walk only to bite somebody, and then return to it again, you had best ask him the reason why he did so. Why, the reason is, that he is mad, and his worm will not let him be quiet, without doing mischief, when he has opportunity.

Now such tempers there are in the world, and always were, and always will be; and so long as there be such, how can there be a constant, undisturbed quietness in societies? We may as well expect, that nobody should die when the air is generally infected, or that poison should be still in the stomach, and yet work no effect upon the body. God must first weed the world of all contentious spirits and ill dispositions, before an universal peace can grow



in it. And this may be one reason to prove, that a *living peaceably with all men*, as it signifies the actual enjoying of such a peace, is utterly impossible.

2dly, The second reason is from the contrary and inconsistent interests of many men. Most look upon it as their interest to be great, rich, and powerful: but it is impossible for all that desire it to be so; forasmuch as some's being so, is the very cause that others cannot. As the rising up of one scale of the balance does of necessity both infer and effect the depression of the other.

This premised, we easily know further, that there is nothing which men prosecute with so much vigour, vehemence, and activity, as their interest; and the prosecution of contrary interests must needs be carried on by contrary ways and motions; which will be sure to thwart and interfere one with another: and this is the unavoidable cause of enmity and opposition between persons.

Sometimes we see two men pecking at one another very eagerly, with all the arts of undermining, supplanting, and ruining one another. What! is it because the one had done the other an injury? or because he is of a quarrelsome temper? Perhaps neither; but because he stands in his way; he cannot rise but by his disgrace and downfall; he must be removed, or the other person's designs cannot go forward. Now as long as both these interests bear up together, and one has not totally run down and devoured the other, so long the persons will be engaged in a constant enmity and contest.

The ground that the poet assigned as one great cause of the civil wars between Caesar and Pompey, *multis utile bellum*, is that into which most men's particular quarrels and enmities are resolved. In peace, every man enjoys his own; and therefore he that has nothing of his own, will be ready enough to blow the trumpet for war, by which he may possibly gain an estate, being secure already that he can lose none.

What is the reason that it is observed in tradesmen and artificers, that they are always almost detracting from one another; but that it is the apparent interest of one, by begetting in men a vile esteem of the other, to divert his custom to himself; or at least to secure that in his own hands, which he has already? If the other person is the only workman, why then he shall monopolize all the custom; if he be as good as this, then this shall have the less: and this is that which sets them upon perpetual bickerings and mutual vilifications.

The sum of all is, that most men's interests lie cross, their advantages clash, or at least are thought to do so: and contrary qualities will prey upon one another. Where men's interests fight, they themselves are not like to be long at peace. But now God, in his wise providence, is pleased to cast the affairs of mankind into such a posture, that there will be always such inequalities and contrarieties in the conditions and estates of men. And this is the other reason, why to enjoy *peace with all men* is impossible.

(2.) But in the next place, admitting that it were not impossible, yet thus *to live peaceably with all men* cannot be the sense of the apostle's exhortation, forasmuch as it can be no



man's duty. That which is the matter of duty ought to be a thing not only possible in itself, but also in the power of him to whom it is enjoined. But it is not in my power to enjoy peace with all men, since this depends upon their behaviour towards me, and not immediately upon mine towards them. And therefore it can be no more my duty, than it is my duty that another man should not be a thief or a murderer. If he will be so, I cannot prevent him; he only is the master of his own will and actions: and where the power of acting is seated, there only lies the obligation of duty; otherwise, if I should be obliged to that which depends not at all upon my power, a man might as well tell me that I am obliged to see that it does not thunder, or that the Turk does not invade Germany. Wherefore it is clear that the words of the text are to be understood only in the second sense propounded; and that *living peaceably* imports no more than a peaceable behaviour towards all men: which being the duty here enjoined, we are to see what is included in it.

And for this it seems adequately to consist of these two things.

1. A forbearance of hostile actions.
2. A forbearance of injurious, provoking words.

This seems to take in the whole scope of it, as comprehending all that makes up the behaviour of one man towards another, which are his actions and his words; what he does and what he says. And if those unruly instruments of action, the tongue and the hands, be regulated and kept quiet, there must needs ensue an entire peace.

1. And first, the *living peaceably* implies a total forbearance of all hostile actions, and that in a double respect:

- (1.) In a way of prevention.
- (2.) In a way of retaliation.

(1.) For the first, I call that prevention, when a man unprovoked makes an injurious invasion upon the rights of another, whether as to his person or estate. God, for the preservation of society, has set a defence upon both these, and made propriety sacred, by the mounds and fortifications of a law. For what living were there, did not the divine authority secure a man both in his being and in the means of his being; but should leave it free for the stronger to devour and crush the weaker, without being responsible to the almighty Governor of all things for the injury done to his fellow-creature, and the contempt passed upon the divine law?

And certainly one would think it not only a reasonable, but a very easy thing for a man wholly unprovoked to keep his hand from his brother's throat, to let him live and enjoy his limbs, and to have the benefits of nature, and the common rights of creation. It is a sad thing for a man not to be safe in his own house, but much more in his own body, the dearer earthly tabernacle of the two. How barbarous a thing is it to see a Romulus imbruing his hands in the blood of his brother! and he that kills his neighbour, kills his brother, as to the common bonds and cognation of humanity. Now all murders, poisons, stabs, and unjust blows, fall



under this just violation of the peace in reference to men's persons; which God will avenge and vindicate, as being parts of his image: for there is none who requires to be honoured in himself, who will endure to be affronted so much as in his picture.

It is looked upon by some as a piece of gentility and height of spirit, to stab and wound, especially if they are assured that the injured person will not resist; and so secure them the reputation of generosity, without the danger of betraying their cowardice.

The other instance of violence, is the forcible wringing from men the supports of life, their estates, their revenues, or whatsoever is reducible to this notion, as contributing either to their subsistence or convenience. And this is not to be understood barely of oppression managed by open and downright defiance; but by any other sinister way whatsoever, as the overbearing another's right by the interest and interposal of great persons, by vexatious suits and violence cloaked with the formalities of a court and the name of law. And whosoever interverts a profit belonging to another by any of these courses, is a thief and a robber; perhaps a more safe and creditable one indeed, but still a thief; and that as really, as if he did it by plunder and sequestration; which is only a more odious name, but not a more unjust thing.

And he is no less a disturber of the peace, and a breaker of this law, who oppresses the widow, and grinds the face of the fatherless and the poor, than he who forages a country with an army. For that is only violence with a greater noise, and more solemnities of terror. But God, who weighs an evil action by the malignity of its principle and the injustness of its design, and not by those exterior circumstances which only clothe its appearance, but not at all constitute its nature, has as much vengeance in store for an oppressing justice (if that be not a contradiction in the terms) as he has for the pillaging soldier or the insolent decimator: it being as truly oppression in the accounts of heaven, when proclaimed by the groans and cries of the orphan, as when ushered in with the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war.

For wherein should consist the difference? Is it because one stands upon his ground, and repels the invasion? and the other opens his bosom to the blow, and resigns himself to his oppressor with patience and silence? Is it peace, because the man is gagged and cannot, or overawed and dares not cry out of oppression? Or is he therefore not wronged, because his adversary, by his place or greatness, has set himself above the reach of justice, and is grown too big for the law?

It was an acute and a proper saying of one concerning a prevailing faction of men, *Solitudinem cum fecerint, pacem vocant*; when they have devoured, wasted, and trampled down all before them, so that there is none indeed so much as left to resist, that they call *peace*. But certainly neither are the peacemakers blessed, nor is the peace a blessing, that is procured by such dismal methods of total ruin and desolation. And thus much for the forbearance of hostility in point of prevention or provocation.



(2.) In the next place, there is required also a forbearance of all hostile actions, as to retaliation. I shall not run forth into the common place about revenge, it being a subject large and important enough to be treated of in a discourse by itself. But this I shall say, that according to the weights and measures by which Christianity judges of things and actions, he that revenges an injury will be found as truly a malefactor in the court of heaven, as he that does one. And he that requires *an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*, is a Jew, and not a Christian; a person of a mean spirit, and a gross notion, unacquainted with the sublimity and spirituality of so refined and excellent a religion.

A peaceable deportment is one of the great duties enjoined in it: and the rule and measure of that is to be charity, of which divine quality the apostle tells us in [1 Cor. xiii. 7](#), that it *suffers all things, hopes all things, endures all things*. The very genius and nature of Christianity consists in this, that it is a passive religion: a religion that composes the mind to quietness, upon the hardest and the most irksome terms and conditions.

And the truth is, if it drives on a design of peace, we shall find that the consequences of revenge make as great a breach upon that, as a first defiance and provocation. For were not this answered with resistance and retribution, it would perhaps exhale and vanish; and the peace would at least be preserved on one side. For be the injurious person never so quarrelsome, yet the quarrel must fall, if the injured person will not fight. Fire sometimes goes out, as much for want of being stirred up, as for want of fuel.

And therefore he that can remit nothing, nor recede, nor sacrifice the prosecution of a small dispensable right to the preservation of peace, understands not the full dimensions and latitude of this great duty; nor remembers that he himself is ruined for ever, should God deal with him upon the same terms.

The great God must relax his law, and recede from some of his right; and every day be willing to put up, and connive at many wrongs, or I am sure it is impossible for him to be at peace with us. He shines upon his enemies, and drops the dew of heaven upon the base and the unthankful. And in this very instance of perfection, [Matth. v. 48](#), he recommends himself to our imitation.

If revenge were no sin, forgiveness of injuries could be no duty. But Christ has made it a grand and a peculiar one: indeed so great, as to suspend the whole business of our justification upon it, in [Matth. xviii. 35](#). And in the foregoing verses of that chapter, treating of the unmerciful servant, who exacted a debt from his poor fellow-servant, we find *that his lord was wroth with him, and delivered him to the tormentors*. Neither could it have profited him to have said, that he exacted but what was lawfully his own; what was due to him upon the best and the clearest terms of propriety. No; this excused not the rigour of a merciless proceeding from him, who had but newly tasted of mercy, and being pardoned a thousand talents, remorselessly and unworthily took his fellow by the throat for an hundred pence.



It is or may be the case of every one of us. We pray every day for forgiveness; nay, we are so hardy as to pray that *God would forgive us just so as we forgive others*: and yet oftentimes we can be sharp, furious, and revengeful; prosecute every supposed injury heartily and bitterly; and think we do well and generously not to yield nor relent: and what is the strangest thing in the world, notwithstanding an express and loud declaration of God to the contrary, all this time we look to be saved by mercy; and, like Saul, to be caught into heaven, while we are breathing nothing but persecution, blood, and revenge.

But as to the great duty of peaceableness which we have been discoursing of, we must know, that he who affronts and injures his brother breaks the peace; but withal that he who owns and repays the ill turn, perpetuates the breach. By the former, a sin is only born into the world; but by the latter, it is brought up, nourished, and maintained.

And perhaps the greatest unquietness of human affairs is not so much chargeable upon the injurious, as the revengeful. The first undoubtedly has the greater guilt; but the other causes the greater disturbance. As a storm could not be so hurtful, were it not for the opposition of trees and houses; it ruins no where, but where it is withstood and repelled. It has indeed the same force when it passes over the rush or the yielding osier; but it does not roar nor become dreadful, till it grapples with the oak, and rattles upon the tops of the cedars. And thus I have shewn the first thing included in a peaceable behaviour, viz. a forbearance of hostile actions, and that both as to provocation and retaliation. But whether all kind of retaliation be absolutely unlawful, shall be inquired into afterwards.

2. The other thing that goes to constitute a peaceable behaviour, is a forbearance of injurious, provoking words. I know none that has or deserves a reputation, but tenders the defence of it, as much as of his person or estate. And perhaps it has as great an influence upon his contents and emoluments as both of them. It is that which makes him considerable in society. He is owned by his friends, and cannot be trampled upon by his enemies. Even those that will not love him, will yet in some manner respect him. For till the enclosures of a man's good name are broke down, there cannot be a total waste made upon his fortunes.

Upon this it is, that abusive language, by which properly a man's repute is invaded, is by all men deservedly looked upon as an open defiance, and proclaiming of war with such a person: and consequently, that the reviler is as great a disturber as an armed enemy; who usually invades a man in that which is much less dear unto him. Rabshakeh broke the peace with Hezekiah, as much by his railing, as by the army that besieged him. And he that flings dirt at a man, affronts him as much as he that flings a stone at him. A wound upon the skin is sometimes sooner got off than a spot upon the clothes.

I would fain know, what man almost there is, that does not resent an ugly, reflexive word with more acrimony and impatience, than he would the stab of a poniard. He remembers it more tenaciously, prosecutes it more thoroughly, and forgets it much more difficultly. And the reason is, because a blow or a wound directs an evil only to a man's person, but an

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ill word designs him a wider calamity; it endeavours the propagation and spreading of his unhappiness, and would render him miserable as far as he is known.

Besides, it hurts him so as to put the reparation of that hurt absolutely out of his power: for it lodges his infamy in other men's thoughts and opinions, which he cannot command or come at, so as to rectify and disabuse them. But admit that the defamed person by a blameless and a virtuous deportment wipes off and confutes the calumny, and clears himself in the esteem of men; yet it is of those only with whom the scene of his converse lies: but in the mean time the slander spreads and flies abroad; and many hundreds come to hear the ill words by which the man is abused, who never come to see his own behaviour by which he is righted.

I conclude therefore, that this great duty of living peaceably is not consummate, without a constant and a careful suppression of all offensive and provoking speeches. And he who does not acquit himself in this instance of a Christian behaviour, will find hereafter, that men will meet with as certain a condemnation for what they have said, as for what they have done.

And thus much for the first general thing proposed for the handling of the words; namely, to shew what was implied in the duty enjoined in them. I pass now to the

Second, which is to consider, what are the measures and proportions by which it is to be determined. And those are expressed in these words; *If it be possible, live peaceably*. Now *possible* may be taken two ways.

1. As it is opposed to naturally impossible, and that which cannot be done. Which sense cannot be here intended, as being supposed in all just and reasonable commands. For none can rationally command or advise a man to that, which is not naturally within his power, as has been already observed.

2. It may be taken, as it is opposed to morally impossible, and that which cannot be done lawfully: for it is a maxim in the civil law, *id possumus quod jure possumus*; which was the sense of Joseph's answer to his mistress, in [Genesis xxxix. 9](#), *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* and of that of the apostle, [2 Corinth. xiii. 8](#), *We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*. In both which places, not the possibility, but the lawfulness of the action is specified; and that is the sense here intended.

But now the observance of peace being limited by the measure of lawful, it follows, that where the breaking of the peace is not unlawful, there the maintaining of it ceases to be a necessary duty. It is of some moment therefore to satisfy ourselves when it is lawful, and when unlawful to break the peace. And all inquiries concerning this are reducible to these two.

1. Whether it can at all be lawful.
2. Supposing that it may be lawful, when and where it ought to be judged so.

Under the first of these I shall discuss that great question, whether war can be lawful for Christians. Under the second, I shall shew those general grounds that may authorize a war, and from thence descend to the resolution of particular cases. As,

1. Whether it can be lawful to break peace with the magistrate.

2. Whether it may be lawful for one private man to make war upon another, in those encounters which we commonly call duels.

3. Whether it be lawful for a man to repel force with force, so as to kill another in his own defence.

4. And lastly, since the prosecution of another in courts of judicature is in its kind a breach of the mutual bond of peace, I shall inquire whether it be allowable for Christians to go to law one with another.

All these things admit of much doubt and dispute; and yet, being matters of common and daily occurrence, it concerns us to have a right judgment of them.

I shall begin with the first question, which is concerning the lawfulness of war; in order to the resolution of which, I shall premise what it is. War may be properly defined, a state of hostility, or mutual acts of annoyance, either for the preservation of the public from some mischief intended, or in the vindication of it for some mischief already done to it.

The ground of war therefore is some public hurt or mischief; and since this may be twofold, either intended or actually done, there are accordingly two distinct kinds of war, defensive or offensive.

1. Defensive is in order to keep off and repel an evil designed to the public; and therefore is properly an act of self-preservation.

2. Offensive is for the revenging a public injury done to a community, and so is properly an act of justice.

It is clear therefore, that the lawfulness and justness of war is founded upon the justness of its cause; and this being once found out, and rightly stated, I affirm, that it is allowable before God to cease from peace, and to enter into a state of war; and that upon the strength of these arguments:

(1.) That which is a genuine, natural, and necessary consequent derived from one of the chief principles of the law of nature, that is lawful: but so is war, namely, from the principles of self-preservation, the noblest and the most acknowledged of all those principles, by which nature regulates and governs the actions of the creature. *Hoc et ratio doctis, necessitas barbaris, feris natura ipsa praescrpsit, ut omnem semper vim, quacunq; ope possint, a corpore, a capite, a vita sua propulsarent.* Cicero, in his defence of Milo. And that self-preservation cannot be maintained without war is too evident to be proved. The Jews, when they were set upon by their enemies on the sabbath day, and then murdered and massacred, because they thought it unlawful to make any resistance, or to defend themselves on that day, have transmitted the sad truth of this assertion in bloody letters to posterity.



That men will sometimes invade the rights and the lives of others is certain; and it is also as certain, that the naked breast is not the surest armour, nor patience the best weapon of defence.

Do we expect a rescue from heaven? and that God should send down fire from the clouds, and work miracles for our preservation? Experience sufficiently convinces us that such an expectation is vain. God delivers men by means, when means are to be had, and by the interposal of their own endeavours: and therefore he that flies to the church when he should be in the field, and takes his prayer-book in his hand when he should take his sword, tempts God, and loses himself; and, according to a due estimate of things, becomes a murderer, by so patiently suffering another to be so.

Victrix patientia is a puff and a metaphor; and may, perhaps, in the issue of things, bear a man through a domestic injury or a private affront; but I never read that it put an army to flight, or rebated the courage or controlled the invasion of a fighting enemy.

Besides, patience is properly the suffering quietly, when God in his providence calls us to suffer: but it is not a suffering, when God calls us to act, and to stand upon our own defence. As in some men we see it usual to veil their cowardice and pusillanimity with the names of prudence and moderation; so that, which some call patience, will be once found nothing else but a lazy relinquishment of the rights and privileges of their nature; and that a life and a being was much cast away upon such as would not exert the utmost power they had to defend it. This argument is properly for defensive war.

(2.) The second is for offensive; and it proceeds thus: That which is a proper act of distributive justice is lawful; but such a thing is war, it being a retribution of punishment for a public hurt or injury done by one nation to another. That he who does a wrong should suffer for it, is a thing required by justice, the execution of which is committed to the supreme power of every nation: and why justice may not be done upon a company of malefactors defending themselves with arms, as well as upon any particular thief or murderer, brought shackled and disarmed to the block or the gallows, I cannot understand.

The case in a civil war is clear between a magistrate assisted by his subjects, against another rebel part of his subjects: for he being the supreme power, the right of punishing offenders, whether single or in companies, is undoubtedly in him. But since to punish is properly an act of a superior to an inferior, and two kingdoms or nations seem to be equal, and neither to have any superiority or jurisdiction over the other, it may be doubted, how the one's making war upon the other can be properly an act of punitive justice.

To this I answer, that though these two kingdoms or states be in themselves equal, yet the injury received gives the injured people a right of claiming a reparation from those that did the injury; and consequently, in that respect, gives them a kind of superiority over the other. For, in point of right, still the injured person is superior: and the reason is, because



common justice is concerned in his behalf; to whose rules all nations in the world owe a real subjection.

If it were not for war, therefore, there could be no provision made of doing justice upon an offending nation; justice would only prey upon particular persons; but national robberies, national murders, must pass in triumph with the reputation of virtues, as high and great actions, above the control of those common rules that govern the particular members of societies.

In a word, society could not consist, if it were not lawful for one nation to exact a compensation for the injuries done to it by another; and upon the refusal of such compensation, to endeavour it by force and acts of hostility. Wherefore I conclude, that war must needs be just, when the instrument of its management is the sword of justice. And this argument is for offensive war.

But before I dismiss it, there is one doubt that may require resolution, and it is this; that admitting that an injured nation may lawfully make war upon the nation that injured it, yet is it lawful for the injurious nation, being thus justly assaulted by war, also to defend itself?

I answer, that it is; and that upon this ground, that be a man's delinquency against the laws of society never so great, yet, as long as he retains the nature of a man, he also retains the natural right of self-defence and preservation; unless where, by his own consent, he has quitted it.

But you will say, a particular malefactor is bound to resign up his life to the punishment of the law without resistance: and the case, as to this, seems to be the same in a particular malefactor and an injurious nation; war being a doing of justice upon one, as the execution of the gallows is upon the other: and consequently the obligation to a non-resistance seems to be the same in both. I answer, that the case is very different; and that upon this reason, that a particular member of a commonwealth has consented and submitted to the laws of the nation of which he is a member, which laws enjoin malefactors to surrender up their lives to justice without resistance; whereupon, the right of resisting is lost by his own consent. But now there is no law imposed upon one nation by another, or owned and submitted to by any nation, that obliges it, for having done an injury to another nation, without resistance to endure the effects of war and an hostile invasion; whereupon it still keeps the right of defending itself against all opposition, how just soever it be on their sides that make it.

(3.) The third argument is for all kind of war indifferently, and it runs thus: If St. John the Baptist, Christ himself, and the apostles, judged the employment of a soldier lawful, then war is lawful. The consequence is apparent; for every employment is lawful or unlawful, according to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the actions to which it is designed: an employment being indeed nothing else but a constant engaging of a man's self in such or such a way of action. And now for the assumption, that St. John the Baptist, Christ himself, and



the apostles, judged the life and employment of a soldier lawful, it shall be made appear particularly.

And first for St. John the Baptist. It was his great office to be the preacher of repentance, and to consign it with the great sacrament of baptism: upon which it is rational to conclude, that he admitted none to baptism, without declaring to them what sins they were to repent of. And since the sum of his doctrine was, that men should bring forth fruits worthy of repentance; when any men asked him what they were to do, to fulfil this great command, it is most consonant to reason to judge, that his answer taught them all that was included in that duty, and shewed them whatsoever was inconsistent with it.

But now, when the soldiers amongst others asked John *what they should do*, [Luke iii. 14](#), he speaks nothing at all of laying down their employment; but rather confirms that, by prescribing rules to them how they should manage it: as, *Do violence to no man, neither accuse any one falsely, and be content with your wages*. In short, it is not imaginable that the great forerunner of the Messiah, even one of the greatest persons that was born of women, should busy himself to instruct men how they should lawfully manage such an employment as was in itself absolutely unlawful; and to countenance men to receive wages for a work that he judged highly impious and unjust.

In the next place, for the judgment of Christ and his apostles about this matter; the first we have in [Matth. viii. 10](#), where Christ, speaking of the centurion, said, *that he had not found so much faith, no, not in Israel*. And the like is testified of Cornelius the centurion, in [Acts x. 1, 2](#), *that he was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house*.

From whence I argue thus: he whose faith Christ commended, and he to whom the Spirit of God bore this testimony, *that he was a devout man, and feared God*, could neither of them be engaged in a course of life absolutely unlawful; otherwise saving faith, and the fear of God, would be consistent with a settled, constant, resolved living in sin. For he whose employment is sinful, sins habitually, and with a witness; and we might, with as much propriety of speech, and truth in divinity, commend the faith of an highwayman, and say, a devout bawd, and a devout cheat, as a devout centurion.

I conclude therefore, that war is a thing in itself lawful and allowable, and that the proof of it stands firm, both upon the principles of nature and the principles of Christianity.

And being so, it is a great wonder that Faustus Socinus, and his school, in other things too partial defenders of nature, should yet in this so undeservedly desert it, as to assert all war to be utterly unlawful; not indeed by virtue of the law of nature, or of Moses, but of Christ, who, they say, has perfected the two former, and superadded higher and more sublime precepts.

But still I cannot see that this sect of men are able to quit themselves from the charge of very great unreasonableness in this assertion. For in those truths that concern the theory of the Christian religion, as about the Trinity and the like, they vehemently contend that all

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scriptures, howsoever in the clearest appearance of natural construction looking that way, yet ought to be interpreted and brought down to the analogy and rules of natural reason. But here, in the highest concerns of practice, in which men's lives and fortunes, their being and wellbeing, are immediately interested, they strip men of all the rights of nature, and that under pretence of such an injunction from the Christian religion.

It concerns us therefore to inquire into their arguments; which we shall do, first, by examining the general ground upon which they stand; and then by traversing those several scriptures which these men allege in the behalf of their opinion.

First of all then, they lay this as the foundation of all their arguings in this particular, that God, under the Mosaical covenant, made only promises of temporal possessions and blessings to his people; and therefore giving them a temporal Canaan, it was necessary that he should allow them the means of defending it, which was properly by war, and repulsing their temporal enemies: but now under the covenant of grace, established by the mediatorship of Christ with the world, God has made no express promise of any temporal enjoyments or felicities; but rather, on the contrary, bids us despise and take our minds wholly off from them. And therefore, according to the tenor of such a covenant, he has made no provision to secure his people in any such temporalities, but took from them all right of war and resistance.

To this, which is a proposition current through the main body of the Socinian divinity, I answer, that it is both false in itself, and as to the present purpose hugely inconclusive.

For first, it is to be denied that God transacted with his people, under the Mosaical covenant, only in temporal promises: he did indeed, according to the thick genius of that people, too much intent upon worldly happiness, express and shadow forth spiritual blessings under temporal; but that they had hopes, and consequently promises of a better life after this, is clear from sundry places, as particularly that in [Psalm lxxiii. 24](#), where David says to God, *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel here, and afterward receive me to glory*. And it is clear, from all the foregoing verses, that by the guidance of God's counsel, he understood God's favour to him throughout the whole compass of his life. But more fully in [Heb. xi. 13](#), where the divine author, speaking of the ancient heroes before the times of the gospel, says, *that they all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*. What could be said more fully and expressly to shew the insolence of that assertion, that by taking from the Mosaical church all promise of future blessedness, would degrade them to the rank of brutes and swine, and epicures, who live only by this beastly principle: *Let us eat and drink to-day, for to-morrow we shall die?*

And further, it is also false, that God has under the covenant of grace made no temporal provision for the persons under it. For what mean those words of Christ, [Matt. vi. 33](#), *Seek ye first the kingdom of God., and all these things shall be added unto you?* God indeed did



not design these temporals as parts of the great promised blessing, as he did under the Mo-
saical covenant, but only as appendages and concomitants of it, that so he might shew the
spiritual nature of this covenant to be much above that of the other: but still it follows not,
but God has made an allowance of temporal necessities under the second covenant, though
not in the same manner and upon the same terms that he did under the first.

It is clear therefore, that the contrary proposition is false; and that it is as weak in the
nature of an argument, as it is false in the nature of a proposition, is no less manifest.

For if the only reason that made war lawful to the Jews was because it was a means to
secure them in the possession of their temporal Canaan, against the invasion and incursions
of the enemy, then when there was no such incursion or invasion, it ceased to be lawful: this
is a natural inference. But the contrary is evident: for we know that they commenced a
lawful war against the tribe of Benjamin, their brethren, in which there could be no pretence
either of securing or enlarging the borders of the promised land; but only a just revenge
acted upon them, for a black and villanous trespass upon the laws of common justice and
humanity.

And then for the Christian church; suppose they should have no federal or spiritual
right to their earthly possessions, yet they have a civil and a natural right; which right they
may accordingly defend: since, by virtue of the covenant of grace, to have a title to heaven;
and withal to have a civil and temporal claim to their earthly estates; and further, to maintain
that claim against the violence of an enemy; are not at all opposite or contrary one to the
other, but very fairly subordinate.

But that I may thoroughly pluck up this false foundation, grounded upon the difference
of the two covenants, I shall observe this: that since in the former covenant there were some
things of moral and external right, some things only of positive institution, peculiarly made
for and restrained to the church and commonwealth of the Jews; whatsoever alterations and
abrogations have been made by Christ under the second covenant, were only of those posi-
tive laws, peculiar and proper to the Jews; all other things, which depended upon the
eternal and immutable laws and rights of nature, remaining inviolately the same under both
covenants, and as unchanged as nature itself.

Now such a thing I affirm the right of war to be, as being the result and dictate of that
grand natural right of self-preservation. It is the voice of reason and nature, that we should
defend our persons from assassination, and our estates from violence: and he that seeks for
rescue from any thing but a vigorous resistance, will find himself wronged to that degree,
that it will be too late for him to be righted.

Having thus removed the false ground of the arguments, proving the utter unlawfulness
of war, I come now to see what countenance this opinion receives from scripture; from
which the abettors of it argue thus:



If we are expressly commanded *not to resist evil, but being smote on the right cheek, to turn the other also*, as in [Matt. v. 39](#). and to *recompense no man evil for evil., nor to avenge ourselves, but rather to give place to wrath*, as in [Rom. xii. 17, 19](#). if also we are commanded to *love our enemies*, as in the same [Matt v.](#) then war, which includes in it the clean contrary, is utterly unlawful.

Before I answer these particular scriptures, I shall premise this:

What if we should answer Socinus in his own words, who in his book *De Jesu Christo Servatore*, disputing against Covelus for the disproving of Christ's satisfaction, has the hardiness to say, that the word *satisfaction* is not to be found in scripture? which is true. But supposing that it were; yet it being, in his judgment, contrary to right reason, it was not, he says, to be admitted in the sense naturally signified by it. So say I; these scriptures indeed, however they prohibit self-defence, yet this being contrary to the light of nature and right reason, they are not to be admitted in their proper signification. Surely this, though it were a bold and a profane speech, yet to him it were a very full answer, who makes the very same plea upon a parallel occasion.

But we shall not need such refuges. To those scriptures therefore I answer, that they are to be understood only of private revenge acted by one particular man upon another, and not of a public, managed by the authority of the magistrate: but such a revenge only is war. That the words are so to be understood is clear, as the occasion of those in [Matt. v.](#) shews: for Christ's design was to beat down that corrupt and false gloss of the pharisees upon the law, who taught that it was lawful for any private man to right and revenge himself with his own hands; provided that he observed the just measure of equality between the evil which he suffered, and the evil which he returned: whereas indeed Moses committed the execution of this law of retaliation only to the magistrate.

Hereupon Christ tells them, that it was the duty of private men not to resist evil, nor to revenge themselves, but being smote upon one cheek to turn the other; which words are not literally to be understood, for neither Christ himself nor the apostle Paul so behaved themselves: but being smote upon the face, they expostulated the injury of the blow, [John xviii. 23](#), and [Acts xxiii. 3](#). But they are only an hyperbolical speech, prescribing a very great degree of patience and composure of mind; and that of the two, we should rather choose, having received one injurious blow, to offer ourselves to another, than to sin against God by revenging it.

But that this prohibition of revenge, further urged in [Rom. xii. 19](#), concerns only private men, and not absolutely damns all kind of revenge, acted by a public person, is manifest; for not above six verses off, namely, in [verse 4, chap. xiii.](#) the apostle is so far from denying this to the magistrate, that he tells us it is the very design of his office, and that *he beareth not the sword in vain; as being the minister of God., a revenger, to execute wrath upon him*

that doeth evil. We cannot therefore make the apostle to forbid all revenge, without a gross and a palpable contradicting of himself.

But besides, as touching revenge, which is properly a retaliation, or repaying one evil for another, that this is not a thing in its nature unlawful, is invincibly proved by this: that God, by an express law, under the Mosaical economy, committed the exercise of it to the magistrate. But were it a thing in the very nature of it unjust, God could not so much as permit or allow the practice of it, much less countenance it by a law.

As for the next injunction, of *loving our enemies*, I answer, 1. That it is there directed by Christ to particular persons, not public bodies or whole nations. 2. But secondly, admitting that it extends to these also, yet I assume that the love here commanded is not properly a love of friendship, but a love of charity; which consists in a freedom from any malice to, or hatred of our enemies' persons: and this may continue and be maintained, even while a man, either in the defence or vindication of his country, kills his adversary in the field.

For I suppose a judge may be in charity with a malefactor while he condemns him; and the executioner have no design of hatred to him, whom by the duty of his office he makes a sacrifice to common justice.

The case is the same in war; where, when a man kills another, it is not because he has not a love of charity to his person, but because he is bound to love his prince and his country with a greater.



SERMON XLVIII.

ROMANS xii. 18.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

II. THE second argument to prove the unlawfulness of all war is taken from that prophecy, in [Isaiah ii. 4](#), where it is said of those that shall live in the times of the gospel, that *they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

Answ. But to this I answer;

1. That prophecies only foretell the future event of things, but determine nothing concerning either the lawfulness or unlawfulness of those things.

2. If these words are understood literally, that after the coming of the Messiah war shall every where cease; then they prove nothing, but what the Jews pretend to prove by them, which is, that Jesus Christ is not the Messiah; forasmuch as since his coming, we have seen no such thing as a general cessation of war over the world.

For the explication of this place therefore we must observe; that in scripture, things have those effects ascribed to them which they have a natural fitness to produce: though by accident, and other impediments, they never actually produce them. Thus, because the gospel delivers such precepts to the world, which if men would live up to, there would certainly ensue such an universal peace and tranquillity; therefore the production of such a peace is ascribed to the gospel, though, through the vice and corruption of men, the case of things fall out to be much otherwise.

But it may be replied, that then, however, those who obey and live up to the precepts of the gospel, ought to abstain from all war: whence it follows, that, according to those precepts, war is unlawful.

I answer, that upon supposition of such an absolute obedience to the doctrine of Christ, war indeed would not be lawful, because the very ground and occasion of it would be taken away, by the inoffensive behaviour of one man towards another. But the dispute is here concerning what is lawful to be done, when the generality of the world live not according to the tenor of this doctrine, but invade the rights of others. In which case I affirm, that the gospel rends not from any the privileges of a natural defence, and the prosecution of justice in a lawful war.

As for instance, the gospel, as much as any doctrine can do, makes provision that there should be no thieves or murderers in the world, by a prohibition of those unhallowed courses: but yet when it falls out that men obey not those prohibitions, but engage in such practices, surely it does not strip the magistrate of all right to animadvert upon such offenders, but leaves the axe as sharp, and the gibbet as strong as ever it was under the law. This exception therefore concludes nothing.



But then by the way, for the further clearing of the text from the Jews' objection, raised out of it against Jesus Christ's being the Messiah; besides what has been said, I add further, as to the very literal impletion of the prophecy, that when it is foretold that a thing shall come to pass in the time of the gospel, it is not necessary to understand that it must happen immediately upon the introduction of it, and be always to be found in the world, during the continuance of the gospel: but it is sufficient if it come to pass and be fulfilled in any period of it. And who knows but before the world ends, God may give the gospel such a progress over the earth, and withal such a mighty influence upon the hearts of those that profess it, that there may be such an universal peace to be seen amongst all nations, and such glorious halcyon days, as the very literal purport of these prophecies seems to exhibit to us. From whence I infer, that we must first see an end of all things, before the Jews' objection can be admitted to prove what it does intend.

III. The third argument for the unlawfulness of war is taken from that place in [Matt. xxvi. 52](#), where Christ commanding Peter to put up his sword, tells him, *that all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword*. From whence it follows, that since Christ allowed not his disciple the use of the sword, and that upon such an occasion as the defence of his master, and him also the Lord and Saviour of the world, certainly he would not allow of it as lawful upon any other occasion whatsoever. To this I answer, that the sense and meaning of every speech is to be limited to the subject-matter of it, and also to be measured by that which first occasioned the utterance of it. Now Christ reprehends Peter, because that by an unwarranted, though perhaps a well-meaning zeal, and without any leave, either had or asked from Christ himself, he flew upon the high priest's servant in that manner. The words therefore, howsoever uttered in general terms, signify only thus much; that those who without any call or warrant from the lawful superior power, but merely by the instigation of an hot zeal, and an hotter head, shall presume *to use the sword, such shall perish by the sword*. But this concludes nothing against the lawfulness of those men's waging war, who come to it armed with the authentic call of the supreme magistrate, to whom God has committed the defence of the subject, and the administration of justice. It is indeed a dagger in the throat of their cause, who can dare to raise armies, ruin countries, and subvert governments, upon no other commission, than the impulse of a furious ambition and a pretended inspiration.

IV. The fourth and last argument for the unlawfulness of war may be framed thus: That which proceeds from a sinful cause, and produces sinful, unlawful effects, that itself is unlawful. But so does war. For the sinfulness of its cause, we have an account of that in [James iv. 1](#), *Whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts?* And for the unlawfulness of its effects, we need only survey our own experience, without recurring to any further histories to inform us what dismal cruelties, rapines, and outrages, are the constant, inseparable attendants of war. Now for that which issues from so evil a

beginning, and draws after it such evil consequences, it is certainly very strange, if it should not be in an high degree evil itself. But to this I answer,

1. As for that place of St. James, it speaks only of personal quarrels and dissensions between particular men, and not of national hostilities managed by the public conduct of the magistrate: which only is the thing here disputed of.

2. But secondly, admit that the words may be extended to national hostilities and wars between people and people; yet the apostle speaks only of what usually are the causes of war; and not, what are so of necessity, and according to the nature of the thing itself: which, though on one side they are unlawful, namely on that which gives the offence; yet on the other, the causes of it are not. always men's lusts; but a rational defence of their country, and a due vindication of public justice.

In a word, it is one thing to speak of war, as actually it uses to be managed, and another to speak of it, as it ought and may be managed. And this affords also an answer to the second part of the argument, concerning those sad and sinful effects that follow it, as unjust violences, rapines, cruelties, and the like. Of all which it is to be said, that they proceed only from the corruption and vice of those who manage it, but are utterly extraneous to the nature of war, considered precisely in itself. I know no action so good and allowable but may derive a contagion by passing through ill hands. But we are not to judge of the nature of any thing or action by that which is only accidental to it. The nature of war consists properly either in the repelling of an intended, or the revenging of a received injury. But whether this be done with unjust rapines and hideous cruelties upon the innocent, or duly and justly, the nature of war is still the same: the quality is indeed altered from just to unjust, but that amounts to no more than the ill performing of a thing in itself indifferent.

And thus I have answered all the arguments that to me seem to be of any moment to prove the absolute unlawfulness of all war; upon the strength of which answers, I think I may reckon upon it as a proved assertion, that war is not a thing in itself unlawful.

I suppose nobody will conclude the foregoing discourse to have been a commendation of war, much less an exhortation to it. It is indeed a lawful, but a sad remedy. And I think there is none who looks upon it as a sufficient argument to persuade him that the cutting off a leg or an arm is a desirable thing, because it is better to do so, than to have a gangrene spread itself over the whole body.

Caustics and corrosives may be endured, but certainly the causes that make them necessary are not to be chose. War can be desired only in the nature of a remedy, and a remedy always supposes an evil. And I know no argument so strong to prove the lawfulness of war, but that war itself is a stronger argument to prove the worth and the convenience of peace.

I have now done with the first general inquiry, concerning the measures by which the great duty of peaceableness is to be determined: which was, Whether war could be at all

lawful? I come now to the second, which is to inquire, upon supposition that it may be lawful, When and where it ought to be judged so? And here I shall,

First, lay down some general grounds that may authorize war. And,

Secondly, descend to the resolution of particular cases.

For the first of these, I shall lay these four general grounds of the lawfulness of it, premising first what is the nature of peace.

Peace is properly the mutual forbearance of acts of hostility or annoyance, in order to the preservation of our nature in all its due rights and capacities.

It is clear therefore, that peace is a means or instrument designed only to such an end. Now that ceasing to be able to compass this end, to which it is designed, ceases also to be an instrument or means, and consequently to engage us to use it: whereupon it is lawful to enter into a contrary estate, namely, of hostility or war.

From whence follow these assertions, as so many general grounds of it.

1. When those with whom we are at peace declare that they will annoy us, unless we cut off our limbs, and injure and mangle our bodies; and accordingly upon our refusal disturb us; as Nahash the Ammonite did to the men of Jabesh Gilead, offering them peace only upon condition that they would let him thrust out their right eyes, [1 Sam. xi. 2](#); it is in such a case lawful to repel and resist that force or disturbance. For every one has a right to preserve his limbs and the faculties of his nature.

2. When those with whom we are at peace declare war with us, unless we will renounce our religion, and, upon our refusal, do so; (which is the case of the pope's exposing the dominions of those whom he calls heretics to the invasion of other princes;) it is then lawful to repel and resist that force or invasion. The reason is, because every man has a natural right to the use of that which he apprehends indispensably to conduce to his chiefest good: and that is his religion.

3. When one nation injures another to that degree, as to blast its honour and reputation, it is lawful to revenge that public breach of honour by a public war. The reason is, because the honour of a nation is as absolutely necessary to the welfare and support of it, as its trade or commerce; it being indeed the great instrument of both, and perhaps also of its very safety and vital subsistence: it being seldom known that a government, dishonoured and despised abroad, did long preserve itself in credit and respect at home.

4. When those with whom we are at peace declare war with us, unless we will quit our civil rights, as our estates and families, and the protection of the laws, and accordingly upon our refusal do so; it is lawful to enter into war with those who make such encroachments upon us. The reason is, because when civil societies are constituted and submitted to, every man, so submitting to them, has a natural right to the conveniences and enjoyments of such societies.



Now the foundation of the lawfulness of war in all the forementioned cases is, because whatsoever a man has a lawful right to possess or enjoy, he has by consequence a right to use all those means which are absolutely necessary to the possession or enjoyment of that thing.

You will say now, that, according to this doctrine, when the prince encroaches upon his subjects' bodies, estates, or religion, they may lawfully resist or oppose him.

This objection brings in the resolution of the first particular case proposed by us to be discussed, which is, Whether it be lawful for subjects in any case to make war upon the magistrate? My answer to it is in the negative; and the reason is, because the subject has resigned up all right of resistance into the hands of his prince and governor.

And for this we must observe, that as every man has naturally a right to resist any one that shall annoy him in his lawful enjoyments, so he has a general, natural right, by which he is master of all the particular rights of his nature, so as to retain them or recede from them, and give them away as he pleases.

Now when a man consents to be a subject, and to acknowledge any one for his governor, he does by that very action invest him with all the necessary means of being a governor; the chief of which is, a quitting and parting with that natural right of resisting him upon any occasion whatsoever.

And every man consents to have such an one his governor, from whom he covenants to receive protection, and to whom he does not actually declare a non-subjection.

This being laid down, it follows, that it is not more natural for a man to resist another particular man, who would deprive him of his rights, than it is natural for him not to resist his prince upon the same occasion. Forasmuch as by a superior and general right of nature, he has parted with this particular right of resistance: and consequently, having given his prince the propriety of it, he cannot any more use it, unless his prince should surrender it back to him again; which here is not supposed.

And this is the ground upon which I judge a resistance of the supreme magistrate both unlawful and irrational. But there have not been wanting in the world scholars to teach, as well as soldiers to act the contrary. Such as have weakened the ties of government, and shook the supremacy of princes, by prescribing of cases in which this duty of nonresistance binds not the subject; and by which they are so discharged of their allegiance, as to be let loose to carve for themselves, and to restrain their superiors.

But before I come to survey any of their opinions, I shall premise this rule or maxim: that those whom the people have a right of proceeding against, so as to punish them by law; those also they may proceed against by war and open force, in case that legal course of proceeding be obstructed.

The reason is, because war is a remedy upon the default of law; and therefore, where the coercive power of the law cannot have its effect, war is to take place, and supply the want



of it: *Ubi judicia desinunt, incipit bellum*, says Grotius in his second book *de Jure Belli*, cap. i. sect. 2.

Upon which ground it is, that one private man cannot revenge an injury upon another by open force, the law being open for him to right himself by; but one nation may by force and war revenge an injury done to it by another nation, because there is no provision of a coercive power stated by a law between them, by which one nation may implead the other, and so have a reparation of an injury made it by the sentence of a common judge. Now I premise this observation to shew, that whosoever teaches that the people may judicially proceed against and punish their prince, the same person does by consequence affirm that the people may also take up arms against him, when they cannot otherwise bring him to such a judicial process.

This being observed, I cannot but set before you those several cases assigned by Grotius in his first book *de Jure Belli*, and fourth chapter, in which he asserts it lawful for the people to proceed against their prince. As,

(1.) When, according to the professed constitution of the government, the prince is accountable to the people, as in Lacedaemon, where the people owned a coercive power over their king, which power they deposited in the hands of their ephori; who, by virtue thereof, restrained the king at the people's pleasure.

(2.) When a prince quits and relinquishes all right of government: after which action, he says, the prince may be dealt withal as any other private man.

(3.) When he would transfer and alienate the right of government to another: in which endeavour, he says, the subjects may hinder, and by force resist him.

(4.) When he actually attempts the destruction of all his people.

(5.) When he holds the grant of the sovereignty from the people upon conditions, and fails in the fulfilling of those conditions.

(6.) When the prince holds but part of the supreme power, the senate or people holding the other part: in which case, if the prince invades that part of the sovereign power not belonging to him, those to whom that part does belong may resist him. According to this doctrine, those amongst us who taught that the king was one of the three estates, and that the parliament was a power coordinate with him, did by consequence teach, that in some cases they might make war upon him; and their practice was not short of their doctrine.

(7.) When, in the conferring of the sovereignty to a prince, the people declare, that in certain cases it shall be lawful for them to resist him: and the reason is, because he who transfers his right to another, may transfer it upon what terms or under what reserves he thinks fit.

This seems of near affinity with the fifth instance, but it is not altogether the same: for the former is suspended upon the prince's not doing of something which he conditioned

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to do; but this speaks not of the prince's action, but of some events of affairs, under which the people put in caution, that their subjection to him should cease.

These aphorisms I had rather rehearse than animadvert upon; the great reputation of the author making all censures upon him, though perhaps true, yet unhandsome.

But the foundation which he had laid a little before, in the seventh section of the same chapter, seems large enough to bear all these superstructures, and many more.

For proposing the question, Whether the law of not resisting the magistrate binds the subject in a great, imminent, and extreme danger? he answers, that most laws, human and divine, though running in absolute terms, yet imply a condition of relaxation in cases of extremity. And for this law, of not resisting the magistrate, he says it sprung first from the consent of the people, who, for the benefits of government and society, resigned themselves up to the absolute disposal of a sovereign; which people, he says, had they been asked whether they would have chose rather to die, than in any case whatsoever to resist their sovereign with an armed power, he conceives they would never have owned that to have been their will or intention; and consequently, that the sense of that law, which is to be measured by the sense of those from whose consent it took force, ought still to be supposed to imply an exception in cases of extreme danger. And accordingly he concludes, in the eighty-seventh page, that for his part he could not condemn a people, under such a danger, so defending themselves: that is, by a resistance of the magistrate; for that is the thing that he is debating of expressly, and exemplifies it by the Maccabees defending themselves with an army against Antiochus.

This assertion, I am apt to think, in the full improvement of it, would widen itself to a very strange latitude. But thus much may be said for this author, that he breathed a popular air, and lived a member of a commonwealth, which needed such maxims as these to justify its being so.

But David Paraeus has, with a much more barefaced impudence, flown in the face of sovereignty, in a set and long dispute upon [Rom. xiii.](#) a strange text, one would think, to preach rebellion upon. His arguments therefore I shall briefly examine and remove, and so conclude this question.

The whole discourse stands upon these two propositions.

Prop. I. The first is, that it is lawful for the inferior magistrates to resist and punish the supreme; and some of the cases in which they may do so are these.

1. If he blasphemes God, or causes others to do so. 2. If he does the subjects some great injury. His words are, *si ipsis fiat atrox injuria*; a term of a very large comprehension, and it is hard if any pretence cannot clothe itself with this name. 3. If the subjects cannot freely enjoy their lives, estates, and consciences.

This, I say, subverts all government; for, if the prince may be punished, it follows,

(1.) That he is not supreme; for all punishment, as such, is an act of the superior upon the inferior.

(2.) If the inferior magistrates may punish him, then they may also judge when he is to be punished; and consequently the prince is never secure, since it is in their power to judge this when they think fit; and they will undoubtedly think it fit, when they find it for their advantage.

His reasons for this doctrine are principally these two.

1. He lays down this division: kings are absolute or by compact; and subjoins, that there is none in Europe, but is by compact, and upon conditions. Upon this he reasons thus; that such a prince, violating the conditions upon which he holds the sovereignty, may be judged by the people or senate that made him prince, upon those conditions.

To this I answer, first, that those who hold the supremacy upon any such conditional grant, upon default of these conditions, may indeed be made accountable to their people; but then I deny that either the kings of England, France, or Spain, hold their kingdoms by any such compact. Yet, because the kings of England take an oath at their coronation to govern by such and such laws, which in case they should not, Milton, and such others, are so bold as to absolve the subject from his allegiance; I shall, to dash that puritan, antimonarchical tenet, lay down this distinction; that it is one thing for a king to promise to manage his kingly office according to such rules, and another thing to take upon him the kingly office upon condition that he so governs: it is this latter only that would render him accountable to his people; but the former, if not fulfilled, is not breach of an antecedent condition, but only breach of a subsequent promise, for the sin of which he is answerable only to God.

2. The other reason for the inferior magistrate's resisting the supreme is this; because they are joined with him as associates in the government, and God has committed the defence of the people to them in their order; by virtue of which commission, they are to defend them against the supreme magistrate himself, if a tyrant, as well as against any other: forasmuch as being intrusted with the people's defence, it matters not who the persons are, against whom they are to be defended.

But to this the answer is ready, by a positive denial of that false and base principle, that the inferior magistrates are associates with the supreme; and that God immediately commissions them to govern and defend the people. For they are not the prince's associates, but his instruments in government, and have no power but what they receive immediately from him: and that he who acts by authority from another, cannot by that authority act against him, whose will and gift is the alone cause of that authority, is too clear to need any proof.

It would be too long particularly to insist upon his other reasons to this purpose; I shall reduce them therefore to general heads, annexing to each their respective solutions.

(1.) He argues from several scripture instances; as Ehud killing Eglon, and Jehu killing Joram.



(2.) From many instances of the heathens; as the Romans deposing Tarquinius.

(3.) From several speeches of princes, acknowledging a kind of dependence upon, and an accountableness to their people. To which I answer,

1. For those scripture instances and examples, that most of them are set down without any approbation or disapprobation, but only by a bare historical narration; and withal, that the honesty of the person does not legalize every one of his actions. And perhaps it can no more be said, that to depose or kill a prince is just, because Ehud and Jehu did it, than, because David left Solomon in charge to revenge an old injury upon Shimei, a man may nowadays, having pardoned an injury, yet justly cause his son to revenge it. Add to this, that those persons are said to have done what they did by an especial commission or warrant from God; which men nowadays cannot pretend to.

2. In the next place, to his allegation of the example of the Romans, I answer, that it was unlawful, and that to use it here is to prove the lawfulness of one rebellion by another.

3. And for those several speeches and concessions of princes, acknowledging their right at the people's dispose, I answer, that we are not to judge of the right of princes by what they may sometimes speak in flattery, upon design, or necessity. Besides, that the concessions this or that prince makes from his own right cannot prejudice or infringe the right of others. And thus much for Paraeus's first proposition, by which we see how he has armed inferior magistrates, as sheriffs, constables, bailiffs, and the like, against their prince; and it is much, that he did not take care also for their calling of triennial parliaments. But does he stop here? no, he proceeds further in another proposition, which is this:

If the prince shall offer violence to the subject, as a tyrant, murderer, or adulterer, and there is no help to be had from any inferior magistrate, then it is lawful for every private man to defend himself *vi et armis*, as from a common thief or murderer.

This is wholesome divinity indeed; and it was not to be doubted, but that the former assertion would in the end produce this.

His reasons for it are these two.

(1.) Because what the inferior magistrates may do, that every private man may do in his own behalf, in a case of necessity. The consequence, I confess, is good, and therefore grant this to be just as lawful as I have already proved the former; that is, indeed, absolutely wicked and unlawful.

(2.) Because otherwise God would have put it into the power of the magistrate to destroy the commonwealth. To this I answer, 1. That the magistrate is but a particular man, and therefore cannot effect such a thing by himself, but by the assistance of others, against whom some are of opinion that the subjects may defend themselves. As amongst us, let any man rob or injure us, and although he be ever so much commanded by the king to do so, yet we have our action against him at law. But still those who hold that the king's instruments, in any act of violence upon the subject, may be resisted, qualify their assertion with these two

cautions: first, that the violence offered be apparent and notorious, such as no man endued with common reason can doubt of or deny; secondly, that the person of the king be still sacred and untouched: yet, since a king, without an absolute obedience to those instruments whom he shall think fit to employ, is but a mere mockery and an insignificant shadow; and since to make the subjects judges, when they are to obey persons so commissioned by him, and when to resist them, clearly opens a door to an insolent shaking off all subjection; I cannot think it safe to build any thing upon this assertion. 2. In the second place therefore I answer, that I see no inconvenience in granting, that that absolute authority which kings are invested withal, puts it within their power, by the abuse of it, to ruin the commonwealth. For if God puts it in the prince's power to be able to preserve, undoubtedly the same power, misemployed, will be as able to destroy society: he indeed is to be responsible to God for his tyrannical abuse of his trust; but subjects, whether their subjection makes them happy or miserable, yet still are to be subjects.

And thus I think I have answered Paraeus's discourse, in which he sets himself as a bold arbitrator between the prince and the subject, so stating the privileges of one, as utterly to subvert the prerogative of the other. The usual patrons of this doctrine against princes are the Jesuits, who are properly the pope's janizaries; and those of the presbytery, whether at home or beyond the seas. But this opinion, that the supreme magistrate may be resisted by his subjects, I think none can confute so fully as the supreme magistrate himself.

II. The next case that comes to be resolved, according to the order proposed by us, is,

Whether it can be lawful for one particular man to make war upon another in those encounters which we commonly call *duels*?

A duel, called by the Greeks $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\mu\alpha\chi\acute{\iota}\alpha$, and by the Latins *duellum*, receiving its denomination from the persons engaged in it, is properly a fight or combat between two persons, mutually undertook, appointed, and consented to, by each of them.

That the action is not a thing in itself absolutely unlawful is apparent, because otherwise it could not be lawful for two men, meeting in a battle, to fight one with another; nor for one man to fight for the defence of his life, with the murderer that assaults him. Since therefore this falls within the number of those actions, which, being indifferent in their nature, come to be stamped lawful or unlawful by their principles and circumstances, and other determining ingredients of action, we are to inquire when it is to be allowed, when not. In which inquiry we shall set down,

1. The cases in which a duel is lawful.
2. The cases in which it is impious, unlawful, and utterly to be disallowed.

(1.) First of all then, when two malefactors stand convict, and condemned to die, and the magistrate appoints them to fight singly; in which fight he that overcomes shall have his life: in this case it is lawful for persons so condemned to accept of such a fight. The reason



is, because on either side it is only a mutual desire of doing execution upon a malefactor convict: and it is lawful for one malefactor, upon the warrant or allowance of the magistrate, to do execution upon the other.

(2.) When two armies are drawn out to fight, and the decision of the battle is cast upon a single combat, it is lawful for any two persons, upon the appointment of the generals, to undertake such a combat; the reason is, because it is allowable for soldiers under command to obey their generals in all things not apparently unjust: and a general has full power to draw out as much or as little of his army to fight, as he shall judge most conducive for the success; there being no ground to conclude, why he may not as well command one single soldier, as one regiment or body of men, to fight, how and when he shall judge fit. Besides the convenience of this course, that it is a compendium of war, and a redemption of the lives of thousands by the death of one, bringing all the advantages of a conquest, without the dismal miseries of a battle.

(3.) When one challenges another, and resolves immediately to kill the challenged person, unless he accepts the combat, it is then lawful for him to accept it; forasmuch as this is nothing else but a repelling of force by force, and so is resolved into pure self-preservation: which shall be considered of by itself afterwards.

But a case may be here propounded: Suppose one should accuse another for his life falsely, offering to verify his accusation by single fight, and the judge should declare that he would proceed to the sentence immediately, unless the person so accused would undertake thus to fight with his accuser in single combat.

In answer to this, some affirm that the accused person may lawfully accept the challenge, it seeming to be equally a repelling of force, and the result much the same, whether the accuser endeavours to kill the accused by his own hand, or by the unjust sentence of the judge.

But, with submission to better judgments, I conceive that it is not lawful for him in this case to accept the combat, the instances propounded being not indeed the same; for in one the danger is from the sentence of the judge, which, however unjust, a man is bound to submit to; in the other, the danger is from the force of a private person, which no man is obliged to submit to, but has a natural right to repel.

And if it be replied, that such an one is necessitated to fight with his challenger in his own defence, for that otherwise he must die; I answer, that this very thing implies, that the necessity or compulsion is not absolute, but only conditional, unless he will submit to death; which of the two he is rather to choose, than to commit a sin.

For the man is under a judicial process, and so has no right to defend himself by force: neither matters it to say, that the judge, by his permission or command, gives him a right; for the judge, by commanding or permitting him so to defend himself, unjustly balks his own duty, which would oblige him to decide the case of the innocent another way; and the judge's going against his duty, by an unjust command, cannot give any man a right to do



according to that command. If the man is condemned, and dies, he suffers; but if he fights with his accuser, when the law ought to deliver him, he acts, and that unjustly. And this is to be observed, that though a man, by the unjust sentence of a judge, is obliged to suffer an unjust punishment; yet he cannot, by any allowance or command of the judge, have any right or obligation to do an unjust action.

The sum of this case is, that a man, under the forementioned condition, is bound rather to die by an unjust sentence, than to take an undue course for his vindication.

2. I come now to shew those cases in which duels are to be judged utterly unlawful.

(1.) As first, when they are undertook for vain ostentation, and that either of affection to the dead; as it was the custom of the Romans heretofore, upon the death of some commander or great man, for some soldiers voluntarily to undertake a single fight at the funeral solemnities, and to kill one another, as it were, by way of sacrifice, in honour of the dead; by that, declaring their loss so great, that they had no will to survive them. It was a custom also, for ostentation of strength and valour at their public sights and shows, for persons to entertain the spectators with duels, and to die like fools, to please they knew not whom; till at length this wretched custom so prevailed, that some would hire themselves at the Praetorian shows, to fight thus in single combat, as men are nowadays hired to act upon the stage; and these were called *gladiators*, a term that grew to as great ignominy amongst the Romans, as *thief* or *cutter* is amongst us. I suppose I need not take any pains to prove the unlawfulness, nay, the sottishness of such duellings, where men sold their lives for a crown or an angel; and by a preposterous way of labouring, earned wages, not to get their living, but to procure their death. It argued also, by the way, a strange savageness in the Roman temper, that men, women, and children should come with such eagerness to, and enjoy themselves with such delight at those barbarous spectacles, in which their chiefest diversion and recreation was to behold these duellers kill one another upon the stage. From which custom, as vile as it was, both on their parts that beheld, and on theirs that fought, most learned men are of opinion, that the use of duels, now so frequent, had its infamous original.

(2.) Another case in which men used to undertake single combats, was for the cleansing of themselves from some crime objected to them; which must needs be unlawful and highly irrational, as being a means no ways suited in its nature to such a purpose; and withal a bold presumption upon Providence, that any one, without any warrant from the revealed will of God, should presume that he must determine the success on the right side. For the ridiculous unreasonableness of it, besides the demonstrations of experience, that the guilty has frequently killed the innocent, it is further evident, from the very nature of the thing: for is there any natural inference, from a man's strength or success, to his innocence? or is it any argument, that the man did not steal another's goods, or defile his bed, because he had better skill at



his weapon than his accuser, and so slew him? I should both abuse my own labour and your patience, should I endeavour to beat down this senseless custom by any further confutation.

(3.) A third case is, when two agree upon a single combat, for the decision of the right of possessing any goods or estate, mutually claimed by both, in which it is agreed that the right shall fall to the conqueror. This also is utterly unlawful, as being a course wholly extrinsical to, and unfitted for the decision of matters of right.

For in every doubtful case, there is yet a right on one side; and where there is a right, there a right may be proved: the proving of which belongs to the law, and the courts of justice; and he that seeks for law from his rapier, which he should seek from the judge, deserves to have his person instead of his case brought to the bar. No man has a right or power to choose the way of having his right tried, by any course not prescribed or permitted by the law.

He indeed whose right the thing is, may possess and defend it against him who is pleased to doubt of the other's right; and in the defence of it may lawfully kill him in his unjust and violent invasion: but yet he may not voluntarily and by choice cast the deciding of his questioned right upon the issues of a single combat, a thing otherwise disallowed. The reason is, because though every man is master of his own right, yet he is not master of the way by which that right is to be tried; that being by all laws took out of private hands, and vested in the person of a public judge.

And to what purpose are courts open, and tribunals erected, if causes must be tried in the field, and inheritances conveyed by the decrees of a lawless combat and a contingent conquest?

(4.) The fourth and grand case is, when a duel is undertaken either for revenge of some injury done, or for vindication of a man's honour, upon the account of some affront passed upon him. As for the first of these, all plea of lawfulness is taken from it, by what has been already said in condemnation of private revenge. And for the second, which is the defence of the great idol and Diana of the duellists, called *honour*; it is confessed that the case of the challenger, and of him that is challenged, is very different. And for the former, there are few that patronize or absolve him, under what pretence soever he may absolve himself. But for the latter, many fair allegations may be made: as, that he loses his reputation upon refusal of the combat; and that, as to the real concerns of life, and the advantage of his fortunes, he is thought unfit for any public command or preferment which requires a person of courage; he is despised, scorned, and trampled upon, by which the contents and comforts of life, dearer than life itself, are torn from him: but with a *non obstante* to all this, I affirm any acceptance of a duel in such a case to be unlawful. And, in answer to what has been alleged, I reply, first, that it proves only to be a difficult duty; such as the exercise of most virtues are, especially according to those straight lines of duty drawn by Christianity. For if every inconvenience attending the performance of a duty should change it from being a

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duty, where is the difficulty of being religious? How can any man be obliged to suffer for conscience sake, if fear of suffering unties the obligation?

The upshot of the dispute is, God by his providence, for the trial of a man's sincerity, and his obedience to the divine law, calls him to an act of duty, beset with high dissuasives, grim circumstances, and great discouragements. So that the point lies here: Will you lose your soul, or your reputation, the favour of God, or the opinion of men? quit your hopes of eternity, or the momentary breath of a popular applause? I suppose here the weight and reason of the thing is sufficient to determine his choice, and to support his spirit in all the calamities that shall attend it.

Besides, that which is here supposed, which is loss of honour, is indeed no such thing: the measure of honour, is the judgment of the knowing, and the pious, and the virtuous, who will value and applaud the passive magnanimity of such an one, that durst look a duty in the face, in spite of scorn, and conquer the scoffs of the world, of which the most reputed for valour are afraid. All that he loses is the opinion of those who rate honour by a false rule, and measure glory by the standard of their own ignorance, vanity, and rashness: and the same persons who condemn him for this, would slight him as much for not talking obscenely, not scoffing at religion, and whatsoever is sacred, and for not drinking himself to the condition of a barrel or a sponge; or not rapping out such hideous oaths, as might even provoke divine justice to revenge the impiety of them upon a place or a nation. Those indeed who look upon the not doing of these things as pedantry, would, no question, account all refusal of a duel poorness and pusillanimity.

It was a wise, a prudent, and indeed a valiant answer of a certain commander, who being challenged by one of his enemies to a duel, told him, that he would meet him in the head of the enemy; which to a soldier was the true opportunity of fortitude, because indeed the scene of duty.

But he that has not the courage to puff at all popular surmises, and to esteem himself superior to the riots and mistakes of hectors; but by a foolish facility appears and ventures his life at the word and challenge of a furious sot, whose life is not worth the keeping, falls ingloriously, and descends to his grave with the burial of an ass; shame is his windingsheet, and the solemnity of his funeral, the reprehension of the wise, the pity of the good, and the laughter of his companions; who can make sport at the loss of a soul, and the miseries of damnation.

And thus I have shewn the several cases in which duels are unlawful; and I suppose I preach to an auditory that needs no other argument against them, than the demonstration of their unlawfulness; yet since other arguments there are, I think a truth cannot be too much confirmed.

1. And amongst these, the judgment of men generally condemning them is no contemptible one. I have already observed what an ignominious name the name of *gladiator* was



amongst the heathen Romans: and in the laws of the Lombards, even while they permitted the use of those duels, they branded them with a mark of infamy. *Incerti sumus de iudicio Dei, et multos audivimus per pugnam sine justa causa suam causam perdere. Sed propter consuetudinem gentis nostrae Longobardorum legem impiam vetare non possumus.* They called it an impious law, even while they suffered it to continue; and declared that they did so, because the corruption and vice of the nation was too strong for them, and beyond the control of remedies. The canon law, even to those that died in justs or tiltings, (which were but in a manner the shadows of a duel,) yet denied them the privilege of Christian burial, in the fifth book of the Decretals of Gregory, chap. i. *de Torneamentis*. And if you will, you may to these add the judgment of the council of Trent, orthodox enough in this matter, where their interest gave them no cause to be otherwise, sess. xxv. chap. 19. *Detestabilis duellorum usus fabricante diabolo introductus, ut cruenta corporum morte animarum etiam perniciem lucretur, ex Christiano orbe penitus exterminetur.* Were it as needful as it is easy, many more authorities might be added, to discountenance this profane practice: but I suppose these are enough to give more credit to the refusal of a duel, than can accrue upon the acceptance of it, from the opinion and vogue of debauched persons; whose infamy will not let their censure be a reproach.

2. But the second and chief argument shall be taken from the wretched consequences of the thing itself; which are twofold:

- (1.) Such as attend the conquered person.
- (2.) Such as attend the conqueror.

As for the conquered person, he is sure of these two evils.

(1.) A disastrous death. And surely it ought to be a very great gain that is to counterbalance the loss of life; something more than the reputation of not giving the wall, not enduring a slighting word or a trivial disrespect; which might otherwise have been confuted by silence, conquered by contempt, and outlived by the next hour.

But now all the labour and expense of a man's former education, all the hopes and usefulness of his remaining years, the expectations of his friends, and perhaps the supports of a family, are lopt off at a blow, extinguished in a moment, with an overplus of misery from the sadness of the occasion.

It is a sad thing for any hopeful man, in the vigour of his years, to be carried off by a plague or a fever, or an unfortunate accident; but still all that is uncomfortable in these is, that the man is dead; but there is no criminal circumstance, from the manner of his death, to embitter his remembrance: he did not die by a sin, or by any thing that might stain his surviving name or endanger his future condition. It was the action of Providence, which piety will, and mortality must submit to.

But he that dies in a duel, so falls to the earth, that it is to be feared he falls much lower; and that the iron enters deeper into his soul than into his body, and kills much further than

it reaches. And this introduces the other fatal consequence which attends the person thus vanquished, and that is,

(2.) Death eternal. When two persons come into the field upon such an expedition, they defy one another, they defy the laws both of God and man, and they defy hell: their business is, which shall send the other to that place of misery first. For certainly whosoever quits the body with the marks of murder and revenge fresh upon his soul, and passes from his conquering adversary to his dreadful Judge, shall in that world be condemned for a murderer, though it was his ill hap to be murdered in this.

Nay, there will lie a double charge of murder upon him: namely, for being both the unjust occasion of his own death, and the designer of his adversary's: for it is the design that makes the murderer, and not the event and issue of the action, which is wholly contingent and extrinsical to the will. For shall a man be therefore accounted no murderer, because he had less courage, less skill, or less luck than his opposite? because his purpose was stronger than his arm? or because his foot slipt, or his misguided rapier hit upon a rib, and kept the fatal point from the regions of life, and so gave the adversary opportunity to be more sure and mischievous in his thrust? All which plea or excuse amounts to no more than this, that he would have slain his adversary with all his heart, but was prevented, and could not.

I neither will nor dare pronounce any thing in limitation of the extent of God's mercy; but this I shall say, that according to the standing rule and tenor of God's revealed will, he that dies in a duel undertook upon an unjust cause, affords no ground for any one to judge that he is saved: for he dies in his sin, directing his sword to his brother's heart; so that there is nothing but his last breath passing between his murderous intention and the final giving up of his accounts to God; before whom he has no other cause to allege for his dying in this manner, but that he was proud, passionate, or revengeful; sad qualifications to recommend a man to the tribunal of such a Judge.

We have seen here the miserable consequences that befall the conquered dueller. Let us now, in the next place, take a survey of those that befall the conqueror: and these also are three.

(1.) In case he is apprehended: the law has provided that for him which he did for his adversary, but in a more ignominious manner. The rope and the gibbet is to be his portion; die he must; and what honour a man wins or saves, by that which gives him an opportunity of being hanged, is hard to be understood; but he that mistakes the cart for a triumphal chariot, or the gallow-tree for a triumphal arch, may apply himself to the obtaining such victories as these.

(2.) But secondly, suppose that he escapes by flight; yet then he quits his country, and lives a banished man, and like Cain, having murdered his brother, he presently betakes himself to wander about the world, leaving behind him the confiscation of his goods, a family lamenting, and perhaps starving; and some of them peradventure dying for grief,



and so feeling the murderous influence of his action as really, though not in the same manner, as his slain adversary.

Surely these will be sad accidents to a man in cold blood, when the fury of his passion, which abused his reason, and represented revenge so pleasant, shall be over, and transmit the thing naked to his recovered judgment, to be considered according to its real aspect and all its sharp events.

By this time, undoubtedly, he will see how much better it had been for him to have kept himself quiet and innocent in the peaceable enjoyment of his friends, his estate, and country; than to wander as an indigent murderer in a strange land, from whence the sense of his guilt, the severity of the laws, and the exasperation of the murdered person's friends, ready to prosecute those laws against him, continually terrify him from all thoughts of a return.

(3.) But, in the third and last place, we will suppose the man to have better fortune: that he has fought and killed his adversary, and so satisfied his revenge; and moreover, that through the intercession of great friends, willing to share his guilt, and to derive some of the blood upon their own heads, he has not by flight escaped, but by a full acquitment out-braved justice, and triumphed over the law, and so stands secure as to all temporal retribution. But still, after all this, may we not ask concerning such an one, is all well within? How fares it with him in the court of conscience? Is he able to keep off the grim arrests of that? Can he drown the cry of blood, and bribe his own thoughts to let him alone? Can he fray off the vulture from his breast, that night and day is gnawing his heart, and wounding it with ghastly and amazing reflections?

Whether it is, that God has done it for the defence of men's lives, or whether it is the unnaturalness of the sin, or whatsoever else may be the cause, certain it is, that there is nothing which dogs the conscience so incessantly, fastens upon it so closely, and tears it so furiously, as the dismal sense of blood-guiltiness.

The man perhaps endeavours to be merry, he goes about his business, he enjoys his cups and his jolly company: and possibly, if he fought for revenge, he is applauded and "admired by some; if he fought for a mistress, he is smiled upon for a day. But when, in the midst of all his gaities, his conscience shall come and round him in the ear: Sir, you are to remember that you have murdered a man, and what is more, you have murdered a soul; you have sacrificed an immortal nature, the image of God, and the price of Christ's blood, to a pique, a punctilio, to the loves of a pitiful creature, lighter than vanity, and emptier than the air: and these are the worthy causes for which your brother now lies in the regions of darkness and misery, without relief, without recovery; an eternal sacrifice to a short passion, a rash anger, and a sudden revenge.

Now when these reasonings shall be joined with the considerations of the divine justice, and the retributions that Heaven reserves for blood; these sad reckonings, that are in store

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for the successful acquitted murderer: believe it, where these thoughts shall lay hold of the conscience, they will leave their marks behind them.

But if the man feels none of these stings or remorse, his condition is infinitely worse: he is sealed up under a spirit of searedness, and reprobation, and an invincible curse. And it is a sign that God intends him not the grace of repentance, perhaps for denying his brother the opportunities of it, by a sudden death; and sending him out of the world in such a condition, that it were ten thousand times better for himself never to have come into the world, than that he should leave it under the like.

I have nothing more to say concerning such a person, but that his sin has put him into such an estate, that, living or dying, he is unavoidably miserable.



SERMON XLIX.

ROMANS xii. 18.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

YOU may remember that the second particular laid down for the prosecution of these words, was to assign the measures and proportions by which the duty of *living peaceably* was to be determined: which I shewed were contained within the bounds of lawful.

In my inquiries into which, I undertook the resolution of several cases. As, concerning the lawfulness of war; of keeping or breaking the peace with the magistrate; as also of duels. All which I have already finished; so that there remain only two more to be discussed. One of which is,

Whether it be lawful to repel force by force, so as to kill another in one's own defence?

The matter of which question is very different from that about duels. For a duel is a fight freely and voluntarily undertaken by the offer of one party, and the acceptance of the other. But this is a sudden, a violent, and unforeseen assault, in respect of him that is assaulted: who thereupon enters not into combat upon any precedent choice or deliberate appointment; but upon the sudden alarms of force and necessity, and the compulsions of an extreme danger.

In which condition we are to suppose the man cut off from all possibility of flying, shut up from all succour by a rescue, or remedy by the law; but drove into those straits, both of place, time, and all other circumstances, that all evasion is rendered desperate and impossible, but through the blood of his adversary.

In this case I affirm it to be lawful for a man to save himself by destroying his enemy, and that upon these two reasons.

1. The first taken from that which we have already insisted upon; the great natural right of self-preservation: which right is as full in particular persons as in public bodies. It is the very firstborn of all the rudiments of nature; and the very ground and reason of its actions; not instilled by precept, but suggested by instinct. A man is no more instructed to this, than he is to be an hungry or thirsty, when nature wants its due refection. And that as to this particular the rights of nature are not abridged by Christian religion, will appear from the

Second argument, taken from that place where Christ commands his disciples to provide themselves swords: but to have allowed them the instruments of defence, and at the same time to have forbid the use of them as unlawful, had been highly irrational. I suppose Christ did not command those poor fishermen to wear swords for ornament only, as men do nowadays; but that he might countenance them in the management of their own preservation, amidst those many unjust violences and assaults, that were likely enough to attend men odious to the world for the promulgation of severe truths.



Add to this the suffrage of the civil law, where the code in the Cornelian law *de Sicariis* utters itself thus: *Is qui aggressorem vel quemcunque alium in dubio vitae discrimine constitutus occiderit, nullam ob id factum calumniam metuere debet.* And further, in the Aquilian law, to the same purpose: *Vim vi repellere omnes leges omniaque jura permittunt.*

So that we have seen the verdict of nature, of Christ, and of the civil law, in the present case; and he whom these absolve is a just and an innocent person, whatsoever other law may condemn him.

Yet since nature, in the present corruption of mankind, is weak and dark, and so apt to misjudge of the necessity of self-defence; oftentimes making that to be so, which indeed is nothing else but an unnecessary fear or a sinful revenge; it being a very easy thing to clothe an unlawful action or design with a lawful name: therefore it concerns us so to assert the privilege, as to take off the danger; and this will be done by stating it under its due limitations.

In order to which, I shall endeavour to clear these three inquiries.

1st, What are those things, for the necessary defence of which it may be lawful to kill the unjust invader?

2dly, What are the conditions required to render that defence lawful?

3dly, Who are the persons against whom we may justly manage such a defence?

And first for the things that may be thus defended.

1. The first is life; the eminent and certain danger of which does lawfully unsheath every man's sword in the defence of it. For where it is lawful to live, it is lawful to do all those things without which life cannot be preserved. Life is a purchase to be rated at the loss of all things else. He that loses it, loses all the world with it, and every thing dies, as to the fruition of the dying man. There is no reparation to be made for it, either in kind or any thing else, as in some degree it may be done in all other losses. For he that loses his friend or his honour may be repaid with an estate, though not to an equality of compensation. But a lost life can be repaid with no enjoyment, since it is the foundation of all other enjoyments; and no man enjoys any thing but the living.

For can we think that a pompous burial or a fine tomb will make the dead any amends, or to have a few mournful words spoken of him for fashion-sake, as, that he was an excellent person, and that it was a loss to the public that he should be snatched away by such a disaster; which words, being dead, he cannot hear; and if alive, perhaps would not much regard.

But all this while the man continues the portion of worms and rottenness, and the great injury of death maintains its full effect upon him. All after-honours and commemorations being but like the serving up of a banquet to a grave, or like the ceremony of courtship and compliment to the cold flints and the insensible rocks.

2. When a man is in imminent danger of the mutilation of a leg or an arm, or the like, it is lawful to prevent the loss of either by the death of the assailant. For who knows but the



loss of a part may bring the destruction of the whole. Where the danger is indefinite, there the utmost and the greatest is to be feared, and proportion ably to be provided against.

The man perhaps in the issue of the conflict may lose but a finger, but thereupon his hand may gangrene, and then his arm, and from thence the mischief reach his heart: or he may receive but a blow only, which blow may sow the seeds of death in his body, in an imposthume, which shall grow and prevail, and at length break, and bear him to his grave. In which case there is no doubt but the man is murdered, though it be ten years before he dies, as truly as if he had breathed his last the very next minute. For he murders a man, who gives him a hurt, upon which death certainly and irrecoverably follows, whatsoever the time of it chance to be. The cause may have its effect, be the distance of time or place what it will, so long as it reaches it by the connection of a certain influence. And he that pulls one end of the chain, moves the remotest link of it as surely, as if he did it by an immediate touch.

But suppose that death should not follow upon the loss of a limb, and moreover (which is yet impossible) that the assaulted person knew so much, yet nature no less dictates the preservation of every part; it being as natural to a man to be entire and perfect, as to be, and to have all his limbs, as any one of them. Besides that it is often worse than death itself to live with the deformities and pains of a shattered, mangled body; as a burden to one's self, and a contempt to others. From which miseries there are few, but, were it in their power, would ransom themselves with the price of the world; and of their blood too, did not the awe of God and the terrors of another death keep them from breaking the uncomfortable prison of such a body, to pass to an eternal execution.

3. When a person's chastity is invaded by force, it is granted on all hands to be lawful to kill the person that invades it. For this is as irreparable as life itself; it is lost but once, and if it should come in competition with life, it would be judged more valuable. Upon which ground, Tamar, had she had strength and courage enough, might have saved her brother Absalom the labour of killing Amnon, and prevented an unjust revenge by a just defence.

To lose one's life is indeed a misery, but it is no dishonour; but the ravished person is dishonoured, her glory stained, and the lustre of that reputation by which she lives and stands accepted in the world, is blasted for ever.

I know no parent, who deserves to be a parent, who had not rather see a child dead, than deflowered. Virginius rescued his daughter from the lust and violence of Appius Clodius the decemvir, by stabbing her dead with his own hand. I am not concerned to warrant his action; but surely it argues the value that the very heathen put upon their chastity, when the very design against it was thought fit to be prevented by the death of the innocent, and to be revenged upon the nocent, even to the subversion of a government.

4. In the fourth place, as for the preservation of estate or goods, the case admits of some more doubt. And there are opinions both for the affirmative and the negative.

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Those who hold the negative argue,

First, From the law of Moses, which, in [Exodus xxii. 2, 3](#), distinguishes the case of a thief robbing by day and by night, allowing it for lawful to kill him, if he makes an invasion in the night; whereas if he is killed in the day, the same law avouches the man that killed him guilty of murder.

Of which difference, these two reasons are alleged.

(1.) Because it cannot be distinguished in the night, whether he comes barely to steal or to murder also; and therefore it is lawful to kill him, not considered merely as a thief, but upon just suspicion that he might come as a murderer.

(2.) Because goods taken away in the night leave the person robbed destitute of all means by which to discover the robber, and consequently of all legal means by which to recover what he had lost.

Ans. This is true, and upon the strength of this very ground I answer this argument brought from the Mosaic law, by affirming, that howsoever the letter runs, yet the design of that law was not to make every killing of a thief in the day-time murder, but that usually and ordinarily it was to be accounted so. For since the law makes it lawful to kill a thief in the night, because at that time all people being usually disposed to their rest, it supposes that there are no witnesses present, by whose means the injured man might have right against him at law: but unlawful to kill him in the day, because then it supposes that there may be witnesses, as for the most part there are. Yet since sometimes it so falls out, that there neither are nor can be any; it will follow, by analogy of reason, that a man under such circumstances is permitted to deal with a thief as in the night; since the very cause for which he was permitted to do it then, does equally take place now.

(2.) In the second place, some argue against the lawfulness of killing a robber for the preservation of our goods, from the tenor of the gospel, and the design of Christian religion; which bids the professors of it despise and trample upon these temporal things, and therefore certainly permits them not to prevent the loss of them with the blood of any one who should presume to take them. To this I answer, that the gospel commands us only to despise these things comparatively, in reference to spiritual and eternal felicities. Otherwise if the words be understood absolutely, it could not be lawful for us so much as to defend our lives; since some texts in the letter of them command us no less to despise these, than those other enjoyments.

I conclude therefore for the affirmative, that it is lawful for a man to defend his estate and goods against an unjust force, even with the death of him who offers that force, if they cannot be retained and possessed otherwise.

The reason is, because they are the means and support of life, and therefore are to be reckoned in the same account with life itself. If one should say, that it were lawful for a man to knock him on the head, that should offer to batter down his house to the ground before



his face; but that he was by no means to touch him, in case he only took away the chief pillar, upon which the house leaned; notwithstanding that upon the removal of that pillar it must fall as unavoidably as if it were pulled down: surely such a distinction were grossly absurd and ridiculous.

The case is the same here. Neither does that reply take off the argument, that a man may live though his estate be lost, as by labour, charity, or the getting of another. For this is accidental, and it may fall out otherwise. And every man is to look upon what he possesses as his only subsistence; since he is not certain, upon the loss of it, to have any other: nay, he is certain that at the present he has none; nor is like to have any for the future, unless some accident or opportunity of a livelihood offers itself, which he is not to suppose or build upon, it being wholly uncertain and contingent; especially, so as to take him off from his dependence upon that which is certain and present.

Should a man put his whole estate into a jewel; either for concealment of his estate, as being otherwise in danger, or for some other advantage or convenience; and should be set upon for it by a thief upon the road, so that, all hope of rescue being out of the way, there remained no other means to preserve it but by killing the robber upon the place; I must confess, I can see no solid reason, why he might not do justice upon him, and right to himself, by sending him out of the world, with his blood upon his own head. If any excellent and pious persons have chose to do otherwise, the thief was beholden to them; and they have only quitted their own right, which lays no injunction at all upon others to quit theirs.

For if a man sets upon me in the highway to kill me, all grant that I may in my own defence kill him; but if he would only take my money, that, it seems, I must relinquish by any means rather than take his life. But let the reason of the difference be assigned. If I ask, what makes it lawful for me to kill him in the former case? it will be answered surely, to preserve my life. But I reply, Is not my life as much destroyed if I am starved, as if I am stabbed? And when my money is once gone, I am sure I may be starved, and none can assure me that I shall not. For am I certain that I shall find a bag of money or a table spread in the road, or that people will be so charitable, as upon free cost to keep me from hunger and cold? which annoyances, unless they will do so, must as surely despatch me, as either a rapier thrust into my bowels, or a bullet sent to my heart.

Neither is that further exception of any moment, that there is no proportion in point of value between the loss of money and the loss of a life. For in the present case my money, compared to my enemy's life, is not to be considered barely as such a sum of money, but as it is the necessary support of my life: so that really, and in effect, the comparison is between his life and mine; in which I conclude myself warranted, by the rights and laws of nature, to prefer my own before his. Nay, if it were but a sixpence that he would rifle me of, and I had no other visible subsistence in the world but that poor sum, I might lawfully defend



that, as I would myself, that is, with the death of my enemy; and count it as equal a stake against his life, as if it were ten thousand millions.

And thus I have shewn those four things which it is lawful for a man thus to defend; namely, life, limbs, chastity, and estate: where, before I pass any further, I shall add this, that whatsoever it is lawful for a man to do in these cases for himself, the same also is lawful for him to do in the same danger and extremity of his neighbour. The reason is, because the measure and standard of his love to his neighbour, is to be the love that he bears to himself.

Which yet, by the way, is to be understood under equal cases and circumstances; for though we are commanded *to love our neighbour as ourselves*, yet it follows not, but when the danger must inevitably fall upon one of us, we may preserve ourselves before our neighbour; because, in the same condition, we are bound to desire no more for ourselves, but that our neighbour should save us in the next place to himself; and therefore, by virtue of this precept, he can desire no more of us. In a word, we are *to love our neighbour as ourselves*, putting him into the same condition and circumstances in reference to us, as we are in reference to him: and therefore, as I myself could not in reason desire, but that my neighbour, in a danger equal to us both, should first defend himself; so my neighbour cannot deny, but that I should do as much for myself under this condition, as I allow him to do for himself under the same. But this by way of digression.

Certain it is, that the defence of our neighbour in his extremity engages us to all those extraordinary courses that we took for our own preservation. Upon this account it was, that Abraham armed his household, and slew kings for the rescue of his kinsman Lot, took captive by them, [Genesis xiv. 14, 15](#). And there is no man, whose concerns and obligations terminate within himself; but he is a relative person, and must own a debt to friendship, to consanguinity, and society. For as in the natural body the whole is maintained by that sympathy and mutual feeling, that the members have of the condition of each other; by which, when any of them is in distress, it calls for and receives help and relief from all the rest: so it is, according to its proportion, in the political body, which is only an aggregate, artificial man. Every particular person lies under an obligation to come in to the succour of his endangered brother, as the hand would presently lift itself up in the defence of the leg or the face, to repel and beat off whatsoever would annoy them. And the contrary would be barbarous and absurd, a perverting of the designs of nature, which, by thus leaving the interest of every part single in itself, and divided from and independent upon the concernment of its fellows, would quickly draw a ruin and dissolution upon the whole fabric. That man who could stand and see another stripped or hacked in pieces by a thief or a rogue, and not at all concern himself in his rescue, is a traitor to the laws of humanity and religion; he commits murder with his eyes, and sheds blood by not striking a blow; and shall one day account to God for the guilt of that action, that was as criminally permitted by him, as done by the other.

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2dly, I come now to the second thing, which is, to shew the conditions required to legalize such a defence of ourselves and fortunes. And they are these.

(1.) That the violence offered be so apparent, and withal so great and pressing, that there can be no other means of escaping it, but by killing the adversary: otherwise, if a man makes it great by his own presumptions and fears, and so makes it necessary to himself to repel that injury with a mortal wound from his rapier, which he might have done with a blow of a switch or a thrust of his arm, he is a murderer; nor will it excuse him to plead a danger which was only created by his own apprehensions. Thus in the late rebellion, when some persons, by the guilt of great villainies, had exasperated majesty, and so having deserved, were pleased also to fear the just consequences of their actions; they were so bold as to strike the first blow, and then so impudent as to say that they did it in their own defence. But that saying of Vibius Crispus, commended by Quintilian, may be here fitly applied, *Quis tibi sic timere permisit?* Fear greatens and redoubles every evil, it stretches the shadow, and enlarges the suspicion: but blood must not be shed upon surmise.



That which must warrant a man in this before God and his conscience, must be a danger as manifest as the light; a life even perishing, and in the very jaws of death: not an hazard that may be disputed, but an extremity that calls and cries, and admits of no answer but an immediate deliverance. And if in this case a life be taken away, he only is a murderer that deserved, not he that inflicted the blow.

(2.) It is required, that all possibility of recourse to the magistrate for a legal protection be taken away. In which case the law leaves every man to his own natural defence. For men are not made for laws, but laws for the good and preservation of men: and therefore, though they enjoin the injured person to fly to them for succour, yet, when he is surrounded with such circumstances as render such access to them impossible; and in the mean time that life, for the preservation of which those laws were designed, is under an unavoidable danger, without flying to other remedies; should those laws tie a man's hand in such a case, they were only snares and traps, and means to deliver a man naked and undefended to be devoured by his enemy.



But, as I observed before, war is a remedy upon the failure of law. And when the supreme and fatal law of necessity comes to be in force, all inferior obligations disband and vanish: and the law that tells a man that no particular person's injury can take from him his right to live, ought to take place, and both to direct him what he is to do in this affair, and to absolve him when he has done.

(3.) In the third place, it is required that a man in the act of defending himself designs merely his own defence, without any hatred or bitter purpose of revenge towards the person who thus invades him. A lawful action may be depraved and changed by the intervenience of an ill intention. Jehu executed the command of God in extirpating the house of Ahab, and consequently that action of his was lawful; but yet we find that the same action was

reckoned to him for sin, because a particular malice and design against Ahab's house mingled with it, and so altered the whole complexion of the performance.

To discern whether a man in these defensive conflicts be acted by a purpose of self-defence, pure and unmixed from any spice of revenge, I confess is very difficult, in case the assault shall be continued till it determines in the death of one party. But if the defendant chance to prevail over the assailant to that degree, as to be able to secure himself from him without taking of his life; and yet shall not be brought to give over, or acquiesce, till he has despatched him: though his first stroke in this engagement was but defence, and so lawful; yet the sharpness of revenge growing upon his spirit in the midst of the action, it is to be feared that the last stroke was murder, and so will pass in the accounts of Heaven.

And thus much for the second thing, namely, to shew the conditions required to render the killing of another in our own defence lawful

3dly, The third, which I shall despatch in a word or two, is to inquire who are the persons against whom we may lawfully thus defend ourselves. And for this, I cannot conceive that any doubt can be raised, but concerning these two, a magistrate and a parent. As for the magistrate, the grounds that I have already laid of non-resistance, by virtue of every subject's quitting his natural right of defending himself against the magistrate, and resigning up all power of resistance into his governor's hands, sufficiently proves, that this doctrine gives no countenance to the subject in repelling any invasion made upon him by his prince.

But as for a parent; the son has made no such resignation of his right up to him. And therefore there are not wanting some casuists among the Jesuits, who have ventured to own the lawfulness of a man's defending himself against parents as well as kings, and all superiors whatsoever; even with the death of those who shall invade him. But yet I affirm, that for a son in any case whatsoever to take away his father's life, from whence, under God, he received his own, seems to imply such a turpitude in the thing itself, and to offer such a grievance to nature, that he is to choose to die rather than, upon any inducement of extremity, to stain his hands in the blood of his father. This I will grant, that in case a father shall unjustly assault the life of his son; his son may proceed to defend himself so far as to disarm him, shut him up, and bind him; but to kill him is unnatural and intolerable. And if a son cannot otherwise secure his life from his father's violence, it is more eligible to die a thousand deaths, than to make such a monstrous and inhuman trespass upon so sacred a name and relation.

And thus I have endeavoured both to clear and to assert the doctrine of self-defence in its due latitude. In all which discourse I am not sensible that I have uttered any thing but the voice of nature, and the rightly explained sense of religion.

As for those who assert the contrary, and by taking from mankind all right of self-preservation, would have them still live in the world as naked as they came into it; I shall not wish them any hurt, but if I would, I could scarce wish them a greater, than that they might feel the full effect and influence of their own opinion.

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IV. The fourth and last case to be resolved is; Since to prosecute another in courts of judicature is in its kind a certain breach of the mutual bond of peace, whether it be allowable for Christians thus to prosecute and to go to law one with another?

It may perhaps, at first sight, seem a strange and an insolent design, to bring a thing vouched by custom, owned by practice, and established by authority, under dispute: yet since it is no less our duty to be able to give a reason of what we do, than of what we believe; and since there are not wanting scriptures, to whose rules we profess to submit our practice, yet in appearance contrary to this; and since there are also some in the world, who think they have sufficient ground from those scriptures to entertain a contrary opinion; I conceive I may, without blame, enter into a disquisition of a thing already controverted; that so, by an impartial survey of the reasons of both sides, we may settle our future practice upon such sure grounds, that if it appears we have been in the wrong, we may be convinced, and brought off from, but if in the right, we may be confirmed in the thing hitherto allowed by us.

As for those who have been so bold as to arraign the courts of law themselves, they are the anabaptists; who succeed into all the principles and opinions of the old anabaptists, those sons of confusion, that once so infested Germany: concerning the nature of whose opinions I cannot but judge this, that those who own a design to remove and cast down all human laws and judgments, ought to be persons either absolutely, and even to a necessity innocent, or very highly malefactors; the former of which might oppose them as needless; the latter, as dreadful and destructive. As for their innocence; the stories of their barbarous rebellions, murders, and the desolations made by them, have settled men's judgments concerning that. And therefore, if their opinions grow from their guilt, in conjunction with their ignorance; as it cannot appear from what root else they should grow; I shall endeavour to remove the latter, leaving the laws themselves to deal with the former.

In the management of this question, I shall, 1. Examine the arguments brought against the allowableness of Christians going to law. 2. Consider what may be argued and alleged for it. 3. Propose the conditions required to warrant men in such a practice.

1. First of all then, their arguments seem principally to bear upon two places of scripture.

(1.) The first is, that formerly hinted by me, and reserved to be discussed in its proper place here, which is in [Matthew v. 40](#), where Christ determines that general precept of not resisting evil, to an utter abolition of all lawsuits; commanding every disciple of his, that in case any man *will sue him at law, and take away his coat, he should let him have his cloak also*. And certainly there is scarce any thing more indispensably necessary to a man's subsistence, than his raiment. But now if a man shall be obliged even to relinquish this, and resign it up to the hand of violence, rather than to recover it by a legal trial, it must needs follow, that the rigour of this command cuts off all pretences of going to law whatsoever.

In answer to this, I cannot but observe, that it is the custom of this sort of men still to argue from the letter of scripture, in abstraction from the sense; and without any pondering



either of the occasion, circumstances, or coherence of the text, immediately to fly and fasten upon the bare outside of the expression.

Two things, therefore, may be answered to this text.

1. That it is not certain, that what we render by *suing at law* signifies any such thing; the Greek is τῷ θέλοντι σοι κριθῆναι; but κρίνομαι signifies to strive, war, and contend with another by force; so that it is all one with μάχεσθαι, καὶ ἐρίζεσθαί σοι. But to sue another at law is κρίνειν; and that with an accusative case, τῷ θέλοντί σε κρίνειν; and to be sued in the passive, κρίνομαι: according to which, τῷ θέλοντί σοι κριθῆναι, taking σοι for ὑπὸ σοῦ, must signify, *to him that is willing to be sued by thee at law*: the meaning being this; He that has took thy coat from thee, and is willing to be brought by thee into a trial for it, to him give thy cloak also. Which sense, besides that it is highly incongruous, τὸν χιτῶνά σου λαβεῖν should have gone before σοι κριθῆναι, and so the words have run thus: *To him that is desirous to take thy coat., and then to go to law with thee for it*: and not preposterously, *To him that is desirous to go to law with thee, and to take thy coat, to him give thy cloak also*; which is to make the going to law antecedent to the wrong or injury about which men go to law.

It is more probable therefore, that the sense of the text is this; *If any one would unjustly contend with thee, and forcibly take away thy cloak, let him have thy coat also*. According to which sense, the words speak nothing at all of the suits or trials at law. And this interpretation, grounded upon the propriety of the word, and so fully agreeing both with what goes before, and with what follows after, if any one will positively insist upon it, I do verily believe, cannot by any solid reason be disproved.

2. But because I think such respect is to be had to the translation, that it is not, but upon very urgent necessity, to be receded from; therefore, in the second place, I add,

That these words are to be interpreted with analogy to the design carried on by Christ throughout this whole chapter, which is, to shew the perverse and sinful practice of the Jews, in which they were abetted by the pharisees; and withal to declare, of how much contrary a temper his disciples and followers ought to be.

Now the custom of the Jews was, upon the receiving any injury, to pursue that law of retaliation so fiercely and bitterly, that sometimes (as I have observed before) one private man would execute it upon another; and when they could not safely or conveniently do it themselves, but were forced to implore the help of the magistrate, and to drag the injurious person before him; yet they did it with so much acrimony and gall, and such designs of personal revenge, that it sufficiently appeared to any impartial or judicious eye, that in all their prosecutions of offenders they did not so much consult either the satisfaction of justice, or their own necessary reparation, as indeed seldom needing any at all, as they did the fruitless gratification of a remorseless, vindictive humour.



Hereupon Christ reads a contrary lecture of patience, meekness, and quietness to his disciples, telling them, that in case they should have any thing injuriously purloined from them, they should rather sit down under the loss of that and a much greater thing too, than with so much virulence and exasperation of mind, as was common amongst the Jews, and unrepended, not to say countenanced by the pharisees, pursue the recovery of their former right. These words therefore do not absolutely prohibit them, being injured, to endeavour a just reparation; but conditionally rather to quit the benefit of justice, than to follow it in a sinful manner.

They are a sublime precept of patience, upon a wrong offered to our goods, parallel to those words, *If any one smite thee on the right cheek, turn the other also*; which enjoins the same measure of patience upon a wrong offered to our persons. And consequently, as heretofore, in the exposition of those, I shewed from Christ's own practice, the best comment upon his precepts, that they were not to be understood according to the rigid import of the letter, as if every man were bound to covet injuries and to court affronts; so I affirm also, that this command is not to be exacted according to the bare surface of the words, but to be enlarged to the allowance and latitude of a figure, as being indeed just such another hyperbole. Which is a trope, that to set forth the greatness of a thing more emphatically, words it in expressions greater than really it is. And thus much in answer to what they argue from this place of scripture.

(2.) The next great place, which some think to speak as fully to their purpose as this, is that in [1 Cor. vi. 7](#), *Now there is utterly a fault amongst you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* Which words certainly amount to a pregnant and full prohibition of all going to law, since they declare it to be our duty rather to suffer, nay, even to embrace any wrong, than by such means to recover our right.

But to this I answer,

1. That what we render *a fault*, is in the Greek not ἀμάρτημα, but only ἥττημα, which signifies properly a *weakness* or *defect*; and such do not always, or of necessity, carry sin along with them. According to which sense, the apostle does not condemn their going to law, as a thing in itself sinful or unjust; but as low, and weak, and not answerable to that greatness and generosity of spirit, which became persons owning so excellent a profession.

2. But in the second place, admitting that the apostle's design here is to discountenance this practice, not only as weak and illaudable, but also as sinful and disallowable; yet I affirm, that he accounted it not sinful from the very nature of the action, but only the irregularity of the circumstance; that they went to law upon every slight occasion, before unbelievers, in [verse 1](#). And though to go to law be very allowable, yet for Christians to prosecute one another before the tribunals of infidels, for those injuries which they might fairly compromise by the arbitration and decision of persons of their own body, was a thing that reflected an

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high disgrace, and left a great scandal upon Christian religion; and consequently as great a guilt upon those who brought the scandal.

In short, the apostle here either reprehends them only for going to law before unbelievers, or barely for going to law, as being a thing utterly unjust in itself. If he designs only the former, as it is clear from the whole chain of the context from the first verse to the ninth that he does; then it concludes nothing against the latter, but that before a believing judge, and a Christian court, with a due observance of other circumstances, Christians may right themselves at law. But if it be said, that the apostle directs the edge of this reproof against the very action itself; then let it be made out, how the apostle can accord himself with himself, who suffers Christians to go to law before the saints, in [ver. 1](#), *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?* Which shews, that what he prohibits under one, in the very same breath he permits under the other. Nay, he proceeds to give reasons why they should manage the judgment of these things themselves, in [ver. 2, 3](#), *If the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? And, know ye not that ye shall judge angels? how much more things pertaining to this life?* And again, in [ver. 5](#); *I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man amongst you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?* And now, is it not as clear from all these places, as if they were writ with a sunbeam, that the apostle's intention is not levelled against their going to law, but against the persons before whom they did it? That they chose to discover and rip up the sores of the church, before such infidels as would deride them, rather than before Christians, who would endeavour to conceal and cure them.

The only thing that can be replied here, is, that in those primitive times of Christianity, the Christians had no tribunals or power of judging, as being under the jurisdiction of heathen potentates: and therefore what they did in order to the deciding of controversies and suits between man and man, they did not do as judges armed with the civil power, but as arbitrators chose and consented to amongst themselves, for the ending and composing of differences. And therefore, though it might be lawful to bring one's cause before such judges, yet it cannot now be lawful to sue a brother in any of our courts, properly so called, as holding a power of jurisdiction from the magistrate.

But to this I answer; that this is so far from overthrowing or weakening the thing which it is brought to disprove, that it is a notable argument to confirm it: for if the apostles allowed it as lawful for them to bring their causes before Christians, that they might exercise a judicial act in deciding them, who yet were not endued with any legal, judicial authority from the magistrate; certainly it were highly strange and irrational, to prohibit men to seek for the same judicial acts, from such as were both Christians, and also empowered with such a judicial authority from the civil governor. In a word, it would amount to this; that Christians might try their causes before Christians, not having any legal jurisdiction for that purpose, but only the consent of the contending parties. But when the same persons come to have

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the stamp of public authority, enabling them so to do by virtue of their office; why then, all trials before them must presently cease to be lawful, and become only a betraying of the rights and privileges of believers. I shall say no more of this wild and inconsequent deduction, but that it is an argument fit to be found only in the mouth of those, whose custom it is to dispute against reason, and to fight against government.

3. The third argument against the allowableness of Christians going to law, is that strict command that lies upon them to forgive injuries, and consequently not to prosecute them in courts of judicature, forasmuch as these two seem utterly inconsistent.

But to this also I reply, that in most injuries we are to consider and distinguish two things: first, The right that is lost. Secondly, The offence done to whom it is lost. And though it may be my duty to forgive the offence done me by him that violently takes away my right; yet it follows not that I must therefore quit my right; but may, with full allowance of equity and piety, endeavour the regaining of that, while I fully remit the other.

And that this is not a mere verbal distinction without a difference, is evident from hence: that supposing that somebody robs me of my goods, and I recover them all to the value of the utmost farthing; yet still after this recovery it is certain that the man has done me an injury, and reason and religion will oblige him to ask me forgiveness; which it could not do, supposing that the wrong did not continue, even after I was repossessed of what I had lost.

It is clear therefore, that the prosecution of one's right at law does yet leave a fair scope for the exercise of forgiveness; and consequently that they may not exclude or justle out one another.

I cannot think of any thing else in scripture that seems to cast any probability of favour upon this opinion: and therefore looking upon the proof of it as desperate upon this account, I proceed to the second thing; which is to shew what may be argued for the allowableness of Christians prosecuting their rights in courts of judicature.

But beforehand I shall premise this: That the ground upon which all such prosecutions proceed is twofold. 1. Restitution; and, 2. Punishment. That is, a man is sued either to restore what he has took from another; or brought into court for some offence or mischief done by him, for which, since no restitution can be made, he is to sustain some penalty for the satisfaction of the law. In which two cases, though it is obvious to see that a man may prosecute another for the restitution of something took from him, without any thoughts of bitterness or revenge; yet since the punishment of another cannot at all redound to my advantage or reparation, it may be inquired, what can warrant a man in his prosecution of another, only to bring him to this, without being chargeable with the designs of revenge.

To this I answer; that his obligation and subjection to the community, of which he is a member, engages him to this. For every man is bound to endeavour the good and preservation of the public, and consequently to prosecute a thief or a murderer, though personally they have not injured him, forasmuch as such persons have made a breach upon society and

common justice; which requires a reparation: yea, and that so strictly, that if a man is robbed, though, being master of his own right, he might choose whether upon that score he would prosecute him for such robbery; yet since by the same there is an injury done to the public, which he cannot pardon, the law binds him to prosecute the robber; and makes him liable to be prosecuted himself, in case he should not. I conclude therefore, that all these prosecutions of a man in the courts of law are just and allowable. And so I pass to the arguments for the proof of the assertion; which are these.

1. To endeavour the execution of justice in the proper acts of it between man and man, is allowable before God, and not repugnant to religion: but without going to law, there can be no such endeavour for the execution of justice, and consequently it is to be admitted. That the former is not repugnant to religion is clear; for then justice and religion would be contrary, which would be to cast an high aspersion upon both.

Justice is the noblest dictate issuing from the principles of improved nature, and nature, which is the law of God written in our hearts, cannot contradict his law as it is written in his word. God cannot write the same thing a duty in one law, and a sin in the other. Justice came down from heaven, and descended upon mankind, as a communication of a divine perfection flowing from him whose great attribute is to be the Just One, and the rewarder of every man according to his works.

As for the assumption of the argument, that the exercise of this great blessing of the world, justice, cannot take place, unless it be lawful to prosecute offenders before courts and judges; it is a thing that requires no laborious proof. For can we expect that thieves and murderers should come and surrender their persons to the vengeance of the law freely, and of their own accord, as scorning all arrests, and preventing attachments by sheriffs, constables, and such other unnecessary instruments of force? Will they arraign themselves, be both jury and evidence, and stand convict by the generous openness of their own confession?

When and where do we read of any instance or example of such strange transactions? When men by frequent villainies have lost even common honesty, may justice expect satisfaction from their ingenuity? But these are unlikelihoods not to be insisted upon; and we may well venture the issue of the whole controversy upon this, that when these things come to pass, then the prosecution of causes at law will cease to be allowable.

2. The second argument is this; that if Christian religion absolutely prohibits and disallows all pursuit of a man's right at law, then the strict observance of this religion unavoidably draws after it the utter dissolution of all government and society; a sad consequence, but naturally issuing from such an antecedent.

For does not society consist in a due distinction of propriety amongst men, and in their peaceable and secure enjoying that, of which they are proprietors? Do not all public bodies bear upon the great basis of *meum* and *tuum* between particular persons, and upon the provision it makes to protect those persons in their respective titles to what they possess?

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And moreover, is not the foundation of all just possession a just acquisition; as by gift, labour, or the like, by which the world shares the common benefits of nature, dividing to each man his portion, and enclosing it to him from the encroachment and pretences of all others? These things, I suppose, must be granted to be the very fundamentals and first uniting principles of society.

But now, if there be no coercive power to call men to account for their actions; when the world shall be infested with the violent and the unjust, who will not labour, but yet possess; who are nobody's heirs, and yet will inherit; raising a new claim, upon force, rapine, and oppression: what will become of order, of propriety, and right? all those hinges upon which the affairs of mankind and the peace of nations move and depend?

He that has the strongest arm, the sharpest sword, the boldest front, and the falsest heart, must possess the world. Whatsoever he grasps must be his own; *right* and *possession* will be terms convertible. The meek and the injured part of mankind shall retain a right to nothing, but to patience under the insultations of the mighty and the unjust, and shall see that they can be lawfully nothing else but miserable, when the very plea of the law itself is rendered unlawful.

And, what is the greatest misery of all, these bonds of oppression must be bound upon men by the ties of religion. Thieves rob us of our goods, and then this robs us of our remedies. And men will persuade us, that Jesus Christ makes it our duty to be poor, wretched, injured, forlorn, and destitute, as often as it shall please the lawless avarice and insolence of our enemies to make us so.

Had the primitive Christians owned this to have been the genius and true intent of what they professed, it would quickly have hissed Christianity out of the world, as the bane of government, and the destroyer of whatsoever was settled, regular, and excellent amongst men. It would have exposed it both to the scorn and hatred of all governors. And the setting up the profession of it in any kingdom would have been like the bringing of a public plague into the bowels of a nation; or the courting of a foreign invasion, to trample down all before them with ruin and confusion. For surely the removal of all courts of judicature would have had no less mischievous effects upon a people, than either of those annoyances. But had this been the design of Christianity, there is no doubt but all nations would have stood upon their guard, and kept it off like a pest; and courts of judicature would sooner have suppressed this religion, than this religion could have beat down those courts.

I conclude therefore, that it is far from the purpose of Christ's doctrine to forbid injured persons to take their course at law; under the gospel, courts are to be as much open as churches. And to plead the cause of the afflicted, the fatherless, and the widow, is but part of that great office which God has honoured, by sometimes assuming it to himself. Christianity came to invest the world with new helps and privileges, and not to abridge men of their old. This religion has provided no asylum for thieves or murderers; it neither secures

nor sanctifies wrong or oppression. And therefore that opinion, which lays this as a block in their way who would proceed to a legal recovery of their rights, is to be rejected, as absurd and insufferable.

Yet since men are too prone to stretch their just allowances beyond their bounds, to abuse privileges, and to spoil a due action by undue circumstances of prosecution; I shall therefore, in the third and last place, briefly propose those conditions that are required to warrant men in their law-proceedings and contentions. And they are three.

1. First, that a man takes not this course against any one, but upon a very great and urgent cause. Every little wrong and trespass is not a sufficient warrant for me to disturb my neighbour's peace, and to make him miserable. It must be a loud and a clamorous injury, that has broke in upon a man's reputation or estate, so that one cannot be entire nor the other safe without a reparation, which must give him a lawful call to use so sharp a remedy.

But those uncharitable, unworthy motives, that usually act men in these prosecutions, sufficiently declare how much they deviate from the rules of religion: for what more usual than such kind of speeches; "I will spend five hundred, a thousand pounds, but I will have my will." So that, it seems, it is not so much to have right, as to have their will, for which some go to law. But let me say to such, that God will spend a thousand, nay, ten thousand curses upon them, but that he will fully punish such a wicked and unmerciful disposition.

2. Supposing that the wrong is great, and calls for reparation, yet in the next place it is required that a man be willing, upon any tolerable and just terms, to agree with his adversary, rather than to proceed to a suit: otherwise he does not sacrifice to justice or to necessity, but to a litigious humour and an ill-nature, that loves contention for contention's sake, and descends to it, not as a remedy, but a recreation: he designs not to advantage himself, but to afflict and harass his adversary; and therefore is willing to undergo the trouble and misery of following the suit himself, only for the base pleasure of seeing another miserable.

For surely it must be a very strange height of virulence, that shall make a man thus prefer the continuance of a quarrel before an amicable composure of it! when Providence is pleased to order the state of things so, that litigiousness is not only a great, but also a very troublesome, laborious, and costly sin. A man cannot be wicked in this respect, but with the expense of much money, the labour of long attendances, and the anxiety of much care. And when a man has wisely made a shift to recover one hundred pound with the expense of three, and for many terms run up and down, backwards and forwards, sedulously and industriously to no purpose; he will find those words of the apostle to the Corinthians, ready upon every slight cause to prosecute one another at law, *Why do you not rather take wrong? why do you not suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* to have been not so much a lesson of piety, as of policy, thrift, and good husbandry. And surely if we compare the charges, vexation, and noise of a suit, with that pitiful design which for the most part is drove at by it; if thus contentiously

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to go to law be a sin, as undoubtedly it is; why then we need look no further, nor enjoin such an one any other penance, but that he should go to law again.

3. But thirdly and lastly, supposing that both the wrong is in itself very great, and no satisfaction or conditions of agreement are offered by him that did it, but that the injured person must of necessity commence a suit against him; yet then it is required, that he manage it by the rule of charity, and not with any purpose to revenge himself upon his adversary. But certainly it is a very rare thing, and seldom found, to see a man of so clear a breast, so sincere a design, as to have waded through such prosecutions without any interposal of vindictive thoughts. The action indeed (as I have proved) is in itself lawful, but the person that is to manage it is weak and sinful, and it is ten to one but his corruption strikes in, and bears a share in what he does; and then the issue of the whole business turns but to the accounts of sin: and when the suit is ended here below, there is an action of revenge brought against him in the court above. And therefore, though he who thus chooses to right himself, does lawfully; yet (except in cases of extremity) certainly that man does more safely, who considers that he is but weak, and so offers not himself to the temptation.

And thus I have finished the resolution of the last case propounded, and I hope have stated the controversy with that truth and equality, that I have not at all derogated from the law of God, while I asserted the laws of men.



SERMON L.

ROMANS xii. 18.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

WHEN I first entered upon these words, I laid the prosecution of them in the discussion of these four particulars.

- I. To shew what was included in this great duty of living peaceably.
- II. What were the measures and proportions by which it was to be determined.
- III. What were the means by which it was to be effected.
- IV. What were the motives and arguments by which it might be enforced.

The two first of these I have at length despatched; and the two last, as containing nothing of controversy, but being of plain and practical consideration, I shall finish in this discourse, and conclude this subject.

And first, for the means conducible to our performance of this excellent duty, I shall, amongst those many that possibly each man's particular experience may better suggest to him, select and reckon these.

1. A careful suppression of all distasteful, but however of all aggravating apprehensions of any ill turn or unkind behaviour from men. He that will preserve himself in a regular course of acting, must not only attend the last issues of the performance, but watch the beginnings, and secure the fountains of action; and he will find it but a vain attempt to oppose it in its birth, when he should have encountered it in its conception. A great sin or a great virtue is a long time in forming and preparing within, and passing through many faculties before it is ripe for execution. And when that chain of preparations is laid, this perhaps is then necessary and unavoidable.

As when a man has fixed his thoughts upon an affront offered him, resented it sharply, and rolled it in his mind a long time, so that the rancour of those thoughts begin to reach and infect the passions, and they begin to rise and swell, and those also to possess the will, so that this espouses it into full resolves and purposes of revenge: it is then too late to command a man, under these dispositions and proximities of action, to be peaceable; he is possessed and full, and admits of no advice. The malicious design has got head and maturity; and therefore will certainly pass into act, and rage in a man's behaviour, to the degree of railing, or downright blows, or perhaps bloodshed; or some other instance of a great mischief.

But had a man, by an early wariness and observance of his teeming thoughts, crushed those infant sharpnesses, those first disgusts and grudgings, that began to sour and torment his whole mind, he would have found the humour curable and conquerable; and for all these seeds, and little essays of disturbance, yet, as to the main event of practice, he must have passed for a peaceable man.



Has a man therefore received an injury, a disrespect, or something at least that he thinks to be so; if he would now maintain himself in a due composure of spirit, and stop the sallings out of an hasty and indecent revenge, and all this with success and a certainty of effect; let him first arrest his thoughts, and divert them to some other object. Let him but do this easy violence to himself, as to think of something else: amongst those thousand things in the world that may be thought on, let him fix upon any one; as, his business, his studies, or the news of the time: but amongst other things, let the thoughts be directed rather to reconciling objects, such as are apt to leave a pleasure and a sweetness upon the mind; as a man's lawful and innocent recreations, the delights of a journey, of a cured sickness or an escaped danger, or the like. But chiefly, let the thoughts be busied upon such things as are peculiar and proper antidotes against the grudge conceived. As, let a man remember whether he never received a courtesy from that person who he thinks has provoked him; and let him consider, whether that courtesy did not outweigh the present injury; and was not done with greater circumstances of kindness, than this of disrespect. Now by such arts and methods of diverting the thoughts, the quick sense of the injury will by degrees be eluded, weakened, and baffled into nothing: and the grudge will strike a man's apprehensions, but as a gentle breath of air does his face, with a transient, undiscernible touch, leaving behind it neither sign nor impression.

For we must know that it is the morose dwelling of the thoughts upon an injury, a long and sullen meditation upon a wrong, that incorporates and rivets it into the mind. And upon this reason it is ill affronting the melancholy and the thinking man, whose natural temper and complexion lays what he has observed before him, by more frequent remembrances, and more stable and permanent representations; so that the mind has opportunity to carry its examination to every particular circumstance, part, degree, and occasion of the affront, brooding upon it with such a close and continued intention, till it binds the remembrance and resentment of it upon the soul with bands of iron and links of brass, never to be dissolved, or fetched asunder, by time, or kindness, or any after-attempts of reconciliation.

If a man will indulge his thoughts upon a disrespect offered him, he will find how by degrees they will raise and advance, and get the mastery of him. That which first did but lightly move, shall presently warm, then heat, afterwards chafe, and at length fire and inflame him: and now the evil is grown mighty and invincible; and swelled into a strange unlimitedness, so that that which perhaps but a week or two ago was no more than a slight displeasure, and to be smiled, or talked, or slept away, is now like to go off like a clap of thunder, to scatter an huge ruin, and determine in something dismal and tragical.

We shall find that this way of thinking had the like effect upon David, but upon a better subject, in [Psalm xxxix. 3](#), *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue.* We see here the gradation by which this holy man's thoughts



led his zeal up to its full height. In like manner, when an injury has passed upon a man, he begins to muse upon it, and upon this *his heart grows hot within him, and at length the fire burns, and then he speaks with his tongue*; perhaps railing and reviling: and it is well, if in the issue he does not also strike with his hand. The lion has not always such a present supply of fierceness as to fit him to fly upon his prey, till, by the echoes of his own roarings, and the frequent striking of himself with his train, he has called up his drowsy spirits, and summoned his rage to attend his appetite, and so fully chafed himself into his natural fury; and then he is a lion indeed, and to meet him is death, and to behold him a terror next to it.

This is exactly the case of the angry and contentious man; he provokes and works up himself to a passion by a restless employment of thought upon some injury done him; till from a man he grows into a beast of prey, and becomes implacable and intolerable. Surely therefore it concerns the virtuous and the wary, and such as know how absolutely necessary it is to conduct every action of piety by the rules of prudence, to endeavour peaceableness, by keeping down the first inconsiderable annoyances and disturbances of it, which like the mustard seeds in their first sowing are very small and contemptible, but being grown up, shoot out into branches and arms, spread into a vast compass, and settle into a firm strength and consistency of body.

Compare a disgust in its beginnings and after its continuance, in the first appearance and the last effects of it; and we shall find the disproportions monstrous and unmeasurable. No man is able to give laws to an overgrown humour, and to grapple with a corruption ripe and armed with all its advantages. Who would think, when he sees a little spring-head, and beholds the narrowness of its circle, its quiet bubblings and small emissions, that by that time this little thing had crope three or four miles off, it should be spacious in its breadth, formidable in its depth, grow insolent in a tempest, rise and foam and wrestle with the winds, laugh at every thing in its way, and bear its conquering stream over dams and locks, and all opposition? Why thus also it is with the mind of man: after he is offended, if he will not be brought to discharge his thoughts of the offence, he may think and think so long, till he has thought a distasteful apprehension into an action of murder.

But as in order to a man's keeping of the peace, both with himself and others, it highly lies upon him to give no entertainment to disgustful thoughts, conceived from the behaviour of men towards him; so he is much more to abandon and take heed of all aggravating thoughts. If he will not pass over and forget an offence, at least he is not to heighten it; to make that great, which is but small; and numerous, that is but single. If a man were to chastise a child for a fault, and presently by an error of fancy should persuade himself, that certainly that child was some great porter, and should measure out stripes to him accordingly; there is no doubt but the injury would quickly appear in a sad effect.



There are indeed no venial sins towards God, but there are between men; and therefore he who shall prosecute a venial offence with a mortal hatred, and swell a molehill into a mountain, beholding every thing under new created heights and additions; he betrays a turbulent disposition, and a mind to which peace and the spirit of peace is wholly a stranger.

It is not unusual to hear such speeches fall from some mouths: He did such a thing purposely to spite me; had he not known that I disgusted it, it had never been spoke or done by him. Whereas perhaps the man, in the word or action for which he is censured, thought no hurt, much less designed any: but did it by an innocent carelessness, not sufficiently alarmed by an experience of the baseness, the falseness, and the exceptiousness of men, to set a greater caution or guard upon his behaviour: or perhaps, take it at the worst, it was a word extorted from him by the exasperation of his spirit, and before he was aware, borne upon the wings of passion, and so quickly out of his reach, and not to be recalled.

But shall we now play the exactors and the tyrants, squeezing every supposed irregularity till we fetch blood, and according to that unworthy course condemned in [Isaiah xxix. 21](#), *make a man an offender for a word*? Are we so perfect ourselves, as to need no allowances, no remissions, no favourable interpretations of what we do or say? Or are we so unjust, as when we need these things ourselves, to deny them to others?

Would any one be willing to be took upon an advantage? to have every slip and weakness of his discourse critically observed, every inadvertency in his behaviour maliciously scanned, and at length heightened, and blown up to a crime, or a great accusation? Surely there is no man so privileged from the common lot of humanity or natural affections, but that he is sometimes more open and gay, free and unconcerned, and so obnoxious to the unseasonable rigours of a watching, ill-natured adversary. And, on the other side, there is no man but sometimes suffers the vicissitude of trouble, business, thought, and indisposition of mind, that may cast a roughness upon his deportment, and for a while interrupt the complaisance of his converse.

And shall these things be now counted grounds sufficient to build a dislike upon, that shall vent itself in the disturbance of a man's peace, the hatred of his person, the undermining of his interest, and the extinguishing his reputation. It is as certain as certainty itself, that oftentimes they do so: and therefore I have nothing to say more as to this particular, but to make use of that prayer of St. Paul, [2 Thess. iii. 2](#), *God deliver us from unreasonable men: for the way of peace such have not known*.

And thus much for the first means to help us in the duty of living peaceably; namely, a mature and careful suppression of all distasteful, but especially of all aggravating apprehensions, either of the defective or faulty instances of men's behaviour towards us.

2. A second sovereign means conducing to the same great purpose, is the forbearing of all pragmatial or malicious informations against those with whom we converse. It was a worthy saying of Solomon, well beseming that reputation of wisdom which he stands



renowned for in holy writ, that *he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends*. The carrying of a tale, and reporting what such an one said or such an one did, is the way to sow such grudges, to kindle such heart-burnings between persons, as oftentimes break forth and flame to the consumption of families, courts, and perhaps at length of cities and kingdoms. The mischief such incendiaries do is incredible, as being indeed for the most part inevitable. And a vine or a rose-tree may as well flourish when there is a secret worm lurking and gnawing at the root of them; as the peace of those societies thrive, that have such concealed plagues wrapt up in their heart and bowels.



For let us consider the case a little: there is perhaps in some united body, collection, or society of men, some pick-thank caterpillar or other, who, either to ingratiate himself with some great one, or to mischief some whom he maligns, or peradventure both, comes and cringes and whispers, and tells his story, and possibly with some dissembled expressions of respect to the person whom he is about to ruin: as, that he is heartily sorry that such an one, whom he had always an esteem for, should so misbehave and forget himself, as to be guilty of such things as he found and heard him to be; and indeed was a long time before he could believe any such matter of him, out of the great honour he bore him. Nevertheless thus and thus it is, and he is troubled that he should be forced to be the messenger of any thing to his disadvantage.

Well, the good man has told his story, and the secret bolt is shot: let us now see into how many cursed consequences this viperous piece of villainy is like to spread itself; and that, whether we consider the accusation as true or as false; as relating to the person accused, or to him before whom he is accused. And first we will take the allegation that such informers usually make in their own behalf, that truly they said nothing but what was truth, and they conceive truth may be lawfully spoken. Very good! Be it therefore a truth. But yet give me leave to ask such persons a few questions: as, whether a truth may not be reported with as malicious a design as the greatest falsity that ever was hatched in hell; and whether to tell a truth with the purposes of malice, be not a sin of as black an hue in the accounts of Heaven, as to contrive and tell a downright lie. I would also ask, whether the person who told this truth would have been as ready to tell it, had it made for the other's advantage as much as it does for his prejudice: and whether he would be willing that every thing should be told and published which is true of himself. I believe the answer to these interrogatories would appear but very lame and imperfect.



But since truth is a thing that seldom dwells in the mouths and discourses of informers, we will suppose the accusation to be, as for the most part it is, really false; and that either as to the very matter of it, there being absolutely no such thing as is reported; or at least in respect of some portion and circumstance of the narration; some little thing being added, over and above the true state of the matter, or something being concealed that should have been mentioned; either of which may make such an alteration in the case, that that which one

way is innocent and allowable, the other way becomes impious, vile, and criminal. It is in such reports as it is in numbers, the addition or detraction but of one unit makes it presently another number.

But now, if we proceed further, and direct the consequences of this degenerate practice to the persons concerned in it; as first, to him that is informed against: we shall find that, whether the information be true or false, his condition is very miserable. For if it be true, all opportunities of deprecating his offence, and of reconciling himself to the person offended, are cut off, and took out of his hands; but in the mean time, the accusation lies festering in the other's mind to whom it is delivered, waiting only for an occasion suddenly to attack or ruin the poor man, who knows not of the cloud which hangs over him, nor of the snare that is spread under him; but is snapt and destroyed before he is aware, without any remedy or escape.

But if the things deposed against him be false, as frequently they both are and may very well be, by reason of the accuser's presumption that he shall never be brought to vouch or prove what he has said; why then an innocent person unheard, untried, and bereaved of all power to clear himself, and to confute his accuser, is concluded against, and condemned; his sentence is passed, the purpose of his ruin sealed, and the man is blown up before ever he understands that there is so much as any crime, accusation, or accuser of him in the world.

And is not this an horrid and a barbarous thing, and a perversion of the very designs of society? For to what purpose do men unite and convene into corporations, if the mischiefs they suffer under them are greater than those that attend them in a state of dispersion and open hostility?

Certainly it is a grievance to nature, and to that common reason and justice which presides over mankind, to see a brave, an upright, and a virtuous person fall by the informations and base arts of an atheist, a sycophant, and an empty dressed fellow; such an one, that, if but one third part of mankind were like him, neither God nor man would think the world worth preservation. And yet such are the men that overthrow virtue, disappoint merit, and render the rewards of the good and the vicious accidental and promiscuous; and in a word, are the pests and vermin that disturb and infest society.

But neither is the poor, accused, ruined person the only one that is abused and injured by the false and malicious informer, but even he who by such information is brought to ruin him. For is it not the worst of injuries, that such a wretch should make a great person the instrument of his sin, and the prosecutor of his malice; and all this by abusing his intellectuals with a lie? deceiving and cheating him with false persuasions, in order to a gaining him to a base or a cruel action; first blinding his eye, and then using his hand, and making him to do that upon a false representation of things, which, had he been rightly informed of, he would not have done for a world. It is like the making of a man drunk, and then



causing him to sign a deed for the passing away of his estate. In short, it is a daring encroachment, and an intolerable injury. And if there were any one that might lawfully not be forgiven, it is this.

But the abuse rests not here; for such sycophants by these practices do not only abuse men in their understanding, their interest, and their peace, by first making them to believe a falsehood, and then to sacrifice a friend or an innocent man to such a belief; but further, they abuse them in that very instance for which they accuse others. It being very frequent, nay my own little experience has observed it, that those who are so officious, by the traducing of others, to fawn, cog, and flatter men to their faces, are as apt to vilify them behind their backs as any other whatsoever: nay, the matter of the accusation by which they secretly stab others, are usually some unwary expressions slipt from those persons, while they have been trappaned into a compliance with the informer's discourse, in his undervaluing, upbraiding, and detracting from the same men, before whom afterwards he is so diligent to accuse them.

Now in this case there is nothing so much to be wished for, as that some lucky hand of Providence would bring the person informed against, and the person to whom he was informed against, together; that they might compare notes, and confer what the informer had said on both sides. And the truth is, so it falls out by a strange connection and trace of events, that usually such whisperers are discovered, and that that which passing from the mouth is but a whisper, from the echo and rebound becomes a voice: the effect of which is, that a vile person comes to be understood, and then to be abhorred, and to be pointed at as he passes by, with such kind of eulogies as these; "There goes a person for whom no one breathing was ever the better, but many ruined, blasted, and undone; the scourge of society, a spit-poison, a viper, and to be abandoned and shunned by all companies, like a mortal infection: and yet withal so despicable, so detested, and that amidst the greatest successes of his base projects, that the condition of him who is most ruined by him, even while he is ruined, is much more eligible, and desirable; as of the two, I know no man, but had rather be spit upon by a toad than be a toad."

I wonder what such persons think, or propose to themselves, when they come to affront God in his house, praying, hearing sermons, and receiving sacraments; when there is no sin or corruption incident to the depraved nature of man, that more peculiarly unfits them for this divine and blessed duty, than the sin that we have been discoursing of. And I am confident, that when such a person thrusts himself upon the ordinance, and receives the consecrated elements; he yet partakes no more of the body and blood of Christ, or the real benefits of them, than the rat that gnaws the bread, a creature like himself, close, mischievous, and contemptible.

We have seen here how much such persons and practices interrupt the peace of societies; but yet we are to know that the burden of this charge is not so wholly to lie upon the framers and bringers of such informations, but that some is to rest upon those also who are ready



to hear them. For as there is a parity of guilt between the thief and the receiver, so there seems to be the like between the teller and the hearer of a malicious report; and that upon very great reason. For who would knock, where he despaired of entrance? or what husbandman would cast his seed but into an open and a prepared furrow? so it is most certain, that ill tongues would be idle, if ill ears were not open. And therefore it was an apposite saying of one of the ancients, that both the teller and the hearer of false stories ought equally to be hanged, but one by the tongue, the other by the ears: and were every one of them so served, I suppose nobody would be so fond of those many mischiefs brought by such persons upon the peace of the world, as to be concerned to cut them down, unless, perhaps, by cutting off the forementioned parts, by which they hung.



But when there is a conspiracy and an agreement on both sides, and one ill-nature tells a tale, and another ill-nature thanks him for it; and so encourages him in the custom, by shewing how ready he is to hear his words, and to do the intended mischief; so that the ball is kept up, by being tossed from one hand to the other: let not that society or company of men, who are blessed with such persons amongst them, expect any such thing as peace; they may as well expect that the winter sun will ripen their summer fruits, or the breath of the north wind preserve their blossoms. No, they will find, that the blasts of contention will blow and whistle about their ears, and a storm arise, which shall endanger their tranquillity to an utter shipwreck, without any possibility of being appeased, but by throwing such wretches and renegadoes from God and good-nature overboard.

Let this therefore be the second means to advance us in the duty of living peaceably; namely, to abominate such practices ourselves, and to discountenance them in others. It is a prescription easy and sovereign, and such an one as will not fail in the experiment: but according to the proportions of its efficacy, will manifest a certain and an happy influence, for the restoring of peace, and the refreshing of human converse: for when the troublers of Israel are removed, the trouble of it must needs cease.

And thus much for the second means of maintaining the duty of peaceableness.

3. The third that I shall prescribe is, that men would be willing in some cases to wave the prosecution of their rights, and not too rigorously to insist upon them. There are some things which it may be lawful for a man to do, but falling under cross circumstances, may be infinitely inexpedient. To require reparation for a wrong, is a thing good and lawful; but sometimes it may be done so unseasonably, that peace, which is a much better thing, is lost by it. That same *stomachus cedere nescius* found in most, is the thing that foment quarrels, and keeps men at such unpeaceable distances. I will not lose my right, says one; and I will suffer no wrong, says another: and so they enter into a conflict, both pulling and contesting, till the quietness of society is torn asunder betwixt them. Now it is here apparent, that unless one of these shall relinquish what he supposes to be his right, the controversy must of necessity be perpetual. But certainly peace is an enjoyment so high, that it deserves to be bought



at the rate of some lesser abridgments; and a man shall find that he never does himself so much right, as when, upon such an occasion, he parts with his right. It may possibly be of some difficulty to assign all those instances in which peace may challenge this of us, as to surrender a right for its preservation; and though cases of this nature are as numberless and indefinite as particular actions and their circumstances; yet, to contribute something to the conduct of our practice in so weighty and concerning a matter, I shall presume to set down some.

(1.) As first, when the recovery of a right, according to the best judgment that human reason can pass upon things, seems impossible: prudence and duty then calls upon a man to surcease the prosecution of that, and rather to follow peace. It will perhaps be replied here, that this case is superfluous and absurd, for no rational man will endeavour after that which he apprehends impossible. I answer, that this seems true indeed, did all that were rational act rationally. But besides, supposing this also; yet unless a man acts virtuously as well as rationally, he may propose to himself the prosecution of a thing impossible, not indeed with a design to obtain that thing, but for some other end or purpose; as either to gratify an humour, or to annoy an enemy, or the like. As for instance, he that should prosecute a poor widow, not worth above two mites, for the debt of a thousand talents due to him from her, yet by reason of this her great poverty, contracted by losses and misfortunes, utterly unpayable; that man prosecutes an impossible thing, and at the same time knows it to be so, and accordingly despairs of the recovery of his debt, yet he continues the suit, because his disposition may incline him to be troublesome, vexatious, and unmerciful; and where money is not to be had, to pay himself with revenge. He may be one that tastes the calamities of a ruined adversary with an high relish, that finds a music in the widow's sighs, and a sweetness in her tears.

But now, in such a case is it not rational to conclude, that Christianity calls us to peace, rather than to a fruitless prosecution of a desperate right? where Providence, by taking away all possibility and means of payment, seems to have decided the case for pardon, and the opportunities of exercising a Christian grace.

We may be also called to the same duty of not demanding our right, when the power and villany of the oppressor put the regaining of it under an impossibility. But you will reply; This is a very hard saying: for ought any one's injustice to prejudice me in the claim of my right? I answer, no: if that claim had any likely prospect of a recovery. Otherwise, what rational effect can follow it? for by all a man's clamours and suits for right, he is not at all benefited, and yet the peace is disturbed; nay, it is enough to stamp his action irrational, that he loses his own peace without the least recompence; all his endeavours expiring into air, and vanishing with no effect: for the door of justice is shut, and his little attempts cannot force it open.

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It is a thing in itself lawful and commendable, for a subject to vouch and assert the title of his prince. But should it so fall out, that a tyrant and an usurper steps up into his throne, and there surrounds himself with armed legions, and a prevailing interest, so that justice and loyalty are forced to shrink in their heads, and so all purposes of resistance become wholly insignificant; will any one say, that it is here the duty of any particular person to stand forth and defend his prince's claim, in defiance of the usurper, by which neither his prince's right is in the least advantaged, nor the oppressor's power at all weakened or infringed; but yet the common peace is interrupted, and a ruin brought upon his own head, and the head of his confederates.

Thus, when a bird comes to be immured in the cage, being took from its natural range in the air and the woods, and begins to feel the injury of a restraint and the closeness of a prison, it strives and flutters to recover its native liberty; and perhaps with striving breaks a wing or a leg, and so pines away: and after all this unquietness, is yet forced at last to die in the cage.

It is so with a person overpowered in his right, and bereaved of it by those with whom he cannot grapple. Christianity and reason command him not here to labour in vain, but to make a virtue of necessity, and to acquiesce, expecting the issues of Providence, which disposes of things by a rule known only to itself. And by so doing a man is no worse than he was before; but the peace is maintained, and the rewards of patience may be well expected.

(2.) In the second place, it seems to be a man's duty to quit the claim of his right, when that right is but trivial, small, and inconsiderable, but the recovery of it troublesome and contentious. That which being lost makes a man not much the poorer, nor recovered, much the richer, cannot authorize him to enter into the turmoil, the din, and noise of a suit, or a long contest.

Nothing can warrant a man in these courses but necessity, or a great inconvenience; which, in the supposed instance, is not pleadable. But he proceeds upon the dictates of humour, the suggestions of revenge, and the instigations of an unquiet disposition: the consequences of which, in this world, are but ill; and the rewards of them in the next much worse.

This whole method is like the applying of corrosives, and caustics, and the most tormenting remedies, to remove the pain of a cut finger, or like the listing of armies to chase away flies: the means and the design are hugely disproportionable.

(3.) In the third place, it seems to be a man's duty to recede from his claim of any particular right, when for the injury done him he has a recompence offered him, in some good equivalent, and perhaps greater, though of another kind. A man has deposited a jewel in another's hand; the jewel comes to be lost or stolen: but the person to whose keeping it was intrusted is willing to make him satisfaction, in paying him the full value of it in money, or in giving him another of a greater price. In which case, should the person endamaged utterly

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refuse all such satisfaction, and rigidly insist upon the restitution of that individual thing, he declares himself a son of contention, an enemy of peace, and an unreasonable exactor.

Nay, the equity of this extends even to those losses, for which, perhaps, no recompence perfectly equivalent can be made; yet, when the utmost that the thing is capable of comes to be tendered, justice, acting by the rules of charity, will tie up the injured man from righting himself by any further prosecutions. As for instance, we will suppose a man defamed, and injured in his reputation; in this case, the word that gave him the wound cannot be unsaid again, or revoked, any more than a spent hour be called back, or yesterday brought again upon the stage of time; but it is gone, and past recovery. Yet the mischief done by this word is permanent and great; it has spilt a man's good name upon the ground; which, like spilt water, cannot be gathered up again. But after this, the slanderer comes to be touched with remorse and sorrow for what he has done, acknowledges and deprecates his fault before his slandered brother; retracts his words as publicly as they were spoke, offers him a large sum of money or a great advantage: what now is the injured person to do in this condition? True it is that a good name is unvaluable; and all the pelf in the world is not an equal ransom for it. Yet it is also as true, that no quarrel, how just soever, ought to be immortal; but ought to be let fall upon due reparation: and the very nature of this case admits of no other or greater reparation than what has been offered. Should it therefore be flung back in the offerer's face, and the action of slander go on rigorously and inexorably, I am afraid the scene would be altered, and that he who prosecutes his right, having yet more malice than right of his side, would, in the estimate of the supreme Judge, from the injured person turn to be the injurious.

The like may be said in the loss of a limb, or any part of the body, as an eye or an arm. Certain it is, that he who has struck out my eye, or cut off my arm, has not the magazines of nature so in his power, as to be able to give me another; nor will all his estate recompense the injury of a maimed, deformed body: yet if he will endeavour to give me the best recompence my sad condition will receive, and make up the loss of these with supplies of other advantages, I must be contented, and lie down patiently under my calamity, no longer owning it under the notion of an injury from the man that did it, but as a sad providence from heaven, as an arrow shot from the bow in the clouds, to punish my sins and to exercise my patience. And therefore all suits and actions and endeavours after a severe retribution, must be let fall; I must not vex, worry, and undo him. The eye that God has left me must not be evil because man has robbed me of the other; nor the remaining arm stretched out to revenge the blow that lopped off its fellow.

And thus I have shewn the cases in which the duty we all owe to peace may command us sometimes to remit the rigid prosecutions of our right; which was the third means proposed to give success to our endeavours after peaceableness.



4. A fourth is, much to reflect upon the great example of Christ, and the strict injunction lying upon us to follow it. We shall find that his whole life went in a constant recession from his own rights, in order to the tranquillity and peace of the public: he was born heir to the kingdom of the Jews, yet never vouched his title, but quietly saw the sceptre in an usurper's hand, and lived and died under the government of those who had no right to govern. When tribute was demanded of him, he clearly demonstrated the case to Peter, in [Matthew xvii. 24, 25, 26](#), that they had neither right to demand, nor he obligation to pay any; yet, in [verse 27](#), we find that he would be at the expense of little less than a miracle, rather than, by refusing to obey an unjust exaction, to disturb the peace. *Lest we should offend them*, says he to Peter, *go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and thou shall find a piece of money in his mouth: that take, and give for me and thee*. But what if they had been offended, it had been but an offence taken, not given: for where nothing is due, nothing was to be paid, nor consequently to be demanded; yet so tender was he of the public peace, that he waved all these pleas and argumentations, and complied with the common practice.

Nay, and what is more, in the great concernment of his life, rather than occasion a tumult, or any unpeaceable disorder, though amongst persons then about the greatest villainy that ever the sun saw; he quitted the grand right of self-preservation: which case, though it was peculiar and extraordinary, and so obliges not us to every particular of the action; yet the design of peaceableness, which induced him to such a behaviour, calls for our imitation in general, that we should be willing to brook many high inconveniences, rather than be the occasions of any public disturbance. They sent out an inconsiderable company with swords and staves to apprehend him; but what could this pitiful body of men have done to prejudice his life, who, with much more ease than Peter drew his sword, could have summoned more angels to his assistance, than there were legions of men marching under the Roman eagles? But he chose rather to resign himself silently and unresistingly, like a lamb to the slaughter, and so to recommend the excellency of patience to all his disciples, in a strange instance and a great example.

Now I suppose that it needs not much labour to evince, that what Christ did, upon a moral account, equally engages the practice of his disciples, according to their proper degree and proportion. And therefore we are to study those divine lessons of peace, to admire, and conform to his behaviour, to transcribe his copy, and to read a precept in every one of his actions. And this is the fourth means to enable us to quit ourselves in the great duty of peaceableness.

5. The fifth and last which I shall propose, which surely, for its efficacy and virtue, will be inferior to none of the former, is this; not to adhere too pertinaciously and strictly to our own judgments of things doubtful in themselves, in opposition to the judgment of our superiors, or others, who may be rationally supposed more skilful in those things. If we pursue most of those contentions which afflict the world, to their first principle, we shall find that



they issue from pride, and pride from self-opinion, and a strange persuasion that men have of their knowledge of those things of which they are indeed ignorant. I am not for the implicit faith of the papists, or for any man to pluck out his own eyes, and to be guided by another man's, in matters plain, obvious, and apprehensible; and of which common reason, without the assistance of art and study, is a competent judge. But surely, in things difficult and controverted, the learned, who have made it their business to wade into those depths, should be consulted, and trusted to, before the rash and illiterate determinations of any particular man whatsoever.

The not doing of which, I am sure, has ruined the peace of this poor church, and shook it into such unsettlements, that the youngest person alive is not like to see it recovered to its full strength, vigour, and establishment. There is not the least retainer to a conventicle, but thinks he understands the whole business of religion, as well as the most studied and profound doctor in the nation. And for those things that by pious and mature deliberation, grounded upon the word of God, and the constant practice of antiquity, have been ordained for the better and more decent management of divine worship, there is scarce any preaching, discontented ignoramus, any groaning old woman, or any factious shopkeeper, who, for want of custom, sits reading the Bible, but will very pertly, and, as they think, also very judiciously, call them in question. For of those many thousands who use to read the scripture, there are few who understand it, and fewer who think they do not; whereupon they venture on all occasions to affix such bold interpretations on the most concerning passages, as either their interest or their ignorance shall suggest.

And having upon such pitiful grounds took up an opinion, they are as ready to fight for it, and to assert it with the last drop of their blood. Armies shall be raised, swords drawn, and the peace of a kingdom sacrificed to a notion, as absurdly conceived as impudently defended. Laws must be repealed, or lie unexecuted, customs abrogated, and sovereignty itself must be forced to bow before the exceptions of a tender conscience, and to give way to every religious opiniator, who is pleased to judge his peculiar sentiments in sacred matters the great standard of truth, to which all must conform. For though they deny a conformity to the church in its constitutions, yet they think it very reasonable, nay, necessary, that the church should conform to them; whereas it is most certain from experience, that such persons seldom persist so steadily in any one opinion, as for a year's space to conform thoroughly to themselves.

I conclude therefore, that there is no such bane of the common peace, as a confident singularity of opinion: for men's opinions shall rule their practices, and when their practices shall get head and countenance, they shall overrule the laws. If when men shall refuse to yield obedience to statute and government, and for such refusal plead, that their conscience will not give them leave to think such obedience lawful, and for this assign no other reason, but because they are resolved to think so, or allege some places of scripture, which they will

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be sure to understand in their own sense, though persons much more numerous and knowing than they understand them in a far different one; and then, after all, shall have this accepted by governors, as a sufficient reason to exempt them from the common obligation that the law designs to lay upon every subject; there is no doubt but that, by this course, the very foundation of peace and government will quickly be unsettled, and the whole fabric of church and state thrown back into its former confusion.

And thus much for the third particular proposed for the handling the words, namely, to shew by what means we might be enabled to the great duty of living peaceably. I come now to the fourth and last, which is to shew,

IV. What are the motives and arguments by which this duty may be enforced. I suppose, many may be gathered here and there from what has been already delivered, and therefore I shall be the briefer in this.

1. The first enforcing argument that I shall propound, shall be taken from the excellency of the thing itself; which indeed is so great, that the highest appellations of honour recorded in scripture are derived from peace. God himself is pleased to insert it amongst his own titles, and to be called *the God of peace*, [Rom. xv. 33](#). It is also the honourable name of the Messiah, that he was to be *the Prince of Peace*, [Isaiah ix. 6](#); and that in the most eminent manner that could be: for he designed the time of his nativity when there was a general peace over the whole world in the reign of Augustus Caesar. And the first message that was sent from heaven upon his nativity was a message of peace; [Luke ii. 14](#), *Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men*. The whole doctrine that by himself and his apostles he preached to mankind is called *the gospel of peace*, and *the word of peace*, [Rom. x. 15](#). The last legacy that he bequeathed to his disciples at his departure out of the world was a legacy of peace; [John xiv. 27](#), *My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you*. And the works of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of believers are expressed by the same thing, [Galat. v. 22](#). *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace*. And in the last place, both the effects and rewards of piety are set forth by this, [Rom. xv. 13](#), *The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing*. In a word, there is no one virtue or excellent quality in the world, from which there be half so many denominations of honour and expressions of blessing taken by the penmen of holy writ, as from peace. It is the very style and phrase of scripture; and if I should endeavour to mention how often it is thus used in it, I must not so much quote particular texts, as transcribe books and chapters.

Now certainly that must needs be a glorious thing, that thus gives titles of glory to the Prince of glory, that thus fills the heraldry of heaven, and calls gifts, graces, blessings, and every good thing, after its own name. The heathen custom was to derive their names of honour from the triumphs of war, as Numidicus, Asiaticus, Africanus: but Christian religion, that came to unite and cement society, to compose differences, and to conquer minds only,



has made up its catalogue of honours with names of peace, a virtue of a more benign nature, that can adorn one man without the disgrace of another.

2. The second motive to peace shall be taken from the excellency of the principle from which peaceableness of spirit proceeds. It is from a pious, a generous, and a great mind. Little things are querulous; and the wasp much more angry and troublesome than the eagle. He that can slight affronts, despise revenge, and rather suffer an inconvenience than employ his passion to remove it, declares himself above the injuries of men, and that though others would disturb him, yet he will not be disturbed, he is too strong to be shaken; and so, has both his quietness and his reputation in his own keeping.

Now certainly it is more desirable to be such a person, than to be a subject and a slave to every man's distemper and imprudence; for so he is whom every man is able to exasperate and disquiet: he has let go his happiness, and put it into the power of those who regard not their own; and therefore is forced to be miserable, whensoever any other man shall think fit to be proud, insolent, and passionate. I suppose I need no greater argument to recommend a peaceable temper, than the misery of such a condition.

3. The third motive to peace shall be taken from the consequent blessing entailed upon it by a peculiar promise, [Matth. v. 9](#), *Blessed are the peacemakers*; and I may add, by a parity of reason, no less blessed are the peace-preservers. The treasures of heaven are opened, and the designs of Providence laid, to serve the interest of the peaceable. All contingencies, unusual passages and casualties of affairs, shall conspire into an happy event, in reference to such persons. For when God intends a blessing, a blessing with an emphasis and a peculiarity, as he does here, he takes a man into a nearer tuition, espouses his concerns, directs his actions, and orders his occasions.

I do not doubt but the blessing here pronounced to the peaceable is such an one as reaches heaven, and runs forth into eternity, and does not determine in these transient enjoyments and earthly felicities; yet since these also lie in the bowels of the promise, and may come in as a fair overplus, or serve as a comfortable earnest of those greater happinesses that as yet are but within our prospect; I shall take notice of two instances of this blessing, that will certainly attend the peaceable in this world.

(1.) The first is an easy, undisturbed, and quiet enjoyment of themselves. While a man is careful to keep the peace with others, he will in the rebound find the influence of it upon himself. He has no enmities to prosecute, no revenges to beware of, no suspicions to discompose his mind. But he that will disturb others, of necessity casts himself under all those evils. For he that affronts or injures a man, must be at the trouble to make that affront good; he must also expect that the affronted person waits for an opportunity to repay him with a shrewd recompence: whereupon he is to be always upon his guard, to hearken and look about, and contrive how he may frustrate the intended blow. All which is a continual torment and a sad vexation; and like being upon the watch every night, while others are at their rest.

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But then the chiefest misery of all is this, that as it is a very restless, so it is a very needless condition. For what necessity is there that I should undertake the trouble of troubling another? Why should I take so much pains to be disturbed and out of order, when the charge at which I may purchase my own quietness is no greater than only to let other men enjoy theirs? If I should strike any one a great blow on the teeth, it is very probable that I may bruise my own hand as well as hurt his face.

But the peaceable man is composed and settled in the most of those disturbances that embroil the world round about him. He can sleep in a storm, because he had no hand in the raising it. He conjured no evil spirit up, and so is not put upon the trouble to conjure him down again. He is like a sword resting in its scabbard, which, by that means, both hurts nobody and preserves itself.

(2.) The other instance of the great blessing attending the peaceable in this world, is that honour and reputation which such a temper of mind and course of life fixes upon their persons. Every one looks upon such a man as a public blessing, as a gift from heaven, as an help and remedy to the frailties and miseries of mankind. There is none but is forced to confess that he has been the better for such an one; and consequently, to acknowledge a debt to Providence, that ever he knew him or conversed with him.

But on the contrary, is there any one that prays for or honours a plague, a rat, a serpent, or, which is worse than all, a false and a malicious informer? As amongst all the trees and plants of the earth the bramble is the most troublesome, so it is also the most contemptible. It is the great and notable curse of the earth to bear briars and thorns: and it is also their doom to be burnt; and I know nobody that would find a miss of them.

For when such persons are removed, afflicted society seems to have a little respite and time of breathing: for while they have scope to act the mischief of their temper, they are like some flies, that first by their venom make a sore, and then set upon it and afflict it.

But it being the nature of mankind to fasten an honour there only where they find either something like to God, or beneficial to themselves; let not such nuisances think, that any generous mind can either honour or affect them; for such can be considerable for nothing, but because they are able to do mischief; and I know nothing so vile or base in nature, but that sometimes it has power to do hurt. Is there any thing more weak and pitiful than a flea or a gnat? and yet they have sting and sharpness enough to trouble a wise man.

It is therefore the peaceable mind only, the mind which studies how to compose, and heal, and bind up the bleeding wounds of society, that is truly great and honourable. The name of such is like an ointment poured forth, which we know is both healing and fragrant. Honour and respect court them and pursue them; and when they have finished a glorious life here, ennobled by the good offices done by them, their report survives them, and their memory is blessed. Their name is glorified upon earth, and their souls in heaven.

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SERMON LI

ROMANS vi. 23.

The wages of sin is death.

THE two great things which make such a disturbance in the world, are sin and death; the latter both the effect and punishment of the former. Sin, I confess, is an obvious subject, and the theme almost of every discourse; but yet it is not discoursed of so much, but that it is committed much more: it being like that ill custom spoken of by Tacitus in Rome, *semper vetabitur, semper retinebitur*.

But while the danger continues, we must not give over the alarm; nor think a discourse of sin superfluous, while the commission of it is continual, and yet the prevention necessary.

In the words, we have a near and a close conjunction between the greatest object of the world's love, which is sin, and the greatest object of its hatred, which is death. And we see them presented to us in such a vicinity, that they are in the very confines of one another; death treading upon the heels of sin, its hateful, yet its inseparable companion. And it is wonderful to consider, that men should so eagerly court the antecedent, and yet so strangely detest the consequent; that they should pour gall into the fountain, and yet cry out of the bitterness of the stream: and lastly, which is of all things the most unreasonable, that a workman should complain, that he is paid his wages.

The scope and design of the words I shall draw forth, and prosecute in the discussion of these three following things.

I. I shall shew what sin is, which is here followed with so severe a penalty as death.

II. I shall shew what is comprised in death, which is here allotted for the sinner's wages.

III. And lastly, I shall shew in what respect death is properly called *the wages of sin*. Of each of which in their order. And,

I. For the first of these, what sin is. And according to the most known and received definition of it, it is ἀνομία, *a breach of the law*; a transgression, or leaping over those boundaries which the eternal wisdom of God has set to a rational nature: a receding from that exact rule and measure which God has prescribed to moral actions. This is the general notion of it; but as for the particular difficulties, disputes, and controversies, which some have started upon this subject, and by which they have made the law of God almost as ambiguous and voluminous as the laws of men, I shall wave them all; and not being desirous to be either nice or prolix, shall speak of sin only under that known division of it, into original and actual.

1. And first, for original sin. It may seem strange perhaps, that sin bears date with our very being; and indeed, in some respect, prevents it. That we were sinners before we were born; and seem to have been held in the womb, not only as infants for the birth, but as

malefactors in a prison. And that, if we look upon our interest in this world, our forfeit was much earlier than our possession: *We are*, says the apostle, *by nature children of wrath*, Ephes. ii. 3. Not only by depravation, or custom, and ill-contracted habits, but by nature; the first principle and source of action. And nature we know is as entire, though not as strong in an infant, as in a grown man. Indeed the strength of man's natural corruption is so great, that every man is born an adult sinner. Sin is the only thing in the world which never had an infancy, that knew no minority. *Tantillus puer, tantus peccator*, says St. Austin. Could we view things *in semine*, and look through principles, what a nest of impurities might we see in the heart of the least infant! like a knot of little snakes wrapt up in a dunghill! What a radical, productive force of sin might we behold in all his faculties, ready upon occasion, and the maturities of age, to display itself with a cursed fertility!

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There are some, I know, who deny that which we here call *original sin*, to be indeed properly any sin at all; and will have it at the most, not to be our fault, but our infelicity. And their reason is, because nothing can be truly and properly sin, which is not voluntary: but original corruption in infants cannot be voluntary; since it precedes all exercise of their rational powers, their understanding and their will.

But to this I answer, that original corruption in every infant is voluntary, not indeed in his own person, but in Adam his representative; whose actions, while he stood in that capacity, were virtually, and by way of imputation, the acts of all his posterity: as amongst us, when a person serves in parliament, all that he votes in that public capacity or condition, is truly and politically to be esteemed the vote of all those persons for whom he stands, and serves as representative. Now inasmuch as Adam's sin was free and voluntary, and also imputed to all his posterity; it follows, that their original corruption, the direct and proper effect of this sin, must be equally voluntary; and being withal irregular, must needs be sinful.

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Age and ripeness of years does not give being, but only opportunity to sin. That principle, which lay dormant and unactive before, is then drawn forth into sinful acts and commissions. When a man is grown up, his corruption does not begin to exist, but to appear; and to spend upon that stock, which it had long before.

Pelagius indeed tells us, that the sons of Adam came to be sinners only by imitation. But then, I would know of him, what those first inclinations are, which dispose us to such bad imitations? Certainly, that cannot but be sinful, which so powerfully, and almost forcibly inclines us to sin.

We may conclude therefore, that even this original, native corruption renders the persons who have it obnoxious and liable to death. An evil heart will condemn us, though Providence should prevent its running forth into an evil life. Sin is sin, whether it rests in the inclinations, or shoots out into the practice; and a toad is full of poison, though he never spits it.

2. The other branch, or rather sort of sin, is that which we call *actual*. This is the highest improvement of the former: the constant flux and ebullition of that corrupt fountain in the

course of a vicious life: that *abundance of the heart* declared in expressions, and made visible in actions. It is that which St. John calls *the works of the devil*, [1 John iii. 8](#), and the apostle Paul, *the deeds of the flesh*, [Rom. viii. 13](#), and *a walking and living after the flesh*; with other such like descriptions.

Now actual sin may be considered two ways.

(1.) According to the subject-matter of it.

(2.) According to the degree.

For the first; considered according to the subject-matter of it, it is divided into the sin of our words, the sin of our actions, and the sin of our desires; according to that short, but full account given of it by the schools, that it is *dictum, factum, aut concupitum contra legem Dei*. Something said, done, or desired against the rule of God's law.

(1.) And first, for the sin of our words; the irregularity of them is, no doubt, sinful, and imprints a guilt upon the speaker. We cannot say in that lofty strain of those in [Psalm xii. 4](#), *Our tongues are our own: who is lord over us?* No; we have both a lord and a law over us; and our tongues are not so much our own, as to privilege the greatest princes and the most illustrious drolls from being responsible for their extravagance. A word is quickly spoke, but the guilt of it abides; like an arrow, it flies swift, and it sticks fast. And our Saviour assures us, that *every idle word* stands upon record to be one day accounted for. And that word is such, which is either directed to no end, or not to a right one. A defect in either of which leaves an immorality behind it. For, as it is in [Matthew xii. 37](#), *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*. Thy own tongue shall give in evidence against thee; and thy soul shall pass to hell through thy own mouth.

(2.) The second sort of actual sin is the sin of our external actions; that is, of such as are performed, not by immediate production or emanation from the will, but by command of the will upon some exterior part or member of the body, as the proper instrument of action. Such as are the acts of theft, murder, uncleanness, and the like. To prove which to be sins, no more is required but only to read over the law of God, and to acknowledge its authority. They being wrote in such big, broad, and legible characters, that the times of the grossest ignorance were never ignorant of the guilt and turpitude inseparably inherent in them. And where the written letter of the law came not, there, according to the apostle's phrase, men, as to these particulars, *were a law to themselves*, and by perusing that little book, which every man carried in his own breast, could quickly find enough, both to discover and to condemn those enormities.

(3.) The third sort of actual sin is the sin of our desires. Desires are the first issues and sallyings out of the soul to unlawful objects. They are sin, as it were, in its first formation. For as soon as the heart has once conceived this fatal seed, it first quickens and begins to stir in desire: concupiscence is the prime and leading sin, which gives life and influence to all the rest, so that the ground and principal prohibition of the law is, *Thou shalt not covet*.



And in [Matthew v.](#) we see how severely the gospel arraigns the very first movings of every irregular appetite, making them equal to the gross perpetration of the sin. And indeed action is only a consummation of desire; and could we imagine an outward action performable without it, it would be rather the shell and outside of a sin, than properly a sin itself.

Now all these three ways, namely, by word, action, and desire, does sin actually put forth itself. And this is the division of it, as considered according to its subject-matter.

The other consideration of actual sin is according to the degree or measure of it; and so also it is distinguished into several degrees and proportions, according to which it is either enhanced or lessened in its malignity.

(1.) As first, when a man is engaged in a sinful course by surprise and infirmity, and the extreme frailty of his corrupt nature; when the customs of the world, and the unruliness of his affections, all conspiring with outward circumstances, do, like a torrent, beat him out of the paths of virtue, and, as it were, whether he will or no, drive and bear him forward in the broad road to perdition: which I take to be frequently the condition of the dangerous, unwary, hardy part of a man's life, his youth; in which generally desire is high, and reason low; temptations ready, and religion afar off. And in such a case, if a strict education, and an early infusion of virtue, does not prepossess and season the heart, and thereby prevent the powers of sin in their first and most furious eruptions; how is a desperate wretch drawn forth into open rebellion against his Maker, into a contempt of all goodness, and a love of those ways that can tend to and end in nothing but his confusion? And yet this is the most tolerable condition that sin designs to bring the sinner into. I call it the most tolerable, because sin, left to its natural course and tendency, would and may plunge him into a much worse. Nevertheless, if a remedy does not maturely interpose, this must certainly prove fatal, and the end and *wages of it will be death.*

(2.) The second degree of actual sin is, when a man pursues a course of sin against the reluctancies of an awakened conscience, and the endeavours of his conversion: when salvation waits and knocks at the door of his heart, and he both bolts it out and drives it away: when he fights with the word, and struggles with the Spirit; and, as it were, resolves to perish in spite of mercy itself, and of the means of grace. This we may see exemplified by several instances both in the Old Testament and the New. Thus God upbraids the house of Israel, [Isai. i. 5](#), *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt yet more and more.* And is there any thing more frequent than complaints of their backsliding, their playing fast and loose with God; and their sinning against all God's methods of reclaiming sinners? [Isai. lvii. 17](#), *I was wroth, says God. and smote him: I hid myself, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart.* Here we see God angry, and the sinner unconcerned; God smiting, and yet the sinner still proceeding.

And the like examples we find of the Jews sinning in our Saviour's time: they sinned against clear light and irresistible conviction; with an hard heart and a daring hand. *If ye*



were blind, says our Saviour, [John ix. 41](#), *ye should not have had sin*. No, they sinned knowingly and resolutely, with an open eye and a bare face, as if they would even look conscience itself out of countenance. If our Saviour did wonders and miracles before them, they encountered miracle with miracle, and were as miraculous in their obstinacy as he in his mighty works.

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Now this is a more robust, improved, and confirmed way of sinning, than any sinner, upon his first entrance into and engagement in the service of sin, ever rises to; and it takes in many grains of guilt and malignity which were not in the former; it inflames the sinner's reckoning; it alters the nature and changes the colour of his sin, and sets it off with a deeper stamp and a more crimson die.

(3.) The third and last degree of actual sin is, when a man sins, not only in opposition, but also in defiance to conscience; so breaking all bonds, so trampling upon all convictions, that he becomes not only unruly and untractable, but finally obstinate and incorrigible. And this is the utmost, the *ne plus ultra* of impiety, which shuts the door of mercy, and seals the decree of damnation.

For this we are to reckon upon, that there is a certain pitch of sin, a certain degree of wickedness, though known to God himself alone, beyond which, God never pardons; (not that it is in its nature impardonable, but that God, according to the wise and unsearchable economy of his dealing with sinners, after such an height of provocation, withdraws his grace, and surceases the operations of his Spirit, by which alone the heart can be effectually changed or wrought upon.) So that these being thus withdrawn, the sinner never actually repents or returns; but being left to himself, and the uncontrolled sway of his own corruptions, he still goes on sinning, till he ends his wretched course in final impenitence.

And this, no doubt, is the true sense of all those scriptures that represent God limiting his grace to *a certain day*: the neglect of which (like the last and fatal line drawn under the sinner's accounts) leaves him nothing more to expect, but a dreadful payment; or, as the apostle calls it, *a fearful looking for of judgment*. For as soon as ever the sinner has filled the cup of God's wrath, the next infusion makes it run over.

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And thus I have shewn the several degrees of actual sin, the several steps and descents by which the sinner goes down into the regions of death and the bottomless pit.

Now this differs from original sin thus, that that is properly the seed, this the harvest; that merits, this actually procures death. For although as soon as ever the seed be cast in, there is a design to reap; yet, for the most part, God does not actually put in the sickle, till continuance in sin has made the sinner ripe for destruction.

II. Come we now to the second general thing proposed; which is, to shew what is included and comprised in death, which is here allotted for the sinner's wages.

Death is the great enemy of nature, the devourer of mankind; that which is continually destroying and making havock of the creation: and we shall see the full latitude of it, if we consider it as it stands divided into temporal and eternal.

1. And first, for death temporal. We must not take it in that restrained sense, as it imports only the separation of the soul from the body: for that is rather the consummation of death, than death itself; it is properly the ending stroke, the last blow given to the falling tree.

But we must take it in a larger compass and comprehension; as it is a summary and compendious abridgment of all those evils which afflict human nature; of all those calamities and disasters, which by degrees weaken, and at length dissolve the body.

Look upon those harbingers and forerunners of death, diseases; they are but some of the *wages of sin* paid us beforehand. What are pains and aches, and the torments of the gout and of the stone, which lie pulling at our earthly tabernacle, but so many ministers and under-agents of death? What are catarrhs and ulcers, coughs and dropsies, but so many mementos of an hastening dissolution, so many foretastes of the grave? What is a consumption, but a lingering, gradual rotting, before we are laid under ground? What is a burning fever, but hell in a shorter and a weaker fire?

And to these diseases of the body we may add the consuming cares and troubles of the mind; the toil, and labour, and racking intention of the brain; all made necessary by the first sin of man; and which do as really, though not as sensibly impair and exhaust the vitals, as the most visible, corporeal diseases do, or can do; and let in death to the body, though by another door.

Moreover, to these miseries, which reach us in our persons, we may subjoin those which attend our condition; those which we are liable to in our names and estates; as the shame and infamy, which makes men a scorn to others, and a burden to themselves; which takes off the gloss and air of all other enjoyments, and damps the quickness, the vigour, and vivacity of the spirit. Also the miseries of poverty and want, which leave the necessities and the conveniencies, that is to say, the second necessities of nature unsupplied: when a man shall be forced to make his meals upon hunger and expectation; to be clothed with rags, and to converse with filth; and to live only upon those alms which the covetousness or the surfeit of other men can spare.

Now all these things are so many breaches made upon our happiness and well-being, without which life is not life, but a bare, thin, insipid existence; and therefore certainly we cannot deny them to be parts of death, unless perhaps from this reason, that upon a true estimate of things, they are indeed much worse.

And thus we have seen death in the first fruits of it; how by degrees it creeps upon us, how many engines it plants against us, how many assaults it gives, till at length it ends its fatal progress in the final divorce which it makes between soul and body, never resting, till



it has abased us to our primitive earth, and to the dishonours of stench, rottenness, and putrefaction.

2. But secondly, the grand payment of the sinner's wages is in death eternal: in comparison of which, the other can scarce be called death; but only a transient change, a short darkness upon nature; easily borne, or at least quickly past.

But when eternity comes into the balance, it adds an infinity to the weight, and sinks it down to an immense disparity. Eternal death is not only the sinner's punishment, but his amazement: no thought, no created reason can take the length of an endless duration.

But there are also some other concomitant properties of this death, which vastly increase and aggravate the horror of it, besides the bare considerations of its eternity.

(1.) As first, that it bereaves a man of all the pleasures and comforts which he enjoyed in this world; the loss of which, how poor and contemptible soever they are in themselves, yet surely must needs be very afflictive to him who had placed his whole entire happiness in them: and therefore to be stript of all these, and to be cast naked and forlorn into utter darkness and desertion, cannot but be infinitely tormenting, though a man should meet with no other tormentors in that place. For to have strong, eager, immense desires, and a perpetual bar and divorce put between them and their beloved objects, will of itself be hell enough, though the *worm should die*, and the *fire should be quenched*.

For how will the drunkard, the epicure, and the wanton bear the absence and removal of those things that alone used to please their fancy and to gratify their lust! For here will be neither ball nor masks, plays nor mistresses, for the gallant to entertain himself with; here will be company indeed good store, but no good-fellowship; roaring enough, but no ranting in this place. With what a killing regret must the condemned worldling look back upon his rich manors and his large estate, his parks and his pleasant gardens! to which there is now no return for him, but only by thought and remembrance; which can serve him for nothing, but to heighten his anguish by a bitter comparison of his past and present condition. And this is some of the fruit of sin, which by carrying out the heart to a vicious, irregular enjoyment of the things of this life, which quickly have an end, treasures up in the same heart materials for such a sorrow as shall have none.

(2.) Eternal death bereaves the soul of that infinite, inexpressible good, the beatific fruition of God. The greatest and the quickest misery of a condemned sinner is the sense of loss. And if the loss of those puny temporal enjoyments make so great a part of his punishment, as I have shewn it does, what then shall we say of the loss of that, which was the only thing which gave life and spirit to all those enjoyments! which gave them that substance, and suitableness to our nature, as to render them properly felicities! For all the comfort that God conveys to the creature, comes from the sensible, refreshing discoveries of his presence. *In thy presence*, says the Psalmist, *there is fulness of joy*, [Psalm xvi. 11](#). This is the reviving light which scatters all the darknesses and dismal blacks of sorrow; that wipes off all tears;

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the happy sunshine, which dries up those disconsolate dews. For as it is the presence of the king which makes the court; so it is the peculiar presence of God which makes heaven; which is not so much the name of a place, as of a state or condition.

But now there is an everlasting cloud drawn between this and a sinner under damnation. God hides himself for ever; so that this is the sum and height of the sinner's doom, that he is condemned eternally to feel God's hand, and never to see his face.

(3.) And lastly, eternal death fills both body and soul with most intense pain, and the highest torment and anguish which can be received within a created, finite capacity. All the woes, griefs, and terrors which humanity can labour under, shall then, as it were, unite, and really seize upon the soul at once. *I am tormented in this flame*, says the rich man, [Luke xvi. 24](#). And surely a bed of flames is but an uneasy thing for a man to roll himself upon to all eternity. The sufferings which shall attend this estate, no tongue can express, no heart can conceive. Pain shall possess the body; horror, agony, and despair, shall rack the mind: so that the whole man shall be made the receptacle and scene of misery, the tragical scene for vengeance to act its utmost upon, and to shew how far a creature is capable of being tormented without the loss of its being; the continuance of which, under those circumstances, is but a miserable privilege, and would gladly be exchanged for annihilation. For every lash which God then gives the sinner shall be with a scorpion; every pain which he inflicts shall be more eager than appetite, more cruel than revenge; every faculty, both of soul and body, shall have its distinct, proper, and peculiar torment applied to it, and be directly struck there, where it has the quickest, the tenderest, and the sharpest sense of any painful impression.

God seldom punishes or afflicts in this world, but it is with some allay of mercy; some mixture of clemency, which even in the midst of misery may yet support hope. But when sin has lodged the sinner in hell, the cup which God then administers shall be all justice without mercy, all wrath and venom, all dregs and yet no bottom; a cup never to be drank off, inexhaustibly full, inconceivably bitter.

But I shall use no other argument to evince the greatness of those torments but only this, that the Devil shall be the instrument of their execution. And surely a mortal enemy will be a dreadful executioner; and the punishment which an infinite justice inflicts by the hand of an implacable malice must needs be intolerable.

And thus I have despatched the second general thing proposed; which was to shew, what is included and comprised in death, which is here allotted for the sinner's wages. I proceed now to the

Third and last; which is to shew, in what respect death is properly called the *wages of sin*. I conceive it may be upon these two following accounts.

1. Because the payment of wages still presupposes service and labour. And undoubtedly the service of sin is of all others the most painful and laborious. It will engross all a man's



industry, drink up all his time; it is a drudgery without intermission, a business without vacation.

We read of *the mystery of iniquity*; and certainly the mystery of no trade can be attained without a long and a constant sedulity. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*. It is the business of a life to be a complete sinner.

Such as are the commands of sin, such must be also the service. But the commands of sin are for their number continual, for their vehemence importunate, and for their burden tyrannical.

Sin is said to conceive and to bring forth; and there is no birth without pain and travail. God condemned Adam upon his transgression to the turmoils of sweat and labour: but one would have thought, that he might have spared this malediction, when labour is not only the consequent, but the very nature of sin. To dig the earth is man's punishment; but the sin which deserves it, is the greater labour.

For is there any work so toilsome, so full of fatigue and weariness, as to be always at the call of an unlimited appetite, at the command of an insatiable corruption? The Greek is emphatical, and describes the nature of sin in its name; for *πονηρία*, which signifies *sin* or *wickedness*, takes its derivation from *πόνοϋς*, which signifies *labour*. So that the readiest way, it seems, to fulfil the apostle's precept in [1 Thess. iv. 11](#), of *studying to be quiet*, is to study to be innocent.

And were there nothing else in sin but the discomposing and ruffling of that serene quiet, and undisturbed frame of spirit, which naturally attends a true and steady virtue, it were enough to endear the one, and to discommend the other. For sin seldom acts, but in the strength of some passion: and passion never moves but with tumult and agitation: there being scarce any passion but has its contrary to thwart and to encounter it; so that still the actings of them represent a kind of little war in the soul: and accordingly, as the prophet Isaiah says of *every battle of the warrior*, so we may say of every stirring of an high passion, that it is *with confused noise*. The *still voice* of reason is drowned, the sober counsels of religion are stifled, and not heard. And must not that man, think we, needs be very miserable, who has always such a din and hurry in his breast? His passions raging, and his vicious appetites haling and pulling him, sometimes to this object, sometimes to a contrary! So that what through the clamour, and what through the convulsion of exorbitant clashing desires, the soul is in a rent, distracted condition; like Actaeon amongst his dogs, that first bawl about his ears, and then tear him to pieces.

The truth of this is sufficiently manifest, from the general theory of the thing itself; but the same will appear yet more evidently by running over particular instances.

And first, take the voluptuous, debauched epicure. What hour of his life is vacant from the slavish injunctions of his vice? Is he not continually spending both his time and his subsistence to gratify his taste? and, as it were, to draw all the elements to his table, to make



a sacrifice to the deity of his belly? And then, how uneasy are the consequences of his luxury! when he is to grapple with surfeit and indigestion, with his morning fumes and crudities, and other low and ignoble distempers, the effects of a brutish eating; thus having his stomach always like a kitchen, both for fulness and for filth.

And next, for the intemperate drinker: is not his life a continual toil? To be sitting up when others sleep, and to go to bed when others rise; to be exposed to drunken quarrels and to sordid converse; to have redness of eyes, rheums, and distillations; a weakened body, and a besotted mind?

And then for the adulterer and unclean person: upon what hard employments does his lust put him! first to contrive, plot, and compass its satisfaction, and then to avoid the furies of an enraged jealousy, and to keep off the shame of an infamous discovery. We find the adulterer, in [Job xxiv. 16](#), *digging through houses*, till at length, perhaps, he digs his own grave too; and by a laborious pursuit comes to an ignominious end.

And lastly, for the covetous, scraping usurer. It is a question whether he gathers or keeps his pelf with most anxiety: he is restless to get, and fearful to lose; but always solicitous, and at work. And perhaps those who labour in the mines are not so busy as those who own them. But I need say no more of such a person but this, that his business is as vast and endless as his desires; and greater it cannot be.

And thus I have shewn the toil of sin, in several particulars, to which many more might be added. In short, if idleness were not a sin, there was scarce any sin but what is laborious.

So that now the retribution of death following such hard and painful service, may properly bear the denomination of *wages*; and be reputed rather a payment than a punishment.

2. The other reason why death is called *the wages of sin*, is because wages do always imply a merit in the work, requiring such a compensation. Sin and death are compared together as sowing and reaping: and we all account it a thing of the highest reason and equity in the world, that he who sows should also reap: *He who sows to the flesh*, says the apostle, [Gal. vi. 8](#), *shall of the flesh reap corruption*. The evil of sin is every way commensurate to the evil of death; retaliation is the very nature and spirit of justice; and that a man who does an action contrary to another's good, should be made to expiate it by a suffering contrary to his own, is but proportion.

But to this, some make that trite and popular objection; that since the same is the measure and extent of things contrary; and since our good works cannot merit eternal life; it should follow also, that neither can our sins, our evil works, merit eternal death.

But to this I answer, that the case is very different in these two. For to the nature of merit, it is required that the action be not due: but now every good action being enjoined and commanded by the law of God, is thereby made due, and consequently cannot merit: whereas, on the contrary, a sinful action being *quid indebitum*, altogether undue; and not

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at all commanded, but prohibited, it becomes properly meritorious; and, according to the malignity of its nature, it merits eternal death.

But some will yet further urge; that in regard a sinful action is in itself but of a finite nature, and withal proceeds from a finite agent; there seems to be nothing of proportion between that, and an endless, eternal punishment. For what is man but a weak, mutable creature at the best? And what is sin, but a vanishing action, which is performed in the compass of a few minutes, and not to be laid in the scale with the inexhaustible measures of perpetuity?

But to this also we answer, that the merit of sin is not to be rated, either by the substance of the act, or by the narrowness and poorness of the agent; but it is to be measured by the proportions of its object, and the greatness of the person against whom it is done. And therefore being committed against an infinite majesty, it greatens, and rises to the height of an infinite demerit.

Nevertheless, because men are apt to think that God treats them upon hard terms, and to view sin with a more favourable eye, I shall in a word or two shew what there is in the nature of sin, which renders it so highly provoking, as to deserve the greatest evil that omnipotence itself can inflict upon the creature. And,

1st, Sin is a direct stroke at God's sovereignty. Hence we read of the *kingdom of Satan*, in contradistinction to the *kingdom of God*: and in the conversion of a sinner, when grace is wrought in the heart, *the kingdom of God* is said to come into it: and the whole economy of the gospel is styled the *kingdom of heaven*. So that sin had translated God's subjects into a new dominion: as amongst men, he who has committed a felony or a murder, usually flies the territories of his lawful prince; and so living in another kingdom, puts himself under the necessity of a new subjection.

Thus sin invades the throne of God, usurps his royalty, and snatches at his sceptre. But now there is nothing so tender, and sensibly jealous of the least encroachment, as prerogative; the throne admits of no partner, endures no competitor. Rule and enjoy all Egypt, says Pharaoh to Joseph, but still with this reserve, that *in the throne I will be greater than thou*.

No wonder therefore if God punishes sin, which is indeed treason against the King of kings, with death; for it puts the question, Who shall reign? It grasps at all, it strikes high, and is properly a blow given to the supremacy.

2dly, Sin strikes at God's very being. In [Psalm xiv. 1](#), *The fool*, that is, *the sinner*, has said *in his heart, There is no God*; and if this be his belief, it is so, because it was first his desire. Sin would step not only into God's throne, but also into his room.

And it matters not, that the infinite perfection of God sets him far above the boldest reaches of his rebel-creature. For it is enough to see the attempts of malice: God takes an estimate of the sinner by his will; he is as much a serpent now he hisses, as if he stung: for whatsoever a man has an heart to wish, if he had power he would certainly effect.



And now, if all this malignity lies wrapt up in the bowels of sin, let none wonder how it comes to deserve death; but admire rather, that God has not invented something greater than death, if possible, to revenge the provocation.

And thus I have finished the third and last general thing proposed to be handled from the words: from which, and all the foregoing particulars, what can we so naturally and so directly infer, and learn, as the infinite, incredible folly, which acts and possesses the heart of man in all its purposes to sin! still proposing to the sinner nothing but pleasure and enjoyment, advantage and emolument, from the commission of that which will infallibly subject him to all the miseries and killing sorrows that humanity is capable of. Sin plays the bait before him, the bait of a little, contemptible, silly pleasure or profit; but it hides from his view that fatal hook, which shall strike through his heart and liver, and by which that great catcher and devourer of souls shall hold him fast, and drag him down to his eternal execution. The consequent appendant miseries of sin are studiously kept from the sinner's notice; his eye must not see what his heart will certainly rue; but he goes on pleasantly and unconcernedly, and acts a more cruel, inhuman butchery upon his own soul, than ever any self-murderer did upon his own body.

I shall close up all with that excellent saying of the wisest of men, in [Prov. xiv. 9](#), that *fools make a mock at sin*. Fools they are indeed for doing so. But is it possible, for any thing that wears the name of reason, to be so much a fool, as to make a mock at death too? Will a man play with hell, dally with a scorpion, and sport himself with everlasting burnings?

In every sin which a man deliberately commits, he takes down a draught of deadly poison. In every lust which he cherishes, he embraces a dagger, and opens his bosom to destruction.

In fine, I have endeavoured to shew what sin is, and what death is, the certain inevitable *wages of sin*; and so, have only this short advice to add, and to conclude with: he who likes the wages, let him go about the work.



SERMON LII.

MATTHEW v. 8.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

IT may at first seem something wonderful, especially since the times of the gospel, that there should be so few men in the world happy, when happiness is so freely offered and proposed by God, and withal so universally and eagerly desired by men. But the obviousness of the reason will quickly supersede the wonder, if we consider the perverse and preposterous way of men's acting: who, at the same time, passionately pursue the end, and yet overlook the means; catch at the good proposed, but abhor the condition of the proposal. For all would enjoy the felicity of *seeing God*, but scarce any can brook so severe a duty as to maintain a *pure heart*; all would behold so entertaining and glorious a sight, but few are willing to crowd for it into the *narrow way*. Men would reconcile their future happiness with their present ease, pass to glory without submitting to the methods of grace. So that the grand reason that so many go to hell, is because they would go to heaven for nothing: the truth is, they would not go, but be *caught up to heaven*; they would (if I may use the expression) coach it to the other world, as Elias did; but to live as the same Elias did in this world, that they cannot bear. In fine, if we could peruse the black roll of all those who have perished eternally, we should find that the generality of men are lost, because they cannot eat, drink, sleep, and play themselves into salvation.

But this great sermon of our Saviour teaches us much other things; a sermon fraught with the most refined and elevated doctrine, the most sublime and absolute morality that ever was vented into the world: far before all the precepts and most applauded doctrine of the philosophers; yea, as far before them in perfection and purity, as they were before Christianity in time. For they only played upon the surface and outside of virtue, gilding the actions, and giving some little varnish to the external behaviour of men: but Christianity looks through all this, searches the reins, and pierces into the inmost recesses of the soul, never resting till it stabs sin, and places virtue in the very heart.

An eminent instance of which we have in these words; which being so very plain and easy in themselves, ought not to be encumbered with any superfluous explication: and therefore I shall pass immediately to the discussion of them; which I shall manage under these four following heads. As,

- I. I shall shew what it is to be *pure in heart*.
- II. What it is to *see God*.
- III. How this purity of heart fits and qualifies the soul for the sight or vision of God.
- IV. And lastly, make some brief use and application of the whole.

I. And for the first of these, we must know, that the nature of purity in general cannot be better explained, than by its opposition to these two things.



1. To mixture. 2. To pollution.

1. And first of all, it excludes mixture; that is to say, all conjunction with any different or inferior nature; purity still infers simplicity: gold cannot be called pure, though never so great in bulk, if it has but the least alloy of a baser metal. Though there be in the heart seeds of virtue, principles of goodness and morality; yet if blended with a greater, or an equal degree of corruption, that heart cannot challenge the denomination of *pure*: for, as Solomon says, [Eccles. x. 1](#), even so small a thing as *a fly falling into the apothecary's ointment will give it an offensive savour; and one grain of folly will taint all the honour of him who has a reputation for wisdom*. In this sense also is purity ascribed to the word or law of God, in [Psalm cxix. 140](#); *Thy word is pure, therefore thy servant loveth it*: which is an elogy that cannot be truly given to any other laws in the world, no not to those of the most renowned lawgivers, as of Lycurgus, Solon, or Plato in his Commonwealth, whose laws, though they enjoined many worthy, virtuous, and noble actions, yet still were debased by the addition of something vile and filthy, not only allowed, but sometimes also commended by them; still there was a vein of immorality running through them, that corrupted and defiled the whole channel, and the best of human laws have still some mixture of imperfection.

But now all mixture or composition is a kind of confusion; attempting unity, where nature has made variety and distinction. It raises a certain war or faction in the same compound; and the very cause of death, dissolution, and putrefaction, in all sublunary bodies, is from the contest and clashing of contrary qualities upon mixture; which never takes away the innate enmity of contraries, though it may compose their present quarrel. Christ states this matter fully in [Matth. vi. 24](#), *No man, says he, can serve two masters; for he will love the one, and hate the other*. In like manner, it is impossible for two opposite principles so to unite and mix themselves in the same heart, as equally to command and share its obedience by such just proportions, that it should at the same time seriously intend the service of virtue and the gratification of a vice. Now to give things their due and exact appellations, I conceive, in the sense hitherto spoken of, a *pure heart* is properly the same with that which is called in scripture a *single heart*.

2. Purity excludes also pollution, that is, all adherence of filth and outward contagion; as a fountain is said to be pure, when there is no dirt or soil cast into it, that may discolour or defile it. If the guilt of any gross sinful act cleaves to the conscience, that conscience presently loses its purity and virginity. Every such sin falls upon it like a blot of ink upon the finest linen or the cleanest paper. In this sense St. Paul enjoins *purity* to Timothy; [1 Tim. v. 22](#), *Keep thyself pure*, that is, free from the least taint of vice or scandal. In this sense also St. Paul declares himself, in [Acts xx. 26](#), *pure from the blood of all men*; that is, clear from the guilt or charge of the murderous neglect of souls. So that a *pure heart* thus taken, is properly the same with that which David calls a *clean heart*; [Psalm li. 10](#), *Create in me, O God, a clean heart*. For so much of inherent sin, so much of filth and foulness. The very

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frame and make of man's heart is but dust; but sin degrades it still lower, and turns it into dirt.

Having thus shewn what purity is in the general notion of it, I shall now endeavour to shew wherein the purity of the heart consists. And that,

First, by way of negation. It does not consist in the external exercise of religion; the heart does not always write itself upon the outward actions. These may shine and glister, while that in the mean time may be noisome and impure. In a pool you may see the uppermost water clear, but if you cast your eye to the bottom, you shall see that to be dirt and mud. To rate a man's internals by his externals, and what works in his breast by what appears in his face, is a rule very fallible. For we often see specious practices spread over vile and base principles; as a rotten, unwholesome body may be clothed and covered with the finest silks. There is often a μέγα χάσμα, many leagues distance between a man's behaviour and his heart. In [Isaiah xxix. 13](#), we have some *drawing near to God with their mouth, and honouring him with their lips*, of whom it is said in the very next words, *that their heart was far from him*. Lip-devotion signifies but little. Judas could afford our Saviour the lip, while he was actually betraying him to his mortal enemies. It is in this case with the soul as with the body, the inward vital state of it is not always known by the colour or complexion. For I suppose we are not now to learn, that the grand governing principle of the world is hypocrisy. And while it is so, in judging of men's words and actions, it is but too often necessary to read them backwards. For though, naturally indeed, they are signs, and signs of the thoughts and affections of the mind; yet art may, and usually does make them much otherwise. And it is odds, but he mistakes seldome, who judges of men quite contrary to what they appear: so seldom do the inward and the outward man correspond with one another. And if this were not so, the prerogative of divine knowledge in judging of a man's internals would not be much superior to the sagacity of an human inspection. For that can read all that is legible to the eye, all that can incur into the outward senses.

But still we must observe, that this assertion of not judging by the outward actions, is to be understood only of good actions, not of bad. For although an act materially and outwardly good may proceed from an heart which is stark naught; yet where the outward actions are bad, it is certain that the heart cannot be good. For the matter of the action, which is properly that which comes into the outward view, may be good, and yet the action itself, upon other accounts, be absolutely evil: but if the matter of the action be evil, (since evil is from any defect,) the whole action must be so too. And consequently, since a *good tree cannot produce evil fruit*, it is manifest that the heart which produces, and presides over those actions, is and must be evil.

But to return to what we were before about: that the outward piety of a man's behaviour cannot certainly argue a pious and a *pure heart*, is evident, because there may be assigned

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several other principles, short of real piety, and yet sufficient to produce such a behaviour. As,

1st, A virtuous and strict education. Many are born into the world, not only with the general taint of original sin, but also with such particular propensions, such predominant inclinations to vice, that they are as fruitful a soil for the Devil to plant in, and afford as much fuel for sin to flame out upon, as it is possible for the utmost corruption of human nature to supply them with. But God, who in his most wise providence restrains many whom he never renews, has many ways to prevent the outrageous eruption of this vicious principle. And one great one is this of a pious education; which may lay such strong fetters, such powerful restrictions upon the heart, that it shall not be able to lash out into those excesses and enormities, which the more licentious and debauched part of the world wallow in: yet still, though by this the unclean bird be caged up, the uncleanness of its nature is not hereby changed. For as no raking or harrowing can alter the nature of a barren ground, though it may smooth and level it to the eye; so neither can those early disciplines of parents and tutors extirpate the innate appetites of the soul, and turn a bad heart into a good: they may indeed draw some plausible lines of civility upon the outward carriage and conversation, but to conquer a natural inclination is the work of an higher power. Nevertheless it must be always looked upon as an high mercy, where God is pleased to do so much for a man as this comes to; and whosoever he is, who in his minority has been kept from those extravagances which his depraved nature would otherwise have carried him out to, and so has grown up under the eye of a careful and severe tuition, has cause with bended knees to acknowledge the mercy of being born of religious parents, and bred up under virtuous and discreet governors; and to bless God, without any danger of Pharisaical arrogance, that upon this account *he is not as many other men are*. But still (as I have noted) all this is but the *sweeping and garnishing of the house*; and though education may sometimes do that, yet it is grace only that can keep out *the unclean spirit*. And consequently such a person, notwithstanding all this outward flourish of behaviour, must yet know that his heart may be all this while as really unrenewed, and upon that score as impure, as the heart of those, who, not being hampered with such early preventions, break forth into the most open and flagitious practices.

2dly, The circumstances and occasions of a man's life may be such as shall constrain him to appear in an outwardly pious dress. As when a man's dependance is upon persons virtuous and religious, and the whole scene of his life cast under those eyes that shall both observe and hate his impiety, there it is not for his interest to uncase and discover himself, and to follow the lure and dictates of a voluptuous humour. While Judas was to associate himself with Christ and his disciples, it concerned him, though he was really a devil, yet to personate and act the saint.

Moreover, when Providence has put a man into a low, a mean, or an afflicted condition, the supplies and opportunities of many vices are thereby cut off, and the man is not able to



shew himself, or to draw forth those base qualities which lie lurking in his breast. He neither drinks, nor whores, nor goes to plays, but he may thank his purse, not his heart for it. Want and poverty bind him to his good behaviour: and Providence thinks fit, in kindness to the world, to chain up the fury and violence of his passions by the straitness of his fortunes. For such is the boundless pride and insolence of some natures, that should they meet with estates equal to the grasp of their desires, and have the plenties of the world flow in with the full swing and career of their appetites, they would be intolerable. Society would even groan under them, and neither heaven nor earth would endure them; so that there is a necessity, that penury and scarcity should discipline, and, as it were, diet them into sober courses. But still, amidst all these restraints, the mind of such an one may be as base, as filthy, and as prone to all lewdness, as the mind of a thoroughpaced rebel may be to his old game, after an act of oblivion. For by all this, Providence only ties his hands, grace does not change his heart.

3dly, The care and tenderness a man has of his honour, may engage him to demean himself with some show of piety and religion. For there is scarce any one so vicious (some few monsters, some years since amongst us, excepted) as to desire or judge it for their credit, to be thought so. But generally, as every such person would gladly *die the death of the righteous*, so he would willingly live with the credit and reputation of the righteous too. The principle of honour (even with persons not stiled honourable) will go a great way; and a man will be at the cost of a few seemingly virtuous actions to be reputed a virtuous person. Men use to go to church in their best clothes; and it is for their credit to put on the fairest appearance in a religious performance. We read how far this principle carried the pharisees; and what a glorious outside the love of glory put upon them. They prayed, they fasted, they gave alms, and in short had the very art of mortification; and yet within were full of all fraud, extortion, and excess, and (in a word) of themselves. There were none, whose behaviour shined brighter in the eyes of men, nor whose heart was more loathsome in the eyes of God; for they did all to be seen and talked of; and (as it were) to ride in triumph upon the tongues of men; and, in fine, were the arrantest puritans in the world, those only of a later date excepted, who, it is confessed, have infinitely outdone their original. For all the religion of those pharisees flowed only from the beholder's eye, and not from their own heart. They made *broad their phylacteries*, and *enlarged the borders of their garments*, taking the measure of both by the breadth and largeness of their latitudinarian consciences; which were of such ample and capacious dimensions, that after they had breathed themselves into a stomach by a long prayer, they could easily swallow a thousand widows' estates, lands, tenements and all, for the first course, and the revenues of a crown and church for the second, of which we can bring aprobatum est for a demonstration.

Machiavel himself, though no great friend to religion, yet affirms, and very frequently too, that the appearance and reputation of religion is advantageous; and that, we know, is



not to be acquired without many instances of practice, which may affect and dazzle the spectators into admiration, and then make them vent that admiration in applause. But what is all this to the purity of the heart, to the sanctity of the inner man? It is all but the acting of a part, a piece of pageantry, a mere contrivance of ambition, nothing but dress and disguise, and may possibly procure a man some glory in this world, but none, in the next.

Now in all these motives to a religious behaviour, we may observe this of them, that they are forced and preternatural, and raise a motion which they are not able to keep up. As when we see a stone thrown upwards, it moves only from the impression of an outward force, and not from the activity of an inward principle; and therefore it quickly sinks, and falls to the ground. In like manner, when there is not a stock or habit of purity in the heart, constantly and uniformly to diffuse the same into the outward actions, the appearance of piety will be found too thin and weak to support itself long. And let that man, whosoever he is, who acts in the ways of piety and virtue only upon the force and spring of external inducements, be warily observed and attended to, and it is a thousand to one but that some time or other his vice gives his hypocrisy the slip, and lays him open to the world, and convinces all about him, that how fair and specious soever the structure seemed to be which he had raised, yet the foundation of it was laid in the sand, or, which is worse, in the mud.

From all which I conclude, that purity of heart neither consists in, nor can certainly be proved by any external religious performances whatsoever. In the

Second place therefore, to shew positively wherein it does consist: it consists properly in an inward change and renovation of the heart, by the infusion of such a principle into it, as naturally suits and complies with whatsoever is pure, holy, and commanded by God. It is not a thing born, or brought into the world with us, nor yet reared upon the stock of nature by any art, industry, or cultivation of our own whatsoever. No, it is and must be the product of a new creation. Nor can all our sorrows and tears of themselves wash or purify the heart; but the *Spirit of God* must *move upon the face of those waters*, and form in it the *new creature*, or the heart will continue in its native filth, chaos, and confusion for ever. Now where such a principle of purity is, it will be like a strong bias, continually inclining and carrying out the soul, and that even in its most vigorous appetites, to what is pure. For as we rationally gather and learn the nature of a thing from the quality of those things which agree or disagree with it; so when the heart kindly and naturally closes with the purity and excellency of the divine precepts, but on the other side carries a certain aversion to, and loathing of the sordid, unclean suggestions of sin, it is an argument that it is advanced into new principles and inclinations, and purified from those foul habits which it was originally polluted with.

Now there are three things more especially (amongst many others that might be mentioned) in which this purity of the heart does certainly and infallibly manifest itself. As,



(1.) In the purity and untainted sanctity of the thoughts. The range of the thoughts is free, and may defy the inspection of the most curious and inquisitive mortal beholder: they walk in such a retirement as is open to no eye, but to that alone, to which nothing can be hid. Now when a man shall carry so strict an hand over these, as to admit of no parley with vice, no, not in his thoughts; when yet he knows, that if he should be never so free and familiar with it there, no man breathing could either observe or reproach him for it: this surely argues, that he loves virtue for itself, and that purity, instead of being his design, is become his nature. For what Solomon says of the dissembling churl in [Prov. xxiii. 7](#), *that as he thinketh in his heart, even so is he*, the same may be said of every man living, in respect of that principle which sways and governs his mind, be it what it will.

For since the thoughts are so quick as to prevent all deliberation, and withal so unruly, as for the most part to admit of no control from reason, when it would either command or carry them out to, or remand, and take them off from any object; it follows, that whatsoever they run out freely and spontaneously upon, that the mind is full of, taken up and possessed with, so that it is, as it were, a mighty spring, incessantly and powerfully possessing and bending the thoughts that way. And therefore, let a man's outward actions seem never so pure, never so unblameable; yet if the constant or main stream of his thoughts runs impure; if they take a liberty to rove over and delight in filthy, unclean objects; and if, where the practice of villainy is restrained, it is yet supplied by an active imagination; there a man may be said to be more cautious and reserved indeed, but not at all the more holy. For it is an undoubted argument, that his heart is of the same temper: since wheresoever the main haunt of the thoughts is, there must the heart be also.

(2.) The purity of the heart is infallibly seen in a sanctified regulation of the desires. The first step and advance of the soul is into thought, the second into desire. Now the desires have the same privilege of secrecy and freedom with the thoughts; and if you would collect and argue the nature of the mind from either of them, the argument from these is as evident, and perhaps more forcible, than from the other. For the will is the great scene and subject of vice and virtue; and the desires are the immediate issues of that. No outward force or art whatsoever can stop the vent and passage of desire: but the whole soul flows forth in its inclinations; and therefore, wheresoever they may be discerned, they are the most true, proper, and unfailing interpreters of the heart. For what else means the Spirit of God by that noted expression in [Prov. xxiii. 26](#), *My son, give me thy heart*; but that a man should give God the strongest and most forcible operations, and (as I may so express it) the firstborn of his heart, his desires.

There was nothing from which David gathered the sincerity and goodness of his heart so much as from the free and natural flow of his desires; in [Psalm cxix. 20](#), *My soul, says he, breaketh for the longing desire that it hath to thy judgments at all times*. And in [Psalm lxxiii. 25](#), *There is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee*. Also in [Isaiah xxvi. 9](#) *With*

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my soul have I desired thee in the night-season, says the holy prophet. And again, in [Psalm xxxviii. 9](#), David sums up his final appeal to God, concerning the integrity of his heart, in these words; *Lord, all my desire is before thee*.

So that if any man now would certainly know whether his heart be pure, he has here a compendious and sure way of trial: let him read over his desires, and strictly observe the motions of his will and affections. When he is upon the performance of any holy duty, let him see whether or no his desires keep him company in it; when the allurements of any sinful pleasure or profit plays itself before him, let him see whether his desires do not reach out after it, though perhaps his hand dares not. And this will give him faithful information, and such as will never deceive him; for desire is properly the pulse of the inner man, and as the heart is affected, so that beats.

(3.) The third, and that not the least argument of a pure heart, is a fearful and solicitous avoiding of every thing that may tend to sully or defile it. It perfectly hates sin, and therefore dreads the occasions of it: it makes a man know no other way of *working out his salvation*, but *with fear and trembling*. And in this great work, the trembling hand is still the steadiest, and the fearful heart the most likely to be victorious. For we must know, that there is nothing almost which we meet with, nothing which comes before us, but may be to us an occasion of sin: some things indeed are so directly, and others are so by accident. And therefore, whosoever he is, who would *be wise unto salvation*, must absolutely fly from the former, and warily observe himself in the use of the latter. For as the apostle says, that *the wisdom from above is first pure*; so we may with equal truth affirm convertibly, *that the purity which is from above is first wise*: that is to say, it considers and casts about for the best methods, how to guard and secure itself against the assaults and stratagems of the grand enemy, who would destroy it. And for this cause, be a thing or practice never so lawful in itself, yet if, either through human frailty or the Devil's subtilty, it is like to prove a snare to a man, and to engage him in some course or other which is not lawful; a principle of true genuine purity will be sure to keep aloof off from it; and by no means admit the enemy into the outworks, where it is careful to defend the main fort. A man of an heart so disposed will say within himself, "I will not venture into such a company, I will not use such a recreation, I will not go to this ball nor to that play, for I know not how my mind may serve me under such circumstances; God may leave me to myself, and my strength may fail me, and my own heart betray me. If I tempt God, God may commission the Devil to tempt me, and so the serpent slide into my bosom before I am aware." No, such an one will carefully avoid those spiritual pest-houses, where scarce any thing is to be heard or seen, but what tends to the corruption of good manners; and from whence not one of a thousand returns, but infected with the love of vice, or at least with the hatred of it very much abated from what it was before. And that, I assure you, is no inconsiderable point gained by the tempter; as those who have any



experience of their own hearts sufficiently know. He who has no mind to trade with the Devil, should be so wise as to keep away from his shop.

In vain therefore does any one pretend to a pure heart, who puts himself into the tempter's walk, into the very road and highway to sin and debauchery. For can any one really hate to be defiled, and yet handle and embrace pitch? abhor all impurity, and yet plant himself in the very neighbourhood and confines of it? A pure heart is a tender heart, and such an one as will smite the breast that holds it upon *sight of the very garment that is spotted with the flesh*; such an one as feels the least breath that may blow upon its innocence, and, in a word, dreads the very first approaches and remote dangers of that fatal contagion.

And thus much for the first general thing proposed; which was to shew, what this purity of the heart is, and wherein it does consist. I proceed now to the

Second, which is to explain, what it is to *see God*. The enjoyment which blessed spirits have of God in the other world is, both in the language of scripture and of the schools, generally expressed to us by their *seeing God*; as in Matt. xviii. 10, it is said of the angels, *that they always behold the face of God in heaven*: and in 1 Cor. xiii. 12 it is said, *that hereafter we shall see God face to face*; with several other places to the same purpose.

Now concerning a man's thus *seeing God*, the schools raise several disputes, but the most considerable of them may come under these two heads.

1st, In regard every man shall be raised with a body as well as a soul, they question, whether this vision shall be wholly mental, and transacted within the soul; or whether the body shall be refined and sublimated to such a perfection, and nearness to the spiritual nature, as to be also made a sharer in it? And whether it be possible for a corporeal substance to see an incorporeal? To which, those who had rather be wise unto sobriety, than pronounce boldly of such things as their present condition renders them incapable of judging of certainly, give these answers.

(1.) That the knowledge of this is mere curiosity, and consequently such as a man may be without, and yet know never the less of what he is really concerned to know. (2.) That there is no express scripture to decide it either way; and natural philosophy is an incompetent judge in matters which can be known only by revelation. But,

2dly, In the next place, they put the question, whether the soul shall enjoy God, its chief good, by an act of the understanding in its intuition of him, or by an act of the will in its adhesion to him. And there are those who fiercely dispute it on both sides.

But to this also it may be answered, that as the soul shall enjoy a perfect good, so it must enjoy it after a perfect manner, so as to diffuse the enjoyment into every faculty that is capable of it: that is to say, it must enjoy it agreeably to a rational nature; which first receives a good by the apprehensions of the intellect, and then transmits it to the adhesion and embraces of the will. For a rational soul cannot love any good heartily, but it must first understand it; nor can it understand an excellent good thoroughly, but it must also love it. And con-



sequently, I conclude, that the soul's fruition of God is neither precisely by an act of the understanding, nor yet of the will, but jointly and adequately of both. But I shall not run out any further into these controversies, as bearing no such necessary relation to the matter before us.

Briefly therefore, by our *seeing God* is meant, and under it comprised, the whole enjoyment of the felicities of the other life; as by *seeing the sun*, is set forth the entire, total enjoyment of this life; as in [Eccl. vii. 11](#), *By wisdom, says the preacher, there is profit to those who see the sun*; that is, to those who are alive in the world. The Greeks also use the same phrase, ἰδεῖν φάος ἡελίου being frequently used by Homer for the whole enjoyment of this life; and the Latins have the like expression, *luce privari, to be deprived of the light*, being with them an usual phrase for a man's *losing his life*.

Now our enjoyment of God is expressed to us by our seeing him, rather than by any other way, I conceive, for these reasons.

(1.) Because the sense of seeing represents the object with greater clearness and evidence, than any of the other senses. Light, the great discoverer both of itself and of all things else, is apprehended only by seeing; and the eyewitness, we know, is still the most authentic. God will then shew himself to the soul so plainly and manifestly, he will so open and display his divine perfections to the understanding, that we shall know him as fully and clearly, as we do now those things which we actually see before our eyes; though still (as we must all along suppose) after much another way.

(2.) A second reason is, because the sense of seeing is of all the other senses the most universally exercised and employed. For as long as a man lives, every moment that he converses in the world, he is still looking upon something or other; except it be when he is asleep, during which time he can scarce be said to live. And therefore since our enjoyment of God hereafter shall be so continual and without interruption, as to leave no vacant minute which shall not be taken up and filled with that glorious fruition, it is upon this account most appositely and properly described to us, by our *seeing him*. For in sight and thought (if in any thing) we have the perpetual motion.

(3.) A third reason of this expression may be, because the sense of seeing is the sense of pleasure and delight; and that upon which the whole comfort of our life principally depends. For, says the wise man in [Ecclesiast. xi. 7](#), *the light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun*. And we know that it is much a greater pleasure for a man to see his friend, than only to hear from him. Put out the eyes, shut but those windows, and the soul will presently be filled with sadness, and horror, and a dismal Egyptian darkness; which we know is to be reckoned amongst the greatest of the Egyptian plagues.

Since therefore the enjoyment of God is the highest bliss and pleasure, the most sublime and ravishing delight; for so the scripture speaks of it, in [Matt. xxv. 23](#), *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*: and in [Psalm xvi. 11](#), *In thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right*



hand there are pleasures for evermore:—I say, since the nature of this blessedness carries in it the height of joy and rational pleasure, by what could it be more livelily set forth to us than by the perceptions of that sense and faculty, which conveys the most quickening and exalting refreshments to the soul?

(4.) And lastly; our enjoyment of God is expressed to us by our *seeing him*, because the sight is of all the other senses the most comprehensive and insatiable. In *Eccles. i. 8*, *The eye* (says the wise man) *is not satisfied with seeing*. That is to say, let it take in never so much of its object, it never surfeits. It is neither subject to satiety nor lassitude. It could presently run over and drink in the beauties of one world, and in the strength of that repast travel fresh into another. For still the more it takes in, the greater is its capacity to take in more. And in a word, it is the only sense, to which satisfaction procures an appetite.

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In this respect therefore it gives us the fittest representation of our enjoyment of God in glory: who is a good of that immense latitude, that inexhaustible fulness, as to satisfy, or rather satiate the greediest and most grasping appetites of the soul. It is he only who can fill the eye, and keep pace with desire; and, in a word, answer all those cravings and emptinesses of a rational nature, which the whole creation together could never yet do. There will then flow in such a torrent of delight upon all our apprehensive faculties, that the soul will be even overcome, and lost in the enjoyment. As when a vessel is thrown into a river, the river first fills it, and then swallows it up. This therefore is the sum of our happiness in the next world, that we shall see God, and experiment that which we never could in this world; namely, that we shall so see, as to be filled with seeing.

And thus I have despatched the second general head proposed from the words; which was to explain what is meant by our *seeing God*: I come now to the

Third, which is to shew, how this purity of heart fits and qualifies the soul for the sight or vision of God. And to give you a short state and account of this, it does it, in a word, by causing a suitableness between God and the soul, and by removing whatsoever may debar or hinder that intimate communion and intercourse, which ought to be, between such a creature and its Creator: now during the soul's impurity, God is utterly unsuitable to it; and that in a double respect.

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1. Of the great unlikeness; and, 2. Of the contrariety, which is between them.

1. And first, for the unlikeness. It is evident, from the clearest and most acknowledged principles of reason, that there can be no true enjoyment, but where there is a certain agreeableness or congruity between the object and the faculty; and if so, what pleasure can it be to a filthy polluted person to converse with those glories which shall both astonish and reproach him? What enjoyment can dirt have in the embraces of a sunbeam? God is infinitely pure, and till the soul has some degrees of purity too, it is no more fit nor able to behold him, than the black mire of the streets to reflect the orient colours of the rainbow upon the sun which shines upon it. God loves not to look upon any spiritual being, unless he can see

his own image and likeness in it; and that cannot be seen, where the mirror is foul that should represent it.

2. The next ground of the unsuitableness between God and the soul, is that great contrariety which a state of impurity causes between them. For it is this which makes the soul look upon God as an enemy, as clothed with terror, and as a *consuming fire*; and upon itself as obnoxious, and fit fuel to be preyed upon and devoured by such a fire. The divine holiness is indeed in itself most amiable, but yet a dreadful and confounding sight to a guilty and defiled soul; as the very light itself, we know, though it be the glory of the creation, and the joy of the universe, is yet a frightful and an abhorred thing to thieves and robbers, and to such beasts of prey as lie only in caves and dens, and converse with nothing but filth and darkness under ground.

Heaven is set forth to us as the great mansion of happiness and pleasure, but it is so only to the soul which is prepared for it, and by the renovation of its qualities made congenial to it. But to a soul possessed with the power and guilt of sin, it can be no more a delight, than the openest and the sweetest air can be to the fish; which perishes in the region and element which preserves its proper inhabitants, and dies by that which keeps us alive.

And thus we have seen how want of purity utterly incapacitates the soul to enjoy God; namely, by rendering it both unlike him and contrary to him. God's infinite holiness, and his transcendent, amazing brightness, meeting with an impure nature, both shames and consumes it; as the day not only discommends, but also expels and drives away the night. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, says the prophet [Habakkuk, i. 13](#). In a word, God is too pure either to see it, or to be seen by it; and therefore none but *the pure in heart can behold him*. And so I pass to the

Fourth and last thing proposed; which was to make some brief use and application of the foregoing particulars. And what better use can be made of them, than to correct our too great easiness and credulity, in judging of the spiritual estate either of ourselves or others. To judge indeed too favourably of others is an error on the right hand: for charity is to pass sentence there, which is a virtue of a benign nature, and whose office is still to think, as well as speak the best of things and persons. Nevertheless, it is one thing to believe charitably, and another to pronounce confidently; and more than the former we cannot do, where the knowledge of the heart is locked up from us; as it is of all men's hearts, besides our own. And in judging of ourselves, I am sure it is charity to suspect the worst, and for every man to probe and descend into his own heart by a strict, accurate, and impartial examination of it. For, *from the heart are the issues of life and death*, and from the same must be fetched the evidences of our title to either.

We see many frequent our churches, hear sermons, and attend upon prayers; they are civil in their carriage, upright in their dealings, and there is no great blot or blemish visible upon their conversation; and God forbid, but a due value should be put upon such excellent

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preparatives to religion: but after all, will these qualifications certainly prove and place us amongst the *pure in heart*? Will men set up for heaven and eternity upon this stock? and venture their salvation upon this bottom? If they do, it may chance to prove a venture indeed. For do not our Saviour's own words convince us, that the outside of the platter may be clean, and bright too, and yet in the inside remain full of all filth and nastiness? So that while one entertains the eye, the other may turn the stomach.

If we would prevent the judgment of God, we must imitate it; and judge of ourselves, as he will judge of us: that is, by the heart, and by the principles which rule there. And for this, let every man be but true to the resolves of his own conscience, and he will seldom need any other casuist. As for those late specious professions of religion amongst us, and those high strains of purity above the rest of the world, together with boastings of a more intimate converse with God, and acquaintance with the mystery of godliness, and the like; they are generally nothing else but terms of art, and tricks used by spiritual mountebanks, to impose upon the credulous and unwary; and signify but little to that all-searching Judge, who judges neither by fine words nor fair pretences. For let men say, or pray, or pretend what they will, he who has a covetous heart, is in the sight of God a covetous wretch. And he who has a proud, a lustful, or a revengeful heart, passes in the accounts of heaven for a proud, a lustful, and a revengeful person. And he who can harbour schism or faction, sacrilege or rebellion, either in principle or design, though he prays never so devoutly, never so loud, and long, with all the postures of a solemn hypocrisy, as a sad look and a doleful tone; yet let him take it from the word of truth itself, that he has nothing either pure or pious in his heart: for the main spring, the heart, is out of order; and therefore the motion of the wheels must needs be so, too.

Briefly, and in a word, and with that to conclude: he who has nothing to entitle him to this blessedness of seeing God, but a civil, inoffensive smoothness of behaviour, a demure face, and a formal, customary attendance upon a few religious duties, without a thorough renovation of the great principle within him, and a sanctified disposition of heart, may indeed hereafter see God, but then he is like to see him only as his judge.

To which God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



SERMON LIII.

GALATIANS v. 24.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

IT is common to all sects and institutions to have some distinguishing badges and characteristic names, by which they both express and distinguish their profession. But Christ, that came into the world not to imitate, but to correct and transcend both that of the Jews and of the philosophers, sequesters his doctrine from the empty formality of names, reducing it to its inward vigour and spirituality. So that even in respect of the most solemn appellation, we find that Christianity was some time in the world before the name of Christian; perhaps to convince the world, that religion is not a bare name, and that men might be Christians before they were called so; as daily experience demonstrates that they are often called so before they are.

And indeed the name of Christian, without the nature, leaves no more impression upon the soul, than the baptismal water that conveys it does upon the face. Wherefore Christ gives another-guess badge and mark of Christianity; such an one as constitutes the very essence of it; for still it is the same thing that gives both nature and difference to beings. Now this discriminating mark is in short comprised in the crucifixion of the flesh and the lusts thereof.

For the explication of which words, I shall shew,

I, What is meant by *being Christ's*.

II. What by *the flesh with the affections and lusts*.

I. For the first of these. *To be Christ's* is to accept of and have an interest in Christ, as he is offered and proposed in the gospel. Now Christ is offered and held forth to every particular person that expects to be saved by him under three offices; 1. his prophetic, 2. his kingly, and 3. his sacerdotal. In which account I give you not only the number of his offices, but also their order, as they stand related to us. And this order and economy of them is founded upon the very nature of the thing, and the natural order of religious actions. For in the procedure of nature there must be, 1. the knowledge of a duty; 2. the performance of it; 3. the reward. Correspondent to these is the economy of Christ's offices. For, 1. by Christ's prophetic office, revealing his mind to us, we come to know his will. 2. Then by his kingly office, ruling and governing us, we come to yield obedience to that will. 3. And thirdly, by his sacerdotal or priestly office, we come to receive the fruit of that obedience in our justification and salvation. For we must not think that our obedience is rewarded with eternal life for its own merit, but it is the merit of Christ's sacrifice that procures this reward to our obedience.

Some indeed preposterously misplace these, and make us partake of the benefit of Christ's priestly office in the forgiveness of our sins, and our reconcilment to God, before



we are brought under the sceptre of his kingly office by our obedience. But such must know that our interest in Christ as a lord and king to rule us, does precede, if not also cause, our interest in him as a priest to save us. For the gospel perverts not the order of nature; the work must still go before the reward. And those shall never share in the benefit of Christ's sacrifice, who have not submitted to the rule of his sceptre.



Now therefore, to sum this up into a firm conclusion, he, and he alone, is properly said to be Christ's, who, upon a sound knowledge of and a sincere obedience to Christ's will, stands justified and reconciled to God by the merit of his death and sufferings: and thus he is perfectly Christ's, who has an interest in him considered under every one of his offices. This may serve to overthrow the wild and irrational justification of the antinomians, libertines, and lazy solifidians, who upon this ground only judge themselves to be Christ's, because they believe they are: a way of justification, for its easiness, rather to be wished true than to be thought so. But easy things in religion are always suspicious, if not false; and such will find, that their belief is not the rule of God's proceeding.

II. In the next place we are to see what is meant by *the flesh*, and *the affections and lusts*. By the first I suppose I need not tell you that it cannot be understood of the corporeal bulk of man, which together with the soul makes up the whole compound; but it is rather a metonymy of the part for the whole, or perhaps more properly, of the subject for the adjunct, the flesh for the sin adherent to the flesh, as shall be made out by and by. In the mean time by *flesh* we are to understand the whole entire body of sin and corruption, that inbred proneness in our nature to all evil, in one word expressed by *concupiscence*, usually called by the schoolmen *fomes*; that fuel, or combustible matter in the soul, that is apt to be fired by every temptation; the womb that conceives and brings forth all actual impurities, styled in the next words *affections* and *lusts*. By which we are not to understand only the brutish affections of carnal sensuality, but indifferently all the actual eruptions of that accursed principle, all the streams that issue from that impure fountain; for as by *the flesh* is denoted the original depraved disposition of the heart, so by the other is signified the drawing forth of that propensity or principle into the several commissions of sin through the course of our lives; flesh is the fuel, and lust the flame.



Having thus given the explication of the words, and shewn what is to be understood by *being Christ's*, and what by *the flesh* and *its affections*,

We shall lay the further prosecution of the text in these two things.

I. To shew why this vitiosity and corrupt habit of nature comes to have this denomination of *flesh*.

II. What is imported by the *crucifying* of it.

For the first of these. The whole depravation of our nature comes to be called flesh for these reasons.

1. Because of its situation and place, which is principally in the flesh. Here it is placed, here it is enthroned. Concupiscence, I shew, was the radix of all sin, and all the several kinds of sin, to which men are severally inclined, are only so many modifications or different postures of concupiscence; and concupiscence itself follows the crasis and temperature of the body; as we know the liquor for the present receives the figure of the vessel into which it is infused. If you would know why one man is proud, another cruel, another intemperate or luxurious, you are not to repair so much to Aristotle's Ethics, or the writings of other moralists, as to those of Galen, or of some anatomists, to find the reason of these different tempers; for doubtless they arise from the different quality of the blood and the motion of the spirits in those several persons; which things themselves depend upon the climate, diet, and air, in which men are born and bred. Hence we see that those of the same climate are usually disposed to the same sin. Whereupon some have presumed to set down the standing characters of several nations; as that the Grecians are false; the Spaniards formal, grave, and proud; the French wordy, fickle, and fantastic; the Italians lustful; and the English mutinous and insolent to governors. And these characters, if true, seem to agree to these several nations, not only for one age, but successively in all generations: as waters of a river running in the same channel always retain the same colour, taste, and breed the same sorts of fish. And it is not to be questioned, but that it was the same humour that raised the barons' wars, and since acted higher in the late rebellion. I do not believe a transmigration of souls, but surely there is something to be observed that looks very like a transmigration of tempers and manners; so constantly does posterity succeed into the humours, appetites, and ways of their progenitors.

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But let not any one gather from what has been said, that I place sin in the body only, not in the soul also: for in the body I place only the first seeds and occasions of it, which immediately, upon the sociation of the soul with the body, communicates and transfuses the contagion to that likewise; as we see in stills and alembics, though the fire put under, and the materials put within them, lie in the lower part, yet they send up a steam and exhalation, which settles into drops in the upper part: so all the perturbations of bodily affections, though they are seated in the body, which is the lower part, yet they continually exhale and breathe forth sinful vapours, that leave a guilt and an impurity upon the soul; yea, even upon the top and commanding faculties, the understanding and the will: though, to pursue that similitude a little further, as that which rises from the bottom of the still is but a vapour, and becomes not a drop till it settles upon the upper part of it, so that which comes from the body is but a bare disturbance, and comes not to the proper form and nature of a sin, till consented to and owned by the soul. From what has been laid down, Aristotle observes, that intemperance and luxury about things that affect the body and grosser senses leaves a kind of stupidity and sottishness upon the mind also; as the uppermost part of the chimney is blacked by the fire that burns below.

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How the body should affect the soul, that which is material work upon that which is immaterial, is, I confess, a problem hardly resolved in philosophy; but experience shews the truth of the thing by its apparent and undeniable effects: and reason itself will not prove that we ought to reject the thing, because we are ignorant of the manner, unless reason would prove also, that we might know every thing. But where philosophy seems to contradict a divine truth, there it is to be reputed vain, and we are to fetch the decision of the case from faith.

Divines, in the matter of original sin, which upon good grounds we believe, though I suppose few can explain the way of its propagation; they (I say) acknowledge that the soul, which is by immediate creation infused by God into the body, comes pure, unspotted, and untainted with the least sin; but upon the union and conjunction of it with the body, it contracts a pollution, and so the whole man becomes presently sinful; as the purest water issuing from the fountain, when it slides into a dirty and a muddy kennel, it immediately loses its clearness and virginity, and becomes as filthy as the place in which it runs. This discovers that it is the body that first sullies and besmears the soul; here is the *malum propter vicinum malum*, this is the unhappy neighbourhood; for no sooner are they joined, no sooner are the body and the soul made brothers, but they are brethren in iniquity.

Conformable to what has been said is the verdict of the holy scripture. Hear the exclamation of St. Paul, [Rom. vii. 24](#), *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?* It was his body that wounded, that, as it were, stifled his soul: hence it cries out, as one sinking in a bog or quagmire, for immediate deliverance. This sociable evil, this treacherous companion, is the enticer and betrayer to all sin. Hence again Paul lays the stress and load of all upon this in the [eighteenth verse of the same chapter](#), *In me, that is, my flesh,* (says he,) *there dwelleth no good thing.* He earned his prison about him, nay, his bane, his poison, had he not had an antidote from grace: it was a magazine for the weapons of unrighteousness, a full, endless, inexhaustible storehouse of all filth and corruption.

This truth, that sin has its first situation and place in the flesh, and that from hence it borrows its name in common dialect of scripture, is yet further clear from this; that the most mortified and sanctified persons in the world cannot by any means wholly discharge themselves from the relicks of sin and concupiscence while they are yet in the body; as having soaked and insinuated itself into the very vital constitution of it: but immediately after they die, and the soul comes to be delivered from the body, we hold that the sanctification of it is then perfect and consummate; so that it sins no more, the very being, as well as the guilt of sin, is then destroyed; the soul is then sprightly, pure, and vigorous, like the spirit or quintessence of a liquor extracted from the dregs and the captivity of matter; or like a pleasant bird that is released from a nasty cage: the soul then finds its activity restored with its purity, and so mounts up to heaven, where it enjoys its Maker by a bright and a

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clear intuition, and converses with him for ever: and this is an evident demonstration that the vitiosity of our nature is first situate and fixed in the flesh.

The papists indeed hold that the souls of the saints, at least of the plebeian and ordinary saints, are not immediately, upon the dissolution of the body, freed wholly from the being and inherency of sin, but are sent into a place called *purgatory*, where the fire is to calcine and purge off the dross of sin from the soul, before it can be fitted for the society of the blessed. But this is a fabulous and a gross conceit, and, were it not gainful, unworthy the patronage of any learned popish writer. For how can the fire burn the soul? and then how can it burn off sin? Do we think that sin sticks upon the soul like rust upon a piece of iron? But these things are so ridiculous and absurd, that to repeat them is to confute them.

2. The vitiosity of our nature is called *flesh*, because of its close, inseparable nearness to the soul. There is an intimate conjunction and union between the soul and sin; and the intimacy of their coherence is the cause of the intimacy of their friendship. Sin is fixed in the heart, and therefore it lies in the bosom. Hence, to shew the individual estate and the indissoluble tie of matrimony, the Spirit takes a similitude from this, [Matthew xix. 5](#), and says, *They two shall be one flesh*.

The soul, while it is embodied, can no more be divided from sin, than the body itself can be considered without flesh. The nearness between these two, our soul and our corruption, is so great, that it arises to a kind of identity: hence to deny and conquer our sin is, in scripture language, *to deny ourselves*, implying that sin adheres so close to us, that it is a kind of second self.

I do not say that the substance of the soul is evil, or that the being and nature of it is sinful; but that the stain of sin contracted by it clings so fast to it, that it is scarce to be fetched off. Blackness is not the substance of the ink, yet it is inseparable from it.

See the nearness of sin to the soul, by observing the ways and means by which God endeavours to part them, and without which they cannot be divided. No less than the blood of the Son of God to wash off the stain of sin; no less than the Spirit of God to subdue the power; nothing but an infinite price, joined with an infinite power, can work the division. Hence the effectual sin-conquering force of the word is expressed by this dividing quality, [Heb. iv. 12](#); *It is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow*. Is there any thing more closely united than the joint and the marrow? than the soul and the spirit? Yes, the soul and sin. Hereupon, the word being to disenthral the soul from it, must have the same effect upon it that the sword has upon the body, which is, by penetration and dividing the continuity of the parts; for every wound is properly division, an opening or loosening the compactness and closeness of the thing upon which the impression is made. Wherefore, if the great business of the word is to wound and divide the soul from sin, it follows, that they were



once intimately and closely cemented together; the connection between these two is a Gordian knot, that cannot be dissolved but by this spiritual sword.

We misapply the command of loving our neighbour, and misplace our affection; for sin is our nearest neighbour, and we love that most; it cleaves, it adheres, it sticks to us; but it is as the viper did to Paul's hand. And we may say of it as Christ did of Judas, *He that betrays me is with me*: sin is, as it were, engrafted into the soul, and thereby made connatural to it, and consequently as a stock upon which another scion is engrafted; the soul does not bring forth its own natural fruit, but the fruit of sin.

They are mutually knit and entwined one within the other. Hence the power of remitting sins is in the gospel termed, [Matth. xvi. 19](#), *the power of loosing*, as the contrary is *of binding*. Sin has bound itself as close upon the soul as the bonds or fetters that pinion and hold fast an imprisoned malefactor.

The same union is yet further evident from the state of every unsanctified, unregenerate person in his death: at which great change, though he leaves his body, he retains his sin; that still keeps close to his side, and follows him into another world. A man's corruption, if dying in his sin, is to him like a bad servant or an unfaithful soldier; though it lives with him, yet it will be sure not to die with him. And this may be the second reason of this denomination.

3. A third reason why the vitiosity of our nature is called *flesh* is, because of its dearness to us. And this founded upon the former, for vicinity is one cause of love. Now there is nothing that we prosecute with a more affectionate tenderness than our flesh; for as the apostle says, [Ephes. v. 29](#), *No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it*. How does the soul sympathize with it, either in its sufferings or its comforts! one would think that reason was even swallowed up in sense: how does every change of weather affect the mind! how sensible is it of every winter's blast, every summer's heat, of the sweetness of ease and the tortures of pain, as if, by conversing with the body, it even grew corporeal. If any the least member is hurt, what a general auxiliary, what a concurrent help is there from all the rest! the eye bewails, the tongue bemoans, and the hand plasters and foment it; and all this to rescue a base carcass from that which will one day certainly attach it, death and dissolution.

But in the mean time the conscience may be wounded, the soul bruised and broke with the fatal blows of sin and temptation, and lie even gasping at the brink of eternal death, and yet we feel no pain there, neither seek for a remedy; it may faint and bleed, and we never ask whether there is any balm in Gilead, any spiritual surgeon to pour oil into our wounds. For see whether it is not the usual custom of men not to think of their souls till their body is given over; nor to send for the divine, till they are left by the physician; so dear is this flesh to us: for if it were not so, could we think the drunkard would ruin his soul to please his palate? would the unclean person pawn eternity for the gratification of a base appetite?

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Nay, take a survey of all the arts, the trades, and the most prized inventions in the world, and you will find ten to four found out and employed either to please or adorn the flesh: it is for this that the artificer labours, and the merchant ventures; and we compass sea and land ten times oftener to make a gallant, than to make a proselyte. Justly therefore upon this account also does the Spirit express our sin by the name of *flesh*, for this has an equal share in our love.

Sin is our darling, our Delilah, the queen regent of our affections; it fills all our thoughts, engrosses our desires, and challenges the service of all our actions. Can there be any greater love than the love of a mother to her child? And we know the scripture tells us, that sin *is conceived and brought forth* by the soul, [James i. 15](#). Doubt not therefore but it shall be cherished and beloved as a child; it is the firstborn of the soul, *the beginning of its strength*; but it is such a firstborn to it as Reuben was to Jacob; such an one as he had for ever cause to curse.

I shall not stand to shew the excessive love that the miserable, bewitched soul of man bears to sin, much less shall I stand to prove it. Let it suffice us to observe, from the constant, uncessant practices of the world, that there is no cost, study, travail, and labour, either to preserve health, to defend life, or to endear friends, which is not with an abundant overplus of charge and expense freely and greedily laid out upon the satisfaction of sin, and that in its most tyrannical and unreasonable demands. What that man in [Micah vi. 7](#) proffers for the expiation, many hundreds would give for the preservation of their sin; *thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers oil, yea, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul*: so dear does sin usually cost men in this world, though much dearer in another.

This is their paramour, they court it, they *go a whoring* after it, as the usual scripture expression is: they will not, though you fling the vengeance of God and the fire of hell in their faces, be plucked away, but, maugre all curses or promises, terrors or entreaties, they will even die in the fatal embraces of their dear but killing corruption: and as some will rather rot and perish, and be eat through with a gangrene or an ulcer, than undergo the painful cutting and lancing of their flesh, because they are delicate and tender of it; so the soul will, through the same tenderness to a cruel lust, see itself overgrown, infected, poisoned, and at length ruined by it, rather than remedy and remove it, by the healing severity of a thorough mortification. Let this therefore be the third and last reason why the Spirit has here set forth the pravity and corruption of our nature by the name of *flesh*.

Now what has been hitherto discoursed of may, by way of inference, suggest these things to our consideration.

1. The deplorable estate of fallen man; whose condition is now such, that he carries his plague about him, and wears it something nearer to him than his shirt; that he encloses a viper in his bowels, feeds and maintains, and is passionately fond of his mortal enemy; and, what is the greatest misery of all, has it not in his power to be otherwise; he has a body that



is not so much the instrument, or servant, as the dungeon of his soul: and sin holds him by such bonds of pleasure, so strong, so suitable to his perverted and diseased inclinations, that his ruin is presented to him as his interest, and nothing gratifies, delights, or wins upon him, but that which dishonours his Maker, and certainly destroys himself.

2. The next thing offered from hence to our thoughts is, the great difficulty of the duty of mortification: this is a greater work than men are aware of: it is indeed the killing of an enemy, but of such an enemy as a man thinks his friend, and loves as his child; and how hard it is to put the knife to the throat of an Isaac is easily imaginable. What! part with that that came into the world with me, and has ever since lived and conversed with me, that continually lies down and rises up with me, that has even incorporated itself into my nature, seized all my appetites, and possessed all my faculties, so that it is the centre and principle of all my pleasures, and that which gives a relish and a quickness to every object! This is an hard saying, and an harder undertaking. He must be a good orator that should persuade a man to stick daggers and needles in his flesh, to strip his bones, and in a manner to tear his nature over his ears; yet to mortify a sin is something like it: but alas! it would go near to nonplus the most artificial persuader, to bring a man to part with the covering of his body; but how much more with the vestment of his soul!

Surely there is no love to God less than that which will induce a man to lay down his life for God, that can enforce him to mortify a corruption for him; and this, one would think, should awaken those who sacrifice to their own dreams, who spread themselves paths of roses to a fool's paradise, and design heaven upon those terms of easiness that the gospel knows not of: but it is an attempt that will cost many a smart blow, many a bitter rencounter, and many a passage through the fiery furnace, before the innate filth of our nature can be severed from us. And whatsoever measures a man may propose to himself, he will find, that to mortify a lust, and to be a Christian, is an harder work than now and then to lift up his eyes, to cry, Lord! Lord! or to hear an absolution, which perhaps does not at all belong to him.

3. In the third and last place, this declares to us the mean and sordid employment of every sinner: he serves the flesh, that is, he is a drudge and a scavenger to the most inferior part of his nature. It is a low and an unmanly thing for any person to be laborious and solicitous, and to spend much time in dressing and adorning his body; it shews him to be a fop, a trifle, and a mere picture: but then how much more ignoble must it be to attend upon his body, in the dishonourable provisions for the lusts and corruptions of it!

If it be a preferment to handle sores and ulcers, to converse with diseases, and all the filth of a distempered body, then may it pass for a generous employment, to be sedulous in obeying the dictates of sin and the commands of the flesh; but as the service of God is perfect freedom, so the service of the flesh is perfect, entire, complete slavery.

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II. I proceed now to the second general thing proposed for the handling of the words, and that is, to shew what is imported by the crucifixion of the flesh; under which I shall do these things.

1. I shall shew what is the reason of the use of it in this place.
2. What is the full force, sense, and significance of it.
3. Prescribe some means for enabling us to the duty signified by it.
4. Make some useful corollaries and deductions from the whole.

1. For the first of these: this word is here used by way of allusion to Christ, of whose behaviour and sufferings every Christian is to be a living copy and representation. Christ will have his death an example to excite, as well as a sacrifice to save: and there is no passage in his life and death but is intended for our instruction, as well as our salvation. Upon this score we are bid to *put on Christ, as a garment*, [Rom. xiii. 14](#). For as in a garment there is an apposite fitness and commensuration of each part of that to every part of the body; so there is nothing in the whole series of Christ's life and death, but ought in some measure to be answered and transcribed by every believer; as affording to us for every action not only a pattern, but a motive.

We read of Christ's nativity: here every Christian is to turn an history into a precept, and read in himself the necessity of a new birth. We find the passion and the crucifixion of Christ for sin: now what can this better suggest to us, than the crucifying sin, the cause of his crucifixion? We read and admire his resurrection from the dead: certainly this might infer in us a spiritual resurrection from the death of sin and the grave, and stench of corruption.

Nay, if we have that Christian dexterity and skill of a proper application of these passages, we shall find a correspondent, homogeneous quality derived from each. We shall die with him, and we shall rise with him: we shall find something in his cross that shall kill our sins; something in his resurrection that shall revive our graces: for if we transfer and place it even upon a natural cause, what is it else, but for the body to sympathize with the head?

The Socinians indeed place the whole business of our redemption upon a bare imitation; and the truth is, to say no more, (if you will admit the expression,) they do indeed make Christ an example, and that in a much more ignominious way than the Jews did. But now though they place the whole redemption wrought by Christ in a bare following and expressing his example, let not us therefore transgress into the other extreme, and totally exclude this imitation; for undoubtedly Christ in all his sufferings left us a pattern, as well as paid a price.

There is none that seems to have so evangelical and raised a notion of this, as the apostle Paul in [Galat. ii. 20](#), *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live*. Paul seems to be recovered to his spiritual life, as the youth upon whom Elisha stretched himself. The prophet put his face to the other's face, his eyes, his mouth, his hands, to the eyes, mouth, and hands of the



other; and so, by an adequate application of his body to each part, he brought him at length to enjoy the same life with himself.

Thus Paul as it were stretched himself upon the same cross with Christ, and by exactly conforming to his sufferings and death, was advanced to the similitude of his life. Hence it is said, [2 Tim. ii. 12](#), *If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him*. And Paul, in that excellent discourse, [Phil. iii. 10](#), vents an heavenly passionate desire, *that he might know the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death*. And thus to endeavour to be like Christ is a laudable, nay, a dutiful ambition; it is our sin to worship, but our duty to be his picture: for doubtless every Christian is obliged not only to obey, but also to represent his Saviour.

Certainly Paul, in [Galat. vi. 14](#), where he says, that *he is crucified to the world*, and tells the believing Romans, in [Rom. vi. 6](#), *that their old man is crucified with Christ*, could have expressed the same thing by other words sufficiently significant, as, that he was mortified, and his worldly desires extinguished, and that their corruptions were abated, weakened, and subdued; but he rather says *crucified*. The other, indeed, would have expressed his purity, but this, by a peculiar significance imports his Christianity, as not only declaring an excellent life, but also the example that caused it. It is like fair writing, with the copy prefixed and set above it. The business of a Christian is not invention, but imitation: and because he is too ignorant to prescribe to himself, all his perfection is to follow, and Christ gives every Christian this comprehensive, summary compendium of his duty, *Let him take up his cross and follow me*. And if we would abridge all religion into this short dichotomy, the sum of our belief is Christ, and of our obedience conformity.

Having thus shewn the reason of the use of the word here, I proceed now to the second thing, which is,

2. To shew the full force and significance of it.

Crucifying therefore, as it is here applied to the corruption and depraved sinful disposition of our nature, imports these four things:

(1.) The death of it. The cross is the instrument of death, and to crucify is to kill. A few interrupted assaults and combats with a man's corruption will not suffice; he may give it some blows, and wounds, and bruises, but after all these it may recover; and we know the seed of the woman was not only to *bruise*, but to *break the serpent's head*.

He that will crucify his sin must pursue it to the very death. Many, after they have been something humbled for their sin, and for a while have used the means of mortification, so as to terrify it from a present acting, and have took off something of the edge of its fury, conclude that the day is won, and the enemy routed, when by sad experience they find at length that it is but a retreat, and the return is more furious and dangerous than ever. An enemy is never overcome till he is killed; and those only act like wise men who think so.

We are to crucify our corruptions, as the Jews did Christ; the whippings, scourgings, and buffetings were but the forerunners and beginnings of the grand suffering that was intended. It was his life and his blood that they thirsted after. Now it is but for a man to change the scene, and act the same upon his own corruption. Sin stands as a malefactor condemned to death by the law of God; and God has intrusted every man with the execution of his own sin; and God will require life for life; so that if a man lets his sin escape alive, the life of his soul must be its ransom.

There is nothing that betrays and ruins men, as to the great concerns of their eternal happiness, so much as half and imperfect mortifications of their sin, but supposed to be perfect and complete: for they give sin rather a respite than a ruin; a time of breathing and of re-collecting its strength, and a more prevailing insinuation upon the heart, upon the vicissitude and the return: so that a man is strangely baffled and set backwards in the main work of repentance, while he sees all his endeavours unravelled, and his sin grow upon him afresh, like weeds only crott and cut, whereas they should have been rooted up.

If a man thinks that he has given a shrewd blow to his lust, let him know that this is an argument for him to pursue his advantage, and to redouble his strokes upon it, to a perfect conquest, rather than to acquiesce, as if he had achieved something sufficient to acquit himself in the combat. The utmost cruelty to an inveterate enemy is always successful, if sufficiently powerful; but if a man shall content himself to have given such an adversary a scratch on the hand, when he might and should have stabbed him to the heart, let him thank himself, if in the issue he fall by a recovered fury, and dies by that strength that he spared to his own ruin.

Wherefore when we are thus commanded to *crucify the flesh*, let every one understand the full latitude of this precept; and remember that he is charged to kill his corruption. God's hatred is directed to the life and being of sin; and for a man to spare that, is to be absurdly cruel to his own soul. To strike it, to war against it, without designing its death, is but hypocrisy. A Saul may captivate and imprison an Agag, but a pious Samuel will slay him.

(2.) As it implies death, so it further imports a violent death. Sin never dies of age. It is as when a young man dies in the full fire and strength of his youth by some vehement distemper; it as it were tears and forces and fires his soul out of his body. He that will come and fight it out with his corruption to the last, shall find, that it will sell its life at a dear rate; it will strive and fight for it, and many a doubtful conflict will pass between that and the soul. It may give a man many a wound, many a foil, and many a disheartening blow: for, believe it, the strong man will fight for his possession.

Never think to dispossess him by a bare summons, or imagine that a man can recover the mastery of his heart and his affections by a few prayers and broken humiliations. No,



such a mortifying course must be taken, and such constant violences and severities used, as shall try and shake every power of the soul, before a corruption can be despatched. The conquest had need be glorious, for it will be found, by sharp experience, that the combat will be dangerous.



The soul is engaged with such an enemy as will require both the onsets of force and the stratagems of art. Sin will never quit its hold quietly; but, like the Devil, who if we hear is conjured down, it is always in a storm. That man that allows himself in his sin, and humours his corruption, let him consider, that if God ever intend to save him from it, what it will cost him to conquer it; kill it he must, but then it will not be killed like a lamb, which resists not the knife, but like a wolf or a wild boar; he must run it down and conquer it, before he can kill it; and though God do give him the grace to conquer it in the issue, yet he must go the hazard and the dubious adventure of being conquered himself. When a man is put to effect any thing with violence, it is troublesome to him that does, as well as grievous to him that suffers it. This therefore is the second thing implied in the crucifixion of sin, to despatch it by a violent death.

(3.) To crucify the flesh with the affections of it imports a painful, bitter, and vexatious death. Let us but reflect upon our Saviour: he was nailed to the tree, and that through those parts which were most apprehensive of pain, the hands and the feet; which members, by reason of the concurrence of the nerves and sinews there, must needs be of quickest sense: thus he hung, in the extremity of torture, till, through the unsupportable pressures of pain, he at length gave up the ghost.

Now we are still to take the former observation along with us, that the occasion of the use of this expression here is an allusion to Christ's crucifixion: so that the crucifying the flesh must express the pain also, or the resemblance would not be perfect. This supposed, it would be well that such as are quick and forward to profess the name and undertake the rigour of a Christian course, would first sit down and calculate and ponder the difficulties, the hard, grating, and afflicting contrariety that it bears to the flesh. They are to live as upon the rack; to hear the cries of a tormented, dying corruption, without relenting; when our greatest desires thirst and beg for satisfaction, they are to be answered only with renewed exercises of mortification; when we have got them upon the cross, we are to treat them as the Jews did Christ; when they thirst and call out for their former pleasures, to give them the vinegar and the gall of sharper and sharper severities. The cravings of our dearest and most beloved affections are to be denied; and what a torment is it when desire is upon the career, to separate between the enjoyment and the appetite! It is like rending the skin from the flesh, or the flesh from the bone: yet this is to be done; nor are we to be surprised with wonder at it; for certainly no man was ever crucified without pain.



The punishment of the cross is of all others the quickest and the most acute; it is the universal stretching of all the limbs from the joints, so universal, that there is not the least

part, sinew, or fibre in the body, but it is distended. So the mortification of sin is to be so general and diffused, as not only to fix upon the bulk and body of sin, but to stretch the inquisition to every the least desire, the most lurking and secret affection; for assuredly there is something more than ordinary implied in this expression of *crucifying sin*: it cannot but import the most rugged, cruel, and remorseless dealing with it that is imaginable. And however men are nice and favourable to their corruption, yet did they consider what endless pains, what unspeakable torments, their corrupt affections and lusts prepare for them, even self-love could not but be religion enough to make them prevent such miseries, by first inflicting them upon the author.

Every man should remember, that for all his indulgence to sin, sin will not spare him; even that corruption that lies in his bosom will prosecute him, and cry out for justice against him at the *judgment of the great day*. Besides, why should we grudge at the painfulness of this duty, when it is confessed, that every wound given to sin cannot but pain the sinner; but then if we consider withal, that God has decreed to pardon and save none, without giving them some taste of the smart and bitter fruit of sin, we have cause to adore his mercy in this, that the pain we take in mortifying sin, will be the only pain that we shall ever endure for it.

(4.) In the fourth and last place, crucifixion denotes a shameful and a cursed death; it is such an one as was marked out and signalized with a peculiar malediction, even of old, by God himself, [Deut. xxi. 23](#), *He that is hanged on a tree is accursed of God*; and for the shame of it, it is so great amongst all nations, that the infamy were a sufficient punishment, without the pain: so that the Romans used it to slaves only, and the vilest malefactors. Hence, in [Heb. vi. 6](#), such apostates as are said by their unworthy behaviour to *crucify Christ*, are said also to *put him to an open shame*.

Thus therefore must the corruption and vitiosity of our nature be dealt with. God has doomed it to death, without the benefit of so much as dying honourably. If there be any scorn, loathing, and detestation due to a dying offender, certainly it is much more due to the sin that made him so. Hereupon God has provided one great instrument for the mortifying of sin, which is the irksome shame of confession: I do not mean the auricular, pick-pocket confession of the papists, but public confession, such an one as David exercised, when he confessed his sins before the whole congregation; and such an one as the primitive Christian church required of scandalous excommunicate persons, before they were readmitted into its communion. And indeed if we consider the temper of man's mind, confession is of all other penalties the most shameful; shameful I mean to sin, though glorious to the confessing sinner.

Hence also humiliation for sin is expressed by *taking shame to ourselves*. And certainly if shame is not judicially awarded as the punishment, it will naturally follow as the fruit and effect of sin. See all the cursed deaths, the confusion and consternation that attends malefact-



ors: it is all to be ascribed to this cursed cause, that they would not shame their sin, and therefore their sin has now shamed and confounded them. Considering therefore how sin has stained the beauty of our nature, and covered it with the shames and dishonours of corruption, whatsoever we do or can inflict upon it of this kind, it is not so much a punishment from the law of God, as a proper retaliation from ourselves.

Having thus shewn what is imported by the crucifying of sin, I proceed now to the third thing proposed.

3. Which is, to prescribe some means for the enabling of us to the performance of this duty. Two therefore I shall mention as conducive to this crucifixion of the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

(1.) The first is a constant and pertinacious denying them in all their cravings for satisfaction. A man by fasting too long may come to lose his stomach; so an affection abridged and tied up from its proper gratification comes by degrees to be chastised and even wearied into sobriety; for frequent disappointments in a thing eagerly desired will at length leave a kind of indifference in the desires as to that thing. As on the contrary, every gratification of a corrupt appetite exasperates, calls forth, and enlarges it to new, and greater, and more restless expectations.

Let a man therefore begin the crucifixion of his flesh in these negative mortifications; that is, when his voluptuous humour is clamorous for pleasure, let him not answer any of those calls: if he would not maintain it, let him not feed it: he will find that so much as it wants of food, it will lose of its fierceness. This is the course taken for the taming of wild beasts, to reduce and order them by the disciplines of hunger, by long and frequent frustrations of their ravenous appetites.

And the reason of this course is founded in a natural cause. For though the design of every appetite is to purvey for nature, and to derive strength to that by receiving such and such objects; yet by the same means it first feeds and strengthens itself. It being like some collectors of public monies, who indeed are employed and intended to serve the exchequer, but yet in the mean time use to be very kind to themselves. In a word, the defraudation of the appetites of sin weakens the whole body of sin and themselves also; as on the other side all satisfaction corroborates and inflames them.

And he that takes up a resolution to crucify his intemperance, luxury, or uncleanness, yet when they call for their usual refection, and a fair occasion knocks at his door, or his companions call upon him, has no power to deny either the entreaty of his appetite within, or to slight the invitation of tempting objects from without, he may as well expect to tame a wolf by feeding him, or to extinguish a flame by heaping fuel upon it, as to mortify a sin upon these terms. His attempt is absurd, his success desperate, and his lust must and will prevail.

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2. The other means to crucify a corrupt affection, is to encounter it by actions of the opposite virtue. This differs from the former thus: that that was only the denying of fuel to a fire, but this a pouring water upon it, and so vanquishing it by the prevalence of a contrary element. He that is profane, let him subdue his profaneness by the exercise of prayer and meditation. He that is covetous, let him dispossess his mind of that vice by actions of charity and liberality: for as vicious actions frequently repeated produce a vicious habit, that infects and ferments the whole soul; so the like frequent repetition of virtuous actions does by degrees loosen, and at length totally unfix and drive out that habit of vice. Now this is both the nobler and the speedier way of conquest: as it is more glorious to break open than to starve a city, and to take it by force than by surrender. Both indeed are equally conquests, but the latter is the greater triumph.

And thus much for the means by which we may be enabled to *crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts*.

4. Come we now to the fourth and last thing, viz. To see what may be drawn by way of consequence and deduction from what has hitherto been delivered.

(1.) First of all then we collect the high concernment and the absolute necessity of every man's crucifying his carnal, worldly affections. I know no work so difficult and unpleasing, but its necessity is an abundant argument to enforce it. And I suppose every one will grant, that it is necessary for him to be a Christian: yet unless he has crucified the flesh he cannot be so, and his assuming that title is only a nullity and an usurpation.

Upon this small hinge therefore turns the grand determination of our eternal estate, whether as to happiness or misery. The whole round of man's happiness, from the first dawnings of it in the revelations of grace, to the last consummation of it in glory, runs solely and entirely upon this. Without this, not so much as the blessing of word and sacraments, but it is poisoned with a curse. For first, he that comes to Christ's table who is not Christ's, is in God's esteem only as a *dog catching at the children's bread*. He that prays to Christ, and yet is not Christ's, is but as a rebel presenting a petition; if he intrudes into the participation of ordinances, and the society of the saints, he is a guest without either invitation or wedding garment, where his best entertainment will be the imprisonment of a malefactor, instead of the welcome of a guest. On the other hand, take all the solid happiness of this life, and the hopes of a better, the privileges of the sanctified, and the eternal fruitions of the glorified, and they are all compendiously but fully couched in this one word, *to be Christ's*.

(2.) In the next place, we gather a standing and infallible criterion, by which to distinguish those that are not Christ's from those that are, and consequently to convince us how few Christians there are in the world; or, to speak more closely, how few Christians there are in Christendom; and that the common use and acceptation of this word is much larger than its real signification. Much the greater number and proportion of men lie wallowing in all the filth and the pollutions of the flesh. But I suppose the precedent discourse has been a



sufficient demonstration, that he and he alone has a right to this glorious appellative of a Christian, and to the privileges that attend it, who has mastered his depraved nature, cashiered his corrupt inclinations, and offered violence to his dearest, when sinful affections; so that he overcomes and triumphs, and sees his sin bleeding at his feet. In sum, he only is Christ's who has executed the utmost of that pious cruelty upon his sin, that we have seen hitherto imported by crucifixion.

But it will be replied, that this is an hard and a discouraging assertion, that none should be reputed Christ's, unless he has fully crucified and destroyed his sin.

But to this I answer, that we must here distinguish of a twofold destruction of sin, 1. In respect of a total abolition: thus every one that is Christ's must have destroyed his sin in design and purpose; this he must intend, whatsoever God enables him to effect; this must be aimed at, whatsoever is reached. 2. In respect of a sincere, though imperfect indication: and thus every one must actually destroy his sin; that is, he must actually begin and be about the work. Where we may observe, that this is properly, nay, with an emphatical significance, implied by crucifixion; for a man is not dead as soon as crucified. We know our Saviour and the two thieves hung some hours upon the cross before they breathed their last: so sin, though it is not immediately dead, yet it is truly crucified if it is a dying. It may struggle for life, indeed, yet for all that it may be under the pangs and power of death.

But to shew what is the least degree of the crucifixion of sin indispensably required to entitle a man to this transcendent privilege of being Christ's, I shall lay down this position, viz. that he in a true evangelical sense is to be reputed Christ's, who has crucified his sin, as to an active resolution against it; I say active resolution; where this term *active* does not illustrate, but imply the nature of it. There is a kind of identity in these terms *active resolution*, as when we say, *a rational man*, where the predicate does not describe, but include the subject.

Which, by the way, is a sure, unfailling rule for men to try the sincerity of their resolutions by. Many are prone to think, that they are resolved against sin, when indeed they only deceive and abuse themselves, and are not so: for that is no resolution that is not seconded with vigorous, suitable endeavours: if it is not active, it is not so much as resolution. But he that pursues, and backs, and follows home purpose with endeavour, resolution with action, he has given his corruption its deathblow; he has crucified it; and if he does not intermit this course, he shall see his victory completed in the death of his adversary. And thus I affirm, that the crucifixion of sin realized in a sincere though partial mortification of it, makes a man a believer, instates him in grace, entitles him to glory, and, in a word, renders him truly Christ's.

And indeed, if this does not, we may conclude, according to that of our Saviour, though in a different sense, *when the Son of man comes will he find faith upon the earth?* For if this be rejected as no sufficient condition to interest a man in the merits of Christ's death, and

the redemption he has purchased, as God indeed has limited the number of saints to very few, so I am afraid that upon these terms we shall reduce it almost to none, and make the passage to heaven yet narrower than ever God made it; who, even in the midst of a sinner's condemnation, is the God that delights to save, and not to condemn.

To which God be rendered and ascribed, &c.



SERMON LIV.

HABAKKUK ii. 12.

Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood.

THIS short prophecy, out of which I have selected this portion of scripture to discourse of upon this sad and solemn occasion, was uttered (as interpreters do conjecture, for know it certainly they cannot) about the latter end of the reign of king Josiah, or at least in the following reign of his son, but however some time before the Babylonish captivity, that being the great event which it foretells, and the chief subject of which it treats.

The whole prophecy contains in it these two parts: 1st, A double complaint made by the prophet: 2dly, A double answer returned to it by God.

1. And first for the complaint. The prophet cries out of the horrid impiety, the great perfidiousness, and general corruption of the Jewish nation, then grown to that height, that he was forced to invoke the justice of heaven against them, as being too strong for all human control, too big for reproof, and fit only to upbraid the means of grace by their incorrigible impenitence under them.

This loud and grievous complaint of his prophet, God answers with the denunciation of a severe judgment against the persons complained of, by bringing in upon them an army

of the Chaldeans, *that hasty and bitter nation*, as they are styled in the [sixth verse of the first](#)

[chapter](#), persons that should act all the insolences upon them, that victory in conjunction with ill-nature could prompt them to: men whose hearts were flint, and their bowels brass; who knew not what it was to pity or relent, but were utter strangers to humanity, and incapable of shewing compassion: but upon all these accounts so much the fitter to be instrumental to the divine vengeance, now enflamed against them, and to surpass, if possible, the severity of the sentence by the fierceness of the execution.

Which dreadful answer of God is so far from satisfying the prophet's complaint, that it only exasperates his grief, and provokes him to another, in which he expostulates with God the method of this his judgment, that he should punish the wickedness of his people by persons so much viler and wickeder than themselves; that vice should be employed to punish sin, and that his church should be chastised, and, if you will, reformed by persons notable for nothing but blood and rapine, luxury and idolatry.

To this complaint also God is pleased to rejoin, and to clear the justice, equity, and reason of his proceeding, by shewing that it was not to be rated by the qualification of the instruments made use of in it; which instruments he would be sure to account with when they had done his work; and that, as he designed his people for the rod, so he designed the rod itself for the fire. He assures his prophet, and with him all pious and humble persons,



who could lift their faith above their sense, that as Nebuchadnezzar and his army were not for any worth or piety in themselves suffered to captivate and trample upon God's people, and to make havock of and vent their rage against the church; so that they themselves should infallibly have their turns in the course and circulation of divine justice, and be strictly reckoned with for their intolerable pride, their insatiable avarice, and their unhuman and remorseless cruelty, shewn in the spoil and waste they had made upon all nations round about them for the propagation of their empire, which they were still enlarging as their desires, and their desires as hell, as it is expressed in the [fifth verse of the second chapter](#): for all this, I say, the prophet is assured that these victorious sons of Belial should pay severely, when God should think fit to rebuild Jerusalem upon the ruins of Babylon; and to convince the proud and the cruel, that he neither loves nor values his scourge, though he is sometimes constrained to use it.



The words of the text contain in them a woe or curse, denounced personally and directly against the great head of the Chaldean empire Nebuchadnezzar, but by consequence against the whole empire itself. The curse is both for the ground, object, and measures of it considerable: and therefore I shall cast the prosecution of the words into these five particulars.

I. I shall shew the ground or cause of this curse, which the text declares to be, that justly abhorred sin of blood-guiltiness.

II. I shall shew the condition of the person against whom this curse was denounced. He was such an one as had actually set up and established a government by blood.

III. I shall shew the latitude and extent of the curse, and what is comprehended in it.

IV. I shall shew the reasons why a curse or woe is so peculiarly denounced against this sin.



V. And lastly, I shall apply all briefly to the present sad occasion.

I. And first for the ground and cause of the curse here denounced, which was the crying, crimson sin of bloodshed; a sin, in the hatred and detestation of which heaven and earth seem to strive for the mastery. The first great disturbance in the world after the fall of man was by a murderer; whom the vengeance of God pursued to that degree, that he professed that *his punishment was greater than he could bear*, though he himself could not say, that it was greater than he had deserved. Accordingly in all succeeding generations it has still been the care of Providence, both by civil and religious means, to extinguish all principles of savageness in the minds of men, and to make friendship and tenderness over men's lives a great part of religion. But by nothing has this been so highly endeavoured, as by the rules and constitution of Christianity, the last and noblest revelation that God has made of his mind and will to the sons of men. In which all acts of fierceness, violence, and barbarity, are so strictly provided against, that there are few injuries in which patience and sufferance are not recommended instead of the most just and reasonable pretensions to revenge: nay, and so very tender is it of men's lives, that it secures them against the very first approaches

and preparations to murder, by dashing even angry thoughts, and denouncing damnation to vilifying, provoking words: so that we have both law and gospel equally rising up against this monstrous sin: and the sentence of both confirmed by the eternal voice of reason speaking in the law of nations: and so all passing this concurrent judgment, that whosoever sheds man's blood, ought by man to have his blood shed. A judgment made up of all the justice and equity that it is possible for reason and religion to infuse into a law.



But now the execution of this law being upon no grounds of reason to be committed to every private hand, God has found it necessary to deposit it only in the hands of his vicegerents, whom he intrusts and deposes as his lieutenants in the government and protection of the several societies of mankind; and so both to ennoble and guard their sceptres, by appropriating to the same hands the use of the sword of justice too. From which it follows, that the law has not the same aspect upon sovereign princes, that it has upon the rest of men; nor that the sword can, by any mortal power, be authorized against the life of him to whom the sole use of it is by divine right ascribed. Upon which account, if it so fall out that a prince invades either the estate or life of a subject, that law, that draws the sword of justice upon the life of any private person doing the same things, has no power or efficacy at all to do the same execution upon the supreme magistrate, whose supremacy, allowing him neither equal nor superior, renders all legal acts of punishment or coercion upon him (the nature of which is still to descend) utterly impossible.

But what! does God then approve, or at least connive at those wicked actions in princes, that he so severely takes revenge of in others? No, certainly, the guilt is the same in both, and under an equal abhorrence with God, and shall equally be accounted for; but the difference is this, that while God punishes inferior malefactors by the hands of princes, he takes the punishment of princes wholly into his own: and surely no guilty person is like to speed at all the better for having his cause brought before him who has an infinite wisdom to search into, and an infinite power to revenge his guilt. It is God's prerogative to be the sole judge of princes, and heaven only is that high court of justice, where kings can be legally arraigned, tried, and condemned. God has woes enough in store to humble the highest and the proudest tyrant, without needing the assistance of any of his rebel subjects; and therefore such courses for the curbing or pulling down of princes is neither the cause of God nor the defence of religion, but the doctrine of devils, and the dictates of that which in the judgment of God himself is worse than witchcraft. For be a king never so savage, bloody, or unjust, he is, under all these respects, to be looked upon as a plague or a punishment sent by God upon the people, whose duty I am sure is to submit, be the punishment what it will. And however, that nation is like to find but a strange recovery, be its distemper what it will, if its cure must be a rebellion.



II. The second thing to be considered is, the condition of the person against whom this woe or curse is denounced. He was such an one as had actually established a government

and built a city with blood. We know that as soon as Cain had murdered his brother, he presently betook himself to the building of a city. And so indeed it falls out, that bloodiness has usually a connection with building, and that upon some ground of reason: forasmuch as men, by shedding of blood, are enabled to build cities, and set up governments; and then because such cities being once built, and governments set up, do secure the shedders of blood from the vengeance due to their sin. The person here spoken of I am sure eminently served his turn by his cruelty and bloodiness in both these respects, as having thereby reared, or at least hugely augmented the most magnificent city that ever was; even Babylon, the stupendous metropolis of the eastern monarchy, then the governess of the world: a city so strong and great, that it might well promise its builder sufficient defence against any mortal power, that should presume to call him to account for any of those slaughters and depredations, by which he had been enabled thus to build it. So that it is not for nothing, that the prophet here expresses the whole Chaldean monarchy by this city, which was of such incredible strength, glory, and vast dimensions, that it might well pass for one of the wonders of the world, and render it almost doubtful whether Babylon should be accounted in the Chaldean empire, or the Chaldean empire be said to be in Babylon. The account the world has had of the Assyrian monarchy, the first and greatest of all the four, is indeed but small and imperfect; but so far as the scattered fragments of antiquity have been able to inform us, we may guess at the unparalleled greatness of the structure by the magnificence of its remains. For if we consider the spaciousness of this city of Babylon, it is reported to have been about four hundred and fifty-eight of our English miles in circuit: yea, so exceeding wide and ample was it, that three days after it was taken, one part of the city knew nothing of what had befallen the other. The wall that encompassed it was two hundred cubits high, and so thick withal, that two coaches might meet upon the breadth of it. It opened itself at an hundred gates, and those all of brass; which whole wall was the work of Nebuchadnezzar, though falsely ascribed to Semiramis. Add to all this, the *horti pensiles*, art's miraculous emulation of nature, that is, vast gardens and woods planted upon the battlements of towers, and bearing trees fifty foot in height: such prodigious instances of the grandeur of this city have the most authentic historians, both Greek and Latin, transmitted to us. So that Nebuchadnezzar might well vaunt himself upon the survey of such a mighty structure, as, in [Daniel iv. 29, 30](#), we find that he does to some purpose; where we have him walking in the palace of his kingdom, and thus braving it to himself: *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of my kingdom, and by the might of my power?* Words that sufficiently declare the speaker of them to have little regarded either God or man. And surely while he uttered them, he thought himself in a condition rather to rival and defy heaven, than to fear it, and far above the reach of all woes or curses.

But when God shall send a curse, it shall go with a vengeance, and make its way into the very heart of Babylon, climb its high walls, and break through its brass gates, and drive



the tyrant with these very words in his mouth from his throne and all his imperial glories, to herd it with the beasts of the field, till a better mind should fit him for a better condition. For it is worth our observing, that God takes a peculiar delight to surprise and seize upon a great guilt in the height of its pride and bravery, and in the very midst of all its strengths and presumed securities. He delights to commission his curse to arrest a bloody Ahab, just as he is going to take possession of the price of blood, and to dash out the brains of a murderous Abimelech in the very head of his army. These are the triumphs of judgment, and the glorious trophies of blood-revenging justice.



III. The third thing proposed was, to shew the latitude and extent of this woe or curse, and what is comprehended in it. Concerning which, there is no doubt but it includes the miseries of both worlds, present and future. And if we go no further than the present, it is grievous enough, and made up of these following ingredients.

1. That it fastens a general hatred and detestation upon such men's persons. For cruelty and bloodiness, armed with power, is the proper motive and the dreadful object of men's fears; and fear and hatred usually keep company; it being very hard, if not impossible, to assign that person, who has not the same share and proportion in men's hatred, that he has in their fears. Every man flies from such an one, as from a public ruin or a walking calamity, who, which way soever he turns himself, both looks and brings certain desolation. He converses amongst the living as an enemy to men's lives; as a sword or a dagger, which the nearer it comes, the more dangerous it is.

Cruelty alarms and calls up all the passions of human nature, and puts them into a posture of hostility and defiance. Every heart swells against a tyrant, as against a common enemy of mankind, and blood rises at the sight of blood; and certainly it is none of the least of miseries for a man to be justly hated; for though it be tied up and restrained from its utmost effects, yet the very breathings of it are malignant, the silent grudgings and glances of it ominous and fatal. A great part of the happiness of this life is, to enjoy a free and amicable converse with such as live about us; and therefore an ingenuous nature cannot but account it a real plague, to see a cloud in every countenance he beholds; to observe the black and lowering aspects of a reserved malice, and, as it were, to read his doom in every face, and to gather his fortune from another's forehead.



Who so hated as Cain, Nebuchadnezzar, Saul, Herod, and such other bloodsuckers? All the glory of their power and magnificence was smothered in the hatred of their cruelty, deriving a just hatred upon their persons: for it is the concernment of mankind, and of humanity itself, to abhor such destroyers. He that shews the power he has over men's lives only by taking them away, must not think to command or reign over their affections.

Neither is this hatred without an equal scorn; for the same temper that is cruel is also sordid and degenerate, and consequently as fit an object for contempt. What so cruel, and withal so base, as a wolf? But on the other side, true worth and fortitude is never bloody.

Gold, the noblest of metals, is healing and restorative; and it is only iron, the vilest, with which we wound and destroy.

Let this therefore be the first ingredient of the woe discharged against the tyrant and bloody person, to be universally hated and scorned; to go no whither, but with a retinue of curses at his heels; to be murdered in the wishes, and assassinated in the very looks of his subjects. He who is a monster, and an exception from human nature, may perhaps count this nothing, and say with Lucius Sylla, the murdering, proscribing dictator of Rome, *Oderint dum metuant*; but he that is sensible that man was born for society, that is, to love and to be loved, must in this case look upon himself as an outlaw and an exile from the converse, and consequently from the felicity and proper enjoyments of mankind.

2. The second ingredient of the woe here denounced against bloody persons is, the torment of continual jealousy and suspicion. He that is injurious, is naturally suspicious; and he that knows that he deserves enemies, will always suppose that he has them, and perhaps at length by suspecting come to make them so.

But now, is it not the height of misery thus like a wild beast still to fear and to be feared? for the mind to be perpetually struggling with its own surmises, and first to create torments, and then to feel them? The breast of a tyrant is like a sea, it swallows up and devours others, and is still restless, troubled, and unquiet in itself. Could Herod the Great be more poorly and basely unhappy, than to be afraid of poor sucking infants, and not to think himself safe in the throne, unless he stormed nurseries and invaded cradles? A kingdom can be desirable upon no other account, but because it seems to command more of the materials of happiness, and to afford greater opportunities of satisfaction to the desires of a rational nature, than can possibly be had in any inferior condition. But now what real happiness can that prince or great man find, that has his mind depraved into such a jealous, suspicious temper? What can all the enjoyments of a court or kingdom profit, when the tormentor within shall embitter them all, and the paleness of fear and death sit perpetually upon his heart? What pleasure can it afford to cast roses into that bosom, that feels the gnawings of the wolf?

And therefore if the tyrant is brought to this pass, as to feel the reflections of his tyranny over others in that which his own jealousy exercises upon himself, and if his own thoughts plot and conspire against him, his very diadem is but a splendid mockery, his throne a rack, and all his royalty nothing else but a great and magnificent misery.

3. The third ingredient denounced against him that endeavours to raise and settle a government with blood is, the shortness and certain dissolution of the government that he endeavours so to establish. There is no way by which God so usually punishes villainous designs, as the disappointment of them, by those very methods and instruments by which they were to have been accomplished. It is, as I may so say, the great sport of Providence, to ruin unjust titles and usurped government by their very supports. But of all the means employed by tyrants for this purpose, there is none so frequently made use of, though none



so often proves fatal to the user, as this of savageness and cruelty; innocent blood always proving but a bad cement to build the walls of a city with. For how do such governments pass the world like so many furious blasts of wind, violent and short! as it were out of breath and expiring with their own violence. How do tyrants, having by much blood and rapine advanced themselves to the sovereign power of a kingdom, like so many fatal comets, shine and blaze, and fright the world below them, in those upper regions for a while, but still portend their own downfall and destruction? For was it not thus with those traitorous captains of Israel, who kinged themselves by slaying their masters and reigning in their stead? How quickly was their usurped government at an end! How soon did they meet with others who did the like for them! *Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?* Such governments quickly fall and moulder away, like clods dissolved with blood.

Was it not thus also with Cinna and Marius, and afterwards with Sylla himself, who had nothing of Dictator Perpetuus but the name?

How soon was the family of bloody Saul extinct! And for Herod the Great, did not the same cruelty, for which he deserved to be childless, almost make him so? Archelaus, the only son he left, succeeding but to part of his kingdom, and that too but for a short time. And when afterwards Herod Antipas the tetrarch was routed, and lost all his army in a war with Aretas, king of Arabia, and when by the subtilty of Agrippa he was outwitted and outed of all, and also banished, Josephus himself says, that even the Jews ascribed all this to a divine vengeance upon him for the barbarous and unjust murder of John the Baptist.

And for the Jews themselves, does not Christ, in the very same place in which he foretells the ruin and destruction of Jerusalem, upbraid that bloody city with her *killing God's prophets, and stoning those that were sent unto her?*

And lastly, whereas the high priest counselled the putting of Christ to death, lest otherwise the Romans should come upon them, and destroy both their nation and government; is it not evident to any one not obstinately blind, that the very guilt of his blood brought that destruction upon them from the Romans, who not long after sacked their city, burnt the temple, killed, crucified, sold, and dispersed the inhabitants; that is, used them as they had used Christ, till at length they took away both their place and nation? *Woe to the bloody city,* says the prophet, in Ezek, xxiv. 6.

The sin of blood is a destroying, wasting, murdering sin; murdering others, besides those whom it kills; it breaks the back of governments, sinks families, destroys for the future, reaches into successions, and cuts off posterities.

4. The fourth ingredient of the woe here denounced against the bloody builders of governments, is the sad and dismal end that usually attends such persons. He that delights to swim in blood, is for the most part at length drowned in it; and there is a kind of fatal circulation by which blood frequently wheels about and returns upon the shedder of it. How did Cyrus the Persian verify this by a peculiar significancy of death, having his head cut off,



and thrown into a tub of blood! How did the fratricide Romulus die, being torn in pieces by the senate! How did Sylla expire in a murdering fit, causing one to be strangled before him in his chamber, and with that passion so disturbing himself, and enraging his distemper, that within a few hours he breathed out his own bloody soul!

And, to come to the sacred story, how did Samuel treat Agag? *As thy sword has made many childless, so shall thy mother be childless amongst women.* And then for Herod the Great, who so barbarously murdered those poor innocents; he died indeed in his bed, as well as our late grand regicide; but with so much horror and disaster, that for some days before he died, he snatched at a knife to have murdered, or rather to have killed himself; and so to have done that, which only wanted another and an higher hand to have made it a just execution. But upon none did the revenging hand of divine justice appear more signally than upon Herod Agrippa, mentioned in the [twelfth of the Acts](#); who, to please the Jews, and thereby to confirm himself in his kingdom, having slain James, the brother of John, with the sword, proceeded to take Peter also. But we read in what terrible strange manner, even in the height of his pride and glory, he was smote by God, infested with worms, and made a living carcass; thus anticipating the effects of death, and suffering the curse of the grave before he descended into the ground.

Should I endeavour to give a full rehearsal of all such like instances, I must transcribe the stories of all times, which are scarce fuller of pages, than of examples of this kind. Blood seldom escapes revenge, since it is so easily followed and found out by its own traces. And thus much for the third thing proposed; which was, to shew the latitude and extent of the curse or woe here denounced against bloody persons, and the several plagues comprehended in it. I come now to the fourth particular, which is,

IV. To shew the reasons why a curse or woe is so peculiarly denounced against this sin. Many may be assigned, but I shall produce only these.

1. The first is, because the sin of bloodshed makes the most direct breach upon human society, of which the providence of God owns the peculiar care and protection.

Concerning which we must observe, that every man has naturally a right to enjoy such things as are suitable to and required by the rational appetites of his nature; in the due and lawful satisfaction of which properly consists his well-being in this world, which is every man's birthright by an irrevocable charter from God and nature. For whosoever is born, has a right to live; and whosoever has a right to live, has a right also to live well. Now that men might the better secure both their lives or being, and withal compass such lawful satisfactions to themselves, as should be requisite to their well-being, they first entered into society, and then, to preserve society, put themselves under government. So that the end of society is a man's enjoyment of himself, and the end of government is society. For in the first and most natural intention of it, no governor, merely as such, is made absolute lord of the lives or proprietor of the estates of those whom he governs, but only a trustee by God

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to secure them in the free possession and enjoyment of both. And therefore that governor that wrings away a man's estate, or destroys his life, not yet forfeited to the community he lives in by any crime, is in God's account a thief and a murderer, and so shall hereafter be dealt with by him as such; though in the mean time (as I said before) neither reason nor religion can authorize the subjects to revenge these injuries upon their governor.

From whence we learn the reason why God so much concerns himself to punish the unjust shedder of blood; first, because he is the great trespasser upon human society, by being destructive to the lives of men; and next, because if he who is so chances to be a sovereign prince, there is no provision in the ordinary course of human justice to call such a destroyer to account.

As for the life of man, it is an enjoyment in comparison of which nature scarce values all others: this is the very apple of his eye, sensible of the least touch, and irrecoverable after the first loss. For if a man loses his estate, he may get another; and if he loses his reputation, he may perhaps recover it; or if he cannot, he may live without it, not very happily indeed, but yet he may live. But if the tyrant takes away his life, there is no retrieving of that; this sweeps away being and well-being at one blow: the dying man parts with all at one breath, and is but one remove from annihilation; not so much as his very thoughts remaining, but they also perish, [Psalm cxlvi. 4](#).

And now when a tyrant by shedding blood has provoked civil justice, and by shedding so much has put himself beyond the reach of it, does not the matter itself seem to appeal to a superior providence, to invoke the justice of Heaven to make bare its arm in the behalf of injured and oppressed right?

Blood certainly shall not go unrevenged, though it be the greatest Herod that sheds it, and the meanest infant that loses it; though whole parliaments and armies shall conspire against the life of the innocent and the helpless. Briefly, it belongs to God, as the supreme governor of the world, to revenge such grand and unnatural violations of the societies of mankind, committed to the tuition of his providence.

2. The second reason why God so peculiarly denounces a woe against the sin of bloodiness, is not only for the malignity of the sin itself, but also for the malignity of those sins that almost always go in conjunction with it, particularly for the abhorred sins of fraud, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy. The two great things that make such a breach upon the peace and settlement of the world are force and fraud. For all men that are miserable become so either by being driven or cheated out of their enjoyments. Hence the Spirit of God, in [Psalm lv. 25](#), joins the bloody and deceitful man together. And does not Christ himself call Herod, that murdered John the Baptist, *fox*; a beast notable for his craft, as well as for sucking of blood?

If we look into history, we shall scarce find any one remarkably cruel, who was not also noted for his dissimulation. But we need not much trouble histories; for has not all the

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bloodshed amongst us, from the blood of the prince to that of the peasant, issued from the most devout pretences of reformation? Has not the nation been massacred by sanctified murderers, who came into the field masked with covenants and protestations, quoting scripture while they cut throats, and singing psalms while they plundered towns; destroying their prince's armies and shooting at his person, while in the mean time they swore that they fought for him?

But this way and method of proceeding is but natural. For men must be first deceived out of their guards and defences, before they can be exposed to the utmost violences. The bird must be caught in the snare, and the fish beguiled with the bait, before they can be killed.

But now there is scarce any thing that God hates more thoroughly, and punishes more severely, than deceit and falseness; for it is most properly a defiance of God; who is always either solemnly invoked, or at least tacitly supposed, for the great witness of the sincerity of men's dealings; and if men use not truth in these, the great bond of converse is dissolved.

No wonder therefore if bloodiness draw after it such a woe, having always such a sin in its company, and if the curse falls heavy, being procured by two of the greatest sins in the closest conjunction.

And thus much for the fourth particular, which was to shew the several ingredients contained within the compass or latitude of the curse or woe here denounced. I descend now to,

V. The fifth and last, which is, to apply all to this present occasion.

I shew at the beginning, that ever since the creation of mankind, God has all along manifested such a solicitous care for the lives of men, the noblest of all his creatures, that he has not secured them only by severe laws established against murder, but also by making kindness, mercy, and benevolence a great part of religion; and of all other religions, has he chiefly wove these excellent and benign qualities into the very heart and vital constitution of Christianity. By how much the more detestable, and for ever accursed, must those miscreants appear, who have slurred and bespattered the best, the purest, and most peaceable of all religions, by entitling it to all the rapines they have acted, and all the blood they have imbrued their hands in, as shed by the immediate impulse of God's Spirit, and for the defence and preservation of religion! How much this nation has been concerned in this black charge, we need no other argument than this fatal day to convince us; on which was acted the most disloyal, barbarous, and inhuman piece of villainy, and that with all the solemn disguises of piety and religion, that mortal men were ever yet guilty of, since there was such a thing as sovereignty acknowledged, or such a thing as religion professed upon the face of the earth.

But to shew further how close and home the subject-matter of the text comes to the business of this annual solemnity, we will survey the correspondence that is between them, as to the three main things contained in the words. The first was a charge of unjust effusion

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of blood. The second was the end or design for which it was shed, namely, the setting up of a government. And the third and last was a woe or curse denounced against the person that endeavours to establish himself by such a course.

As for the first, we must know, that all unjust bloodshed is twofold. 1. Either public, and acted by and upon a community, as in a war. Or, 2. Personal, in the assassination of any particular man.

1. As for that which is public; it is as certain, that he who takes away a man's life in a war, commenced upon an unjust cause, and without just authority, is as truly a murderer, as he that enters his neighbour's house, and there stabs him within his own walls. And as for the late war, upon the account of all laws, both of God and man, whether we respect the cause for which it was raised, which was, the removal of grievances, where there were none, or the persons that carried it on, who were subjects armed against their prince, it was in all the parts and circumstances of it a perfect, open, and most barefaced rebellion. For not all the Calvins, Bezas, Knoxes, Buchanans, or Paraeus's in Christendom, with all their principles of anarchy and democracy, so studiously maintained in their respective writings, can by any solid reason make out the lawfulness of subjects taking arms against their prince. For if government be the effect and product of reason, it is impossible for disobedience to found itself upon reason: and therefore our rebels found it necessary to balk and decry this, and to fetch a warrant for all their villainies from ecstasy and inspiration. But besides, if we translate the whole matter from the merit of the cause to that of the person, no people under heaven had less ground to complain of, much less to fight against their prince, than the English then had, who at that time swimm'd in a full enjoyment of all things but a thankful mind; no prince's reign having ever put subjects into a condition so like that of princes, as the peaceable part of the reign of king Charles the First: which indeed was the true cause that made them kick at those breasts that fed them, and strike at that royal oak under whose shadow they enjoyed so much ease, plenty, and prosperity.

2. The other sort of unjust bloodshed is, the assassination of particular persons: and had not our bloodsuckers their slaughterhouses and courts of mock justice, as well as the high places of the field, to act their butcheries upon? Strafford and Canterbury lead the way, both as forerunners of, and introductions to the shedding of a more sacred blood, the stain of which will dye the English calendar for ever, and the cry of which sober persons much fear continues still, and rings aloud in heaven, whatsoever arts have been used, and still are, to silence it here on earth. For it was the blood of one, who had those two things eminently in conjunction, either of which alone should be a sufficient safeguard to the life of him that has them, to wit, innocence and sovereignty. For innocence ought to protect the life of the meanest subject, and sovereignty to secure the person of the highest criminal. But we scorn that word when we speak of this blessed martyr, whose virtues were larger than his dominions, and will make his enemies more infamous than their own vices.



Blood therefore we see has been shed amongst us to some purpose: the first thing in which the text is answered by the business of this day.

The second was, the end or design for which the blood here spoken of was shed, namely, the erecting or setting up of a government. And was not the very same thing drove at by all our pious murderers? For out of the ruins of a glorious church and monarchy, and all those slaughtered heaps of men sacrificed to the cause of loyalty on one side, and of rebellion on the other, did there not at length rise up a misshapen, monstrous beast with many heads, called a commonwealth; a pack of insolent, beggarly tyrants, who lorded it as long as they were able, till at length they were forced to surrender and pass over all their usurped power into the hands of their great Beelzebub, the prime rebel and regicide, by whom they had done all their mighty works? And so their commonwealth wheeled about again into a monarchy. All those rivulets of tyranny, as it were, emptying and discharging themselves into that great gulf or dead sea of all baseness, cruelty, and hypocrisy: a fellow that had torn and trampled upon all those obligations, either civil or sacred, by which human society does subsist; who, by abusing religion, breaking oaths, mocking of God, and murdering his prince, at length grasped the sovereign power of these three kingdoms, and then called himself their protector, with the same truth and propriety that a wolf or a bear may be said to protect the flocks they worry and tear in pieces.

So then, the parallel we see holds good thus far; that our villains reared themselves a government by the blood they shed, as well as those mentioned by the prophet in the text.

And now, in the third and last place, have they not, think we, also as full a right and title to the woe and curse there denounced in the same words? Yes, assuredly; there being no persons under heaven that more deserved to drink off the very dregs of God's vengeance, and to empty all his quivers, than these monsters did.

As for the curse that befell these bloody builders of government, I shew, that it manifested itself eminently in two respects.

1. In the shortness of the government so set up. And was it long that these murderers of their prince possessed the government they so usurped? Within five years their infant commonwealth expired; and in five years more Cromwell's mushroom monarchy was at an end, in spite of all the prophecies of those impostors, that would lengthen out his life and government out of Daniel and the Revelations, telling him, that there was thirty years more generation-work (as they canted it) cut out for him; and that it was contrary to the methods of Providence, having raised up such an extraordinary instrument, to lay him aside, till he had finished his work. But God, who understood his own counsels better than such saucy interpreters, knew that this wretch had disturbed the world too long already; and so in his good time sent him to his own place.

2. Another part of the curse attending the bloody raisers of government, was the general hatred that always follows such persons. And of this I think our usurpers had as large a



portion as ever light upon the heads of mortal men. For in the most flourishing estate of all their greatness they were encompassed with curses as well as armies; men being scarce able to keep down the inward boilings of revenge, and to restrain their tongues and hands from ministering to that fulness of hatred that swelled within their hearts. Men hated them even in the behalf of human nature, and for the vindication of common humanity. And still so much and so justly abhorred are they, that all the pardons and indulgences, all the good words, all the great offices and preferments that can be bestowed upon them, will never be able to sweeten their memory, nor rescue them from the detestation of all sober persons and true lovers of their country. And the truth is, to speak the severest words of these vipers is not (as some call it) a sacrificing to any personal heat or private revenge; but a real serving of the public interest of society, and the doing an act of mere charity to the innocent and to posterity, who, by hearing with what abhorrence such miscreants are mentioned, will dread the imitation of those villainies, that have derived such an odium and infamy upon the actors of them. Nor can I think that any one can concern himself against the ripping up of the baseness of the king's murderers, even in the harshest, that is, the most proper terms, but such as have been either the relations, officers, or servants of that grand regicide, and consequently whose unlimited puritan-consciences will equally serve them to act and thrive under any government whatsoever.



But it is well that there is a punishment for villains in the general hatred of mankind; and this is the lot, this the punishment of our rebels: but as for any other penalties that use to descend upon traitors and murderers from the hand of human vengeance, these they have for the most part escaped, as having rebelled under a lucky star, which has prospered their villainies and secured their persons in this world, till the great Judge of all things shall recognise the cause of abused majesty and religion in another, and there award such a sentence upon the violators of them, as shall demonstrate to men and angels, that verily God is righteous; *doubtless there is a God that judgeth the world.*

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



SERMON LV.

1 JOHN iii. 8.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil.

HERE is nothing that contributes so much to the right understanding of the nature of any thing or action, as a true notion of the proper end and design of it; the ignorance of which bereaves mankind of many of the blessings of heaven: because oftentimes while they enjoy the thing, they yet mistake its use; and so pervert the intentions of mercy, and become miserable amidst the very means of happiness.

Certainly therefore it concerns men infinitely, not to entertain an error about the greatest of God's favours, and the very masterpiece of his goodness, the sending of his Son into the world. The meaning of which providence should we misconstrue, we should frustrate our grand and last remedy, and perish, not for want, but for misapplication of the means of life. Wherefore this divine apostle, who had been honoured with so near an admittance into his master's mind, and lain so familiarly in the bosom of truth, endeavours to give the world a right information about this so great and concerning affair in this chapter, and particularly in these words; in which we have these two parts.

I. An account of Christ's coming into the world, in this expression; *The Son of God was manifested.*

II. The end and design of his coming; which was, *to destroy the works of the Devil.*

I. As for the first of these, the manifestation of the Son of God, though it principally relates to the actual coming of Christ into the world, according to my application of it to the present purpose, yet it is a term of a larger comprehension; and so ought to carry our notice both to passages before and after his nativity. For as in the coming of a prince, or great person, to any place, the pomp of harbingers and messengers is as it were some appearance of him before he is seen; so Christ declared himself at vast distances of time, by many semblances and intimations, enough to raise, though not to satisfy the world's expectation.

We shall find him first exhibited in promises, and those as early as the first need of a Saviour, even immediately after the fall; by such an hasty provision of mercy, that there might be no dark interval between man's misery and his hope of recovery; [Gen. iii. 15](#), *The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head.* He was afterwards further shadowed out in types and sacrifices, and such other emblems and arts of signification; still with this method of proceeding, that the manifestation brightened and grew greater and greater, according to the nearer and nearer approach of the full discovery.

He that at first was known only as the seed of the woman, was in process of time known to be the seed of Abraham, [Gen. xxii. 18](#). And after that, the seed of David, in [Isaiah xi. 1](#).



And from thence proceeding to greater particularities relating to the manner of his coming, he was known to be born of a virgin, [Isaiah vii. 14](#). And for the place where; to be born at Bethlem, [Micah v. 2](#). And for his person and condition, that he should be *a man of sorrows*, [Isaiah liii. 3](#). And that he should suffer and die for sin, [verse 8](#). That he should rise again, [Psalm xvi. 10](#). That he should ascend into heaven, and lead captivity captive, &c. [Psalm lxviii. 18](#). That he should reign till he had subdued his enemies, and saw the world brought under him, [Psalm cx. 1](#). Thus by a continual gradation the promise advanced itself with further steps and increases, *shining more and more unto a perfect day*; displaying fresh and fuller discoveries through the several ages of the world; every new degree of manifestation being a mercy great enough to oblige an age.

But when at length prophecy ripened into event, and shadows gave way upon the actual appearance of the substance, in the birth of Christ, yet then, though the Son of God could be but once born, he ceased not to be frequently manifested: there was a choir of angels to proclaim his nativity, and a new star to be his herald; the wise men of the east came to worship a new sun, where they saw and acknowledged the first miracle of his birth, a star appearing when the sun was up. When he disputed with the doctors, every argument was a demonstration of his deity; and during the whole course of his ministry, all the mighty works he did were further manifestations of a divine nature wrapped up in the flesh: even his death proved, that there was something in him that could not die; and the very effects of mortality, by a strange antiperistasis, declared him to be immortal; [1 Pet. iii. 18](#), *Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*. And lastly, after all this, the perfection and height of evidence shone forth in the stupendous passage of his resurrection; in which, according to the apostle Paul's phrase, [Rom. i. 4](#), he was *declared to be the Son of God with power*. God made it his business to shew him publicly, to hold him up to be seen, admired, and believed in. Every thing that concerned him was writ in capital letters, and such as might not only entertain, but help the sight.

Now upon the strength of this consideration it is, that we pronounce the Jews inexcusable for persisting in their unbelief. Concerning which as we are to observe, that in order to the convincing of men's belief, it is not only required that the proposition, proposed to be believed, be in itself true, but that it also appear such; so Christ, to comply with the strictest methods of human reason, asserted his being the Son of God with such invincible arguments, that he was manifested to be so: yea, and to that degree, that the Jews' rejection of him is not stated upon ignorance, or the cause of it want of evidence in the thing that they were to know; but upon the malice and depravation of their wills acting counter to their knowledge, in [John xv. 24](#); *If I had not done amongst them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father*. It was not a blind hatred; they saw well enough what they did: they had an open, as well as an evil eye; a resolved obstinacy to outlook the sun and outstare the light.



For so was Christ, he was the light of the world; and nothing is more manifest or visible than that which manifests both itself and all things else; and needs no invitation to the eye, but will certainly enter, unless it be forcibly kept out.



But they were purposed not to believe their eyes; to question whether it was day when the sun shined; to doubt whether he that did the works of God was sent by God; whether miracles could prove any thing, or signs could signify; and lastly, whether he that fulfilled all prophecies was intended by them. It is clear therefore, that the Jews rejected the Son of God, not because he was not manifested, but because they delighted to be ignorant, and to be sceptics and unbelievers even in spite of evidence.

And thus much for the first thing, the manifestation of the Son of God: pass we now to the next, which is, the end of his manifestation, *that he might destroy the works of the Devil.*

In the prosecution of which I shall first shew, 1. What were those works of the Devil that the Son of God destroyed: 2. And secondly, the means and ways by which he destroyed them.

1st. For the first of these. I reduce the works of the Devil, destroyed by the manifestation of the Son of God, to these three: 1. Delusion: 2. Sin: 3. Death.

There is a natural coherence and concatenation between these: for sin being a voluntary action, and so the issue of the will, presupposes a default in the understanding, which was to conduct the will in its choices: and then when the delusion and inadvertency of the understanding has betrayed the will to sin, the consequent and effect of sin is death. Christ therefore, that came to repair the breaches and to cure the miseries of human nature, and to redeem it from that phrensy into which it had cast itself, designs the removal and conquest of all these three.



1. And first for delusion. The Devil, as his masterpiece and first art of ruining mankind, was busy to sow the seeds of error and fallacy in the guide of action, their understanding. And surely he has not gained higher trophies over any faculty of man's nature than this. For where, upon a survey of the world lying under gentilism, can we find truth even in principles of speculation, but much less in those of practice?

As for the first fundamental thing, the original of nature and the beginning of the world; what dissonant and various opinions may we find, and consonant in nothing but their absurdity! Some will not allow it to have had any beginning; others refer it to accident. And those who acknowledge it to have been efficiently framed and produced by an infinite eternal mind, yet assert the matter and rude chaos, out of which he framed it, to have been as old, or rather as eternal as the artificer. Thus ridiculously making two eternals, and one of them infinitely imperfect; whereas the very notion of eternity and self-existence, pursued into its due consequences, must of necessity infer an infinite perfection in all other respects whatsoever. For all imperfection and finiteness proceeds from the restraint of a superior

cause: and what cause could limit that which had no cause; and keep that which had its being from itself, from having all the perfections of being?

And for the principles of practice, they were equally ridiculous and uncertain. Some fixed the chief good of man in pleasure, some in contemplation, and some thrust the means into the place of the end, and made the chief good of man to act virtuously; whereas indeed the chief good was to enjoy God, and the way to attain it was to act virtuously. And then if you would know what they understood by acting virtuously, you would find them stating the rates of virtue so, that many actions were taken into that number, which we account vicious and unwarrantable. Ambition was an excellent thing amongst them, and an insatiable desire of honour a current virtue. Lust, if it did not proceed to adultery, that is, to a downright act of injustice, was accounted a very innocent and allowable recreation. In a word, they were at an infinite loss where to state the ground and reason of men's actions; and all their practical maxims were deficient at least, if not unjust.

And for those that acknowledged God for the end of all that they were to do, yet did they pursue the enjoyment of that end by means any ways suitable or proportionable to it? Did they worship him as God? No, we know, *that they waxed vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*: they changed the glory of the eternal, all-wise, incorruptible God, into the images of silly, sinful, mortal men; nay, and what is yet more incredible and intolerable, into the similitude of beasts, and fowls, and creeping things. All this time worshipping the works of their own hands, or at least using them as instruments of worship and proper conveyances of divine adoration to God himself, held forth to them by such ways of representation; which was a great absurdity in reason, a great impiety in religion, and an horrible injury and affront to the Deity: for could any thing be more injurious, than that men should take their notions of God from such resemblances; and then depress their religious worship of him to the proportion of those notions?

Now all this was done by the wisest of the heathens, by the philosophers, the sages, the governors and teachers of the rest of the world; and if these could so degenerate and ride down their reason to such a strange weakness and deception, what can we think of the rout and the vulgar, who could not salve their idolatry with art and distinction? They certainly were in *outer darkness*, in such thick *darkness as might be felt*. Their priests' images were their realities; and what they saw with their eyes they worshipped with their heart, thinking of no other deity but what shined upon them in the golden statue or the curious picture; still raising their devotion as the skill of the graver had advanced the object.

But then, since the exercise of virtue is not to be bound upon men's consciences, (at least respecting the generality of men,) but by hopes and fears grounded upon the proposal of future rewards and punishments; if we look further, and consider how they acquitted themselves in giving an account of these to the world, we need require no further account of the error and delusion under which the Devil had sealed them. All the reward they pro-

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posed to virtue, even in its greatest austerities, self-denials, and forbearances, was to live for ever in the Elysian fields. A goodly reward indeed; a man must forego many of his pleasures, defy his clamorous appetites, and submit to many inconveniences in pursuing the *rigidum honestum*, the harshnesses of virtue: and afterwards, for all this, we shall be gratified with taking a turn now and then in a fair meadow.



And then the punishments they designed for ill lives were no ways inferior in point of unlikelihood and absurdity: as the filling of tubs full of holes, which let out the water as fast as it was poured in. The rolling of a great stone up a steep mountain, which perpetually returned back upon the person that forced it upwards. The being whipt with snakes by three furies. The being bound hand and foot upon a rock, and having one's liver gnawed by a vulture; still growing and renewing itself according as it was devoured. These and such like old wives' or old poets' fables they amused the world withal; which could keep nobody that was witty from being wicked: all awe and dread vanishing upon the discovery of such ill-contrived cheats, such thin and transparent fallacies.

Yet this was the economy of the religion of the gentiles before the coming of the Messiah. And for that little handful of men, that God chose from the rest of the world, to impart his law to them, the church of the Jews; even this, sometimes before the birth of Christ, was like an enclosed garden overrun with weeds, the very influences it lived under being noxious and pestilential. Their fountains were poisoned: their teachers were only so many authentic perverters of the law; so many doctors of heresy and immorality; abusing the authority of Moses while they sat in his chair. So that there was a kind of universal error and delusion, and that in matters of the greatest importance, spread over all nations, by that diligent, indefatigable enemy of truth and mankind the Devil. This being his groundwork, to delude men's apprehensions, that so he might command their services: and so blind were their eyes, that he might lead them whither he would.



2. The second great work of the Devil to be destroyed by the manifestation of the Son of God, was sin. It were a sad story to give a full account of this. For the truth is, the Devil deceived men only for this cause, to make them sinful. And such was his cursed success in this attempt, and the vile fertility of this ill thing brought by him into the world, that it conveyed a general infection into all the faculties of man: so that at length *the thoughts of his heart were evil, and only evil, and that continually*, Gen. vi. 5. It had so corrupted and fouled the world, that it put God to attempt the cleansing of it by a deluge. But neither so was the work effected; for after so many sinners were cashiered, yet sin still survived, and grew and multiplied, like a plant rather watered only than drowned; thriving and increasing as fast as those that peopled the world by a commission and command from heaven.

It would be a fearful sight to see those sins that have stained man's nature ranked into their several kinds and degrees, and displayed in their filthy colours: to see one nation branded with one vice; another nation notorious for another; and each in some degree

tainted with all. St. John tells us, that *the whole world lies in wickedness*, 1 John v. 19. And St. Paul gives us a large account of the vices of the gentile world, in Rom. i. from the 26th verse to the end of the chapter. They were possessed with *vile affections*, acted by unnatural lusts, delivered over to a reprobate mind, being *filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, &c.* And for a concluding epiphonema, it is said of them in the last verse, *that knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in those that do them.* And certainly for men to take pleasure not only in their own sins, but also in the sins of other men, is the very height and perfection of an overgrown impiety: yet thus far were they arrived. Every one delighted to see the sin of his own temper and practice exemplified, and so in a manner countenanced by another man's behaviour; to see himself transcribed, and his vice propagated into the manners of those that were about him.

And to proceed further, their vice did not only reign in their ordinary converse, but also got into their divine worship: and as before I shew that they worshipped their gods idolatrously and foolishly; so their histories tell us that they worshipped them also viciously: revels, drunkenness, and lasciviousness, were the peculiar homage and religious service that they performed to them. What were their *bacchanalia*, but solemn debauches in honour of a drunken deity? And the rites of their *bona dea*, in which Publius Clodius was deprehended under the habit of a woman, were transacted with so much filth and villainous impurity, that they are scarce to be thought of without a trespass upon modesty. Now certainly if these courses could propitiate or please their deities, there could be no such dishonour or defiance to them, as the practices of virtue and sobriety.

We see here to what a maturity sin was grown amongst the heathens: and amongst the Jews it was not much shortened in its progress. For what are all the writings of the prophets, but so many loud declarations of the prevailing sway that sin had amongst them? How does Isaiah complain, that *the faithful city was become an harlot!* Isaiah i. 21. How does Jeremy bemoan himself, that he was constrained to dwell and converse with so much impiety, in chap. ix. 2; *Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.* And again, in verse 4, *Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant.* It seems there was scarce truth and sincerity enough amongst them to serve the common intercourses of society and human life. The truth is, he that fully enlarges himself upon this theme must be endless and infinite, and declaim to eternity. But now when such an enormous corruption of manners had seized upon the church, to whom was committed the law of God, and the living oracles, and all the means of instruction to piety and virtue, and whatsoever was excellent; what was to be expected, but that God should either destroy or reform the world?

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And therefore having pitched upon the latter, it was now full time for him to send his Son, to cleanse this Augean stable, to purge away the dross of the world; for this was the design of his coming, [Mal. iii. 2, 3](#), *to be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope, to purify the sons of Levi, and to purge them as gold and silver*; and if it were possible, to recover the world to its former innocence, or at least to such a degree of it, as to break the sceptre and kingdom of the wicked one, who triumphed in the possession that he had got of men's hearts, by the sin that dwelt there, and raged in their lives.

Would we know the great purpose that brought Christ out of his Father's bosom, and clothed him with the infirmities and meannesses of our nature, and made him submit to all the indignities that an obscure birth, an indigent life, and an ignominious death could bring upon him? Why it was not through these miseries to acquire a crown, and to advance his glory; for this he had by an eternal birthright, beyond any increase or addition; and his glorification did not so much invest him with any new honour, as restore to him his old.

But all this long and miraculous scene of transactions was to redeem poor mortal men from the beloved bonds and shackles of their sins, to disenslave them from the tyranny of ruling corruptions; to dispossess the usurper, and to introduce the kingdom of God, by setting it up first in men's minds; to recover all their faculties to the liberty of innocence and purity; and so, in a word, to restore men both to God and to themselves.

Now if this were the grand design of Christ's coming into the world, to conquer and destroy sin; certainly it concerns us not to celebrate the memory of that coming by any thing that may contradict the design of it. To be vain, and dissolute, and intemperate, are strange commemorations of his nativity, who was born into the world to make men otherwise. It is indeed such a solemnity as is the proper and deserved object of our joy; but then it is to be such a joy as is in heaven, of which divine love is the principle, and purity the chief ingredient. And thus much for the second grand work of the Devil, which Christ was manifested to destroy, namely sin.

3. The third and last is death, the inseparable concomitant of the former. This is the Devil's triumphing work, by which he vaunts and shews forth the spoils of our conquered nature, the marks and trophies of his unhappy victory. For since the first entrance of sin into the world, death has dwelt amongst us, and continued, and with a perpetual, irresistible success prevailed over us. [Rom. v. 12](#). *Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*. Sin, as it were, opened the sluice, and death immediately, like a mighty torrent, rushed in, and overwhelmed the world. Or like a commanding enemy, it invaded mankind with a ruining, destructive army following it. Plagues, fevers, catarrhs, consumptions, shame, poverty, and infinite accidental disasters; and the rear of all brought up with death eternal.

But now Christ, intending to be a perfect Saviour, came to destroy this enemy also; for the apostle tells us, in [1 Cor. xv. 26](#), that *the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*. Where

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yet it is not to be understood, that this benefit of Christ is to extend to all men; but to those only who should believe, and be renewed by the Spirit, and become *the sons of God*; these are the persons over whom *the second death shall have no power*. For since this deliverance proceeds upon the conditions of faith and obedience, those who reach not these conditions are not at all concerned in it; but remaining in sin, are consigned over to death. But some will say, Do not saints and believers die as well as the wicked and unbelievers? I answer, that though they do, yet the sting of death is taken away; so that from a curse, it is made a means to translate them to a better life; and that sickness, misery, or temporal death, that has nothing of curse or punishment in it, but, on the contrary, ends in that that gives an end to all misery, according to the estimate of God, comes not into the accounts of death. And this is sufficient to render Christ truly and properly a conqueror of death; that he actually conquers and destroys it in some, and has it in his power to do it in all others, would they but come up to those terms upon which only he is pleased to do it.

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2dly. And thus I have shewn what those works of the Devil are, for the destruction of which the Son of God was manifested. I come now to the last thing proposed, which is to shew, what are the ways and means by which he destroys them. Where we must observe, that as those works of the Devil were three, so Christ encounters them by those three distinct offices belonging to him as mediator.

1. As a prophet, he destroys and removes that delusion that had possessed the world, by those divine and saving discoveries of truth exhibited in the doctrine and religion promulgated by him. The apostle tells the Athenians, that before the coming of Christ God winked at the ignorance and idolatry that had blinded the gentiles; but after his coming, *commanded all men every where to repent*, [Acts xvii. 30](#). And in [chap. xiv. 15](#), he tells the men of Lystra, that the design of his preaching was, *that they should turn from those vanities unto the living God*. And still we find, that according as the gospel found reception and success, men began to be undeceived, and to shake off the yoke of their former delusions. In [Acts xix. 19](#) we find, that upon the preaching of the gospel, those that were addicted to magic and conjuration, brought their books, though of never so great value, and burnt them publicly, as a sacrifice to the honour of Christ, and a solemn owning of the efficacy of that religion. And again, in [2 Tim. i. 10](#), the apostle tells us, that it *was Christ that brought life and immortality to light*. The heathens' notion about the future estate of souls was absurd and phantastic; and that which the Jews had was but dim and obscure: but Christ cleared it up to mankind, under evidence and demonstration; *he uttered things kept secret from the foundation of the world*; he unlocked and opened the cabinet of God's hidden counsels, and has afforded means to enlarge men's knowledge in proportion to their concernment.

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In a word, the doctrine of Christ gives the best account of the nature of God and of the nature of man; of the first entrance of sin into the world, and of its cure and remedy: of those terms upon which God will transact with mankind, and upon which men must ap-

proach to God in point of worship, and depend upon him in reference to rewards. And this is the circle of knowledge necessary and sufficient to make mankind what they so much desire to be, happy. Which if it be sought for any where but in the discoveries of Christianity, it is like seeking for *the living amongst the dead*; or the expectation of a vintage from a field of thistles. All that the philosophers teach about these things is either falsity or conjecture; and so tends either to make men sinful, or at the best unsatisfied.

But Christ was to be *a light to the gentiles*; and there is no cozenage in the light, no fallacy in the day: wheresoever he shines, mists presently vanish, and delusions disappear.

2. As for the second work of the Devil, sin, this the Son of God destroyed as a priest, by that satisfaction that he payed down for it; and by that supply of grace that he purchased, for the conquering and rooting it out of the hearts of believers. By the former he destroys the guilt of sin, by the latter the power. Christ when he was in his lowest condition, suffering upon the cross as a malefactor, even then he broke the chief support of the Devil's kingdom, and triumphed over his strongest principality, in cashiering the guilt and loosing the bands of sin by a full expiation.

Sin, that has so much venom in it as to poison a whole creation, to kindle an eternal fire and an unsupportable wrath, to shut up the bowels of an infinite mercy to poor perishing creatures, and, in a word, to overturn and confound the whole universe; yet being once satisfied for, it is a weak and harmless thing; it is a lion without teeth, or a snake without a sting.

But none could make it so but the Son of God, the eternal high priest of souls, who exhausted the guilt and full measure of its malignity, by a superabundant ransom given for sinners to the offended justice of his Father.

3. As for the third and last work of the Devil, which is death; this Christ, as he is a king, destroys by his power: for it is he that *has the keys of life and death*,, *opening where none shuts, and shutting where none opens*: this even amongst men is the peculiar prerogative of princes. At the command of Christ *the sea shall give up its dead*, the graves shall open, and deliver up their trust; and all the devourers of nature shall make a faithful restitution.

And surely this is that which should comfort every Christian when he is upon his death-bed, and about to lay his head upon a pillow of dust, and to take his long sleep; that he has the greatest ground in the world to expect that he shall rise again, if an omnipotence can awaken him, if the eternal Son of God can snap asunder the bonds of death, and if the word of the King of kings can give him assurance of all this.

Christ has fully finished the work for which he was manifested; he has vanquished the Devil, beat down all his forts, frustrated his stratagems; and so having delivered his elect, in spite of delusion, sin, and death, and all other destructive contrivances for the ruin of souls; as a king and a conqueror he is set down at the right hand of the Most High, receiving the homage of praises and hallelujahs from saints and angels, who are continually saying,



Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, do we also render and ascribe, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever. Amen.



SERMON LVI.

MATTHEW ii. 3.

And when Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

THOUGH all the works of God, even the most common, and such as every day meet our senses in the ordinary course of nature, carry in them a grandeur and magnificence great enough to entertain the observation of the most curious, and to raise the admiration of the most knowing; yet it has still been the method of divine Providence to point out extraordinary events and passages with some peculiar characters of remark; such as may alarm the minds and engage the eyes of the world, in a more exact observance of, and attention to, the hand of God, in such great changes. And very observable it is, that the alteration of states and kingdoms, the rise and dissolution of governments, the birth and death of persons eminent in their generations, have for the most part been signalized with some unusual phenomena in nature; sometimes in the earth, sometimes in the sea, and sometimes in the heavens themselves: God thereby shewing that the great affairs of the world proceed not without his own particular notice; and therefore certainly ought much more to challenge ours. And of this method of Providence, as the reason on God's part cannot but be most wise, so on man's (the more is our just shame) it is no less than necessary: for that natural proneness in most men to irreligion seems to gather strength from nothing more than from an observation of the constant uninterrupted course of nature, from which some are but too ready to think, whatsoever they speak, that nature is its own god, because they never see it controlled; that things always were, and always will be, as now they are; and in a word, that the world is unchangeable, when they do not see it changed. God therefore is sometimes pleased to interpose with an high hand, and to vary the usual course of nature, thereby to convince mankind, that this great fabric is not an automaton, so as to move itself; nor yet unaccountable, so as to acknowledge no superior law: but that it acts, or is rather acted by that eternal Spirit, and governed by that almighty and all-wise Artificer, that can order, govern, transpose, and, if occasion requires, take asunder the parts of it, as in his infinite wisdom he shall judge fit.

But of all the strange passages and prodigies by which God introduced great persons into the world, none were so notable as those that ushered in the nativity of this glorious first-born of the creation, our blessed Saviour. And indeed great reason it was, that he that was Lord of heaven should have his descending into the flesh graced and owned with the testimonies of stars and angels, one shining and the other singing at so great a blessing coming upon mankind. Accordingly the evangelist in this chapter makes it his design and business to recount some of those notable circumstances that attended our Saviour's birth, which we may reduce to these two heads.



I. The solemn address and homage made to him by the wise men of the east.

II. Herod's behaviour thereupon.

For the first of these, there are in this general passage these particulars considerable.

1. Who and what those wise men were.
2. From whence they came.
3. About what time they came to Jerusalem.
4. What that star was that appeared to them.
5. How they could collect our Saviour's birth by that star.

Of each of which in their order.

1. And first for the first of these. The persons here rendered *wise men* (and that certainly with great truth and judgment) are in the Greek termed μάγοι, and in the Latin *magi*. The origination of which word some take from the Hebrew radix, signifying in the participle *benoni in hiphil*, one that meditates or mutters. Some from a Syro-Arabic word, signifying *explorare* or *scrutari*. Others from a Persian word, but what that word is none pretends to know: though since it is probable that these magi did first exist amongst the Persians, it is also not improbable but that both name and thing might have their original in the same place.

As for the use of the word, it is different. At first it was taken, doubtless, not only in an honest, but also in an honourable sense; and the *magia* of the ancients was nothing else but a profound insight into all truth, natural, political, and divine. So that Suidas gives this account of the word, μάγοι παρὰ Πέρσαις οἱ φιλόσοφοι, they were the Persian philosophers. And that they were divines also is clear; for Xenophon in his 8th book, περὶ Κύρπου παιδείας, commends the piety of Cyrus and his care of religion, for his appointing magi to preside in their sacred choirs, and to manage the offering of sacrifices, τότε πρῶτον κατεστάθησαν οἱ μάγοι ὑμνεῖν τοὺς Θεοὺς, &c. And that this also was a name given to such as were skilled in politic matters is no less evident; for the great counsellors of the Persian kings were called magi; and Cicero affirms, in his 3d book *De natura Deorum*, that none was ever admitted to the Persian throne, but such as had been thoroughly instructed and trained up by these magi. For, as Plato says in his *Alcibiades*, it was their work, βασιλικά διδάσκειν, to teach and instil into them the arts of government.

Now this discourse is only to shew, that the acception of the word amongst the Greeks and Latins, and other modern languages that speak after them, by which *magus* signifies no better than a *wizard* or *conjuror*, is through abuse and degeneration: the ill practices of some who wore this name, having by little and little disgraced the name itself into a bad sense.

As for the acception of it here by our evangelist, I doubt not but it is in a good sense, and that the persons here spoken of were great scholars, men well studied in the works of nature, and probably most seen in the mysteries of astrology, the chief and principal part of the eastern learning, For the proof of which, this observation is very considerable, that



the word μάγοι applied to the Latins, Greeks, or Egyptians themselves, is for the most part used in a bad sense; but the same authors applying it to the Chaldeans and Persians intend it in a good; and that these men mentioned by the evangelist were Persians, shall presently be made at least very probable.

As for the condition and quality of these magi, or wise men, some contend, though I think more eagerly than conclusively, that they were kings; and for the proof of it allege several places of scripture; as first, that of [Psalm lxxii. 10](#), *The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts*. But what is this to those who came not from Tarshish nor from Sheba, but from Persia, as shall be made appear hereafter? Besides that those words are literally spoke of Solomon, in whom they were eminently fulfilled; for we know what commerce he had with those parts, and we have also a full rehearsal of the great visit and present made him by the queen of Sheba.

They allege also that place in [Isaiah lx. 3](#), *The gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the glory of thy rising*; with other such texts, which they call proofs; though so unconclusive and impertinent to the matter in hand, that they prove nothing but the folly and absurdity of those that allege them.

To the whole matter therefore I answer, that it is most improbable that these men were kings; and that the behaviour of Herod and the Jews toward them seems clearly to evince so much. For there was no mention of any pompous, kingly reception, but on the contrary, he treats them as imperiously as he would have done his servants or his footmen, in [ver. 8](#), *And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go, search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again*. Which surely sounds not like language fit to bespeak princes in. Those indeed whose chief religion is to rebel against princes might possibly talk to them also at this rate; but it is not to be imagined that the rest of the world were yet arrived to this perfection.

It is evident therefore that Herod received them not as kings, no, nor with that respect that is due to the ambassadors of kings; but rather as any of our inferior magistrates would nowadays receive some Polonian or Hungarian, that should come to him about a brief, or for a licence to shew some strange, outlandish feats upon a stage.

But lastly, this is an undeniable argument that they were not kings, that the evangelist is thus silent of it. For since it is manifest that his design was to set forth Christ's birth, and to render it as notable and conspicuous as he could from those passages that did attend it; it is not imaginable that he would have omitted this, that would have added so much of lustre and credit to it in the eyes of the world. The omission of it is indeed so hugely improbable, that, all things considered, it may almost pass for impossible.

2. The second thing here proposed to our consideration was the place from whence these wise men came. The evangelist describes it only by a general term, ἀπ' ἀνατολῶν, *from*



the east. But the east is of a large compass, and therefore we may well direct our inquiries to something that is more particular.

Some therefore are of opinion, that these wise men came from Arabia, and that part of it that is called Arabia Felix, which lay eastward to Jerusalem; especially since their presents consisted of gold, myrrh, and frankincense, the proper commodities of those places: for Arabia afforded gold, and the adjoining Sabea afforded plenty of all manner of spices and perfumes.

Others there are that affirm these wise men to have come from Chaldea or Assyria.

I shall not trouble myself to produce or confute the several reasons upon which either of these opinions are built; but briefly give my reasons why neither of them can be admitted.

For the first. They could not come from Arabia, because there never was in Arabia any sort or sect of men known or distinguished by the name of magi; and therefore to bring these men from Arabia were altogether as absurd, as if in story we should bring the Brachmans, or Indian philosophers, from the Orcades, or the Druids from America.

And as for that reason, that the materials of their presents were the native commodities of those regions, it proves nothing; since other countries afforded them besides, and however might have them otherwise by importation. And when men make presents, they do not always pitch upon such things as grow in their own countries, but upon the best and richest that they have in their possession.

In the next place for Assyria or Chaldea: they could not come from thence neither, forasmuch as they lay northwards to Jerusalem: so that frequently in the prophets, when God threatens the Jews with an invasion from the Assyrians, they are still called *a nation or army coming from the north*. But the evangelist expressly says, that these men came ἀπ' ἀνατολῶν, *from the east*, to which words this opinion is utterly irreconcilable.

Having thus removed these two opinions, I judge it most probable that they came from Persia; which as it is confirmed by the concurrent testimonies of the most eminent divines, both ancient and modern, so there wants not also solid reasons to persuade the same.

(1.) The first of which shall be taken from this; that this sort of men most flourished in Persia: they were most famous there. And I believe there may be better arguments brought to prove that the magi had their first rise there, than any can be brought to the contrary.

(2.) The second reason shall be taken from the situation of the place, Persia being situate eastward to Judea; so that it exactly answers the words of the evangelist.

(3.) The third and last shall be taken from the manner of their doing homage to Christ, which was that used by the Persians in expressing their homage to kings, namely, by gifts and presents.

These reasons seem probably to evince that these magi, or wise men, came from Persia: and we must know, that in matters of this nature, where demonstrations are not to be had, probable conjectures, burdened with no inconvenient consequences, are the best arguments,



and such as any rational mind may well acquiesce in. And thus much for the place from whence these wise men came.

3. The third thing proposed was, the time when they came to Jerusalem; for some affirm them not to have come to Jerusalem till two years after the birth of Christ, grounding this their assertion upon what is said in [ver. 16](#), that *Herod sent and slew all the children in and about Bethlehem, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men*. Whence they infer Christ to have been two years old at the time of the wise men's arrival at Jerusalem. But the words of the text import the time to have been but very small between the birth of one and the coming of the other; for it is said in [ver. 1](#), that *when Jesus was born, behold the wise men came*; which word ἰδοὺ, behold, according to the phrase of scripture, is equivalent with *forthwith*, or *presently*, as might be made out by sundry parallel places. Besides, that the wise men at their coming found Christ in Bethlehem, where yet it is certain that Joseph and Mary tarried not above forty days, the time appointed by the law for her purification; from whence it follows, that the coming of the wise men must needs have been within the compass of those forty days. As for that argument grounded upon Herod's killing the children of two years old and under, according to the time of his inquiring of the wise men, the solution of it is very easy, if we reckon those two years before the time of his inquiry, and not those two years that immediately followed it. The reason of which is manifest, forasmuch as the wise men spoke not of Christ as yet to be born, but of him as actually born; though the precise time when, they declared not, nor perhaps knew. And therefore Herod, whose design was to secure himself from a rival king, whom he heard was already born, killed all the children that were born within the space of two years before the coming of the wise men and his inquiring of them. From whence it follows, that the time of the wise men's coming to Jerusalem was some few days after the birth of Christ, probably nine or ten, and that they worshipped him at Bethlehem about the twelfth, the day still observed by the church for its commemoration.

And now, as we have here removed the opinion of those that state the time of the wise men's coming to Jerusalem two years after the birth of Christ; so another opinion, that makes the star to have appeared two years before Christ's birth, is no less to be rejected, since they gave it the appellation of his star upon this account, that it then declared him to have been born. And whereas some, in defence of this opinion, allege the improbability of their coming from Persia in so few days, I answer, that if they be allowed to have come from those parts of it that lay nearest to Jerusalem, (as well they may,) it is not improbable at all; since a very learned commentator upon this place says, that some parts of Persia were not distant from Jerusalem *ultra ducentas leucas*, which, reckoning five hundred paces to a *leuca*, as some do, amount to an hundred of our miles. If fifteen hundred, as Ammianus Marcellinus does, then they make three hundred of our miles. The former of which they might go in that time very easily, and the latter with no such extraordinary great difficulty; considering



that camels, the beasts of travel in those countries, are said even with great burdens to despatch forty of those *leucas*, that is, according to the latter and greater computation, threescore of our miles in a day. And thus much for the third thing, viz. the time of these wise men's coming to Jerusalem.

4. The fourth thing proposed to be considered was, what this star was. Where though some have affirmed it to have been of the same nature with those that have their proper place and motion in the celestial orbs, and though that omnipotent God, that made the sun stand still at one time, and go back at another, cannot be denied to have been able to have commanded any of the stars upon such a message and employment, yet that he actually did so is not necessary for us here to assert, there being otherwise sufficient reasons to persuade us that this was not a real star of the same kind with those heavenly bodies, but only a bright meteor formed by the immediate power of God into the resemblance and similitude of a star, and so by a singular act of his providence used and directed to this great purpose. For had it been indeed a real star, there can hardly any reason be assigned why it should not have appeared to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as well as to those wise men in their journey from thence to Bethlehem; which yet it is clear that it did not, from the evangelist's being wholly silent of it; who otherwise would undoubtedly have recorded it as a passage, than which none could be more efficacious, to upbraid the Jews with the unreasonableness of their unbelief. Nor does its being called a star prove it to have been really so: it being so usual, both in scripture and common speech, to call the resemblances of things by the names of those things themselves, comets and falling stars still obtaining this appellation, which yet have nothing of stars in them but the name.

5. The fifth and last thing proposed to be discussed was, how these wise men could collect or come to know our Saviour's birth by their seeing this star. Evident it is from the words that they had a full and clear knowledge of it: for they spake of it as of a thing granted; and therefore they ask not whether or no he was born, but where he was born. And they call it emphatically *his star*; *We have seen his star in the east*; implying that it pointed him out by a certain and peculiar designation.

To this I answer; that all knowledge must commence upon principles either natural or supernatural.

If they draw it from the former, it must have been either,

1. From the principles of astrology; and here, for the confutation of this, would the time and measure of this exercise permit, the vanity of this science might easily be shewn, from the weakness of its principles; the confessions of such as have been most reputed for their skill in it; and, what is stronger than their confessions, from their frequent mistakes and deceptions in their most confident predictions; which sufficiently prove the greatest pretenders to it to be indeed but mere planetaries; that is, as we may well interpret it from the force

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of the word, such as use to err and to be deceived, and consequently, that nothing certain can be concluded from their principles.

2. Or secondly, if these men's knowledge of Christ's birth by the star were natural, the former way being removed, it must needs have been from tradition. And as to this, some affirm that they gathered it from that prophecy of Balaam continued down to them by report from his time, which prophecy is recorded in [Numb. xxiv. 17](#), *that a star should rise out of Jacob*; and also that they might learn it from several prophecies of the sibyls, one of which sibyls prophesied in Persia. But how much soever these prophecies of the sibyls may have obtained in the world, yet most of them relating to Christ are proved by the learned Casaubon to be spurious and supposititious, and by all wise men believed to be such.

Others affirm, that this might have been first learned from the Jews, in the time of their dispersion. But especially from some remaining traditions of Daniel. And certainly, when we consider how much this prophet writes of the kingdom and coming of the Messiah, it is no ways improbable but that he might otherwise, both by writing and word of mouth, leave many things behind him concerning the same. All which, through the greatness of the place he held in the Persian court, and the vast repute that he had for his knowledge and learning, might easily find both a general and a lasting reception.

It cannot therefore be rationally denied, but that these wise men might be much directed by such helps as these. But yet I affirm that these were not sufficient; so that we must be forced to derive their knowledge of Christ by this star from a supernatural cause; that is, from the immediate revelation of God: how, or in what manner, that revelation was effected, it is not necessary for us to know; but that they were such persons, to whom God upon other occasions did vouchsafe extraordinary revelations, is clear from the twelfth verse, where it is said, that they were admonished by God in a dream not to return to Herod. Now it is very probable that the same God who warned them of their danger, first suggested to them this great discovery; especially since it was not so difficult to escape the one, as to find out the other. We must conclude therefore, that it was neither their own skill, nor yet the light of that star, that taught them the meaning of that star. But Leo states the matter rightly in his fourth sermon upon the Epiphany: *Praeter illam stellae speciem quae corporeum incitavit obtutum, fulgentior veritatis radius eorum corda perdocuit*. Star-light is but a dim light to read the small characters of such mysteries by. He only that made the stars could discover it; even that God who rules their influences, and knows their significations.

And thus much for the first notable circumstance of our Saviour's nativity, namely, the solemn address of the wise men to him from the east, upon the appearance of a star. I come now to the

Second, which was, Herod's behaviour thereupon; who being a person so largely spoken of in the Jewish story, so particularly noted by the evangelist, and made yet more notable



by having the birth of the great Saviour of the world fall in his reign, he may well deserve our particular consideration: accordingly we will consider him in these three respects.

1. In respect of his condition and temper in reference to his government of Judea.
2. Of his behaviour and deportment upon this particular accident.
3. Of the influence this his behaviour had upon those under his government.

And first for the first of these; we will take an account of his condition and temper in reference to the government held by him, by these three things recorded of him, both in sacred and profane story.

1st, His usurpation: 2dly, His cruelty: and 3dly, His magnificence.

1. And first for his usurpation. When the government of Judea was taken from the Asmoneans, the last of which that reigned was Antigonus, this Herod, the youngest son of Antipater, an Idumean, (who had grown up under Hyrcanus, being by him employed in the chief management of the affairs of his kingdom,) through the favour of Marcus Antonius, was by the Roman senate declared king of the Jews; in which dignity, to the wonder of many, he was also confirmed afterwards by Augustus himself. But Herod had a good purse, and having also well experienced Jugurtha's observation of Rome, that it was *urbs venalis*, knew how to open it for his advantage as well as any man living: which, together with his great courage and resolution, lifted him up to, and settled him in a royal throne, so much above the pitch of any thing that by his birth he could pretend to. But let men be usurpers, and as false and wicked as they will, yet God is still righteous, and will serve and bring about his righteous purposes, even by their wickedness. And I question not but the success of Herod's projects was chiefly from the special providence of God, while the villainy of them was wholly from himself: for by this strange and unexpected translation of the Jewish government, in setting the crown of it upon a stranger's head, was exactly fulfilled that eminent and most remarkable prophecy of the Messiah, in [Gen. xlix. 10](#), *That the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.*

2. The second thing observable of him was his cruelty. We have already seen him seated in the Jewish throne, though an usurper and an intruder, and one who had no other title to that sovereignty, but the gift of those who had no right to give it. However, being thus possessed of it, he must have recourse to the common method of usurpers, and maintain by blood what he had got by injustice. Accordingly he assassinates all such as he could but suspect might be his competitors. Aristobulus, the last of the Asmonean race, and preferred by him at the instigation of his wife Mariamne to the high priesthood, because the affections of the people were towards him, was by his appointment treacherously drowned. Nor spares he Hyrcanus himself, his predecessor, though now in the extremity of old age, and the person who had raised his father Antipater to that pitch as to give him, his son, the possibilities of a kingdom, and consequently of doing all this mischief. Nay, and his beloved wife Mariamne also, and his own sons Alexander and Aristobulus, and, at length too, his base son Antipater;

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and, which was the most unparalleled piece of barbarity that ever was acted, last of all, those poor infants also, (which we shall presently speak of,) they must all fall a sacrifice to his remorseless cruelty: so that neither the innocence of infancy, the venerableness and impotence of old age, the sacred obligations of gratitude, the love of a wife, nor, lastly, the endearing relation of a son, could prevail any thing against the inhuman resolves of his base and cruel disposition; which gave occasion to that sarcastical speech of Caesar Augustus concerning him; "That it was better to be Herod's hog, than his son." For as a proselyted Jew, he would not meddle with the former; but as worse than a Jew, he barbarously procured the murder of the latter.

3. The third thing observable in the temper of this Herod was his magnificence. There was none that reigned over the Jews, Solomon only excepted, that left such glorious monuments of building behind them as did Herod. The temple, the *arx Antonia*, and his own houses, sufficiently declared his vast and boundless spirit: any one of which had been enough to have ennobled the reign of any one prince: but this was all for which he was laudable: God sometimes thinking it fit to give a man some one good quality to season his many bad ones; and so to keep him sweet above-ground. Herod did many things of public advantage, and yet he scarce deserved the reputation of a public spirit, when the end and design drove at by him in all he did was his own private glory, and the gratification of his ambition. The consideration of which may teach us how great a riddle the actions of most men are, even in their most specious and public undertakings. The action may be sometimes of a national emolument, and yet the spring and design that moves it be but personal. Few men know what disguises are worn upon the public face of things, and how much the world is beholding to some men's pride and vain-glory, which often supply the office of charity in those worthy benefactions they pass upon the public; while, in the mean time, the good of those that are benefited by such works is the least thing in the thoughts of those that did them. So far from impossible or improper was that supposition made by the apostle Paul in [1 Cor. xiii. 3](#), *of a man's bestowing all his goods upon the poor, and yet not having charity*. For it is not the bulk or outside of the action, but the mind and spirit directing it, that stamps it charitable. Men may give large sums, and do generous actions, upon as great designs of selfishness as ever the vilest miser or usurer entertained, when he amassed heaps upon heaps within his greedy coffers; only with this difference indeed, that one in all this feeds his pride, the other his covetousness. But surely pride is as much a vice as covetousness, though not always of so ill effect to those that are about it. It is not what a man does, but how, and why, that denominates his action good or evil before God. Herod may be Herod still, for all his building of a temple.

And thus much for the three qualifications observable in Herod's person.

2. The second thing to be considered of him was, his behaviour upon this particular occasion of the wise men's coming to Jerusalem from the east, to inquire after him that was



born king of the Jews, at the nativity of our blessed Saviour; which behaviour of his shews itself in these two things.

1. In that trouble and anxiety of mind that he conceived upon this news. He was full of suspicious, misgiving, and perplexing thoughts, what the issue of things might be, and how he should be able to maintain himself in the throne, against the claim of the right owner, which he knew he held by no other title but that of injury and usurpation.

2. His behaviour shews itself in that wretched course he took to secure himself against his supposed competitor; which was by slaying all the children born in and near to Bethlehem, from two years old and under; the time within which he had learnt from the wise men that Christ must have been born.

It must be confessed here (which yet certainly is very strange) that Josephus, who is so particular in recording most things relating to Herod's reign, yet speaks not a word either of the birth of Christ, or of the appearance of the star, or of the wise men's coming to Herod thereupon; nor, lastly, of the massacre of these children. All of which (one would think) were too great and too considerable passages to be passed over in silence by such an historian as Josephus.

However, this ought not to shake our faith of these things at all; since if the evangelists had falsified in these narratives, it is infinitely improbable, that the enemies of the Christian religion, who could so easily have convinced them of such falsification, should not some time or other have objected it against the truth of our religion, which yet they never did; but on the other hand, it is hugely probable, that Josephus, a great zealot in the Jewish religion, and consequently a mortal hater of ours, might, out of his hatred of it, omit the relation of these passages which were likely to give it so much reputation in the world. But as for the passage of his murdering the infants, Ludovicus Capellus is of opinion, that in that place where Josephus says, that Herod, drawing near his death, summoned the noblest of the Jews by a menacing edict from all parts of Judea, and shutting them up, gave order to his sister Salome, and her husband Alexas, to see them all put to the sword after his death; it was Josephus's intent, by this device, to slubber over the massacre of these innocents; thus not wholly omitting it, and yet by so obscure a narrative not clearly and plainly discovering it. But whether this observation have any weight in it or no, I hope the testimony of those whose writings have been opposed, but never yet confuted, or convinced of falsity, will have more authority and credit with us, than the ambiguity and shuffling of a partial historian.

3. The third thing proposed to be considered by us was, the influence that this behaviour of Herod had upon those under his government. For the text tells us, that not only he was troubled himself, but that *all Jerusalem was also troubled with him*: yet not for any love they bore him, we may be sure. But they were troubled and disturbed with the fears they had of what the rage and jealousy of such a tyrant might produce: for seldom does a tyrant confine his troubles within his own breast, but that those about him also go sharers in the smart of

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them. And what the prophet said of Ahab may be as truly said of Herod, and all such usurpers, *that they are those that trouble Israel*. For usually such persons neither rise nor fall, but at the cost of the people's blood, and the expense of many innocent lives. When tyrants and victorious rebels invade the regal power of any nation, the people must not expect to rest quiet either in peace or war: nor were the Jews here deceived in their ill-boding presages of what mischief would ensue upon Herod's discontents. Such a cloud could not gather over their heads for nothing. And long it was not before it broke out in that bloody shower that has been made mention of. From all which we may learn how much it concerns the tranquillity and happiness of a kingdom to stop the first pretences and encroaches of usurpers; and as much as in them lies to keep all Herods and Cromwells from getting into the supremacy. For as soon as their own guilt and suspicion shall alarm them with any fears of the right owner's regaining his inheritance, then presently the whole nation is in danger of being forced to a war, to defend and fight for those whom they have more heart to fight against. Or in case Providence shall favour them so far as to enable them to turn, their swords against such domestic pests, yet they must still purchase their delivery by a war; that is, rid themselves of one calamity by another. So that we see, when Herods and usurpers once ravish the government into their hands, whether they stand or whether they fall, *all Jerusalem is like to be troubled with them*.

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And thus I have finished what I proposed from the text, namely, the two grand circumstances of our Saviour's nativity. I shall now close up all with a resolution of this short question, Why that Jesus Christ, being born the right and lawful king of the Jews, yet gave way to this bloody usurper, and did not, either in his or his successor's time, assume the government himself?

In answer to which, though I think it a solid and satisfactory reason of all God's actions to state them upon his mere will and pleasure; yet there are not wanting other reasons as-signable for this.

I shall pitch upon two.

1. Christ balked the kingly government of the Jews, because his assuming it would have crossed the very design of that religion that he was then about to establish; which was, to unite both Jew and Gentile into one church or body. But this union could not possibly be effected till the politic economy of that nation, so interwoven with the ceremonial and religious, like the great partition-wall, was broken down. Upon good reason therefore did Christ refuse to undertake the kingly government, and therein the support of that nation, the politic constitution of which, through the special providence of God, in order to the propagation of the Christian religion, was now shortly to expire and to be done away.

2. Christ voluntarily waved the Jewish crown, that he might hereby declare to the world the nature of his proper kingdom; which was to be wholly without the grandeur of human sovereignty and the splendour of earthly courts. In [Luke xvii. 20](#) it is said, *that the kingdom*

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of God cometh not with observation. So we read it. But the Greek is *κατὰ φαντασίαν*, that is, with pomp and gayety of outward appearance. For so the word signifies. Whereupon, in [Acts xxv. 23](#), when Agrippa and Bernice came in much splendour and magnificence to visit Festus, it is said that they came *μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας*, which is there well rendered, *with much pomp*.

This being so, men may save themselves the labour of entering into covenants, raising armies, and cutting of throats, to advance the sceptre and kingdom of Jesus Christ: for Christ has no need of their forces: he came to cast out such legions, and not to employ them. Here in this world he owns no sword but that of his Spirit, no sceptre but his word, no kingdom but the heart. This is his prerogative royal, to govern our wills, to command our inclinations, and to reign and lord it over our most inward affections.

Which kingdom, God of his mercy daily propagate and increase within us.

To which God be rendered and ascribed., as is most due, all praise, might., majesty, and dominion., both now and for ever. Amen.



SERMON LVII.

MATTHEW x. 37.

He that loves father or mother better than me is not worthy of me.

OUR Saviour in these words presents himself and the world together as competitors for our best affections; which because we never fasten upon any thing but for some precedent apprehension of worth in it, he therefore treats with us not upon terms of courtesy but reason, challenging a transcendent affection on our parts, because of a transcendent worthiness on his. He would have it before the world, for this cause only, that he deserves it above the world.

Now because men might be apt to flatter themselves into a false persuasion of their love to Christ, the heart being no less the seat and shop of deceit, than it is of love; lest, I say, they might baffle and impose upon themselves, (as sad experience shews, that most men do in this particular,) our Saviour, with great art, selects and singles out those enjoyments that are most apt to seize and engross our affections, and particularly states the sincerity of our love to him, in the superiority of it over our love to those. An ordinary affection relating to an extraordinary object is no affection. When Christ is the thing that we are to love, between the highest degree of love and a total negation of it, there is no medium; as it is said of Jacob, that he loved Rachel, but he hated Leah; because he loved Leah the less of the two. So if a man loves the world in a greater degree, and Christ in a less, when God shall come to take an estimate of that love, he will make no allowance for the comparison, but account that man absolutely to love the world and to hate Christ. For not to value him more than all, is really to undervalue him.

For the exposition of the words we must here observe, that these terms *father* and *mother* are not to be understood in a literal, restrained sense, only as they signify such relations; but they are to be taken more largely, as they comprise whatsoever enjoyments are dear unto us: it being usual in scripture to express all that is dear to us by some one thing that is most dear. As it is a frequent synecdoche, to express the whole by some one principal part. [Prov. xxiii. 26](#), *My son, give me thy heart*. God here requires the service of the whole man; but the heart is only expressed, as being the prime ruling part.

Now the affection we bear to our parents is the greatest that we are to bear to any worldly thing, and that deservedly. For if, under God, they gave us our beings, we may well return them our affections. So that Christ by demanding a love greater than that which upon a natural account is the greatest, and by preferring himself before that enjoyment which is the dearest, he does by consequence prefer himself before all the rest. For he that is above a prince, is consequentially above all his subjects.



As for the next expression, *he is not worthy of me*; it may seem from hence to be inferred, that he who should love Christ above father or mother, or any other worldly enjoyment, would thereby become worthy of Christ. But yet to affirm that any man may so qualify himself, or do that which may render him worthy of Christ, would be apparently to introduce and assert the doctrine of merit; a thing of the highest absurdity, both in reason and religion.



In answer to this therefore we may observe, that there is a twofold worthiness.

1. A worthiness strictly and properly so called, which is according to the real inherent value of the thing; and so no man by the choicest of his endeavours can be said to be worthy of Christ. He can no more merit grace than he can merit glory, and both are included in Christ. Obtain them indeed we may, but we can never deserve them. Worthiness is a thing that man can never plead before God; but after we have done all, we are still unprofitable, and therefore still unworthy.

2. There is a worthiness according to the gracious acceptance of God, which is a worthiness improperly so called: when a thing is worthy, not for any value in itself, but because God freely accepts it for such. This worth may be rather termed a fitness or a meetness, not consisting in merit, but in due conditional qualifications. And so he that loves father or mother less than Christ is in this sense worthy of him; that is, fitly prepared and qualified to receive him; as having that which God is pleased to make the only condition upon which he bestows Christ.

These things being premised by way of exposition, I shall draw forth and prosecute the sense of the words in these three particulars.

I. I shall shew what is included and comprehended in that love to Christ that is here mentioned in the text.

II. I shall shew what are the reasons and motives that may induce us to it.

III. What are the signs, marks, and characters whereby we may discern it.

I. As for the first of these, what is included in the love here spoken of, I conceive it may include these five things.

1. An esteem and valuation of Christ above all worldly enjoyments whatsoever. The first foundation stone of this love must be laid in admiration, and an high persuasion of that worth that we are to love. We must first believe Christ excellent, before we can account him dear. Those that profess and avow a love to Christ, and yet, by the secret verdict of their worldly minds, place a greater esteem upon a pleasure, upon honour, upon an estate, do indeed speak contradictions, and delude themselves, and may as well believe their life may remain when their soul is departed, as imagine that their love may go one way, and their esteem another. Upon which account it is clear, that Christ must be first raised above the world in our judgments; he must first rule there; he must lord it in our thoughts, and command our apprehensions.



If we trace David through all his Psalms, he is continually breathing out an ardent love to God; they run all along in a strain of the highest affection. And this love we shall find to have been founded upon a proportionable esteem of God, which esteem does eminently appear in several expressions. How often does he repeat and insist upon this one, *Lord, who is like unto thee?* Psalm xxxv. 10, and xli. 19. His thoughts were even transported into a ravishing admiration of God's surpassing excellencies, before his heart could be drawn forth in love and affection to him; he suffered an ecstasy in his thoughts before he did in his desires. And again, Psalm xviii. 3, *Thou art worthy to be praised.* God's worth, presented to the soul by thoughts of esteem, is that which so strongly, and, as I may say, invincibly draws its affections. It is indeed the price of our desires, and really buys them before it has them.



Some are of opinion that the dictates of the understanding have such a determining, controlling influence upon the will and affections, that they cannot but desire whatsoever the understanding shall sufficiently offer and propose to them as desirable. But whether or no the judgment does certainly and infallibly command and draw after it the acts of the will, (which is a controversy too big to be discussed in a sermon,) yet this is certain, that it does of necessity precede them, and no man can fix his love upon any thing, till his judgment reports it to the will as amiable. This must be the only gate and portal through which we must introduce loving thoughts of Christ into the heart; he must be first valued before he can be embraced. For this is undoubtedly certain, that nothing can have a greater share of our affections, than it has of our esteem.

2. This love to Christ implies a choosing him before all other enjoyments. For a man to pretend affection to Christ, by extolling his person, admiring what he has done for us, by praising the ways of God, commending the practice and the practisers of godliness; and yet in the mean time to act and labour for the world, to live in sin, and upon all occasions to submit to a temptation, rather than to a precept; notwithstanding this strange opposition and clashing between his profession and his course, I suppose every rational man would read his judgment, not in his words, but in his choice. *Laudant illa, sed ista legunt;* he that commends such books, but reads others, only shews that he praises one thing but values another, and that the best interpreter of his mind is not what he says, but what he chooses.



By this Moses undeniably proved both the strength and sincerity of his love to God and to the people of God, that he chose rather to suffer afflictions with them, than to enjoy all the pleasures of Pharaoh's court. For to have solicited their cause with Pharaoh, to have procured them a mitigation of their bondage, to have won them favour and a good opinion from the Egyptians, had indeed been signs and effects of love; but this was love itself. His affection was in his choice; for had he still chose Pharaoh's court, all other things that he could have done for his brethren had amounted rather to a good wish, than to a true affection.

Thus, on the contrary, wicked men are said to *love death*: but can any man make his greatest evil the object of his best desire, which is love? No, assuredly, while he considers it

as such, he cannot; but because it is rational from men's choice to infer and argue their love, they may be said therefore truly and properly to love death, because they choose it. And by the same reason, on the other side, a believer, though he may be sometimes ensnared in sin, and so brought to commit it, yet he cannot be said indeed to love it, because it is seldom his choice, but his surprise; he makes it not his end and his design. It is rather a sudden invasion made upon his affections, than the resolved purpose of his will.



Thus therefore we see how the spirit and force of our love exerts itself in choice; for the design of love is to appropriate as well as to approximate its object to the soul: and to choose a thing is the first access to a propriety in it. For choice, as I may so say, is possession begun, and possession itself is nothing else but choice perfected. Barely to esteem Christ (if we may suppose a division of those things which indeed are not to be divided) is as much inferior to a choosing him, as a good look is below a good turn.

3. Love to Christ implies service and obedience to him; the same love that when it is between equals is friendship, when it is from an inferior to a superior is obedience. Love, of all the affections, is the most active; hence by those who express the nature of things by hieroglyphics, we have it compared to fire, certainly for nothing more than its activity. The same arms that embrace a friend, will be as ready to act for him. This is the natural progress of true love, from the heart to the hand: where there is an inward spring, there will quickly be an external visible motion.

When we have once placed our affection upon any person, the next inquiry naturally will be, what shall we do for him? And if this be the property of love when it lays itself out upon natural objects, we may be sure it will be heightened when it pitches upon supernatural. It is indeed changed, but withal advanced; the object altered, but the measure of the act increased. Divine and heavenly things do indeed refine and lop off the extravagancy, but they abate nothing of the vigour of our affections.



Christ has determined the case in short, [John xiv. 15](#), *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. There is more real love to God shewn in the least sincere act of obedience, than in the greatest and the most pompous sacrifice. Many may please themselves in their fair professions, their orthodox opinions, and their judgment about the ways of Christ, but God knows there may be much of all this, and yet but little love. It is the command that must try that; and believe it, the grand inquiry hereafter will be, not what we have thought or what we have said, but what we have done for Christ.

Christ all along in scripture proposes himself to us as our Lord and Master; and a servant's love to his master is his service. It was the idle servant that God dealt with as his enemy. How does a wicked man's love to sin appear, but by his continual, indefatigable acting and working for it, obeying its commands, and fulfilling even its vilest lusts and most unreasonable desires! Now Christ requires that every believer should manifest his love to him in that height and measure, that a wicked person manifests his love to sin. So that when he required

a testimonial of Peter's affection, he did not ask him what he thought of him, or what he was ready to profess concerning him: for we know he thought him to *be the Son of God*, [Matth. xvi. 16](#); and he professed, *that if all others forsook him, yet he would not*, [Matth. xxvi. 33](#); yet for all this he afterwards both denied and foreswore him. Christ therefore exacts a demonstration of his love in service and obedience. *Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep*, [John xxi. 17](#). He knew he that would obey and serve him, and execute his commands, loved him beyond all possibility of dissimulation. A man usually speaks, but he seldom *does* one thing and *thinks* another.

It is natural for love, where it is both sincere and predominant, to subdue the party possessed with it to undertake the most servile, laborious, and otherwise uncomfortable offices in the behalf of him whom he loves. If you will admit the paradox, it makes a man do more than he can do. Will is instead of power, and love supplies the room of ability. Had the love of Christ but once thoroughly seated itself in our hearts, we should find that, according to that most expressive phrase of the apostle, it would *constrain us*. It were but Christ's saying, Go, and we should go; Do this, and we should do it. We should find a double command, one from Christ and one from our own affection. Love without works is a greater absurdity than faith without works; faith works by love, and love by obedience. Let none therefore ever think to divide himself between God and mammon; to afford his love to Christ, but his service to the world. If a man may honour his parents but not obey them, keep loyalty to his governor but rebel against him, then may also his love stand sincere to Christ while unseconded with obedience.

It is the masterpiece of Satan and our own corruptions, to bring us under this persuasion, that we may love Christ without serving him: but believe it, it is a destructive and a damnable delusion; equal in the absurdity and in the danger: and I believe, if we could divide these two, and give the Devil his choice, he would accept of one instead of both: give but the Devil your service, and he would give Christ your love. We are apt to place all upon persuasion; but how shall we be disappointed when God comes to reckon with us for performance!

4. Love to Christ implies an acting for him in opposition to all other things; and this is the undeceiving, infallible test of a true affection. We may not only value and commend, but think also that we serve Christ by reason of the undiscernible mixture of his and our interests sometimes wrapt together; so as to be persuaded that we serve and carry on his interest, while indeed we only serve our own in another dress. I believe that Jehu did not only persuade others, but himself also, that he served the cause of God in destroying the posterity of Ahab and the worshippers of Baal; when in truth, God's honour and his own safety, the interest of religion and of his crown, at that time so particularly met and combined together, that he mistook his own meaning, and thought he was all the time honouring of God, while he was only endeavouring to establish himself, and pursuing the designs of policy under the mask of zeal.

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But when two distinct interests are drawn forth in an open, avowed opposition, and visibly confront one another; when those that embrace one are apparently discriminated from the other, and none can embrace both, but a man must either testify a real affection on one side, or an odious indifference and neutrality, then love will appear to be love; dissimulation will be rendered impossible, and a man will be judged to love there only where he shall dare to appear.

When Christ and the world, Christ and our honour, Christ and our profit, shall make two opposite parties, then is the time to try our affections. If one servant should follow two several persons, it were hard to discern whose servant he was, while they both walked quietly together; but should they once quarrel and come to strokes, we should quickly see by his assistance where he had engaged his service. The truth is, it is but one and the same league, that is, defensive in respect of our friends, and offensive to their enemies. Neither is there any defending of Christ's interest, without an active opposing that of Satan and the flesh, when the preservation of one lies in the destruction of the other. If Christ cannot increase, unless John decrease, the Baptist himself must not be spared. Because Peter would shew that he loved Christ above the rest, he drew his sword for him. He that fights for another pawns his life that he loves him: competition is the touchstone of reality.

It is not to make invectives against sin and the courses of the world, or to speak satires against the Devil, that infallibly concludes us to be Christ's disciples. Those may chide very sharply, who are yet hearty and real friends. But shew me the person who can act with as keen a vigour as he speaks; who can put his foot upon the neck of his lust; who can be restless and active in circumventing, undermining, and defeating his corruption; and all this only for its implacable enmity to Christ; such an one indeed declares to the world by a demonstration of the highest evidence, that Christ bears the rule and preeminence in his affections.

Had king Josiah spoke great and glorious words of his love to God's church, and of his hatred to idolatry, this indeed might have been a fair commendation of his zeal to the world, which is often deceived, and almost always governed by words: but it could not have at all commended his zeal to God, who weighs all such expressions in the balance of truth and reality, and finds them wanting.

But see how this royal person's love to God manifested itself: as soon as he succeeded his father, and found the church generally corrupted, and idolatry like an usurper reigning in his kingdom, he presently throws down the altars, breaks the images, dismantles the high places; and all this in opposition to a potent, prevailing interest in his kingdom. A friend at court signified but little, when he was to speak for idolatry, where the king himself looked upon the church as his crown, and the purity of religion as his prerogative. And this was to love God and religion indeed, thus to assert them actively, by engaging against their fiercest opponents, and building up the divine worship upon the ruin of its adversaries. And surely between the most glittering professions, the most enlarged vows, and highest verbal engage-



ments for God, and between this way of taking up and owning his quarrel, there is as much difference, as there is between wearing God's colours and fighting his battles.

5. To assign the greatest and the sublimest instance in the last place. Love to Christ imports a full acquiescence in him alone, even in the absence and want of all other felicities: men can embrace Christ with riches, Christ with honour, Christ with interest, and abundantly satisfy themselves in so doing; though perhaps all the time they put but a cheat upon themselves, thinking that they follow Christ, while indeed they run only after the loaves. What Solomon says of wisdom, that they think of religion, that it is *good with an inheritance*.

The Devil granted it to be an easy matter for Job to serve God in the midst of that great affluence, while God set an hedge round about all that he had: but, says he to God, *Put forth thine hand, and touch him*, strip him of all his greatness, his wealth, and honour, *and he will curse thee to thy face*; and if Job's heart had not been made of better metal than the heart of the most specious hypocrite in the world, the Devil had not been at all out in his advice, but would have certainly seen his prediction verified in Job's behaviour.

Many love Christ as they love their temporal king; while he flourishes, and has the opportunity of obliging his dependents, they will be sure to stick close by his side: but would they follow him into banishment, and pay allegiance to majesty poor, and bare, and forlorn? And if Providence should debase him to so low a pitch, could they honour him in rags, as much as they do in purple? and give him the same homage wandering in the land of strangers, that they shew him riding in the head of his own armies?

No; the case comes to be altered here. When indeed duty and emolument conspire, one may easily be performed, because in the very same action the other may be intended: but when they part, and virtue is to set off itself merely upon the stock of its own worth, there men generally look upon it as upon a fair woman without a portion; all will commend, but none will marry her.

But this was the great and infallible demonstration, that all the ancient heroes in the faith gave of their love to God, that they took him alone for an inheritance and a patrimony, and embraced religion separate from all temporal accessions, as the utmost limit of their desires, the just measures of their designs, and the sole and ample object of their satisfaction. Abraham left his country, his family, his estate, following God upon his bare word and command. The disciples left all, and followed Christ; the primitive Christians and martyrs relinquished every worldly enjoyment even to life itself, and embarked all their hopes, all their fortunes and felicities, both present and future, in this one bottom, looking for all these, and that which was much better and greater than all, entirely in their religion.

But because human nature has great arguments and reluctancies against such an heroic act of piety, God, that he might cast all our duties within the rules and measures of reason, which is the proper *drawing us with the cords of a man*, has provided greater arguments to induce us to such an undertaking, than flesh and blood can produce against it.

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For when he called Abraham from the very bosom of his friends and fortunes, he did not divert his will from one desirable object without proposing to it another: but he both answers his desires and obviates his fears, in that infinitely full and encouraging promise, [Genesis xv. 1](#), *Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*. A promise that might reach the very utmost of his thoughts, confute his doubts, and make good the reason of his obedience in all circumstances whatsoever. And Christ makes the same promise to all his, [Matth. xix. 29](#), *that there is none who should leave father, or mother, or lands for his sake and the gospel's, but should receive an hundredfold in this world, and in the world to come everlasting life*. That is, they should receive that high satisfaction, pleasure, and peace of mind, that should be an hundredfold greater than any that is conveyed to the heart of man from the vastest abundance of worldly treasures and enjoyments. So that in all these high instances of religion, God is pleased to convince as well as to command us to obedience, still interweaving argument with precept, and so making our love to him as rational as it can be religious.

And therefore let men frame to themselves what measures of religion they please, yet if they cannot love and acquiesce in it, when Providence shall leave them nothing in the world else to bestow their love upon, but dispossess them of all the former delights of their eyes and joys of their hearts, (of which we have but too frequent and pregnant examples in many, whose fortunes have been ground to nothing by some sad calamities,) such must assure themselves that all their love to Christ is trifling and superficial, and far from that sincerity that makes it genuine, saving, and victorious over the world.

And God knows how soon he may bring all our pretences to so severe a trial; and what need the weak heart of man will then have of such a principle to support it, when it shall find itself beat off from all its former holds, bereft of its supplies, and every thing on this side heaven frowning and looking sternly upon it. It will be then found that religion is not a chimera or a fancy, and that the pious man has something or other within him that makes him hold up his head, while others in the same calamity droop and despond.

Where the love of Christ has once possessed itself of the heart, though a man lives in the world, yet he lives not upon it. And therefore when nothing is imported from without, he can say to the world as Christ did once to his disciples, *I have meat that ye know not of*. A good man, says Solomon, *is satisfied from himself*; he carries his store, his plenty, his friends, and his preferments about him. Nothing could more excellently and divinely express this condition than those words of our Saviour, [John vii. 38](#), *He that believes on me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*. Cisterns may be broke, and we removed from them, or they from us; but he that has a fountain within him can never be athirst.

Having thus despatched the first particular, and shewn those five things included in the love to Christ spoken of in the text, I proceed now to the



Second; which is, to shew what are the reasons and motives that may induce us to this love.

And for this I might insist upon that mighty and commanding cause of love, the amiableness and high perfection of Christ's person; which contains in it the *very fulness of the Godhead bodily*, all the glories of the Deity are wrapt up and included in it; they reach as wide as infinity, and as far as eternity. His vast, unlimited knowledge and wisdom, his uncontrollable power and his boundless goodness, are all objects to excite such an esteem and admiration of him as must naturally pass into love.

Every thing that is but good attracts love, but that which is excellent commands it; and then how amiable must that nature needs be of which the sun, the gloriousest creature in the world, is but a glimpse, the light itself a shadow, and the whole universe, that is, the united glories of heaven and earth, but a broken copy and an imperfect transcript. *Thou art fairer than the children of men*, says the prophet David, [Psalm xlv. 2](#); and beauty, all confess, is the grand, celebrated motive of affection. The whole song of Solomon is but a description of those raptures of love into which the church had been raised by a contemplation of the unparalleled beauties of Christ. All the perfections we behold and admire in the world, either in men or women, are but weak traces and faint imitations of the divine beauty, which is the original; and which would infinitely more captivate our desires, could we see things with an intellectual eye, as clearly as we do with a corporeal. But I shall not dwell upon these motives of love drawn from the perfection of Christ considered in himself, but as relating to us and to our concernments, and so I shall assign these two motives of our love to him.

1. That he is best able to reward our love.
2. That he has shewn the greatest love to us.

1. And first for the first of these, that he is best able to reward our love. I confess, that to love merely for reward, is not so properly to love as to traffic, and flows not from affection but design. But on the other side, to love a worthless thing, to embrace a cloud, or for a vine to cling about a bramble, is not to bestow, but throw away affection. The *recompence of reward* is a thing always to be respected, though not to be solely intended. And the very pleasure and satisfaction that the mind finds in loving a worthy and a noble object, is a considerable reward of that very love. Virtue and religion composes the thoughts, answers the desires, and satisfies the conscience of him that loves it. The absolving clearness of which is a gratuity much greater than any that either the pleasure of the sin or of the world can bestow. The sensual epicure catches at the delights of sense, and lets out the whole stream of his desires upon them. But what answer and return do they make him? Does he not find them like the apples of Sodom, rotten as well as alluring, fair to the sight, but crumbled into ashes by the touch? How do they vanish into smoke and air, and nothing, and lose all their credit upon experience! Trial puts a period to them, as it must do to all empty, phantastic enjoyments, that owe their value only to distance and expectation.

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Those that have been the most insatiable lovers of pleasure, profit, and honour, and such other worldly incentives of love; and have had all their desires pursued and plied with constant surfeiting fruitions of them; let them at last run over all with a severe and a reflecting thought, and see whether they have not been rather wearied than satisfied, their love still determining in loathing, or at least in indifference. How have they been paid for all their love? Why, some have been paid with the wages of poverty, some of diseases, some of shame, but all with dissatisfaction. *What fruit have we of those things?* says the apostle most emphatically: which words are not so much the voice of a man, as of mankind, upon a survey of all temporal fruitions.. There is an emptiness during the enjoyment of them, and a sting in the remembrance: present they deceive, and being past they disturb. And now must vanity and vexation be took for a valuable price of that affection that Christ would purchase with the pleasures of virtue and the glories of heaven, with present satisfaction and future salvation?



Go over the regions of hell and mansions of the damned, and there you will see how sin and the world have rewarded men for all the love they have shewn them. They have made most men miserable, even in this life; but did they ever make any one happy in the other? in which alone happiness and misery are considerable, as being there alone unchangeable. Consider a man making his addresses to his beloved sin, as Samson did to his Delilah; he courts and caresses it, sacrifices his strength and unbosoms his very soul to it: he breaks through bars, and gates, and walls, to visit it; is impatient of wanting the delights of its company: and now how is he recompensed for all these heights of love? Why, he is answered with tricks and arts, with traps and treacheries; he is dissembled with, and betrayed to his mortal enemies: those eyes are put out by the person upon whom they doted, and the lap he slept in delivers him into perpetual imprisonment, misery, and intolerable disgrace. It is impossible for a man to shew more love than he does to sin, and it is not possible for his bitterest enemy to pay him with more fatal returns. The truth is, a man in all his converse with sin courts a serpent, and hugs a scorpion, which will be sure to strike and sting him to death for all his kindness.

But because there are other things besides sin that are apt to bid fair for our love, as the possessions and honours of the world, let us see what kind of requital they make for that great love that they find from their most passionate suitors and pursuers. A man perhaps loves riches with that vehemence of desire, that he thinks gold cannot be bought too dear, though the price of it be his natural rest, his health, his reputation, his soul, and every thing. But now after all this, what does he find in it to recompense such an unwearied, unconquerable love? Can it ease his conscience, when the injustice by which he gained it shall torment him? Can it reconcile him to Heaven? or afford him one drop of cold water in hell to cool his tongue when it has brought him thither?



And why then should a man fling away the very spirit and quintessence of his soul, his love, upon such an ungrateful object as can make him no return? Would he bestow half of

his watchings, his labours, and painful attendances, in the matters of religion, in stating businesses between God and his soul, he might raise himself such an interest, as should scorn the batteries of fortune, the injuries of time, and the very powers of hell; such an one as should stand victorious and eternal, trample upon the world, conquer death, and even outlive time itself, Let that thing or person therefore have our love that will give most for it: and this shall be the first motive or argument for our placing it upon Christ.

2. The second shall be taken from this consideration, that Christ has shewn the greatest love to us. Love is the most natural, proper, and stated price of love. It is a debt that is not to be paid but in kind; it scorns all other return or retaliation: and Christ is so much beforehand with us in this respect, that should we shew him the utmost love that humanity is capable of exerting, yet our love could not come under the notion of kindness, but of gratitude: for we cannot prevent him in the first acts; but only answer him in the subsequent returns of it. It is not a giving, but a paying him our affection.

The united voice of all the world heretofore proclaimed the baseness of ingratitude, and you needed not have amplified upon the topic of several vices, to have represented a man vile; for that charge alone of being ungrateful was a compendious account of all ill qualities, and left a greater brand upon a man, than whole volumes of satires and loud declamations against him.

For the truth is, it is a vice that has in it a peculiar malignity, tending to dissolve and fret asunder the bands of society, and amicable converse between men; forasmuch as society subsists by a mutual intercourse of good offices; and if there were no correspondence and exchange of one friendly action for another, company could not be desirable: and a man might command the same enjoyment in the solitudes of a desert and an howling wilderness, that he could in a populous city, well inhabited, and wisely governed.

Every ungrateful person, that receives much kindness, but repays none, only acts another kind of robbery, for he really withholds a due, and is indeed a thief within the protection of the law. Ingratitude is as great a sin in the sight of God, as any that is punishable by the laws of men; and has as little to plead for itself upon the stock of human infirmity as any sin whatsoever. For nature prompts and even urges a man to acknowledge a benefit conferred on him; and that so far, that an obligation no ways answered lies like a load and a burden upon an ingenuous mind: and a man must have debauched and worn out the natural impressions of ingenuity to a very great degree, before he can be unconcerned where he has been much obliged.

Now Christ has obliged us with two of the highest instances of his love to us imaginable.

1. That he died for us. The love of life is naturally the greatest, and therefore that love that so far masters this, as to induce a man to lay it down, must needs be transcendent and supernatural. For life is the first thing that nature desires, and the last that it is willing to part with. But how poor and low, and in what a pitiful shallow channel does the love of the



world commonly run! Let us come and desire such an one to speak a favourable word or two for us to a potent friend, and how much of coyness and excuse and shyness shall we find! the man is unwilling to spend his breath in speaking, much less in dying for his friend. Come to another, and ask him upon the stock of a long acquaintance and a professed kindness, to borrow but a little money of him, and how quickly does he fly to his shifts, pleading poverty, debts, and great occasions, and any thing, rather than open his own bowels to refresh those of his poor neighbour! The man will not bleed in his purse, much less otherwise, to rescue his friend from prison, from disgrace, and perhaps a great disaster.

But now how incomparably full and strong must the love of Christ needs have been, that could make him sacrifice even life itself for the good of mankind, and not only die, but die with all the heightening circumstances of pain and ignominy; that is, in such a manner, that death was the least part of the suffering! Let us but fix our thoughts upon Christ hanging, bleeding, and at length dying upon the cross, and we shall read his love to man there, in larger and more visible characters than the superscription that the Jews put over his head in so many languages. All which, and many more, were not sufficient to have fully expressed and set forth so incredibly great an affection. Every thorn was a pencil to represent, and every groan a trumpet to proclaim, how great a love he was then shewing to mankind.

And now surely our love must needs be very cold, if all the blood that ran in our Saviour's veins cannot warm it; for all that was shed for us, and shed for that very purpose, that it might prevent the shedding of ours. Our obnoxiousness to the curse of the law for sin had exposed us to all the extremity of misery, and made death as due to us, as wages to the workman. And the divine justice (we may be sure) would never have been behindhand to pay us our due. The dreadful retribution was certain and unavoidable; and therefore, since Christ could not prevent, he was pleased at least to divert the blow, and to turn it upon himself; to take the cup of God's fury out of our hands, and to drink off the very dregs of it. The greatest love that men usually bear one another is but shew and ceremony, compliment, and a mere appearance, in comparison of this. This was such a love as, Solomon says, is *strong as death*; and to express it yet higher, such an one as was stronger than the very desires of life.

2dly, The other transcendent instance of Christ's love to mankind was, that he did not only die for us, but that he died for us while we were enemies, and (in the phrase of scripture) enmity itself against him. It is possible indeed that some natures, of a nobler mould and make than the generality of the world, may arise to such an heroic degree of love, as to induce one friend to die for another. For the apostle says, that *for a good man one would even dare to die*. And we may read in heathen story of the noble contention of two friends, which of them should have the pleasure and honour of dying in the other's stead, and writing the inward love of his heart in the dearest blood that did enliven it.



Yet still the love of Christ to mankind runs in another and an higher strain: for admit that one man had died for another, yet still it has been for his friend, that is, for something, if not of equal, yet at least of next esteem to life itself, in the common judgment of all. Human love will indeed sometimes act highly and generously, but still it is upon a suitable object, upon something that is amiable; and if there be either no fuel, or that which is unsuitable, the flame will certainly go out.

But the love of Christ does not find, but make us lovely. It *saw us in our blood*, (as the prophet speaks,) wallowing in all the filth and impurities of our natural corruption, and then it said unto us, Live. Christ then laid down his life for us, when we had forfeited our own to him. Which strange action was, as if a prince should give himself a ransom for that traitor that would have murdered him; and sovereignty itself lie down upon the block to rescue the neck of a rebel from the stroke of justice. This was the method and way that Christ took in what he suffered for us; a method that reason might at first persuade us to be against nature, and that religion assures us to be above it.

But such an one that both reason and religion cannot but convince us to be the highest and the most unanswerable argument for a surpassing love to Christ on our parts, that (be it spoke with reverence) God himself could afford us. An argument that must render every sin of so black and dismal an hue under the economy of the gospel, that there is no monster comparable to the sinner, to him that can hate after so much love, and by his ingratitude rend open those wounds afresh that were made only to bleed for his offences.

Having thus shewn the reasons and arguments to enforce our love to Christ, I descend now to the

Third and last thing, which is to shew the signs and characters whereby we may discern this love. Love is a thing that is more easily extinguished than concealed. It needs no herald to proclaim it, but wheresoever it is, it will be sure to shew itself. Fire shines as well as burns, and needs nothing but its own light to make it visible and conspicuous.

But yet to make a clearer discovery of the sincerity of our love to Christ, I shall give these three signs of it.

1. A frequent and indeed a continual thinking of him. *Where your treasure is*, (says our Saviour,) *there will your heart be also*. That is, whatsoever you love and value, that will be sure to take up your thoughts. Love desires the presence of the object loved, and there is no way to make distant things present but by thought. Thought gives a man the picture of his friend, by continually representing him to his imagination. *O how love I thy law!* says David; it is *my meditation day and night*. It kept him waking upon his bed, and was a greater refreshment to him than his natural repose. Let every man reflect upon his own experience, and consult the working of his own breast, and he will find how unable he is to shut the door upon his thoughts, and to keep them from running out after that thing (whatsoever it



is) that has seized his affections. Whatsoever work he is about, whatsoever place he is in, still his thoughts are sure to be there.

And can that man then pretend a love to religion, who seldom makes it the business of his thoughts and meditations? He that thinks of God but now and then, and by chance, or upon the weekly returns of a sermon, when the preacher interrupts his other thoughts, shews that God and religion are strangers to his heart and his most inward affections. David makes this the proper mark and the very characteristic of a wicked and a profane person, that *God is not in all his thoughts*: the very bent and stream of his soul is another way. Love is the bias of the thoughts, and continually commands and governs the motion of them. And therefore if a man would have an infallible account of his own heart, let him impartially ask himself, what hours he sets aside to meditate upon the matters of religion, the state of his soul, the conditions upon which he must be saved, and what evidences he has of his repentance, and his interest in the second covenant; as also to consider with himself the quality of his sins, and the measures of his sorrow; and whether after all he gets ground of his sin, or his sin of him. Let every man, I say, inquire of his own heart what time he allots for these thoughts, and whether he is not delighted when he can retire for this purpose; and on the contrary, grieved and displeas'd when by some cross accident or other he is diverted and took off from thus retreating into himself. If he finds nothing of this in the course of his life, (as it is to be feared very few do,) let him rest assured that he is not in earnest when he calls himself a Christian. For Christianity is not his business, his design, and consequently not his religion: but applied to him is only a name, and nothing else.

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2dly, The second sign of a sincere love to Christ is a willingness to leave the world, whensoever God shall think fit to send his messenger of death to summon us to a nearer converse with Christ. *I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*, says the blessed apostle. For is it possible for any to love a friend, and not to desire to be with him? Upon which account I have often marvelled how some people are able to reconcile the sincerity of their love to Christ, with such an excessive, immoderate dread of death. For do they fear to be in Abraham's bosom, and in the arms of their Saviour? Are they unwilling to be completely happy, to be saved and glorified, and to have their hopes perfected into possession, and actually to enjoy what they profess themselves earnestly to expect?

Those who have a spiritual sight of these things, and a rational persuasion of their title to them, surely cannot look upon that, through which they must pass to them, with so much horror and consternation. The first effect that a true and a lively faith has upon the soul is to conquer the fear of death: for if Christ has done any thing for us, he has disarmed that, and took away the grimness, the sting, and terror of that grand adversary.

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But some men have so set their heart and soul upon the things of this world, that it is death to them to think of dying: they do not so much depart, as are torn out of the world: and the separation between this and them is harder than that between their soul and their

body. How intolerable is it to them, to think of parting with a fair estate, a flourishing family, and great honour! How hardly are they brought to exchange their heaven here below for one above! This is the mind of most men, and it shews itself through all their glorious pretences; but let those who are so minded, whatsoever love they may profess to Christ, rest assured of the truth of this, that they love that most which they are willing to relinquish last.

3dly, A third, and indeed the principal sign of a sincere love to Christ, is a zeal for his honour, and an impatience to hear or see any indignity offered him. A person truly pious will mourn for other men's sins as well as for his own. *Mine eyes run down with tears*, says David, *because men keep not thy commandments*. He is grieved that God is dishonoured, whosoever the person be that does it. He weeps over the vicious lives of those that are round about him, though they cannot wound his conscience, yet because of the wound and blow that the scandal of them gives to religion. For it is the honour and reputation of that, that he espouses as his own concernment; forasmuch as every man even in temporal things looks upon his very personal interest as wrapt up in the credit of his profession. And therefore where such an one hears the name of God profaned, religion scoffed at and abused, his blood boils, and his heart grows hot within him, and he cannot but vindicate the honour of his Maker, in reproving the blasphemer to his teeth.

Some indeed will not discourse filthily or atheistically themselves, but can quietly and contentedly enough hear others do so: but let such know, that they go sharers in the blasphemy that they do not reprehend; and have as little love to Christ, as that son to his father, who should patiently hear him reviled and traduced in company, and acquit himself upon this account, that he did not revile him himself: or that subject to his prince, who could read a libel of him with pleasure, and make good his loyalty to him upon this ground, that he was not the author of it: though in all base and unworthy actions, the difference between the author and the approver of them, by the judgment of all knowing persons, is not great.

Never did our Saviour himself express so keen and fierce an indignation, as when he saw men profaning the temple, and turning his Father's house into a den of thieves: he then added compulsion to complaint, force to his words, and drove out those hucksters in the face of danger, and in spite of resistance, fearing neither the authority of the rulers nor the insolence of the rabble. Thus did Christ manifest his love to his Father, which love he has left as the pattern and standard by which we should measure our love to him.

And thus I have given you some survey of the love that Christ exacts from all those who aspire to the name and privilege of Christians. You have seen the several parts and ingredients of it, the arguments for it, and, lastly, the marks and signs declaring it: which surely will be of some use and moment to every man to conduct him in that grand inquiry about his spiritual state and condition. If the love of Christ is not in him, the merits of Christ's death belong not to him; but he is a member of Satan, and a vessel of reprobation. Certainly had men a deep and a lively sense of that eternal misery that Christ has declared the portion of

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those who relate not to him, they would give their eyes no sleep, nor their thoughts any rest, till they had satisfied themselves of that sincerity that alone must stand between them and eternal wrath; and withal entitle them to those numerous and great blessings that lie wrapt up in the womb of that one comprehensive promise, *that all things shall work together for the good of those that love God.*

To which God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



SERMON LVIII.

EPHESIANS iii. 12.

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

THERE is no duty or action of religion, in which it concerns a man to proceed with so much caution and exactness, as in prayer; it being the greatest and most solemn intercourse that earth can have with heaven; the nearest access to him who dwells in that light that is indeed inaccessible: and in a word, the most sovereign and sanctified means to derive blessing, happiness, glory, and all that heaven can give or heart desire, upon the creature.

But since the distance between God and us is so great by nature, and yet greater by sin, it concerns us to see upon what terms of security we make our address to him: for it cannot be safe for a traitor to venture himself as a petitioner into the presence of his prince, whatsoever his wants or necessities may be. And that sin puts us in the very same capacity in reference to God is most sure; so that if there be no accommodation and reconciliation first found out, for any sinner to come to God, is but for him to cast himself into the arms of a consuming fire, to provoke an imminent wrath, to beg a curse, and to solicit his own damnation.

But Christ has smoothed a way for us, and turned the tribunal of justice into a throne of grace; so that we are commanded to change our fears into faith; to lift up our heads, as well as our hands, and to come with a good heart, not only in respect of innocence, but also in respect of confidence.

For the prosecution of the words I shall endeavour the discussion of these four things.

I. That there is a certain boldness and confidence very well consisting with and becoming of our humblest addresses to God.

II. That the foundation of this confidence is laid in the mediation of Jesus Christ.

III. I shall shew the reasons why the mediation of Christ ought to minister such confidence to us in our access to God.

IVthly and lastly, I shall shew whether or no there be any other ground, that may rationally embolden us in these our approaches to him.

I. And first for the first of these, that there is a certain boldness and confidence very well consisting with and becoming of our humblest addresses to God. This is evident; for it is the very language of prayer to treat God with the appellation of father; and surely every son may own a decent confidence before his father, without any intrenchment either upon paternal authority or filial reverence. For when God by the spirit of adoption has put us into the relation of sons, he does not expect from us the behaviour of slaves, and allow of no other expresses of our honour to him but distance and amazement, silence and astonishment. As for the nature of this confidence, it is not so easily set forth by any positive description, as by the opposition that it bears to its extremes; which are of two sorts.



1. In defect. 2. In excess.

And first, for those of the first sort, that consist in defect.

1. This confidence is in the first place opposed to desperation and horror of conscience. A temper that speaks aloud in those desponding ejaculations of the Psalmist, [Psalm lxxvii. 7, 8, 9](#), *Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? and doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* Every word seems to be the voice of a soul supposing itself in the very brink of hell, and even already singed with the everlasting burnings. Nor does despair here only put it to the question, as the Psalmist does; but takes it for a granted, concluded truth, and verily believes that matters stand thus between God and the despairing person; who looks upon God as his implacable adversary, and himself as under a condemning sentence that is both final and irreversible. Nothing can be imagined more black and dismal than those thoughts and representations, that such a mind frames to itself of God's power and justice. For it thinks that this latter is inexorable, and that the former is wholly employed about the execution of its severe decrees. These grim attributes constantly exercise and take up the meditations; which considered with relation to the state of a sinner, absolutely in themselves, and without any qualification or allays from mercy, must needs drive a man into all the agonies and terrors of mind that can be. For what can a sinner hope for, from power and justice without mercy? What can he expect but the extremity of wrath and revenge? a separation from God, and a consignation over to eternal miseries?

But besides, if despair does sometimes think and reflect upon mercy, yet it expects no share in it; but supposes the bowels shut up, the resentings past, and the day of grace spent and gone. Now so long as it thus misrepresents and libels God to the conscience in all his attributes, how is it possible for a man to have the confidence to pray to him? Despair stupifies and confounds, and stops not only the mouth, but the very breath, and, as it were, keeps and confines a man within himself.

It is natural for every thing to fly from an enemy, and while a man apprehends God to be so, he would if it were possible convey himself out of his very sight. He that presumes to ask a thing of another, is prompted to the doing so, by an opinion of the proneness of such a one to hear and relieve him in all his straits and necessities; but no man puts a petition into the hands of his tormentor, or asks any other favour of his executioner but to despatch him quickly. No man can pray where he cannot hope.

That confidence therefore that must qualify us for and attend us in prayer, is opposed to all kind of desperation, which by making a man account God his enemy, and thereby forbear praying to him, makes him indeed his own.

2. This confidence is opposed also to doubtings and groundless scrupulosities. [1 Tim. ii. 8](#), *I will*, says Paul, *that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting*. Why? Suppose they should doubt and waver in presenting their prayers to God;

James i. 7, *Let not such an one*, says St. James, *think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*. And the reason is plain; for no man is to pray for any thing, but what God both allows and commands him to pray for. In which case, if he doubts of the issue and success of his prayer, is it not clear that his suspicion upbraids either God's power, that he cannot, or his truth, that he will not make good the effects of his promise? And would any great man favour a petitioner that should entertain such thoughts of him? Would he not rather think himself affronted than honoured by such an address? *Qui timide rogat, docet negare*. No man counts himself any longer obliged to do a kindness, after he comes once to be suspected: for to suspect a man is to asperse his clearness and ingenuity, and plainly declares that we judge him not really to be what he pretends and appears; than which there cannot be a greater and a more injurious reflection upon the divine goodness.

God does not love a misgiving, half-persuaded petitioner, that comes in suspense, and trembling, sometimes hopes, sometimes fluctuates, and, in a word, cannot be so properly said to come as a petitioner, as an adventurer to the throne of mercy. God loves to maintain worthy apprehensions of himself and of all his dealings, in the minds of such as serve him; and it is but reason that those apprehensions should shine forth in the freedom of their deportment, and in their frank reliance upon his readiness to give or do whatsoever shall be fit for them to ask.

But it will perhaps be pleaded in defence and excuse of such doubting, that it arises not from, any unbecoming thoughts of God, but from the sense of the unworthiness of him that prays; which makes him question the success of his petition, notwithstanding all the divine mercy and liberality. And this seems to be so far from a fault, that it ought rather to be cherished and commended as an effect of the grace of humility.

But to this I answer, that by the plea of unworthiness is meant either an unworthiness in point of merit; and so the argument would keep a man from praying for ever, forasmuch as none can ever pretend a claim of merit to the thing he prays for, as shall be more fully observed hereafter.

Or 2dly, it is meant of an unworthiness in point of fitness to receive the thing prayed for; which fitness consists in that evangelical sincerity, that makes a man walk with that uprightness, as not to allow himself in any sin. But for a man to plead himself unworthy upon this account, is to plead himself unfit to pray: for whatsoever makes him fit to pray, makes him fit also to expect the thing asked for in prayer. This therefore concerns not the matter in debate; for the question is, whether he that is duly qualified for such an address to God, can without sin doubt of the issue of that address? Which we deny: otherwise it is most certainly true according to that of Solomon, *that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to God*; and that such an one may not only lawfully doubt whether he shall be heard or no, but ought to conclude, that without all doubt he shall not be heard.

But it may be urged further. Does not experience shew, that persons that are thus qualified in point of sincerity and uprightness before God, do not always obtain the things they sue for, but are sometimes answered with a repulse? For did not David earnestly pray for the life of his child, and yet was denied it? And the like instances might be produced of several other saints. Now where a man is sure that the prayers of the righteous are not always granted, may not he very well doubt of the success of his own?

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To this I answer; that in that respect that a man ought to pray for any thing from God, the prayer of no righteous person was ever denied. For every man is to pray for a thing with submission to the divine will, and so far as God shall think fit to grant it. And in this respect no man is to entertain the least doubt in prayer, but steadfastly to believe that God will vouchsafe him the thing he petitions for, so far as the ends of God's glory and his own good shall make the granting of that thing necessary. Otherwise for a man to expect absolutely and infallibly the event of whatsoever he prays for, only because he thought fit to pray for it, is a great folly and a bold presumption; it is to determine and give measures to the divine bounty and wisdom; to tell it what it ought to do; to send instructions to heaven, and in a word, it is not so properly to pray as to prescribe to God.

Having thus shewn the two extremes to which the confidence spoken of in the text is opposed in point of defect, I come now to treat of those to which it is opposed in point of excess, and to shew, that as it excludes despair and doubting on the one hand, so it banishes all rashness and irreverence on the other. It is indeed hard for the weak and unsteady hearts of men to carry themselves in such an equal poise between both, as not to make the shunning of one inconvenience the falling into another; but the greater the danger is, the greater must be our attention to the rule.

1. First of all then, confidence in point of excess is opposed to rashness and precipitation. Rashness is properly a man's sudden undertaking of any action, without a due examination of the grounds or motives that may encourage him to it, and of the reasons that may on the other side dehort and deter him from it: an omission of either of which makes it rash and unreasonable. And prayer surely, of all other duties and actions, ought to be a reasonable service. It calls upon him that undertakes it to consider before he resolves, again and again to consider, into what presence he is going, what the thing is that he is about to do, what preparedness and fitness he finds in himself for it, what the advantages of a right, and what the sad consequences of an undue performance of it are like to be.

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I have read that it has been reported of an holy person, that he used to bestow an whole hour at least in meditation before he kneeled down to that prayer which perhaps he uttered in three minutes. He that goes about to pray, must know that he goes about one of the weightiest and the grandest actions of his whole life. And therefore let him turn his thoughts to all the ingredients and circumstances relating to it; let him meditate before what a pure and a piercing eye he presents himself; such an one as shoots into all the corners and recesses

of his heart like a sunbeam, as ransacks all his most concealed thoughts, views all the little indirect designs, the excursions and wanderings of his spirit, and spies out the first early buddings and inclinations of his corruption. And as it sees them, so it cannot but abhor and detest them, unless their guilt be washed off by repentance, and covered under the imputed righteousness of a Saviour.

Let him consider, how it were like to fare with him, if this should happen to be his last prayer, and God should stop his breath in the very midst of it, and interrupt him with a summons into another world; whether, in such a case, he should be found in a fit posture to own an appearance at that fearful tribunal, without blushing and confusion of face. No man is fit to pray, that is not fit to die.

Let him consider also, whether there are not the scores of old sins yet uncanceled lying upon his hand. Whether he is not in arrears to God in point of gratitude for past mercies, while he is begging new; and whether he has not abused that bounty that he is now imploring, and made the liberality of heaven the instrument of his vanity and the very proveditor for his lust; even in a literal sense turning *the grace of God into wantonness*. These things should be recollected and canvassed with a deep, close, and intent reflection, and all reckonings (as much as possible) set even between God and the soul.

David would first wash his hands in innocency, before he would presume to compass God's altar, [Psalm xxvi. 6](#). But how few are there, that think preparation any part of this duty! They bolt immediately into the presence of God, though perhaps they come but newly from doing that, that they would not own in the presence of men. They come with the guilt of fresh sins warm upon their consciences, lifting up those hands in prayer that were lately busied in all kind of rapine and violence, and joining in it with those tongues that were not long before the instruments of railing, filth, and obscenity. As David washed his hands, so such persons should do well to wash their mouths also, before they approached the place of divine worship, especially when they were to bear a part in it. With what awe and veneration did Jacob look and think upon the place where God had appeared to him! [Gen. xxviii. 16, 17](#). *Surely, says he, the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! it is none other but the house of God.* But sad experience shews, that men nowadays resort to that, that they both call and think the house of God; but yet behave themselves in it, as if it were neither holy nor dreadful: though if God were not more merciful than men are sinful, they would feel by a severe instance that it was both.

There is some boldness that is the effect of blindness; and surely it is this, that brings men to so sacred and so concerning an action as prayer is, with such trivial spirits, such rambling unrecollected thoughts, and such offensive profane behaviours. But such persons must know, that this is far from the boldness mentioned in the text: and that though God both allows and enjoins a due confidence "in our accesses to him, yet still they are to remember that confidence does not exclude caution.

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2. The confidence spoke of in the text, in point of excess is opposed to impudence or irreverence; which, the truth is, is but the natural effect and consequent of the former: for he that considers not the sacredness of a thing or action, cannot easily pay it that devotion and reverence that the dignity of it requires. There are many ways by which this irreverence may shew itself in prayer, but I shall more especially mention and insist upon two.

(1.) The using of saucy, familiar expressions to God. A practice that some heretofore delighted in to that degree of extravagance, that he that should have stood without the church, and not seen what was doing within it, would have verily thought that somebody was talking to his equal and companion. Now the ground of this must needs have been from gross, low, and absurd conceptions of God, and withal very fond and high opinions of themselves, by which they thought themselves such absolute masters of his favour, and bound so close to him by election, that they were to bespeak him at a different rate of fellowship and peremptoriness from all other mortals. And accordingly, they would utter themselves to him as if they were perfectly acquainted with all his counsels, knew his mind, and read over his decrees: and if need were, could advise him in many matters relating to the government of the world.

And therefore their usual dialect was; We know, Lord, that this and this is thy way of dealing with thy saints; and that thou canst not be angry with those whose heart is right with thee, though they may sometimes out of infirmity trip into a perjury, a murder, or an adultery. Nay, and they would tell God to his face, that he had revealed such a thing to them; when perhaps within two or three days the event proved clean contrary. When their armies were in the field, they would usually at home besiege God with such expressions; Lord, if thou shouldest forsake us, thy peculiar inheritance, who are called by thy name, where wouldest thou find such another praying people? And again; Lord, thou mayest, out of anger to the nation, deliver thy chosen ones into the hands of their enemies, but consider what thou doest. It would be endless, and indeed unsavoury, to draw forth all the flowers of their profane rhetoric, with which they so liberally stuffed their impudent harangues, which they were pleased to call prayers.

And the rude familiarity of their expressions was attended with an equal rudeness of gesture and motion, throwing forth their arms, sweating, and carrying their whole bodies so, as if their prayer was indeed a *wrestling with God*, without a metaphor. But it is strange that any should be able to persuade themselves that this should be zeal, and the proper fervour of devotion, when common sense and good manners generally prompt men to a greater wariness and restraint upon themselves in their appearance before an earthly superior. For no man shakes his prince by the hand, or accosts him with an hail fellow well met. And if the laws and customs of nations will by no means endure such boldness to sovereign princes, for fear of debasing majesty, and so by degrees diminishing the commanding force of government, surely there ought to be more care used in managing our deportment toward God;

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since the impressions we have of things not seen by us are more easily worn off, than those that are continually renewed upon the mind by a converse with visible objects. And that which will bring us into a contempt of our earthly prince whom we see, is much more likely to bring us into a light esteem of our heavenly King whom we have not seen. We are to use such words as may not only manifest, but also increase our reverence; we are (as I may so say) to keep our distance from God, in our very approaches to him. But such undue familiarity, as it does for the most part arise from contempt, so it always ends in it.

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(2.) This irreverence in prayer shews itself in a man's venting his crude, sudden, extemporary conceptions before God. Why God should be pleased with that which intelligent men laugh at, I cannot understand. And there is nothing more loathsome and offensive to discreet ears, than the loose, indigested, incoherent babble of some bold, self-opinioned persons, who in their talk are senseless and endless. Some indeed sanctify their unpremeditated way of speaking to God, by calling it *praying by the Spirit*; and so entitling the Holy Ghost to all their impertinencies, which is to excuse or defend boldness with blasphemy. But surely folly is no such difficult thing, that any man should need to fetch it from a supernatural cause, and owe his absurdities to immediate inspirations. For if this be *to pray by the Spirit*, a man needs only to forget himself, to balk the use of his reason, and to let his words fly at random without care or observation, and he shall find very plentiful assistances of this nature.

But to vindicate the Spirit of God from these unworthy imputations, and withal to dash such impudent pretences, we are to know, that the Spirit measures out his assistance to men in the use of the means proper for the effecting or accomplishing of any work; but suspends and denies that assistance, where the use of those means is neglected; for he cooperates with men according to the established course of working proper to their natures: and no man prays and preaches more by the Spirit, than he that bestows time and study in the orderly disposing of what he is to say; and so employs and exerts those faculties of mind, which the Spirit of God endowed him with, for the better and more exact management of those holy services that he stands engaged in.

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Were a man to petition his prince, or to plead at the bar for his life, I believe none could persuade him to venture the issue of so great an action upon his extempore gift. But admit that a man be never so well furnished with an ability of speaking suddenly and without premeditation; yet certainly premeditation and care would improve and heighten that ability, and give it a greater force and lustre in all performances. And if so, we are to remember that God calls for our best and our utmost; we are to bring the fairest and the choicest of our flock for an offering, and not to sacrifice a lame, unconcocted, wandering discourse to God, when our time and our parts are able to furnish us with one much more accurate and exact. When a Roman gentleman invited Augustus Caesar to supper, and provided him but a mean entertainment, Caesar very properly took him up with an *Unde mihi tecum tanta familiaritas?*

Friend, pray how come you and I to be so familiar? Great persons think themselves entertained with respect, when they are entertained with splendour; and they think wisely and rightly. In like manner God will reject such sons of presumption and impertinence with disdain; and though they took no time for the making of their prayers, yet he will take time enough before he will grant them.

But besides, to dismiss this supposition, it is indeed scarce possible, but much speaking without care or study must needs put the speaker upon unseemly repetitions and tautologies, which Christ most peculiarly cautions his disciples against as an heathenish thing, in [Matth. vi.](#) where he prescribes them that excellent form of prayer, composed with so much fulness, strictness, and significancy of sense, that it is impossible for any thing that is extempore to resemble it. He that does not consider and weigh every word of his prayer, will find it very unfit to be weighed more severely by God himself in *the balance of the sanctuary*; who will account no man to speak piously, who does not also speak properly in his devotions. And therefore I shall conclude this particular with that most divine and excellent direction given by Solomon concerning this matter, [Ecclesiast. v. 2](#), *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.* When we speak to a superior, to use words few and expressive is the proper dialect of respect.

And thus I have finished the first thing proposed for the handling of the words, which was to shew that there was a certain confidence well becoming our humblest addresses to God, and withal to demonstrate what this confidence was; which I have done, by shewing that it is such an one as stands opposed both to despair and doubting on the one hand, and to rashness and irreverence on the other.

II. I come now to the second particular, which is to shew that the foundation of this confidence is laid in the mediation of Christ. Where there is a breach of amity between two persons, of which the offended person is much the superior, upon which account his dignity will not permit him to seek or offer a reconciliation; as on the other side, the inferior condition of him that is the offender will not let him dare to attempt one; it is manifest, that unless there be some third person to interpose between both, the breach must needs be perpetual and incurable. It was thus between God and man, upon his apostasy from God: God was too great, too glorious immediately by himself to court his rebel creature, and the creature too vile and obnoxious to treat with his injured sovereign: whereupon they must have both prepared for mutual acts of hostility, had not Christ, God and man, undertook to mediate and compromise the difference on both sides; so that every sinner has cause to speak to Christ as the Israelites did to Moses, an eminent type of him; *Speak thou unto us and for us too, and we will hear; but let not God the father speak to us, or we to him, lest we die.* A guilty person is but a bad advocate.



SERMON LIX.

EPHESIANS iii. 12.

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

THE discussion of these words I shall manage in these two particulars.

I. I shall shew that the confidence becoming a Christian, in his access to God by prayer, is founded upon the mediation of Christ.

II. I shall inquire whether there be any other ground upon which this confidence may rationally found itself.

And first for the first of these, that the confidence becoming a Christian, in his access to God by prayer, is founded upon the mediation of Christ.

But now this dependence of our spiritual affairs upon Christ's mediation will be yet more evidently set forth in the discussion of the third particular:

III. Which is, to shew the reason why Christ's mediation ought to minister such confidence to us in our access to God.

He that is confident in any action grounds his confidence upon the great probability of the happy issue and success of that action, and that probability of success is grounded upon the fitness of the person intrusted with the management of it. In one word, therefore, the reason of grounding our confidence upon Christ's mediation is the incomparable, singular fitness of Christ for the performance of that work; which fitness will appear by considering him under a threefold relation or respect.

1. In respect of God, the person with whom he is to mediate.
2. In respect of men, the persons for whom he mediates.
3. In respect of himself, who discharges this office.

1. And first we will consider him in relation to God, with whom he is to mediate; who also in this business may sustain a double capacity in relation to Christ.

(1.) Of a Father. (2.) Of a Judge.

(1.) And first if we consider him as his Father, there cannot be a more promising ground of success in all his pleas for us. For who should be heard and prevail, if not a son pleading before his father? where the very nearness of the relation is a more commanding rhetoric than words and speeches can bestow upon a cause. Nature itself takes the cause in hand, and declaims it with more power and insinuation than the highest and the most persuasive oratory. To have the judge's ear is a great matter, but his son has his heart also. To be sure of an audience is a privilege that every advocate cannot attain to; but he may wait and wait, and at length go away unheard; and if perhaps he does obtain an hearing, yet he is not sure to carry it on without rubs and supercilious checks, that shall dishearten both his client and himself: he brings no advantage to the cause by his own person; so that if it succeeds, it must be upon the account of an invincible, prevailing evidence of merit. It must in a manner be

its own pleader. It must argue and set off itself, and, without any assistances of favour, prevail entirely by the absolute victoriousness of truth.

But a good cause managed by an acceptable and a favoured person, it is like a sharp weapon wielded by a mighty arm, that enters deeper and further, being drove home by a double cause, its own keenness and the other's strength. It is impossible indeed for the unchangeable rectitude of the divine nature to warp or deviate in the least manner from truth or justice, out of favour to persons. Yet where favour is consistent with justice, as oftentimes it may undoubtedly be, there the sonship of the advocate must needs facilitate and promote the cause. But however, admitting that favour can have no place in matters of this nature, yet it is a solid argument of comfort and encouragement to sinners, that their cause is in such hands as can reflect no prejudice or disadvantage upon it. Their advocate is not disgusted or obnoxious, and in need to plead for himself, before he can be in a capacity to be heard for his client. It is enough, that if there be any possibility of favour, they are sure of it; that they have an interest on their side, an interest founded upon the nearest and the dearest relation. They speak to a father by the mouth of his son, and, what is more, of *his only son*; so that they may hope with the highest reason and argument: and, to put an impossible supposition, though their cause should fall, yet their confidence is founded upon a rock.

(2.) We will consider God relating to Christ as a Judge. And here we will first represent to ourselves all that the office and severity of a judge can engage him to. We will consider him with all the rigours of justice, void of favour, inflexible, immovable, and exacting all by a strict rule, a rule that he will not in the least recede from; a rule admitting of no mitigation or dispensation; but awarding to all actions a recompence according to the most rigid and nice proportions of equality and merit. We will consider him as clothing himself with all the terrors of mount Sinai, uttering a fiery law that speaks nothing but death and a curse to the disobedient, and requires the forfeit of a soul for every transgression. Yet notwithstanding all this, we may with confidence rest ourselves upon the mediation of Christ with God for these two reasons.

1st. Because he appears for us not only as an advocate, but as a surety, paying down to God on our behalf the very utmost that his justice can exact. He suffered, he bled, he died for those for whom he intercedes; so that he brings satisfaction in one hand, while he presents a petition with another. He undertakes and pays the debt, and thereby cancels the bond; so that the law and justice itself have lost their hold of the sinner, and he is become a discharged and a justified person.

And surely such an one may pray with confidence and hope for all the blessings of divine mercy, when his surety has cleared off all scores with his justice. He may take up the apostle's demand, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies*; and he may add further, It is Christ that intercedes; Christ, that brings a price for what he asks, that can plead a right, and, if need be, even appeal to God's justice.

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But secondly, we have yet another ground of building our confidence upon Christ's mediation with God, though considered as a Judge; because he himself has appointed him to this work: *It was he that laid help upon one that is mighty*, as the Psalmist says, [Psalm lxxxix. 19](#), and *that made the man of his right hand, the Son of man, strong for himself*, [Psalm lxxx. 17](#). He prepared and endowed him with qualifications fit for so great an employment; upon which account he is called the Christ, that is, the Anointed of God: for with the Jews, kings, priests, and prophets, that is, persons designed to the highest offices and charges, were initiated into them by the ceremony of anointing; whereupon Christ, who was to sustain all these offices, is said to have been *anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*.

But now, if God thus constitutes Christ a mediator between himself and sinners, certainly it is an evident demonstration that he will hear and accept him in the management of that very work that he called him to and put him upon. No judge commands an advocate to speak, and when he speaks presently shuts his ears. This would be to contradict himself, and to mock the other; which God's truth and goodness will not suffer him to do. What Christ does in this matter he does upon the very account of obedience, and has a call and a command to vouch for the success of his appearance, and therefore cannot be rejected or kept off as an intruder. He that bids another ask a thing of him, tells him in effect that he is resolved to grant it. He that invites, promises an admittance.

And thus I have shewn Christ's fitness for the work of mediation in respect of God, and that, considered either as a Father or as a Judge.

2. In the next place we are to consider his fitness for this work in reference to men, for whom he mediates; which will appear from that fourfold relation that he bears to them.

1. Of a friend. 2. Of a brother. 3. Of a surety. 4. Of a lord and master.

1. And first let us look upon him as a friend; that is, as one that we may trust with our nearest concerns as freely as ourselves. And Christ has solemnly owned this relation to all believers; so that we may with the greatest cheerfulness and assurance commit the presenting of our petitions to him, whose care and sollicitousness for the success of them will be the same with ours. Friendship is an active and a venturous thing, and, where it is real, it will make a man bolder and more importunate for his friend than for himself. Now Christ has all the perfections of human friendship without the flaws and weaknesses of it: and surely he will bestow a prayer for those for whom he would spend a life. Though the presence of God is terrible to behold, and his anger much more terrible to feel, yet Christ has declined neither of them, but made his way to the former by a resolute undergoing of the latter.

Many men will indeed profess themselves to be friends, and expect to be accounted so: but if at any time they are desired to speak a good word to a great person in the behalf of one to whom they have made all these professions, they will desire to be excused; they must



not spend and lavish away an interest upon other people's advantages, but reserve it fresh and entire for themselves.

Sad were the condition of sinners, should the friendship of Christ shew itself at this rate. A friend in the court of heaven would do them but little good, that would not so much as befriend them with a word. But Christ is interceding for us night and day, presenting our prayers to the Father, and making them effectual by his own.

2. Let us consider Christ as a brother, and so we have a further cause to repose a confidence in him, in point of his mediation for us. For although it does not always fall out that the nearest relations are the best friends, yet it is a fault that they are not so; and therefore we may be sure that Christ, who cannot commit a fault, cannot but equal the nearness of the relation he bears to us with a proportionable measure of affection. He is the Son of God by nature, and because we cannot be so too, he has made us so by adoption; [John i. 12](#), *To as many as received him, he gave power to become the sons of God*. So that he has even united us into one family with himself: [Ephes. iii. 15](#); *By whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*. Nay, and to advance the relation yet nearer, because it was impossible for dust and ashes to aspire to a participation of the divine nature, he was pleased to descend to the assumption of ours, and to become the Son of man not by adoption only, but really and naturally: to be *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*; to own the same human affections, and, in a word, not to decline our very infirmities.

Which being so, we may very well own all that confidence of succeeding through the mediation of Christ, that the fidelity of a friend and the dearness of a brother may administer to us. For should a brother prevaricate and prove false, nature itself would seem to fly in his face, and upbraid his unhuman perfidiousness. Society would mark him out as a common enemy to mankind, and unfit for converse.

Brotherhood unites persons by a certain tie that is not only forcible, but sacred; and to violate it by any falseness or treachery of behaviour is to injure not only a man, but even humanity itself. And therefore whatsoever business any one puts into his brother's hands, he counts as secure as if it were in his own. And we may be sure that Christ will be as much more concerned for our affairs than an earthly brother, as such a brother would be more than an ordinary acquaintance.

3. Let us consider Christ as our surety; and so we shall find the same, if not a greater cause of being confident of him as our mediator. It is not every friend nor every brother that will be a surety, since the love that must raise one to undertake this even amongst men, must be a love greater than he bears to himself: for he that ventures to be a surety for another, ventures an undoing for his sake; and there is not any thing less to be wondered at in common life, than to see such persons undone: so that nothing is more certain in human affairs, than that assertion of Solomon, that *he that hateth suretyship is sure*.

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But the debt that Christ was our surety for, was as much greater than the greatest that befalls men in worldly matters, as eternity is greater than time, as heaven is above earth, and the executions of an infinite wrath above the slight, weak revenges of a mortal power. *He bore our iniquities, Isaiah liii.* and placed himself before the justice of his Father, as responsible for all that the law could charge us with: and being made thus obnoxious by his own free choice, *wrath came upon him to the uttermost:* he drank off the cup of God's fury, and squeezed out the very dregs. All this he did in our stead, in our room, in our persons, whom he represented in all that great action.



And now, after such an experiment of his love to us, can we doubt that he will stick at the lesser and lower instances of kindness? that he will refuse to manage and enforce our petitions at the throne of grace, who did not refuse to make himself an offering to justice? We may rest assured that he will not be wanting to the prosecution of our interest, who, by the very office that he has undertaken, has made our interest his own.

4thly and lastly, for the further confirmation of our confidence, in our addresses to God, we will consider Christ under a very different relation from all the former, and that is, as he is our lord and master. *Majestas et amor*, sovereignty and love, (as the poet observes,) do but ill cohabit in the same breast; and the truth is, love prompts to service, and sovereignty imports dominion, and so proceed in a very contrary strain. Yet Christ has united them both in himself: for as he is the most absolute of lords, so he is the best and the most faithful of friends, the kindest brother, and the ablest surety. Nay, and he has founded our friendship and our subjection to him, things very different, upon the same bottom, which is, obedience to his laws; *John xv. 14, Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* And elsewhere he tells us of the homage we owe him, in *John xiii. 13, Ye call me Lord and Master: and ye do well; for so I am.* But this relation, though it speaks superiority and distance, yet it imports also kindness and protection. For what master is there, of a worthy and a generous spirit, that does not espouse the interest and good of his servant, and esteem himself answerable for it as for a trust, which all the principles of religion, humanity, and good-nature will call him to an account for?



Christ shews sufficiently how far he owns himself concerned for his servants, where he declares, that he looks upon every courtesy or injury done to the least of them as done to himself, in *Matt. xxv. 45.* And as he owns them before men, so he is not ashamed to acknowledge them before his Father in heaven; to further their prayers, to endear their persons, to recommend their services, and, in a word, to be their constant, indefatigable intercessor.

Now, under this relation of *lord*, I suppose we may consider that also by which Christ owns himself for our *head*; than which there cannot be one more peculiarly fitted to encourage us in the business of prayer. For when any of the members are aggrieved, or ill at ease, it is the head that must complain and cry out for relief. Nor needs it any intelligence from the afflicted part; but it feels it by a quick sympathy, and utters what it feels by a kind of

necessity. And it is as impossible for an arm or a leg to be broke, and the head to be unconcerned, as for any member of the mystical body of Christ to be under a pressing calamity, and for Christ, the head, not to be sensible of that misery, and to vent his sense of it by a vigorous intercession with his Father for its removal.

And thus I have shewn those four relations that Christ bears to believers; every one of which is a pregnant and a forcible argument for us to depend upon his mediation for the success of our prayers and the acceptance of our persons, in all our addresses to the Father.

3. I come now, in the third and last place, to demonstrate the fitness of Christ to be a mediator for us, by considering him in respect of himself, and those qualifications inherent in him, which so particularly qualify and dispose him for this work: of which I shall mention and insist upon three.

1. That he is perfectly acquainted with all our wants and necessities.
2. That he is heartily sensible of and concerned about them.
3. That he is best able to express and set them forth to the Father.

1. And first for the first of these, his acquaintance with our condition. We need not spend much time or labour to inform our advocate of our case: for his omniscience is beforehand with us: he knows all our affairs, and, what is more, our hearts, better than we ourselves. And it is our happiness that he does so; for by this means he is able to supply the defects of our prayers, and to beg those things for us that our ignorance was not aware of. And what is yet a greater advantage, he is upon this account able also to correct our prayers. For such is the shortness of our understanding and the weakness of our affections, that we pray sometimes for those things that would prove our bane and our destruction: we beg heartily for a mischief, and importune God to be so favourable as to ruin us at our desire. In which case surely it concerns us to have somebody to counter-petition us, and to ask a fish while we are begging for a serpent; and to be so kind to us as to keep our prayers from being granted.

A man perhaps is visited with sickness, and passing his days in pain and languishing, puts up many an hearty prayer to God to restore him to health and ease; but all this time he is ignorant of the end and design of this visitation: for possibly the distemper of his body is every day ministering to the cure of his soul, to the mortification of his pride, his lust, and worldly-mindedness: and perhaps God, who foresees all accidents, and knows upon what little wheels and hinges the events of things move, understands assuredly that his sickness removes him out of harm's way, and secures him from those peculiar occasions of sin, that, being well and healthful, he would inevitably fall into, and perhaps deplorably fall by. But now Christ has a full comprehension of all these possibilities, and knows what would promote and what would annoy every man in his spiritual estate: he knows when sickness will set a man nearer to heaven than health can do; when poverty, banishment, and affliction, subserve

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the purposes of grace, and the great interests of eternity, better than all the affluence of fortune, the highest preferments, and the most undisturbed prosperity.

As it is an happiness for some men not to be left to their own choice, but to resign themselves up to the guidance and disposal of one of greater experience; so it is the safest course for many not to be permitted to stand or fall according to their own prayers. For it is not always piety or discretion that indites them, but an impatience of some present grievance, or a passionate desire of some earthly enjoyment, affections that in many circumstances border too near upon sin: and therefore the prayers that proceed from them are never granted by God but in anger, and with an intent to punish and to blast the person that makes them.

Such prayers are never seconded or backed by Christ's intercession, unless for the begging of their pardon, and excusing their folly and their unfitness; and then God may be said most graciously to hear them, when for the mediation of Christ he pardons and denies them: which mediation of his takes its measures of acting, not by our desires, but our wants; of which he is the most competent judge, as being more privy to them than our very consciences; for they may be deceived and deluded, but he cannot. And thus much for the first thing that qualifies Christ to be our mediator, that he knows every thing belonging to our spiritual estate certainly and infallibly.

2. The second is, that he is heartily sensible of, and concerned about whatsoever concerns us. Without which his knowledge would avail us but little. For the bare knowing of a thing engages no man to act in it. And therefore Christ is represented to us as one that is touched with the sense of our infirmities, as sharing our griefs, and bearing a part in our sorrows; which very thing renders him a merciful high priest, and ready to intercede for us with the same vehemence and importunity, that by a personal endurance of those miseries he might be prompted to for himself. He that would speak earnestly and forcibly of any thing, must work it into his heart by a lively and a keen sense of it, as well as into his head by a clear knowledge and apprehension. For where the heart is engaged, all the actions follow: no part or power of the soul can be unactive when that is stirred; and being once moved itself, it moves all the rest.

Now it is the heart of Christ that every believer has an interest in: and we know that he carries that in his breast that intercedes for us with him, as well as he with the Father. He does not only hear our sighs, but also feels the cause of them: and if we suffer by the direct impressions of pain, he also suffers by the movings and yearnings of his own compassion: so that in a manner our relief is his own ease; and that deliverance that disburdens our minds, does also by consequence discharge his.

When he was to leave the world, we read how sensible he was of the disconsolate condition of his disciples; and that he promised to send the Spirit to them for no cause more than to be their Comforter; and to allay those sorrows that upon his departure he foresaw would

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fill their hearts: he seemed actually to feel their grief, while it was yet but future, and to come: that is, before they could have any feeling of it themselves. This concernment therefore of his for us, is another thing that greatly fits him for the office of a mediator.

3. The third and last is, his transcendent and more than human ability to express and set forth every thing that may be pleaded in our behalf to the best advantage; which is the peculiar qualification of a good advocate, and that which makes the two former considerable. For admit that he both knows his client's cause, and is heartily and warmly concerned for it, yet if his tongue and his eloquence doth not serve him to draw forth those thoughts and those affections in a suitable defence of it, he is rather a good man and a good friend, than a good advocate or mediator.

But now is there any one that may compare with Christ in respect of this faculty? to whom God has given *the tongue of the wise*; a tongue speaking with authority, commanding men, and persuading God: nay, and who himself was able to give his disciples such a tongue, as all their adversaries, though never so learned and eloquent, were not able to resist. That prayer that perhaps is by much ado sighed and sobbed out by the penitent, his grief interrupting his words, yet as it arrives to the throne of God from the mouth of our Mediator, it comes with a grace and a force superior to all human rhetoric; it enters the presence and pierces the ears of the Almighty; and, in a word, prevails in that manner, as if it were almighty itself.

And here I cannot but observe, how the qualities of Christ as our mediator pleading for us do particularly mate and confront those of the Devil our grand adversary pleading against us. For as Christ is most knowing of our spiritual estate, and every thing relating to it; so is the Devil most industrious and inquisitive to give himself an exact information of the same. As Christ is most tenderly concerned for us, so is the Devil most maliciously and inveterately set against us. And lastly, as Christ has all the strengths and treasures of elocution to employ in our defence, so is the Devil restless and artificial in drawing up our charge and accusation with all the heightening, aggravating language, that a great wit and a redundant malice can afford. But in all this he is outdone; even as much as the Creator can outdo a creature: so that we need not use any further elogy of Christ's mediatorship than this, that he is a greater and a more potent advocate, than the Devil himself can be an accuser.

And thus I have at length demonstrated the eminent fitness of Christ for the office of mediator, upon a treble account or respect; namely, in respect of God, of us, and of himself: and so have finished the third particular proposed for the handling of the words; which was, to shew the reason why Christ's mediation ought to minister such confidence to us in our access to God.

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SERMON LX.

EPHESIANS iii. 12.

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

THE prosecution of these words was first cast into the discussion of these four particulars.

I. That there is a certain boldness or confidence very well consisting with and becoming of our humblest addresses to God.

II. That the foundation of this confidence is laid in the mediation of Christ.

III. To shew the reason why the mediation of Christ ought to minister such confidence to us in our access to God.

IVthly and lastly, to shew, whether there were any other ground that might rationally embolden us in these our addresses to him.

Having finished the three first of these, I proceed now to the fourth. What reason we have to raise a confidence about the success of our prayers, upon the mediation of Christ, has been already declared; but since we cannot have too many pillars for so great a superstructure to lean upon, it will not be amiss to see whether there be any other means to give efficacy and success to them.

If there is, it must be either, 1. Something within, or 2dly, Something without us.

As for any thing within us, that may thus prevail with God, it must be presumed to be the merit of our good actions, which by their intrinsic worth and value may lay claim to his acceptance. It cannot, I confess, be the direct business of this discourse to treat of the merit of good works. But for our direction, so far as may concern the present subject and occasion, I affirm, that it is impossible, not only for sinful men, but for any mere creature, though of never so excellent and exalted a nature, properly to merit any thing from God, and that briefly for these two reasons.

1. Because none can merit of another but by doing something of himself and absolutely by his own power, for the advantage of him from whom he merits, without that person's help or assistance. But what can any thing that the creature can do advantage God? What can all the men and angels contribute or add to the divine happiness or perfection? And if we should suppose that any action of theirs might, yet it could not be meritorious, forasmuch as they do every thing by a power and an ability conveyed to them by God; so that in their most refined and holiest performances, they offer God but what is his own, the effect and product of his grace working within them, and raising them to do what they do. The talent they trade with was given them, nay, and what is more, the very power of trading with it was given them too: so that both in their being and operations they are another's, and stand accountable for all to a superior bounty; and restitution surely is not merit.

2dly. To merit is to do something over and above what is due, no two things in the world being more directly contrary than debt and merit. But now it is impossible for any created agent to do any thing above its duty, forasmuch as its duty obliges it to do the utmost that it can. It is clear therefore that for any one, even the brightest angel in heaven, to think of meriting, is but a dream and a chimera; but then for us, who are obnoxious upon the account of several sins and breaches of the law, to entertain the least thought of it, is much more absurd and intolerable, and consequently, if we build any confidence in our addresses to God upon our merits, we build upon the sand; and what the issue of such a building is like to be, we may easily conclude.

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It remains therefore that if there be any other ground of this confidence, it must be something without us. And if so, it must be the help and intercession either, 1. Of angels, or 2. Of the saints.

1. And first for the angels, that they cannot be presumed to mediate for us, and present our prayers before God, I suppose may be made evident by these reasons.

1. Because it is impossible for the angels to know and perfectly discern the thoughts, that being the incommunicable property of God; [2 Chron. vi. 30](#), *Thou only, O Lord, knowest the hearts of the children of men*; and in [Jeremy xvii. 10](#), *I the Lord search the heart*. But now many prayers are wholly transacted within the mind and the heart, and pass not into any outward expression. And even in those prayers that are orally delivered, that which is the chief part, and indeed the soul of prayer, is the inward disposition of the heart; which falls under the cognizance of no created understanding, it being the peculiar royalty and prerogative of omniscience.

2. The second reason is, that it also exceeds the measure of angelical knowledge, for any angel by himself and his own natural power of knowing, to know at once all the prayers that are even uttered in words here and there throughout the world; and that because it is impossible for him to be actually present in all places. For though the knowledge of angels is not limited just to the things of that place where they are present, yet it is certain that it cannot extend much further; since a limited nature must needs also have a limited way of knowing. Upon which account God's omniscience is not ill founded by some upon his essential omnipresence, as the ground and reason of it. For he that is intimately present to all things, must needs have a knowledge of those things, which persons that are not thus present to them, for the same cause, are not capable of.

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But for all this, some concern themselves to hold a contrary opinion about the knowledge of angels, and they pretend to ground it, 1. partly upon scripture; 2. partly upon reason.

And first as to what they produce from scripture, passing by most of their frivolous and impertinent quotations, I shall more especially single out and insist upon two, as being the most likely to speak to their purpose.

1. The first of them is that in [Luke xv. 10](#), *There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*. From whence they argue, that repentance being a thing chiefly situate in the heart, if the angels can know this, they must needs know the heart also.

But to this I answer, that repentance is not only immediately knowable in itself, but also mediately, by the outward effects of it shewing themselves in the life of the penitent; such as in [Matthew iii.](#) are called *fruits meet for repentance*; which whether they be sincere and genuine or no, though we perhaps cannot always discern, yet the angels, whose discernment is much greater, may well be thought able to understand and distinguish.

But it will be urged, in the second place, that though it follows not from hence that the angels can discern the heart, or the repentance of a sinner as it lies included there, yet by granting that they know and observe the outward effects of repentance, it will follow, that by the same reason they must also know all those prayers that men utter and express outwardly by word of mouth. And therefore that as to these at least we may presume, that they will be our mediators, to present them for us to God.

For reply to this I answer,

1. That it was sufficiently proved by the former argument, that the angelical knowledge cannot at the same time naturally reach itself to all things that actually happen in the world; and that for the reason then given, that an angel, being of a limited nature, cannot be actually present every where. But you will ask then, how come the angels to know the repentance of every converted sinner? Why; it must be supposed that they know it by report of those angels that God has employed as *ministering spirits* about that repenting person; and consequently it is not necessary that we affirm it to be universally known to all the angels in heaven, but to those only, who by converse with these come to have such a report conveyed to them; for the text speaks only of the angels indefinitely, but not of all universally.

But upon this it may be replied further, that upon the same ground we may infer also, that the angels may know all the prayers orally put up by men throughout the whole world; forasmuch as they may be signified to them, by the like reports from those angels that have the respective care and governance of each person.

To this I answer, that it is indeed possible that they may; but that they also do, we have no ground to conclude. For although God has told us, that so eminent and remarkable a passage as the conversion of a sinner is known to the angels in heaven, whether by particular revelation from himself, or by report from other angels, it matters not; yet that therefore every action done by, or occurrence relating to such an one, must also be reported and made known to the angels too, no reason or argument can demonstrate. And unless we know that these things certainly are so, as well as that possibly they may, they can administer no sure ground to our confidence, as shall be made appear in its due place.

But after all this discourse, what if we should now affirm, that there is no necessity of our holding, that the angels know the repentance of every sinner here on earth, either by



themselves or by the reports of others. For when it is said, *that there is joy amongst the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*, is it said, that this joy happens just about the time of that repentance, or at any time of the sinner's abode in this world? No; we find no mention of the time; and therefore what hinders but that it may be understood of the time when the penitent enters into heaven: that then there is joy amongst the angels who rejoice that he repented and is recovered, which repentance they then come clearly to see and know, in the visible consequent of it, his salvation. This I am sure may be the sense of the text without any force done to it at all; and if it may, there is no necessity of the former interpretation, upon a removal of which, there cannot be so much as any colour or shew of argument from hence to evince the angels' knowledge of every particular man's actions and affairs here upon earth. And thus much in answer to their first scripture.

2. The other is that place in [Revelation viii. 3](#), *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense., that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar that was before the throne*. From whence they say it is evident, that the angels are employed in presenting our prayers to God, nay, so invincibly evident in the judgment of some, that they wonder that any should be able to stand out against the prevailing force of it.

But to this I answer, that *angel* is a name not only of nature, but also of office; and signifies one peculiarly sent and employed by God about any work: upon which account Christ is several times in scripture called the *angel of the Lord*, the *angel of the covenant*; and simply without any addition the *angel*, as in [Zechariah i](#). Accordingly in this sense is the word angel to be taken here, namely for Christ; to whom also the other words most appositely agree; the incense here mentioned very fitly representing the merits of his death and sufferings, by which he offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, by virtue of which sacrifice he is continually giving an efficacy to our prayers before the throne of grace. If therefore the angel here spoke of be Christ, and Christ be God as well as man, nothing for the mediation of any created angel can be concluded from this text.

And thus having answered what they allege from scripture for the angels' knowledge of and concernment about men's particular actions here upon earth, and especially their prayers, I shall now come to examine what they allege for the same from reason.

2. They argue therefore that the angels see and know our prayers, and every thing else belonging to us, because they behold the face of God, the divine essence; which essence containing in itself the exact ideas and representations of all things, by beholding that, they must by consequence behold and view all things else.

This is frequently urged and insisted upon; and yet there cannot be a more false and absurd reasoning. For if this were true, then it would follow that whosoever saw God would be also omniscient, and know as much as God himself knows, since he knows all things by the survey of his own essence. It would follow also that there could be no possibility of God's



revealing any thing to the angels: for how can any thing be said to be revealed that was known before? But yet Christ tells us, that the angels are ignorant of the day of judgment, [Matth. xxiv. 36](#); and St. Peter tells us concerning the mysteries of Christ's incarnation and man's redemption, that *the angels desire to look into them*, [1 Pet. i. 12](#); and the word παρακύψαι in the original is most emphatical, as signifying *a stooping down to look* into a thing, which is a searching, inquisitive posture: and therefore surely the angels are capable of a further knowledge of these things, by a revelation of them from God, and consequently cannot see all things in the divine essence.

But that we may answer and remove the very ground of this reasoning, we are to consider, that the divine essence discovers itself, and what is in it, to those that behold it, not by any natural necessity, as a sensible object lays itself open to the eye, but voluntarily and freely, as the mind of one man discovers itself to another, and as we may presume one angel declares his thoughts to another. Add to this also, that the other supposition of the ideas and images of all things existing in the essence of God, seems but a mere fiction, framed only according to our gross way of apprehending things, and so by no means strictly and literally agreeable to the most spiritual, simple, uncompounded nature of God.

From both which it follows, that that device of *speculum Trinitatis, the glass of the Trinity*, in which they say that saints and angels behold all things, is a most senseless and ridiculous conceit; and I wonder that any persons of reason and learning should be ever brought to lay any weight upon it. For if this be a good argument, that he that sees him who sees all things, must himself also see all things; then by unavoidable consequence this will be as good, that he that sees him who sees nothing, must also himself see nothing. And then any angel may be omniscient and blind in a minute; for let him look upon God who sees all things, and then he is omniscient, and sees all things himself; but let him immediately after look upon a blind man, and then by a wonderful transmutation presently he sees nothing. But the truth is, such ways of discoursing are fitter to be drolled upon, than to be refuted by any serious answer.

And thus I have shewn, that we have no ground to repose any confidence in the mediation of angels, for the promoting of our petitions before God. I come now to see whether we have any greater ground of confidence from any thing that the saints are like to do for us in this particular.

Concerning which we must observe, that the foregoing arguments brought against the angels interceding for us, by reason of their unacquaintance with our spiritual affairs, proceed much more forcibly against the intercession of the saints, who are of much more limited and restrained faculties than the angels, and know fewer things, and even those that they do know in a much lesser degree of clearness than the angelical knowledge rises to.

But yet for the further proof of the saints' unacquaintedness with what is done here below, these reasons may be added over and above.



1. As first, it is clear that God sometimes takes his saints out of the world for this very cause, that they may not see and know what happens in the world. For so says God to king Josiah, [2 Chron. xxxiv. 28](#), *Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and the inhabitants thereof.* Which discourse would have been hugely absurd and inconsequent, if so be the saints' separation from the body gave them a fuller and a clearer prospect into all the particular affairs and occurrences that happen here upon earth. But if they are ignorant of these, as this scripture sufficiently proves, then can there no reason be assigned, why we should not also judge them ignorant of our prayers.

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Some indeed are not ashamed to say, that God reveals the prayers of men here below to the saints above, that they may present those prayers to him; which assertion as it is utterly groundless, so it is also apparently absurd. For to what purpose should God reveal a prayer made to him, to any of the saints, that he might pray it over to him again? Can he make the matter plainer and more evident to God than it was before? Or can he add merit and value to it, when it is impossible for any creature to merit from God? Or lastly, can he prevail with God more than God's own mercy and Christ's intercession? Thus when men first take up an opinion, and then afterwards seek for reasons for it, they must be contented with such as the absurdity of it will afford.

2. But 2dly, we have yet further an express declaration of the saints' ignorance of the state of things here below in those words in [Isaiah lxiii. 16](#), where the church thus utters itself to God; *Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not.* Abraham and Jacob surely were saints, and those too none of the lowest rank; yet it seems they knew nothing of the condition of their posterity, understood none of their wants and necessities. And if so, how they should pray and be concerned for those of whom they had no knowledge, is hard to comprehend.

But notwithstanding these places, the sons of the Romish communion are taught to believe otherwise; and accordingly allege several things, which they are pleased to think, or at least to call arguments to the contrary: the foundation of most of which being overthrown by what has been disputed about the angels, I shall only mention two more, the first from scripture, the second, as they pretend, from reason.

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1. As for scripture, they allege, [Luke xvi.](#) where Abraham, a beatified saint in heaven, could yet know the estate and hear the words of the rich man in hell; as also what befell him and Lazarus in their lifetime, as that *one received good things, and the other evil things*; from whence they say it is clear, that the saints in heaven know the condition of those that live here, and consequently may be thought particularly to intercede for them.

But to this I answer, 1. That supposing this to be a real history, and literally to be understood, yet this proves no more, than that Abraham might come to know from Lazarus, after his assumption into heaven, what the condition of that rich man was, as also what miseries

he himself lay under, during his life: but that is no argument that Abraham knew any thing of this, while Lazarus and the rich man were yet living upon earth. 2. But in the second place we are to know, that this whole relation is but a parable, and so cannot be argumentative for the proof of any thing.

2. Their next argument, which is drawn from reason, proceeds thus. That if the saints here upon earth pray for one another, then certainly those in heaven, whose charity is more perfect and consummate, must be thought much more to pray for those here below. But the former is evident from several examples, and there is also an express command for it in [James v. 16](#).

To this I answer first, that the charity of the saints who live in this world putting them to pray for one another, does not infer, that the saints in heaven (whose charity is greater) must do so too, unless it were proved that the charity of a glorified person must needs have the very same way of acting and exerting itself in heaven, that it had in the same person while he was a member of the church militant here on earth.

2. But in the second place, not to deny wholly that the charity of the blessed souls prompts them to pray for those that live yet in the body, we may distinguish of a twofold intercession of the saints, 1. General, 2. Particular. The general is that by which the saints pray for the good and happiness of the whole body of the church, which they well know upon a general account, during its warfare in this world, to be surrounded with temptations, and so in need of the continual assistance of divine grace; whereupon their charity may well engage them thus to pray for it. But as for any particular intercession, by which any saint intercedes in the behalf of any particular person here below, recommending his personal case to God, this follows not from the former; for it has been proved that they know not these particularities, and if so, though they be in never so high a degree charitable, yet their charity is not to outrun their knowledge.

Now in order to any man's establishing a rational confidence upon the intercession of the saints for us, these three things are required.

1. That they be able thus to intercede for us.
2. That they accordingly will.

3. And lastly, that a man certainly know so much. A failure in any of which conditions renders all such hope and reliance upon them most absurd and unreasonable. For what foundation of hope can there be, where there is no power to help? And what help can he afford me, who knows not whether I need help or no? But suppose that he does fully know my condition, yet knowledge is not the immediate principle of action, but will; and no man goes about the doing of any thing because he knows it may be done, but because in his mind he has resolved to do it. And then as for the saints' will to pray for us, since the measure of their will is the will of God calling and commanding them to undertake such or such a work, where there is no such call or command to the thing we are speaking of, we are to presume



also, that neither have they any will to it. But lastly, admitting that there is in them really both a knowledge, and an actual will fitting the saints for this office of interceding, yet unless we are sure of it by certain infallible arguments, we cannot build our practice upon it, which is itself to be built upon faith, that is, a firm persuasion of both the reasonableness and the fitness of the thing that we are to do. But now what arguments have we to ascertain us of the saints' ability and proneness to intercede for us? We have weighed what has been brought from scripture and from reason, and found it wanting; so that we have nothing solid to bottom ourselves upon in this matter. But God requires that our boldness should commence upon knowledge; for he neither approves the sacrifice nor the confidence of fools.

And now in the last place, if we view this doctrine in the consequence of it, we shall find that it speaks aloud against the folly and impiety of a practice so much used by some, namely, the invocation of saints, and praying to the souls of holy men departed this life.

It is possible indeed that men may believe that the saints in heaven particularly intercede for men here below, and yet not hold that they are to be prayed to: but it is certain, that none hold that the saints ought to be prayed to, who deny their particular intercession with God for us. All the arguments therefore that have been hitherto produced for the disproving of this, do by consequence utterly destroy the invocation of the saints.

But before I examine any of their arguments for it, it will not be amiss to consider the original grounds of this practice; of which, I think, I may reckon these three for the principal.

1. The solemn meetings used by the primitive Christians at the places of the saints' sepulchres, and there celebrating the memory of their martyrdom. In which panegyric speeches there were used frequent apostrophes and figurative addresses to the souls of the saints, as if they were actually present, and heard what was spoke: and these expressions the vulgar, not being able to distinguish between things spoke figuratively and properly, easily drank in, according to the literal meaning of the words; though indeed they no more proved that the saints heard them, or that those that so spoke thought they did, than those exclamations, *Hear, O heaven! and hearken, O earth!* prove that the heaven and earth can hear what is thus spoke to them.

2. The second thing that induced this belief were those seeds of the Platonic philosophy, that so much leavened many of the primitive Christians: which philosophy teaches, that the souls of good and virtuous men after the decease of the body are turned into angels or good demons, and fly about the world helping men, and defending them from evils and mishaps: whereupon it was easy with a little change to transfer and apply these things to the souls of the saints.

For the confirmation of which, it is remarkable that Origen, a person excessively addicted to the philosophy of Plato, was the first of the Christians that brought this opinion into the church: though it was long after his time that the invocation of the saints came to be practised; the practice beginning first amongst the Greek Eremites, who transfused it to Nyssen, Basil,



and Nazianzen, their great admirers and disciples; who afterwards made a shift to insinuate it into the minds of the credulous vulgar.

3. The third cause of this was the people's being bred in idolatry: whereupon what worship they gave to devils, and to their heroes before, they very readily applied, upon their conversion to Christianity, to good angels, and to the souls of the martyrs; which also the unwariness and facility of many of their teachers and bishops was willing enough to humour them in, as being desirous upon any terms to gain them from heathenism to the profession of Christian religion; and being also in those times otherwise took up and busied with disputes against such heretics as more directly struck at the foundations of Christianity.

But nothing can be more evident than that the primitive fathers of the church held no such thing as the invocation of the saints, and that from this one consideration, that they still used this as an argument against the Arians for the proof of the deity of Christ, that he was to be invoked and prayed unto. Which worship, might it have been communicated to the saints, or any besides God, had been no proof of the thing for which they brought it at all.

And moreover, the weak grounds that the patrons of this opinion have found for it in scripture, have been the cause, that even those that hold and practise it cannot yet unanimously agree about the terms upon which they are to hold it. For some will have invocation of the saints necessary, some pious and profitable, and others only lawful or allowable. And the council of Trent, that pretended to determine the case, has been so wise as to put the world off with an ambiguity that might indifferently serve the defenders of either opinion, by denouncing an anathema against those *qui negant sanctos invocandos esse*, who deny that the saints were to be prayed to. Which expression is very ambiguous: for to deny that the saints are to be prayed to, may signify either to deny that it is *necessary* to pray to them, or that it is *lawful* to pray to them. But the truth is, it is their best course to state it upon this, that it is useful and profitable. Profitable, I say, not to those that practise, but to those that teach and assert it.

But since the practice has now prevailed amongst those of the Romish communion, let us see what reason they allege for it. Why, they argue,

From the custom used in the courts of princes, where petitioners presume not to petition their prince immediately by themselves, but by the intercession of such as attend about him.

But to this pretence, which, as St. Ambrose affirms in his comment upon the 1st of the Romans, and St. Austin in his 8th book *De Civitate Dei*, was the very same that the heathens alleged for their worshipping of good demons and their heroes; that is, famous men departed this life, and supposed by them to have attained a state or condition of being and power next to their gods.

To this, I say, this is a full answer; that God is not man, nor are we in all things to argue the manner of our behaviour to God from what we use to men. God will himself determine

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the way by which he will be worshipped; and, consequently, the only rule of the worship we tender him must be his own prescription and command.

But besides, let the comparison be put equally, and so even upon these terms their argument will not proceed. For should even an earthly prince constitute and appoint one certain person to receive all petitions, and bring them to him, surely it would be an arrogance to presume to petition him by the mediation of any other. Now God has actually constituted Christ our mediator, and our sole mediator, which appears from that one text, which the patrons of praying to the saints will never solidly answer, *1 Tim. ii. 5, There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* Upon which account, for us to put our prayers into any other hands, is to affront God in his command, and Christ in his office.

If it be here further alleged, that our sins render us very unworthy to come immediately even to Christ himself; whereupon it is but a due humility for us to make our way to him by the mediation of his friends, such as the blessed saints are:

To this also I answer; that Christ, who knew better than we ourselves, whether we were fit to come to him or no, has expressly commanded us to come: in which case we are to learn, that the best and most refined humility is obedience: and when Christ commands us to come to him, and with the jealousy almost of a rival forbids us all address to others, if we repair to any but himself, it is *the sacrifice of fools*, seasoned with ignorance and wilfulness; and not so much a veneration of his majesty, as a desposal of his mercy. For should any noble or great person command me personally to represent my wants immediately to himself, surely it would be but little modesty or civility in me to present my petitions to him by the intercession of his porter.

As for those that judge or practise otherwise, there is this only to be alleged for the reasonableness of what they do; that having so much injured Christ the great mediator, it is not to be wondered, (should we respect their behaviour, and not his mercy,) if they stand in need of a mediator to Christ himself. But as gold upon gold is absurd in heraldry; so I am sure, a mediator to a Mediator is a greater absurdity in Christianity.

I conclude therefore, that Christ is the only person through whose mediation we may with confidence make our access to God: and that to share this work of mediation with any, either saints or angels, is an injurious and sacrilegious encroachment upon that office, that neither admits of equal nor companion. It is also a senseless invention, grounded upon that which is not; namely, their particular knowledge of our affairs here below: and if it were not so, yet is the practice hugely useless and superfluous; for there cannot be imagined any kindness or concernment in the saints for us, that is not infinitely greater and more abundant in Christ. And therefore let men please themselves as they will in their imaginary fantastic by-ways of address, yet Christ is the only true *way*, the *way* that has *light* to direct,



and *life* to reward those that walk in it; and consequently there is *no coming to the Father but by him*.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore.



SERMON LXI.

GENESIS vi. 3.

And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man.

IN this chapter we have God taking a survey of the state of the sons of men before the flood; and withal we have the judgment or verdict that he delivers in upon that survey, namely, that they were exceeding wicked; as in [verse 5](#), *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth*. We have him in the first chapter looking over all created beings, and thereupon pronouncing his approbation of them, that *behold they were good*, and hear no further of them: in the sixth chapter, we have man, that of all those good things should have in reason proved the best, totally corrupt and depraved; as appears from the same verse, *Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil, and only evil, and that continually*. So that we see his sins were as numerous as his thoughts, and withal so great, that it even *repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth*; as we read in [verse 6](#). Sin is of so vile and provoking a nature, that it is able to extort a certain kind of repentance from God himself, who has elsewhere said, that he cannot repent: so that here we see God himself repenting, by reason of the sins of men: but of the sinner's repentance we read not a word. Now when sins are arrived to their highest pitch, both in respect of number and greatness; and withal attended with an absolute impenitence; what in reason can remain but a certain sad expectation of judgment against the sinner? And such an one we have here. After the overflowing of sin upon the whole earth, God in his justice seconds it with a deluge of waters; and so proportions his punishment to the rate of the offence; a general destruction to a general sin. But before the execution of this judgment, and amidst those aboundings of sin and wickedness, yet God left not himself without a witness in the hearts of men; but continued his Spirit in the ordinary operations thereof, secretly dealing with and entreating men to be reconciled to God. Notwithstanding their obstinate progress in sin, their continual pursuit of the lusts and desires of their evil mind, they had many a gripe of conscience, many sad remorse, many checks and calls from the Holy Spirit, which, by their resolution to persist in sin, they did at length totally extinguish. Upon their rejection of the Spirit, God intends to ruin and reject them, and to that intent withdraws the Spirit, and the strivings of it. And presently after we read of the flood breaking in upon them, to their utter ruin and perdition.

The words will afford several observations; as first, from the method God took in this judgment, first withdrawing his spirit, and then introducing the flood, we may observe,

1. D. That God's taking away his Spirit from any soul, is the certain forerunner of the ruin and destruction of that soul.



This is clearly evinced from the words; for although the flood did immediately terminate in the destruction of the body only, yet because it snatched these men away in a state of impenitence, it was consequentially the destruction of the soul.

2. From that expression of the *Spirit's striving with man*, which does always imply a resistance from the party with whom we strive, we may observe,

2. D. That there is in the heart of man a natural enmity and opposition to the motions of God's holy Spirit: outward contention it is the proper issue and product of inward hatred; striving in action it is an undoubted sign of enmity in the heart: *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh*, Gal. v. 17. Here we see there is a sharp combat between these two: and the apostle subjoins the reason of it; *for these two are contrary*. Things contrary will vent their contrariety in mutual strife.

3. From the same expression of striving we may observe,

3. D. That the Spirit in its dealings with the heart is very earnest and vehement.

To strive, it imports a vigorous putting forth of the power; it is such a posture as denotes an active desire. There is none that strives with another, but conquest it is the thing both in his desire and in his endeavour.

4. The fourth observation is drawn from the definitive sentence that God here passes, that *his Spirit should not always strive with man*, and it is this;

4. D. That there is a set and punctual time, after which the convincing operations of God's Spirit upon the heart of man, in order to his conversion, being resisted, will cease, and for ever leave him.

This seeming to take in the chief, if not the only drift and scope of the Spirit in these words, waving the consideration of the rest, I shall only prosecute this.

In the prosecution of it, I shall do these things.

I. I shall endeavour to prove and demonstrate the truth of this assertion from scripture.

II. I shall shew how many ways the Spirit may be resisted.

III. I shall shew whence and why it is that upon some resistance the Spirit finally withdraws.

IV. Make application.

I. Concerning the first, I shall present you with the proof of this doctrine from several scriptures, that give us pregnant examples, that this is the way of God's dealings still to withdraw his Spirit after some notorious resistance.

1. The first is that dreadful place in which is set down God's dispensation towards the children of Israel, in [Psalm xcvi. 10, 11](#); *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest*. We have here these things observable.



1. Their resistance of God's Spirit, specified in these words; *I was grieved with this generation.*

2. We have the set and limited time of that resistance; it was *forty years.*

3. God's judicial withdrawing his Spirit thereupon, and delivering them up to a state of everlasting spiritual desertion, held forth in these words; *I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.* From whence we see that the departure of the Spirit was as infallibly sure, as the truth of God confirmed with the obligation of an oath could make it.

A second place, that yet further proves that there is such a critical, fixed time of the Spirit's working, is in [Heb. iv. 7](#), *He limiteth a certain day, saying, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.* This expression seems to hold forth two things.

1. The fixed determination of the time of the Spirit's speaking to us; *To-day.* Now as in a day, after such a set hour it is unavoidably and certainly night; so after such a season of the Spirit's strivings, there inevitably follows a final desertion. While it is day the Spirit works; but this night cometh, and it will not work.

2. This expression shews the shortness of this time. The day of grace, it is but a day. It is the sun of righteousness shining in our faces for some few hours. Which, by the way, speaks severe reproof to the unreasonable delays of some, in their closing and complying with God. The Spirit calls them to-day, and they promise obedience to-morrow. Procrastination in temporals is always dangerous, but in spirituals it is often damnable.

The third place that may be alleged for the proof of this truth is that, [Luke xix. 42](#), *If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* In these words also we may observe three things.

1. Their enjoyment of a season, in which the Spirit dealt with them concerning the things of their peace; they had their day.

2. Their neglect and misimprovement of that season, implied in Christ's wish that they had known and improved it.

3. God's dealing with them upon that misimprovement; *the things of their peace were hid from their eyes.* When the day of grace is past, and darkness upon the soul, no wonder if it is unable to discern the things of its peace. To these places we may add that in [Gen. xv. 16](#), where God says, *that the sin of the Amorites was not yet full:* implying, that there was a certain pitch of sin, under which he would not destroy, and after which he would not spare them. Till such time as a vessel is filled, we may still pour in more and more; but when it comes to its fulness, then it has its *ne plus ultra*, there is no capacity to receive any more. So during the time of God's permission, we may go on in a way of opposition to him, to multiply acts of resistance against the Spirit; but after this set time is expired, there must be no further resistance made: we must either yield, or die eternally: God will not let us perpetuate our rebellions against him; he will either take away our opposition, or the Spirit which we so oppose.



And thus much for the proof of the point by scriptures, which leave it undoubted, that the Spirit has its set time of striving with the heart, after which it will cease. And now I could observe also, by way of allusion and illustration, how that the creatures also have their set and stinted times allotted them, beyond which they can do nothing with success. It is notable in the dealings of men, when they make contracts and bargains, there is some good hour, some advantageous nick of time, which if overslipt and let go, either the price fails or the thing fails. And it is further observable, that there are some lucky seasons and offers of preferment in every man's life, which if not laid hold upon, a man is for ever after degraded in his worldly advancements. Nay, even those creatures that are only acted by a principle of sense do observe their set times, in which they will do the works of their nature, and after which they will not. The bird has its summer to build in, and the bee to gather honey in; and if they should chance to be hindered from doing these works at that time, they are never seen to do them in the winter. In [Jeremiah viii. 7](#), we have this very consideration applied to this present purpose; *Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.* I do not mention these things as arguments to prove any thing, but only as observations to illustrate what has been already proved. For since some presume to say, that the visible carnal world is an image or adumbration of the invisible and spiritual; methinks God, that has tied all the operations of the creature within such a strict observance of their respective seasons, he himself should be much more regular and exact in the observance of his own. I shall conclude this first head with that place in [Ecclesiastes iii. 1](#), *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.* And without question we shall find, that not man only, but even the Spirit of God also, as he has his time to work, so he has a time also to leave off working; a time to solicit and persuade, and a time to depart.

But here, before I enter upon the second thing, to prevent misapprehensions, you must here observe, when I say there is a set time of the Spirit's working, after which it ceases, it is not to be understood of a general set time, which is the same in every man, and beyond which these workings never pass; as for example, because forty years was the set time of the Spirit's striving with Israel, we are not thence to conclude, that it will continue its workings just so long with all the world besides: but it is to be meant of a set and stinted time in respect of every particular man's life, in which there is some limited period, wherein the workings of the Spirit will for ever stop. For as it merely depends upon the sovereignty of God's good pleasure, whether or no there should be any such workings at all; so it is likewise absolutely at his disposal to prolong or shorten their continuance. Only this we may rationally collect; where the means of grace are more plentiful, there the Spirit, upon resistance, sooner departs. Now these being more fully, clearly, and convincingly dealt forth under the dispensations of the gospel, than those of the law, we may conclude this also, that the Spirit in such times

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is quicker in his despatches, and shorter in his stay. Thus God forbore the fig-tree but three years, and the children of Israel forty. And no wonder; that was in a fruitful soil, these in the wilderness. And God will bear with that unfruitfulness in a wilderness, that he will not in his vineyard.

II. Having thus proved the point by scripture, and withal given you some caution for the understanding of it; I proceed in the next place to shew, how the Spirit may be resisted in its workings upon the heart. Herein, as for those controversies, whether the workings of the Spirit, by which a man is not actually converted, were yet notwithstanding sufficient for his conversion; or, when one resists the Spirit, and another does not, whether this proceeds from the different operations of the Spirit, or the different dispositions of the hearts wrought upon; I shall not undertake here to determine. But this I shall presume to affirm, that what God never intended should convert a man was never able to convert him: and moreover, what never actually does convert him was never fully intended for his conversion: otherwise, if it was, we must make his intentions frustrate; which, I think, cannot be affirmed, without a blasphemous derogation from his power and his wisdom. But to the point in hand, namely, to shew how many ways the Spirit may be resisted. Where we must first lay down, what it is in general to resist the Spirit. And this I conceive is, in brief, to disobey the Spirit commanding and persuading the soul to the performance of duty and the avoidance of sin.

Now the Spirit commands and persuades two ways.

1. Externally, by the letter of the word, either written or preached.
2. By its immediate internal workings upon the soul, which I shall reduce to two.
 - (1.) The illumination of the understanding.
 - (2.) The conviction of the will.

Now suitable to all these ways of the Spirit's dealing with us, there are so many different acts of resistance, by which these dealings are opposed.

Of all which in their order.

1. Concerning the resistance of the Spirit in disobeying the letter of the word. The reason that disobedience to the word is to be accounted an opposing of the Spirit, is because the word was dictated and inspired by the Spirit itself. As we have it in *2 Pet. i. ult. Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Spirit.* Therefore to disobey what was writ and delivered by them, was, in effect, to disobey the Spirit that did inspire them. I may truly say of this word, that it is *the voice of God, and not of a man*: and what God is the author of, that he will certainly own, both by his encouragements of those that obey it, and his judgments upon those that reject it. It may indeed be delivered by a poor, inconsiderable, obscure man, but even so it is stamped with the appointment of God, and will do thorough execution: be the cloud never so obscure and dark, yet lightning may break from it, to the terror and shaking of all beholders. This word, that is so slighted by sinful man, is no less than the power of the almighty God to salvation; that

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instrument which the Divine Omnipotence uses to convert souls. Look but into the law; and if thou hast a spiritual ear open to hear it, it will speak with a voice that will make thee tremble. Read the gospel; and if ever God do thee good by it, thou wilt feel it like a twoedged sword, dividing between thee and thy dearest lusts. It will be a fiery, a searching word; it will pierce into thy very heart, and unbosom all thy retired corruptions: it will discover to thee those two great mysteries, the mystery of godliness and of iniquity: it will mightily convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment: it will display how cursed and bitter a thing it is to sin against an almighty God; how excellent and amiable it is to follow him in the traces of a pure conversation. It will also lay before thee the certainty, the horror, and dreadfulness of the day of judgment to all the impenitent. This is the power, this is the energy and the force of the word; and if it never had this effect upon thy heart, it was because thou hast resisted the Spirit speaking in it.

It may here be demanded how the Spirit may be resisted speaking in the word.

I answer, two ways.

1. By a negligent hearing and a careless attendance upon it.
2. By acting in a clear and open contrariety to it.

1. Concerning the first, the resistance of the Spirit speaking in the word by a superficial attendance upon it. As for those that seldom or never hear it at all; that keep out of the Spirit's reach; that are such fools as not only to put the *evil day*, but also the good day *far from them*; that do not so much resist, as wholly reject the Spirit; their condition, no doubt, is very sad and desperate. Certainly Sodom and Gomorrah will be able to commence a plea for themselves at the day of judgment that these cannot: for the joyful sound never rung in their ears, the gospel was never brought to their doors; but these have had the means even offered to them, and refused them. But if the word has been a burden, and sabbaths have been a trouble, what a weight will there be in damnation! A man shall one day be accountable, not only for the sermons that he has heard, but for those also that he might have heard. But to pass over those who scarce merit the name of professors, there is another sort, that indeed hear the word, yet with that supine negligence, that they cannot quit themselves from being ranked amongst the contemners of the Spirit. Some indeed hear the sound of the word as of the wind, but, for want of attention, scarce know from *whence it comes, nor whither it goes*. Some suffer wandering thoughts, like the fowls of the air, to intercept the seed, before it falls upon their hearts. Some by reason of their own idle discourses cannot hear the voice of the Spirit. Some sleep, and shut their eyes against that light that might otherwise shine into their souls. And is not this to despise the Spirit? Believe it; as it is the greatest affront that we can offer to any considering man, when he is seriously speaking to us, and that about the things of our own concernment, to be thinking of something else, and not to regard him; so in these addresses of the Spirit to us about the things of our own eternal peace, not

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to attend or observe him, is so much greater a contempt, by how much the Spirit of God is greater than the greatest of men.

2. The second way of resisting the Spirit speaking in the word is by acting contrary to that word. The most considerable thing in man is his actions. Every action it is defined, *fluxus virium agentis*; it is the drawing forth the very spirit and vigour of the agent upon some object: thoughts like shadows in the mind quickly vanish; words are transient, and pass away; but deeds and actions will abide. Accordingly God lays all the stress of religion upon these: the law runs thus; *Do this, and thou shalt live*: the gospel says, *Not every one that cries Lord, Lord, but he that does the will of my Father, shall enter into heaven*. Both agree in this, that they put not men upon bare words and wishes, but upon doing. Nay, let me further say, if it were possible that we could do the will of God without hearing of it, it was no matter whether we heard it or no; for hearing is not intended for itself, but in order to doing. We read of one in the gospel that was commanded by his father to go work in the vineyard, but he denied, and said he would not go; yet notwithstanding was excused, because at length he did go: and so expiated the evil of his words by the goodness of his deeds. Therefore it is the obedience or disobedience of our actions that the Spirit of God chiefly regards. You may hear the word, and, what is more, you may hear it with attention; yet if by your practice you contradict the things that you have heard, this is to resist the Spirit. To hear or read the precepts of God, and yet do things contrary to those precepts; to hear the thunder of his curses, and yet not to be wrought upon, so as to avoid the cursed thing; this is notoriously to resist the Spirit. He that shall hear God commanding him not to take his name in vain, and yet pollute it with hideous blasphemous oaths; that shall hear Christ forbidding wantonness, even in the glance of an eye, and yet roll himself in folly and uncleanness; he that shall hear that dreadful voice of God, *Cursed be he that does the work of the Lord negligently*, and yet come unprepared to duties, and, being come, slightly perform them; surely such a person is to be reckoned amongst the highest opposers of the Spirit. If every idle word renders a man obnoxious to judgment, shall not a downright breach of the law by action sink a man under a much more heavy condemnation? He that will not hear, or, hearing, takes no notice of the laws of his prince, is a disobedient subject; but he that acts in opposition to them is an open rebel. Now the reasons that this kind of resisting the Spirit in our actions is so great, may be these two.

1. Because action is the very perfection and consummation of sin. Sin may indeed make a foul progress in our thoughts and desires, and step a little further in our words; but when it comes to be acted, then it attains its full pitch, and becomes perfect.

2. Because sin in the actions argues an overflowing and a redundancy of sin in the heart. A sinful action it is only the boiling over of sin as it lies there: for the heart it is yet in the womb; for as the apostle says, there it is conceived: but in the actual commission of it, it is then brought forth: so that if (according to our Saviour's word) through the abundance of



the heart a man speaks, then certainly from the exceeding superabundance of it does he proceed to action.

Having thus shewn how the Spirit is resisted in its external speaking in the word, I shall next shew how it is resisted in its immediate internal workings upon the soul.

Here we must reflect upon ourselves, and know that, upon the unhappy fall of man, sin, and the wretched effects of sin, immediately entered upon, and took full possession of all his faculties: his understanding, that before shined clear like the lamp of God, was by sin overspread with darkness: his will, that bore a perfect conformity to the divine will, was rendered totally averse from and contrary to the things of God. When man was first created, there was such an exact symmetry and harmony of all the faculties, such an absolute composure of the whole, that he was not only the workmanship, but also the image of his Maker. But sin shattered all, it took the whole fabric asunder. And thus the soul, being broke and ruined, (as God threatened to Babylon, in [Isaiah xiii. 21.](#)) became desolate, and a place of *doleful creatures*; that is, black and dismal apprehensions of God's wrath, and gross ignorance of his will, lodging in the understanding; and a place for satyrs to dance in; that is, of brutish lusts, and impure desires, acting, moving, and taking their pastime in the will. Now God the Father, through the admirable contrivance of his wisdom, and the propensity of his mercy, intending man's recovery, and the Son as mediator undertaking it, it was requisite that in order to it, he should take away and cure all these distempers both of man's understanding and his will. Hereupon, by virtue of the power committed to him as mediator, he issues forth the Spirit as the purchase of his death, for the accomplishment of these gracious ends, in renewing and recruiting the decayed nature of man. And this he does by the two forementioned works, to wit, illumination and conviction; in both of which the Spirit may be resisted.

1. Concerning our resistance of it in illumination, or its enlightening work. Where note by way of caution, that by the works of the Spirit I understand not the extraordinary efficacious works thereof in true conversion; for these are not resistible, inasmuch as they take away our resistance: they depend not upon the courtesy of our wills as to their success, but upon the sole power of God forcing his way through the heart in spite of all opposition. But I speak of its common works, such as a man may frustrate, such as he may be partaker of, and yet perish. And these enlightenings both may be and often are resisted by the soul. Illumination in general may be described, the Spirit's infusing a certain light into the mind, whereby it is in some measure enabled to discern and judge of the things of God. Now this light is threefold.

1. That universal light which we usually term the light of nature, yet so as it may also be rightly termed the light of the Spirit; but in a different respect. It is called the light of nature, because of its general inherence in all men; because it is commensurate and of equal extent with nature, so that wheresoever the nature of man is to be found, there this light is

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to be found. *It enlightens every man that comes into the world.* But on the other hand, it is called the light of the Spirit, in respect of the Spirit's efficiency, in that it is the producing cause of it, as it is of every good and perfect gift. This light it is the first breathing of God upon our nature, the very first draught and lineaments of the new creature; it is, as it were, the first dawning of the Spirit upon the soul, in those connate principles born with us into the world, and discovering, though very imperfectly, some general truths; as that there is a God, and that this God is to be worshipped, and the like. Yet this is but a glimmering, imperfect light, and such an one as carries with it a greater mixture of darkness; like the break of day, which has in it more of night, it is but one remove from darkness. The Spirit of God shining barely in nature, it is like the sun shining through a cloud, but with a faint, weak brightness, made rather to refresh than satisfy. Yet this was all the heathens had, in whom especially the imperfection of it appeared, as not being able to rescue them from idolatry, from villainous and unnatural lusts, both of which are the blush of nature as well as of religion. Yet by this light they shall be judged, and by this condemned. Wherefore of all sins that resist the Spirit, loathe and detest those that resist it speaking in nature, which are so gross and horrid, as not to be named, much less to be committed. Certainly these stains are not the stains and spots of God's children: nature itself is corrupted, yet it will testify aloud against such hideous corruptions. Conscience is corrupted, yet, like the unjust judge, through the importunity and cry of such, it will judge righteously. To be unnatural is something more than to be irreligious; for a man to offer violence to the principles, what is it but a spiritual self-murder? To cease to be a man, is something worse than not to be a saint. O reverence therefore this light, set up by God himself in our nature. As we are not to rely upon it as our only guide, so are we upon no hand to sin against it: walking according to its directions is not sufficient to save us, but going contrary to them will certainly condemn us.

2. The second kind of light may be called a notional scripture light; that is, a bare knowledge of or assent to scripture truths. This light is begot in the mind of all professors by the mere hearing or reading the word: it is the bare perception of evangelical truths placed in the intellect, resting in the brain, treasured up there by a naked apprehension and speculation. So that the resisting this, being almost the same with our resistance of the Spirit speaking in the word, only with this difference, that in the former we resist the word as considered in the letter, in this we resist it as it lies transcribed in the conceptions of the understanding: I say, since this almost coincides with the former, which I have discussed already, I shall proceed no further in it, only leave this to your consideration, that if the poor heathens fell under the wrath and curse of God, only for resisting the Spirit in the dim light of nature; then how will it be possible for us to escape, if we resist it now shining openly (like the sun in his might) in the clear discovery of the law and gospel? As the light which we resist is greater or less, so is the proportion of our sin either diminished or advanced.

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Therefore if we disobey the Spirit, what can follow, but that as our light, so our sin also, must be far greater than theirs, and our punishment answerable? For assuredly, the just God, who takes the exact and true dimensions of sin, will heat the furnace of his wrath seven times hotter for gospel reprobates, than for ignorant heathens.

3. The third kind of light may be called a special convincing light, which is an higher degree of the enlightening work of the Spirit, and not common to all professors, yet such a one as may be resisted, yea and totally extinguished. This is the highest attainment of the soul on this side saving grace; it is like the clear shining of the moon and stars, which is the greatest light that is consistent with a state of darkness. Yea it is such a light as does not only make a discovery of the things of God, but also engenders in the soul a certain relish and taste of them. It is a light, not only of knowledge, but of joy; and this it was that enlightened the stony ground in [Matt. xiii. 20](#), which did not only hear and apprehend the word, but also with joy received it: yet we see in the next verse, that it was not able to withstand tribulations and persecutions, but when the storms arose, and the wind beat upon it, it quickly went out; like a torch before a tempest, after a very short and weak contest, it was soon extinguished. However, we must know, that this light is the *ultimus conatus*, the last and greatest endeavour of the Spirit upon a reprobate soul, which once finally resisted for ever departs, and leaves the soul under an everlasting night, without any after returns of day. To be thus enlightened, is called in scripture *to taste of the heavenly gift, to be partaker of the Holy Ghost, and of the powers of the world to come*, as it is expressed in [Heb. vi. 4, 5](#): and of the desperate, deplorable condition of those that miscarry under these illuminations, we have an account in the next verse; *If they fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. The wicked, says God, shall fall, and never rise.*

He that shall hear what report the gospel makes of the nature of sin, and be so far affected with a lively sense and feeling of it, as to resolve against it, to hate it, even to a relinquishment of it, and continue for a long time so to do, yet notwithstanding at length disentangle himself from those thoughts and apprehensions of sin, so far as to relapse into the fearful commission and love of it, that man's case is grievous, and his wound not easily curable. For God intends these, illuminations as singular special means, both to allure the soul to duty by the discovery of the love of Christ, and to awe it from sin by the terrors of hell. Now when a man desires to sleep securely in the free enjoyment of his sin, and shall therefore seek to put out this light, we have no ground to conclude that the Spirit will ever restore it. He that frowardly and foolishly puts out his candle, is not sure to blow it in again. As for those common shinings of it that beam forth in the notion of the word, they indeed may be renewed every sermon, they are such beams as we read of, *occidere et redire possunt*. But when this special light is extinct, when this sets in darkness, the soul that is thus benighted is left to sleep a perpetual sleep of sin and death.



And thus much concerning the first inward work of the Spirit, to wit, illumination of the understanding; we come now to the second, which is the conviction of the will, which conviction may be described in general,

A work of the Spirit of God upon the will and affections, producing in them some imperfect liking of the ways of God, and dislike to the ways of sin.

There is a clear and open passage between the understanding and the will. Light in the one naturally begets heat in the other, and the conviction of the affections is never greater than the illumination of the judgment. So that when the work of the Spirit miscarries about the understanding, it never thoroughly succeeds in the will; for it strikes the will and the affections through the understanding; and if it cannot pierce this, it is not to be imagined how the blow can reach the other.

Now the convincing works of the Spirit upon the will may be reduced to these three.

1. A begetting in it some good desires, wishes, and inclinations.
2. An enabling it to perform some imperfect obedience.
3. An enabling it to leave some sins.

In all these works the Spirit may be resisted and opposed.

1. And first, it may be resisted in the good desires and inclinations that it suggests to the will. That these good desires issue from the Spirit, I suppose none will deny, who acknowledges that of ourselves we are not so much as able *to think a good thought*. He that affirms holy duties may proceed from an unholy, corrupt heart, may as well expect *grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles*. As there are some desires so exceeding black and hellish, that it easily appears they came into the mind from their father the Devil; so on the contrary there are some so pure and holy, that they may be quickly discerned to be the offspring of the Spirit, as bearing his image and likeness. Good inclinations, they are the firstborn of holiness in the soul, the very first endeavours and throes of the new birth. And as they are the first, so in reason they may be thought to be most imperfect, and consequently most easy to be rejected: a good desire stepping forth amongst raging and unmortified lusts, it is like righteous but weak Lot, endeavouring to appease the tumult of the Sodomites. O! how easily is it forced to retire! how quickly is it repulsed! It is like a drop of water falling into a furnace, that presently exhales, and does not at all allay the fury of its heat. How often has the Spirit whispered to us, *This is the way, walk in it*, and our perverse hearts have hurried us another way! How often has many a soul thoughts of relinquishing its sin, and returning to God, and yet by the allurements of new pleasures has been inveigled and recalled back! How often do some think of repairing to Christ, and yet are held fast by the fetters of prevailing lust! And all this befalls men, because they improve not these blessed inclinations. O! were we but true to our own souls, to cherish these tender, new-born, infant desires, and to carry them to Christ by prayer, certainly he would take them in his arms and bless them, and send them away strengthened. Every sincere desire to pray might be improved to a



blessed communion with God; every secret dislike of impurity might be wrought up to sanctity of life and conversation. O despise not therefore *the day of small things*; shut not your ears against the secret admonitions of the Spirit; they are none other than God himself speaking to thee (as to Elijah) *in a still voice*. You may one day come to know, when with bitterness of soul you shall reflect upon and recollect all these dealings of the Spirit: Such a time I had an inclination to confess my idleness, my intemperance before God, and amend it; but I hearkened to the dissuasions of my corrupt heart, and so neglected it. Such a time I had strong motions and intentions to restore my ill-gotten goods; but my covetousness restrained me. I say, then you will know and confess, (as Jacob did of Bethel,) *Of a truth God was in all these workings, and I knew it not*.

2. The Spirit may be opposed, as it enables the soul to perform some imperfect obedience to God's commands. A man, by the convincing energy of the Spirit in the word, may be led, or rather drawn to many duties. Thus Herod, in [Mark vi. 20](#), upon the soul-searching ministry of John, is said to have *done many things*. The Israelites also, in [Psalm lxxviii. 34](#), were driven by God's judgments to proceed very far in his worship; *When he slew them*, (it is said,) *they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God*. So that here we have both duty and earnestness in duty; but we see in the following verse they quickly got loose from those convictions; They flattered him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their lips: that is, their ensuing practices foully falsified all those fair promises of obedience which they made under their convictions. Such men's hearts may be often heated by the lively and warm impressions of the Spirit; yet by their innate corruptions, as it were, their proper form, like water heated, they are quickly recovered to their native coldness. In [Job xxvii. 10](#), Job says, *Will the hypocrite always call upon God?* Implying, I conceive, that from the motions of God's Spirit he may engage very fairly in that duty, though he fall short of continuance. See the convincing works of God's Spirit upon Ephraim, in [Hosea vi. 4](#); they wrought in him some superficial beginnings of goodness; but, as it is there expressed, *it was like a morning cloud*, when temptations arose it posted away, and *like the early dew*, presently drunk up by the scorching heat of raging lusts. Now this resistance of the Spirit is much more heinous than the former, inasmuch as the practice of holiness is greater than a bare desire and inclination to it. To injure or offend him that does but wish and desire our good, argues little ingenuity; but to grieve and oppose him that actually endeavours it, shews a plain want of humanity. For him, who has maintained some communion with the Spirit, and has *took sweet counsel with him*, so that they *have often walked to the house of God in company*; I say, for such an one to lift up his heel in acts of defiance and resistance of the Spirit, this is very grievous. When a man has proceeded very far in the mortification of his pride, his drunkenness, his lust, for him to return again to the same excess of riot, this is a more than ordinary provocation. When he is upon a fair advance to Zoar, to the *city of life* and deliverance, for such an one to look back upon Sodom, and cast an eye of desire upon

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his forsaken filth; it is just with God to make such an one a wonder and a sad example of his abused mercy. But this is the upshot of all, this is the very dividing point where the Spirit of God and the souls of men break and part for ever; they find a cursed pleasure in sin, and none in a course of duty: and so, maugre all the entreaties and wooing convictions of the Spirit, they relinquish duty, and return to sin.

3. The Spirit may be opposed in that convincing work, whereby it enables the will to forsake some sins. This work bears some affinity with the former, but it is not altogether the same. I confess, to yield perfect obedience to all God's commands does include in it a forsaking of all sin, and is consequentially, yea and really, the same with it. But imperfectly to execute some good duties, and imperfectly to leave some sins, which is here intended, are two distinct things. Now that the Spirit is able to work up a soul even to this also, and that the soul is likewise able to frustrate this work, these following scriptures will demonstrate. [2 Peter ii. 20](#), we have some that by the convincing help of the Spirit *had escaped the pollutions of the world*, they had washed their hands of all those enormities that raged and reigned in the lives of grosser sinners. Yet in the same verse we have these also *again entangled and overcome by their lusts*; and thereupon compared to the most filthy creatures, which being washed, with much greediness return to their beloved mire and defilements. In [Gal. iii. 3](#), we find some *who had begun in the Spirit*, yet in danger to have *ended in the flesh*; so treacherous is sin in its departure, and so violent in its returns. Certainly in these cases it seems to retire and draw back, only to come on afterwards with a greater assault. For the appetite of sin being only restrained, not taken away, it returns after a while with more violent fury upon its object: and like a thirsty man, the longer it has forebore to drink of the pleasures of sin, it takes so much deeper a draught of them at length. Thus sin is only pent up in the soul by main force of the Spirit; but when it finds the least vent, it lashes out to the purpose: some cannot neglect duties as they used to do, because the terrors of God are upon their souls; some dare not venture upon their former lewd courses, because the Spirit meets them with the drawn sword of God's vengeance, casting the very flashes of hell in their faces, if they step a foot into those ways. So that here the sinner is indeed held in bonds, but his sinful nature is still unchanged; like the devils themselves, who though they are kept in chains, yet they are still devils in chains. The soul has lost the present exercise of sin, yet still retains the faculty: but at length the Spirit having for a long time kept the soul from its lust, as God did Balaam from his covetousness, and still hearing it crying and craving after its beloved corruption; even as God let Balaam go upon the like importunity, so the Spirit slacks his hold, and lets the soul loose to its sin. And then it sins at an high rate indeed; better were it for a man never to have given the Spirit any room, any place in his heart, than at length thus to turn it out. We may truly say of this holy guest, *turpius ejicitur, quam non admittitur*; yea safer had it been for such a soul to have still wallowed in his sin, than being once rescued from it, again to apostatize to it. For this is to sin from choice, and that from choice grounded

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upon experience; for having tried both ways, to wit, those of the Spirit and those of sin, by such returns to it he does aloud proclaim his judgment to the world that sin is better.

And thus much concerning the second general head, to shew how many ways the Spirit may be resisted: I proceed to the third, to shew the reasons why upon such resistance the Spirit finally withdraws.

1. The first reason is drawn from God's decree. This is that which bounds all things, and fixes the freest operations of second causes: the event of things in themselves merely contingent, by this degree is stamped certain and infallible. It turns a casualty into a certainty; a contingency into a necessity. And as the actions of the creature are limited and determined by this decree, so the most free actions of God himself come also within the restraining compass of the same. God purposes before he acts, and his purpose it is the measure of his operations: and what God wills, he wills immutably. His wisdom and infinite knowledge foresees and debates all inconveniences antecedently to every act of volition; and so there can be no new emergent inconvenience that may unframe his resolutions and cause a change. Accordingly the workings and strivings of God's Spirit are measured out and bounded by this decree; by virtue of which its departure is firmly and irreversibly intended, and some resistance of it is thereby put beyond pardon. Some think the like of the great sin against the Holy Ghost, that is not unpardonable from its own nature, but from God's special decree; not because it is of so great malignity as to surpass the extent of God's mercies, nor yet because it is inconsistent with the means of obtaining pardon; but that God by an act of sovereignty singled out this sin, and for the glory of his justice, and the terror of those that should abuse his grace, passed a decree for ever to exclude it from all possibility of remission. But thus much by way of digression. Now this decree has not any active influence or efficiency, so as actually to produce or put in being the thing decreed. I say the decree itself does not effect the thing, but it engages God's veracity and immutable truth to see it certainly effected. There is nothing therefore but, if we pursue it to its first original, must of necessity terminate in this decree, as deriving from hence the first rise and reason of its being. I say the reason, though not the cause. In [Ephesians i. 11](#), God is said *to work all things according to the counsel of his own will*. He resembles an excellent artificer, who in all his works of art has forelaid in his mind a perfect model of his intended fabric, before ever he sets the first hand to it. It is finished in the contrivance, before it is so much as begun in the production. God says, *Shall I decree, and shall it not come to pass?* So by inversion we may say, Shall any thing come to pass, and shall not he decree? Would we know why the Spirit of God departed from Judas, even to the loss and perdition of his soul? We have an account in [John xvii. 12](#); it was, *that the scriptures might be fulfilled*; that is, that the will or decree of God delivered in scripture concerning Judas might be accomplished.

Now what terrors should this strike into all resisters of the Spirit, all prodigals of the means of grace! Whosoever spends upon mercy, spends upon a set allowance. God has al-

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lotted and decreed to every man his portion in the Spirit's workings, which, by reason of the enforcing power of that decree, he will never extend nor contract, diminish nor augment. And since it is not known to us in what point of our life God has set this fatal bound, as it is a sovereign remedy to prevent despair, that none might unadvisedly conclude against himself, that he had finally resisted the Spirit: so on the other hand it ought to be a strong argument to cut short the outrageous progress of a presuming sinner, since he knows not but the very next sin he is closing with, may separate between him and the Spirit of God for ever. For shall God limit the natural days of our life, beyond which we cannot pass, as it is in [Job xiv. 5](#), and shall the days of the Spirit's striving with us be undetermined? Certainly what he says of those may be said of the Spirit's workings, *they are all numbered*. And that they are so will appear one day, when those exact bills of our accounts, relating all our opposings even of the smallest motions of the Spirit, shall be preferred and read against us. Can we then (as it is expressed in the prophet,) disannul *God's covenant with day and night*? Can we disappoint or change *the ordinances of heaven and earth*? Then may we stretch the fixed time of the Spirit's dealing with our hearts beyond God's decree. Then may we, when our day of grace is expiring, cause the sun of mercy to go ten degrees backward. Alas! poor inconsiderable, impotent men! We must lay our mouths in the dust, and give way to the irresistible decree of God for ever. Can all the men in the world, by the united force of their power and policy, hinder the sun from setting but for the space of one hour? nay, but of one moment? And can we weak sinful worms prolong our precious day of grace at our pleasure? True it is, the mercy of God is infinite, and his goodness past finding out; but he that has set bars and doors to the sea has also set bounds to this ocean of his mercy, and said, Thus far shall you come in your strivings with such a soul, and no further.

2. The second reason why the Spirit departs upon resistance, is because it is most agreeable to the great intent and design of the gospel. And this is twofold, suitable to which the Spirit does accordingly appropriate a twofold operation.

1. The first great gospel design is the converting and saving the elect; and this is accomplished by an effectual converting power, which in its addresses to the soul is invincible. It does not persuade but overpower; and therefore never fails or miscarries, but effectually converts, sanctifies, and reduces the soul. The infallible success of the work depends upon the irresistible force of the agent: by a happy, alluring, yet efficacious violence it draws; [Jeremiah xxxi. 3](#), *With lovingkindness have I drawn thee*. Wheresoever this power draws, the soul certainly follows: I rather say certainly than necessarily, because necessity may seem to intrench upon the free spontaneity of the will, although it is clear that there is a kind of necessity which is compatible with its freedom. The drawing work of the Spirit it has the strength, but not the violence of coercion, [Luke xiv. 23](#), *Compel them to come in*. There is a compulsion indeed, but not such an one as is against the will; but such an one as makes it willing. And this alone is sufficient to enervate the objections of those free-willers, that ex-

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claim of coercion and compulsion in an irresistible converting work. Thus therefore the Spirit effects God's great and primary gospel design, in calling home his sheep, his chosen ones, the objects of his eternal love: and this is done by an effectual, never-failing power in their vocation; by which they are fully instated in their present possession of grace, and sufficiently secured in their hopes of glory for the future.

2. The second end and design of the gospel is to render reprobates inexcusable; and this is no less effectually done by the common enlightening, convincing works of the Spirit, which are sufficient to take off all pleas, to silence them in their own defence, and to enhance their guilt beyond excuse. It is confessed, the converting, renewing work of the Spirit was never vouchsafed to any reprobate; they were never admitted to share in *the children's bread*. Yet God's denial of recovering grace cannot warrant them in a state of sin. All indeed through Adam were generally immersed into an equal plunge of misery, all were forlorn and broke, and as to the stock of their first righteousness totally bankrupt, and the law still remains a rigid exactor of obedience. The elect and reprobate both fell from their righteousness, but God was pleased to renew the store of the former, leaving the latter destitute: but may not God even from these require perfect obedience, though they have lost the power to perform it? A creditor does not lose his right to his money, because the debtor is unable to pay. Suppose a creditor have two debtors, and both turn bankrupt; now if he of his own free cost and favour supplies one wherewithal to discharge the debt, may he not therefore demand it of the other without the like supply? Certainly mercy to one does not weaken or take off the procedure of the law against the other; neither our merits nor our misery can lay any obligation upon God's grace. He that shall dare to cavil and expostulate with his Maker at such a rate of impiety and impudence, as the corrupt heart of man is apt to do; "Is it my fault that I remain unconverted under all my convictions? Had God vouchsafed to me converting grace as he did to others, I had been converted as well as they?" God will answer the expostulations of such men, as he did those, [Matt. xx. 13, 15](#), *Friend, I do thee no wrong*. Is it not lawful to do with my own free grace as I please? *Is thine eye evil* and malicious, *because I am good?* Out of my mercy I bestowed converting grace upon such an unworthy sinner; out of my sovereignty I denied it to another, yet still without any impeachment to my justice. His justice is not at all injured when he confers grace upon one, nor his mercy lessened when he withholds it from another. However a man may for a while please himself in such objections against his Creator, and seem to himself to unreason the equity of God's proceedings; yet there will be a time when the sinner shall stand clearly convinced of the righteousness of God's dealings in his final departure from him; so as not to be able to plead or reply any thing against him in a rational way to all eternity: and this of all other will be the most stinging consideration, the most irksome and tormenting thought: for if we observe the vilest, the most profligate malefactor, when he stands openly convict, and that by the most pregnant evidence, he is apt to relieve his mind with such poor, perishing, forlorn

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persuasions, as, that he suffers unjustly, that he has hard measure, and that he smarts in the severe censures of men beyond the merit of his fact; then, I say, the slender comfort even of these apprehensions will fail the sinner. For he shall evidently find and know himself utterly forsaken and rejected by the Spirit, and withal see it most just and righteous that he should be so forsaken. This is that that will most bitterly gnaw and rack the proud heart of a reprobate, when he shall be forced to acknowledge that the Spirit's departure is not only his punishment, but his desert: he shall then confess, that the Spirit was as real in his workings, as he was peremptory in his resistance: that he was as pathetic and tender in the offers of grace, as he was obstinate in their refusal: that the Spirit with much eagerness would have often stepped between him and the commission of his beloved sin, and that he with as much vehemence rushed into it: that the Spirit had used many forcible arguments to conclude him into duty, and that he still flew off; and when he could not answer them, absolutely denied them. All these things, in the dismal remembrance of them, will be like so many vultures devouring and preying upon a self-condemned soul.

But it may be here replied, What needs any continuance of the Spirit's workings to render a man inexcusable, since the very strivings of the Spirit in natural conscience is sufficient to effect this?

I answer; that it is most true, that even nature itself is able to cut off all excuse from the mind of an awakened sinner: as is clear from [Rom. i. 20](#), where Paul, speaking of the heathen, which were only acted by this principle, says, *that they were without excuse*. And again, in [Rom. ii. 15](#), we read of their natural *consciences excusing and accusing each other*, according as their deeds were good or evil. From whence it clearly follows, that the motions of God's Spirit are continued and vouchsafed to the impenitent under the gospel, not barely to render them inexcusable, but to render them in a greater measure inexcusable, and to charge their impenitence with greater aggravations: for God intending to the reprobates different degrees of punishments, it is requisite that in order to it, he should present their sins under different aggravations.

And thus we see God's two great gospel designs; the first of them to convert the elect, which is effected by the extraordinary power of the Spirit; the second to bereave the reprobate of excuse, which is accomplished by the ordinary strivings of it, in those convictions which in their issue prove ineffectual: so that now the Spirit having finished the end for which those workings were continued, what in reason can follow, but the end being acquired, those workings should cease? In human actions designed for the attainment of any end, when it is actually attained, the continuation of that action is irrational and absurd. And what is unsavoury and unbecoming in the actions of men, shall we ascribe to those of the Spirit? A man may with as much reason set his reapers to work when he has finished his harvest, or set his labourers to prune and lop his trees, which by his own appointment they have already cut down, as the Spirit continue his strivings after he has fully accomplished God's

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end upon any sinner. He is sent only as God's agent or ambassador to do his message, and for a while to negotiate his business with the hearts of the impenitent, not to take up his fixed dwelling or habitation with them. Therefore it is most rational, that having done his message, and finished his embassy, he should depart.

3. The third ground or reason why God withdraws his Spirit upon our resistance, is because it highly tends to the vindication of his honour.

Now God may vindicate his honour two ways in the Spirit's departure.

1. As it is a punishment to the sinner, that has dishonoured him. God's glory cannot be repaired but by the misery of the party that made a breach upon it. God cannot be glorious, till the offender is made miserable. Now this is a punishment exactly correspondent to the sin, that is totally spiritual. For can there be a greater punishment for a sinner, than to be permitted to take a full swing in the free satisfaction of his lust? When God bereaves a soul of his Spirit, there is, as I may say, a decree passed in the court of heaven, in respect of that soul, for liberty and toleration in sin. In this sense there is no distinction between the evil of sin and the evil of punishment; for the evil of sin is the greatest evil of punishment. If a man possessed with phrensy should endeavour to drown or stab himself, and being forcibly withheld, should fight and strive to have his will; could there be any greater punishment for his fighting and striving, than to be delivered over to the free execution of his intended mischief? We find the children of Israel grieving, and even fretting God's Spirit, in [Ezek. xvi. 43](#), *Thou hast fretted me in all these things*. Now what course does God take to revenge himself? Does he threaten them with the sword, with famine and desolation? Does he give them over as a prey to their enemies, to be insulted over by a bitter captivity? No; but, what is worse, that he may inflict spiritual judgments, he causes temporal judgments to cease; in [verse 42](#), *I will make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry*: that is, his anger should grow to that height, that it should be too great to be outwardly expressed: it should burn inwardly: and so it is much more dreadful. The wind when it breaks forth, it only shakes the trees; but when it is pent up and restrained within the ground, it makes the very earth shake and tremble. Questionless, there is not an expression in all God's word, that does more fully and terribly hold forth God's anger, than this wherein he says he will be angry no more. It is clear therefore that God cannot vindicate his honour by inflicting a greater evil upon those that despise his Spirit, than by withdrawing it. Then God punishes the unjust man in a fearful way, when he inflicts that matchless curse in [Revel. xxii. 11](#), and says, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still*. Then does he take the sorest vengeance of the unclean person, when he withdraws the pure motions of his holy Spirit, and says, *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still*. No penalty for sin so dreadful, as a liberty to continue in sin.

2. God may vindicate his honour by clearing his injured attributes from those aspersions that human mistakes might charge upon them: for upon God's merciful, patient continuance

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of his Spirit, after long opposition made against it, from the facility of God's forbearance, men are prone to conceive otherwise of God, than is either consistent with their duty or his honour. But now, by thus withdrawing of his Spirit, he does eminently vindicate and recover the repute of his injured attributes, and of these two especially.

1. Of his wisdom. 2. Of his mercy.

1. He vindicates and asserts the honour of his wisdom. I confess it is downright atheism to deny God's wisdom in words, and few will do it. But corruption is apt to think what atheism only will avouch. And there is a language of the heart which speaks clear enough to God's dishonour, though not to our hearing. The voice of it in such a case is, *How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most high?* Psalm lxxiii. 11. Is it for God's wisdom to offer what he knows will be rejected; and to multiply his entreaties, that the sinner may only have occasion to multiply affronts? Is it prudence to urge and press a man with the continual offers of that thing, which we know him to be fully resolved for ever to refuse? Amongst men there is none but the covetous and the foolish that offer their gifts to those who they are sure will not accept them. He that shall give with the same importunity that others ask, and shall entreat men to receive his favours, plays the beggar in the midst of his liberality. Now as long as the Spirit prorogues his workings after an obstinate resistance of them, so long he only seeks and sues for a repulse; he courts an affront. It is mercy at first for God to send his Spirit; but when it is slighted, it is wisdom to revoke it.

2. He vindicates the honour of his mercy. Such is the vileness of men, that even from mercy itself they take occasion to blaspheme mercy. For by thus presuming upon it, they do not so much think or speak, as act their blasphemies against it. He that goes on to sin against mercy, he either thinks that God knows it not, and so cannot punish him; or that he is of so impregnable a clemency that he will not. But as the former of these strikes at God's omniscience, so the latter at his mercy. For this is not properly mercy, but fondness; that is, an irrational mercy; which we cannot add to God's nature, but by such additions we should diminish and detract from his perfection.

Now God by the departure of his Spirit vindicates the honour of his mercy in a double respect.

1. By shewing that it is no ways inferior, much less contrary to his holiness. God's attributes do not interfere nor clash: the exercise of one does not jostle out the other: they are at perfect agreement: and mercy will not enlarge itself to such a pitch as holiness will not warrant. God will let the resisters of his Spirit see, that as he was merciful to endure them so long, so he is too holy to bear with them any longer. For during the time of his forbearance, the repute of his holiness lies at stake. What glory did God gain to his mercy, as it is in Psalm l. by bearing with *such as consented with thieves, as were partakers with adulterers, as gave their mouth to slanders and reproaches?* I say, what glory did he gain in verse 21, *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as*



thyself? Here we see, in recompence of his forbearance, they question his righteousness; and from his permission conclude also his approbation of their wickedness.

2. God in this vindicates the honour of his mercy, by making it clear that it is not repugnant to his justice: nay, that it is not only not repugnant to it, but also makes way for a severer execution of it: and from hence God may be said not only to be merciful because he will be merciful, but because he will be just. Mercy neither can nor will rescue an impenitent sinner from the hand of justice. All the time that the infinite mercy of God is striving and dealing with the heart of an obstinate sinner, his justice is like a sleeping lion, ready to tear him in pieces whensoever God shall awaken it. It is reported of Dionysius, that setting to sea after he had pillaged a temple, and having a very prosperous voyage, he cried out, *O quam diis placet sacrilegium!* How are the gods pleased with sacrilege! The case of the obstinate sinner is not much unlike: when men in the full pursuit of their sins find themselves yet followed by the fresh gales of the Spirit blowing upon their hearts, they are apt to conclude, that God will still wait their leisure, that these motions will be perpetual, and that therefore they may take their own time to accept of those terms, that they suppose will be always offered: and consequently they will venture to swear once more, to wantonize once again, to take another sip or two of the cup of intemperance, till the Spirit departs of a sudden, and leaves them in a state of irrecoverable hardness and perdition. As children, when they play by the seashore, they will in sport step a little into the water, and presently a foot further, and so on, till the tide unexpectedly comes, and sweeps them away beyond all possibility of return. As long as an obdurate sinner goes on resisting the Spirit, even the angels of heaven cry to God, *How long, O Lord, holy and just!* Where is the glory of thy holiness, and thy zeal for thy justice, that thou dost thus suffer so provoking, and yet so contemptible a creature to make a progress in his rebellion, to abuse thy grace, and to affront thy Spirit? Now the righteous God is here even engaged to withdraw his Spirit, and to vindicate the honour of his mercy by the exercise of his justice.

4. God withdraws his Spirit upon resistance, because this naturally raises in the hearts of men an esteem and valuation of the Spirit's workings: and the reason of this is, because in so doing, men apparently see that God himself puts an esteem and value upon them, otherwise why should he so severely bereave men of them upon their abuse? Were it not a treasure, God would not be so choice of it. God shewed what a value he put upon his vineyard, by taking it from those husbandmen who had misemployed it.

The great God is not jealous for a trifle. God can continue worldly riches to men even when they abuse them; but if a spiritual talent be misimproved, it must be taken away. Now upon whatsoever God shews his esteem, it is natural for men, acting rationally, to place theirs.

Now the esteem that the departure of the Spirit begets upon their minds is twofold.



1. An esteem of fear. For this, like the rest of God's judgments, *is poena ad unum, terror ad omnes*; a punishment indeed to one, but a terror to all. God in every punishment does not intend revenge so much as example. We read how the Spirit departed from Saul: and certainly God designed it not only for a judgment upon him, but also for a document of fear to others; otherwise, why do these things stand upon eternal record in scripture? Questionless the thought of this would put a stop to any sober sinner; it would give a restriction to his appetite: and if there be any thing that keeps the sinner from causing the Spirit to depart, it is the fear of his departure. Men are usually ruled and instructed by their fears. It is the height of spiritual prudence to draw caution from danger, to distil instruction from punishments. And from a serious consideration of the Spirit's final departure from others, to secure it in its abode with ourselves.

2. The thought of this begets in the minds of the godly an esteem of love. When they shall know that God withdraws his Spirit from the unworthy abusers of it, and yet continues it to themselves notwithstanding all their unworthiness, if there be any but the least grain of pious ingenuity in them, they cannot but reflect upon this distinguishing love of God with melting returns of love and affection. For who is there, even amongst the most holy of men, but reflecting upon his own heart must of necessity confess, Is there not with me also an opposition to the Spirit, as well as in others? yet the Spirit has for ever departed from them, and still abides working and striving with me. Singularity puts a value and endearment upon mercy. Enjoyments that are peculiar are usually precious.

Application. You have heard that there is a set time, after which the Spirit, being resisted, will cease to strive, and depart: you have also heard how many ways it may be resisted; and withal, the several grounds and reasons why it will withdraw upon such resistance. And now, what can be more seasonable than to wrap up all in the apostle's own exhortation, [1 Thess. v. 19](#), *Quench not the Spirit*. It is clear therefore that it may be quenched. And if so, it will be our prudence to avoid all those courses that may not only quench, but even cool it in its workings. Let every one be as careful and tender of grieving the Spirit, as he would be of grieving his only and his dearest friend. Believe it, it is this Spirit alone that is able to stand by and comfort you in all the disconsolate and dark passages of your lives. When he is gone, who shall resolve and clear up all the doubts of our misgiving and trembling consciences? who shall subdue all our corruptions? who shall bear up our desponding souls in the midst of afflictions? who shall ward off the force and fire of temptations? Our own deceiving hearts, an alluring world, a tempting Devil, and all the powers of sin and hell, will be let loose upon us: and, what is the greatest misery of all, being deprived of the Spirit, we shall have nothing to oppose them; no second to assist us. Be ready therefore to entertain it in all its motions; to cherish all its suggestions: whensoever it knocks at the door of your hearts, (as it often does,) stand prepared to open to it, and receive it with joy. When it speaks to you in the word, answer, as Samuel did, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears*. When it seems

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to pull you from sin, and says, *Do not that abominable thing which my soul hates*; draw back your hands from the commission of it, and do it not for a world. When it enables you to relinquish and forsake some sins, never rest till you have forsaken them all. When it raises you to the performance of some good duties, still press forward to perfection: let every holy motion and desire be improved into an holy action: but if you should at any time chance to grieve or oppose him, (as we do all of us too, too frequently,) yet be sure that you persist not in it, but recover yourselves by a speedy and a serious humiliation. Mourn over your disobedience, pray fervently for an obedient heart. Assuredly you will hereafter find, that it is better thus to strive with God in prayer, than with the Spirit in his workings. Now as arguments to dissuade or deter you from this, and withal to persuade and excite you to the former, take these motives.

1st, Our resisting of the Spirit in his precepts and instructions will certainly bereave us of his comforts. Now the office of the Spirit consists in these two great works, to instruct and to comfort. The same Spirit that in [John xvi. 7](#) is termed a *Comforter*, in the [thirteenth verse](#) is said to be a guide to lead into all truth. Where we must note, that his comforting work always presupposes and follows his work of instruction; yea, and it is dispensed to men as a reward for their obedience to that; nay, before this work pass upon the soul, it is not capable of the other. For the Spirit to pour in comfort to an impure heart, before it is qualified and cleansed, and as it were prepared, by its instructing, convincing work; it is as if a physician should administer cordials to a corrupt, foul body; they would do much more hurt than good, till the ill humours are purged and evacuated. He that will not be reformed cannot be comforted. God has inseparably joined these two together, and therefore it is presumption for any to hope to divide and put them asunder; as it is in [Rom. xiv. 17](#), *righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost* go linked together. Purity and spiritual joy are as closely united as sin and sorrow. It is in vain to catch at one and balk the other. He that will not obey the Spirit as his instructor shall never enjoy him as his comforter.

Now the reason that such as resist the Spirit cannot enjoy his comforts is, because this resistance is inconsistent with those ways by which the Spirit speaks comfort; and these are two.

1. The Spirit speaks comfortably, by giving a man to understand his interest in Christ, and consequently in the love of God. But it is impossible for him that resists the Spirit to be sure of any of these, inasmuch as he falls under those qualifications that render a man the proper object of God's hatred, and totally estranged from Christ; [1 John iii. 6](#), *Whosoever abideth in Christ sinneth not; and whosoever sinneth hath neither seen nor known him*. I suppose it will be easily granted, that he who acts in a continual repugnancy to God's Spirit, by a despisal of all his holy motions and suggestions, sins, and that at a very high strain; and upon this concession, this scripture will unavoidably conclude him so far unacquainted with Christ, as neither to have seen nor known him. And can we rationally imagine, that he

who has neither seen nor known Christ can have any sure interest in him? He that is interested in Christ is his friend; [John xv. 15](#), *I call you not servants, but friends*: but he that is not so much as an acquaintance cannot possibly be a friend. And for any interest in God's love, he is totally excluded from that; [Psalm xi. 5](#), *The wicked his soul hateth*. And such are all resisters of God's Spirit, wicked in the highest, *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, and by way of eminence. Now how can the Spirit convey comfort to such persons? To whom if he reports the truth, as the Spirit of truth can do no otherwise, he must tell them that they are aliens to Christ, strangers to the covenant, enemies to God, haters of him, and therefore hated by him. Now if these can be arguments of comfort, then he that resists God's Spirit may be comforted.

2. The second way by which the Spirit comforts a man, is by discovering to him that grace that is within him; that is, not only by clearing up God's love to him, but also by making him see his love to God. The strength of this, as it is an argument of comfort, lies here. Because our love to God it is the proper effect, and therefore the infallible sign of God's love to us, which is the great basis and foundation of all comfort. We therefore love because we were first beloved. But can the love of God abide in him who resists and does despite to his Spirit? Can any one at the same time fight like an enemy and love like a friend? The sinner cannot give any true evidence of his love to God, inasmuch as a continual, obstinate resistance of the Spirit is inconsistent with grace; and it implies a contradiction for any one to love God, and to oppose that Spirit, that is a Spirit of love.

And thus it is clear, that such as resist the Spirit's strivings cannot share in his comforts. And how unconceivably sad and miserable it is to want them, none knows so much as those that have wanted them. If God should let loose all the sorest afflictions of this life upon you, and should awaken your consciences to accuse you, and withal possess your guilty, despairing souls with a lively sense of his wrath for sin, and fill you with the terrors of hell, so that you should even roar by reason of the disquietness of your hearts, as he had done to some, and particularly to David, you would then know what it is to have the Spirit as a comforter. However, when you come to look death in the face, and are upon your passage into eternity, and presently to appear before God in judgment, then you will prize the comforts of the Spirit. And if you ever hope to enjoy them at that disconsolate hour, beware how you resist his strivings now.

The second motive why we should comply with the Spirit is, because the resisting of it brings a man under hardness of heart and a reprobate sense. Now a man is then said to be under a reprobate sense, when he has lost all spiritual feeling; so that when heaven and the joys thereof are displayed before him, he is not at all affected with desire; when hell and wrath and eternal misery are held forth to him, he is not moved with terror.

Now resisting of the Spirit brings this hardness upon the heart two ways.

1. By way of natural causation. Hardness of heart is the proper issue and effect of this resistance. Every act of opposition to the Spirit disposes the soul to resist it further; as the

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reception of one degree of heat disposes the subject to receive the second, and the second the third, till it arrives to the highest. And the more frequent the Spirit's workings have been, the heart grows more insensible and hard; as a path, by often being trod, is daily more and more hardened. Custom in sin produces boldness in sin; and we know boldness is for the most part grounded upon the insensibility of danger.

2. This resistance brings hardness of heart, by way of a judicial curse from God. It causes God to suspend his convincing and converting grace; whereupon the sinner is more and more established and confirmed in his sin. It is not to be questioned but the hardness of Pharaoh's heart at the time of his destruction had in it something of punishment as well as sin; and was penally inflicted upon him as a judgment for his irrational hardness under God's former judgments. I shall allege no more examples; this is sufficient to demonstrate how dreadful a thing it is to be punished with an hard heart. It is this alone, to say no more of it, that renders all the means of a man's salvation utterly ineffectual.

The third motive is, because resisting of the Spirit puts a man in the very next disposition to the great and unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. For this dreadful sin is only a greater kind of resistance of the Spirit. And all the foregoing acts of resistance are like so many degrees and steps leading to this. For since a man cannot presently and on the sudden arrive to the highest pitch of sin, there are required some previous antecedent dispositions to enlarge, and, as it were, make room in the heart for the admission of so great a sin as this. All former oppositions of the Spirit empty their malignity into this one, which virtually includes them all, as rivers empty themselves into the sea. It is confessed a man may frequently oppose the Spirit, and yet not commit this great sin; yet none ever committed this sin, but such as had before frequently resisted the Spirit. Some indeed make the sin against the Holy Ghost to be only a blasphemous rejection of the external objective testimony of the Spirit, that is, of his miracles, by which he attested the truth of the gospel, so as to ascribe them to the Devil. But as for a wilful, malicious opposing of the internal, efficient persuasion of the Spirit upon the heart, they doubt whether the nature of man is capable of such an act. Here, not to exclude the former from being the sin against the Holy Ghost, certain it is, that the general judgments of divines do agree in the latter. And [Hebrews vi. 4, 5, 6](#), seems not obscurely to evince the same.

And thus you have seen that way marked out before you that leads to the sin against the Holy Ghost. Therefore it nearly concerns all resisters of the Spirit to bethink themselves whither they are going, and to beware that they do not slide into that that is unpardonable. It is wisdom timely to depart from your sins, before the Spirit finally departs from you. I hope there is none here that either has or ever shall commit this great sin; yet consider, which certainly is terror enough to a considering mind, that if you go on, and still proceed to resist the Spirit, it is possible that you may. And in things that concern the everlasting



ruin of an immortal soul, *miserum est posse si veils*. It is a miserable and a dangerous thing to be able eternally to undo yourselves if you will. Wherefore I should now entreat and advise all, as they desire the comforts of the Spirit, as they tender the good of their precious, never-dying souls, as they wish for the unspeakable satisfaction of a peaceable conscience, as they hope to enjoy the refreshing sense of God's love here, and to behold his face with joy hereafter, that they would forbear to resist the strivings of the Spirit; for if we still go on further and further, till we come to resist him so far, he will then seal and fit us for wrath and judgment in this world, and then actually deliver us up to it in the next.



SERMON LXII.

MATTHEW v. 20.

For I say unto you, That unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

WE have here the great doctor of souls in his sermon upon the mount applying himself to the great business of souls, their eternal happiness and salvation; a thing aimed at by all, but attained by few. And since there can be no rational direction to the end, but what is laid in the prescription of the means, he shews them the most effectual course of arriving to this happiness that is imaginable; and that is, partly by discovering those ways and means by which men come to miss of salvation; and partly by declaring those other ways by which alone it is to be attained: first he shews them how it cannot be acquired; and secondly how it may. It cannot be attained by *the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees*; it may be attained by such an one as does exceed it.

In order to the understanding of the words, I must premise some short explication of these three things.

I. Who and what these scribes and pharisees were.

II. What is here meant by *righteousness*.

III. And lastly, what by *the kingdom of heaven*.

I. And first for the first, who these scribes and pharisees were. It would be both tedious, and, as to our present business, superfluous, to discourse exactly of the original and ways of the several sects that about the time of our Saviour infested the Jewish church; such as were the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Herodians. Let it suffice us therefore to consider so much of them as may contribute to the clearing of the text; which is, that these pharisees were a powerful ruling sect amongst the Jews, professing and pretending to a greater sanctity of life and purity of doctrine than any others. Upon which account they gave denomination to their sect from *pharash*, a word importing *separation*; as that they were men who had sequestered and set apart themselves to the study and pursuit of a more sublime piety and strictness of life than the rest of mankind; as also such as gave the best interpretations of the Mosaic law, not only expounding, but also correcting and perfecting it where it was defective.

In which respect they struck in with the scribes. For *pharisee* is the name of a sect, *scribe* of an office; and signifies as much as *a doctor*, one whose employment it was to interpret and expound the law to the people in their synagogues. So that in short the scribes and pharisees amongst the Jews were such as owned themselves for the strictest livers and the best teachers in the world.

II. The second thing to be explained is, what our Saviour here means by *righteousness*. The word may have a twofold acception.



1. It may import a righteousness of doctrine; such an one as is to be the rule and measure of the righteousness of our actions.

2. It may import a righteousness in point of practice; that is, such an one as denominates a man just or righteous; as the former properly denominates a man only sound or orthodox.

And now, according to these two senses, as righteousness is twice mentioned in the text; so it is first mentioned in one sense, and then in the other.

The righteousness called by our Saviour the *righteousness of the pharisees* signifies the righteousness taught by the pharisees, which is manifest from the whole drift of the chapter. In all which throughout, it is evidently Christ's design to oppose the purity of his doctrine in the clear exposition of the law, to the corrupt and pernicious expositions that the pharisees gave of the same.

But then the other righteousness, called by our Saviour *your righteousness*, imports a righteousness of practice, a pious life, or a course of evangelical obedience. So that the sense of our Saviour's words taken more at large runs thus: Unless you pursue and live up to a greater measure of piety than what the scribes and pharisees teach and prescribe you in their perverse and superficial glosses upon the law of Moses, you will find it infinitely short and insufficient to bring you to heaven. Your lives must outdo your lessons. You must step further, and bid higher, or you will never reach the price and purchase of a glorious immortality.

III. The third and last thing to be explained is, what our Saviour here means by *the kingdom of heaven*: for there are three several significations of it in scripture.

1. It is taken for the state and economy of the church under Christianity, opposed to the Jewish and Mosaic economy; in which sense that known speech both of John the Baptist and of our Saviour is to be understood, in which they told the world, *that the kingdom of heaven was at hand*; that is, that the Mosaic dispensation was then ready to expire and cease, and that of the Messiah to take place.

2. It is sometimes taken for the kingdom of grace, by which Christ rules in the hearts of men. In which sense those words of his to the young man are to be understood in [Mark xii. 34](#), *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*. That is, Thou art not far from such a frame and disposition of spirit, as fits a man to be my disciple and subject, and so brings him under the spiritual rule of my sceptre.

3. And lastly, it is taken for the kingdom of glory, which is the prime and most eminent acception of it; and which I conceive is intended here; though I deny not but some would have it expounded in the first of these three senses.

But besides that the natural aspect of the phrase seems to favour this interpretation, the word *entering into* much more easily denoting a passage into another place, than merely into another state or condition; the same is yet further evident from hence, that an entrance into the kingdom of heaven is here exhibited as the end and reward that men propose to themselves as attainable by the righteousness of their lives, and consequently to commence

upon the expiration of them; which therefore can be nothing else but a state of blessedness in another world.

These things premised by way of explication, we may take the entire sense of the words in these three propositions.

1. That a righteousness is absolutely necessary to the attainment of salvation. Which is an assertion of such self-evidence, and so universally granted by all, in appearance at least, that to cast any remark upon it might at most seem ridiculous, did not so many in the world contradict their profession by their practice; and while they own designs for heaven, yet indeed live and act as if they were candidates of hell and probationers for damnation.

2. As a righteousness is necessary, so every degree of righteousness is not sufficient to entitle the soul to eternal happiness. It must be such an one as exceeds, such an one as stands upon higher ground than that which usually shews itself in the lives and conversation of the generality of mankind.

3dly, and more particularly, that righteousness that saves and lets a man into the kingdom of heaven, must far surpass the best and the greatest righteousness of the most refined and glistening hypocrite in the world.

Which proposition, as virtually containing in it both the former, shall be the subject of the following discourse. And the prosecution of it shall lie in these three things.

I. To shew the defects of the hypocrite's righteousness, here expressed by *the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees*, and declared for such an one as cannot save.

II. To shew those perfections and conditions by which the righteousness that saves and brings to heaven does transcend and surpass this.

III. And lastly. To shew the grounds and reason of the necessity of such a righteousness in order to a man's salvation.

And first, for the defects of the hypocritical, pharisaical righteousness, we may reckon several.

1. As first, that it consisted chiefly in the external actions of duty; never taking care of the inward deportment of the soul, in the regulation of its thoughts, wishes, and affections; in the due composure of which consists the very spirit and vital part of religion. The pharisees taught the Jews, that he who imbrued not his hand in his brother's blood was no murderer, and that he who defiled not his neighbour's bed could not be charged with a violation of that command that forbade adultery. So that it seems, according to them, a man might innocently burn with malice and revenge, lustful and impure thoughts, so long as he could keep the furnace stopped, and prevent them from breaking forth and raging in gross outward commissions.

Thus (as our Saviour told them) making clean the outside of the platter, and smoothing the surface of their behaviour, while their inward parts were full of all noisomeness, filth, and abomination. The hypocrite and the pharisee, like some beasts, are only valuable for

their skin and their fine colours; so that after all their flourishes of an outward, dissembled piety, all those shows of abstinence and severity, by which they amuse the eyes of the easy, credulous world, we cannot say properly of any one of them, that he is a good man, but only a good sight; and that too, because we cannot see all of him.

Such persons are not the temples or habitations, but the sepulchres of piety; and we know that when we have seen a sepulchre, we have had the best of it: for there is none so ill a friend to his other senses, as to search or look into it any further. The pharisees were thought and accounted by the deluded vulgar the greatest heroes in piety, the highest and most advanced proficient in the school of religion, of all others whatsoever; so that at the same time they were both the glory and the reproach of the rest of their brethren the Jews, whom they seemed to obscure, and even to upbraid, by their vast transcendancy in the ways of sanctity and devotion: and yet our Saviour gives you the very original and spring-head of all those shining performances, in [Matt. xxiii. 5](#), where he tells you, *that all their works they did to be seen of men*. It was the eye of the world that they courted, and not the eye of heaven that they feared. Otherwise, surely they would have thought themselves responsible for all the villainy and hypocrisy of their hearts; for all their bosom-cabinet-concealed impurities; since all these were as open to the eye of God's searching omniscience, and as odious to the pure eye of his holiness, as murders or robberies committed in the face of the sun, and revenged upon the actors of them by the hand of public justice.

And where these were cherished by the inward affections and approbations of the heart, demure looks, long prayers, and enlarging of phylacteries, were but pitiful, thin arts to commend them to the acceptance of that God, who looks through appearances, and pierces into the heart, and ransacks the very bowels and entrails of the soul, rating all our services according to the frame and temper of that. For being a spirit, he judges like a spirit, and cannot be put off with dress and dissimulation, paint and varnish; and the fairest outward actions of duty, not springing from an inward principle of piety, are no better in the sight of him, who abominates nothing more than a foul heart couched under a fair behaviour.

2. A second fault and flaw in this righteousness was, that it was partial and imperfect, not extending itself equally to all God's commands: some of which the pharisees accounted great ones, and accordingly laid some stress upon the observation of them; but some again they accounted but little ones, and so stiled them in their common phrase, and shew as little regard to them in their practice.

Which defect, as it was eminent in them, so it is also common to every hypocrite in the world, who never comes up roundly to the whole compass of his duty, even then when he makes the most pompous show; but singles out some certain parts, which perhaps suit best with his occasions, and least thwart his corruptions, leaving the rest to those who may like them better. As the proud or unclean person may be liberal and charitable to the poor, frequent in the service of God, abhor a lie, or a treacherous action, with many other the like

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duties, that do not directly grate upon the darling sin that he is tender of: but what says he all this time to those precepts that charge his pride and his uncleanness? God calls upon him to be humble as well as charitable, to be pure and chaste, as well as devout; nor will it suffice him to chop and change one duty for another: he cannot clear his debts, by paying part of the great sum he owes. The obligation of the law is universal and uniform, and carries an equal aspect to every instance of religion lying within the compass of its command. Upon which account it is said, [James ii. 10](#), that *he that offends in one is guilty of all*. For by so doing he breaks the whole chain of duty, which is as really broke and divided by the breach of one link, as if every one of them was took asunder. Nor is it otherwise in the laws of men. For surely he that is convict of murder has no cause to excuse that violation of the law upon this account, that he is no thief or traitor: the law is as really, though not as broadly violated by one transgression as by a thousand: and whosoever lives, and allows himself in the constant neglect of any one of Christ's commands, and expects to be saved upon the stock of his obedience to the rest of them, (though even the supposition of such an obedience is absolutely impossible,) that man has a hope altogether as absurd, sottish, and ridiculous, in reference to his future salvation, as if in the forementioned case a convict murderer should think to escape the sentence and execution of death, by pleading that he never broke open an house, nor conspired the death of his prince, or bore his share in a public rebellion: how would every one hiss and explode such a defence!

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David knew that there was no building any solid confidence upon a parcelled, curtailed obedience; and therefore he states his hope upon such an one as was entire and universal; [Psalm cxix. 6](#), *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments*. Every disappointment certainly draws after it a shame: and whosoever hopes to stand before God's tribunal in the strength of a righteousness maimed in any one integral part of it, will have a defeat and a disappointment cast upon his greatest expectation and his highest concernment; he will be lurch'd in that that admits of no after-game or reparation.

God exacts of every soul that looks to enter into the kingdom of heaven a perfect righteousness; perfect, I say, with a perfection of sincerity, which is a perfection of parts, though not of degrees: that is, there is no one grace or virtue but a Christian must have it before he can be saved: though such is the present state of human infirmity, that he cannot in this life attain to the highest degree of that virtue. But as an infant is a man, because he has all the parts of a man, though he has them not in that bulk and strength that those have who are grown up; so he is righteous and sincere who performs every divine precept, omitting no one of them, though his performances have not that perfection and exactness that is to be found in the obedience of a person glorified and made perfect. However, still we see that universality is required, and an equal compliance with all the divine precepts. For as it is not an handsome eye, an handsome hand, or an handsome leg, but an universal symmetry and just proportion of all the members and features of the body, that makes an handsome

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man; so neither is it the practice of this or that virtue, but an entire complexion of all, that must render and denominate a man righteous in the sight of God. And therefore it was infinite folly in the pharisees to be exact in other things, even to the tithing of rue and cummin, and in the mean time to lop off the force and design of a grand precept of the law, by allowing men in some cases not to pay honour to their parents; as we read in [Mark vii. 10, 11, 12, 13](#), making it a damnable sin forsooth to deprive the priest of a salad, but a very allowable thing to suffer a parent to starve with hunger. But when such a deluded wretch shall brave up his accounts to God, that he prayed of ten, fasted twice a week, paid tithe of all that he had; what will he answer, when God shall reply upon him; Ay, but, friend, what have you done for your distressed father and mother? Your bowels have been shut up to your nearest kindred, and you have not relieved the poor, though recommended with the dearest relation. Then he will find, that the performance of one duty can be no recompence for the omission of another.

Men should measure their righteousness by the extent of Christ's satisfaction for sin, which was far from being partial or imperfect; it grasped and comprehended all the sins that either were or could be committed. And if, in the application of this satisfaction to any soul, Christ should take all the sins of it upon his own score, one only excepted, that one sin would inevitably expose it to the full stroke of God's vengeance, and sink it for ever into endless perdition.

Let a man therefore shew me any one part of the law, for the transgression of which Christ did not shed his blood; and for the pardon of which the merits of that blood must not be imputed to him, if ever it is pardoned; and I will grant, that in the general rules and obligations of obedience, that part of the law admits of an exception, and consequently obliges not his practice: but Christ knew full well how imperfect a Saviour and Redeemer the world would have found him, had he not paid a price to divine justice for every even the least and most despised deviation from the law. One peccadillo, as some phrase it, if not satisfied for, had been enough to crack and confound the whole system of the creation, and to have lodged the whole mass of mankind eternally in the bottomless pit.

From all which it appears, that the partial, mangled obedience that the hypocrite or the pharisee pays to the divine precepts, can entitle him to no right of entrance into the kingdom of heaven: there is no coming thither with a piece of a wedding garment, with the ragged robe of an half and a curtailed righteousness: and the righteousness of the most eminent unregenerate professor amounts to no more, who is never so clear and entire in duty, but that he has his reserves, his allowances, and exemptions from some severe, troublesome precept or other, that he is resolved to dispense with himself in the observance of; as never worshipping God but with a proviso, that he may still bow in the house of his beloved Rimmon.

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3. The third defect of this pharisaical, unsound righteousness is, that it is legal; that is, such an one as expects to win heaven upon the strength of itself and its own worth. Which opinion alone were enough to embase the very righteousness of angels in the sight of God so far, as to render it not only vain, but odious; and to turn the best of sacrifices into the worst of sins. It is an affront to mercy for any one to pretend merit. It is to pull Christ down from the cross, to degrade him from his mediatorship; and, in a word, to nullify and evacuate the whole work of man's redemption.

For, as St. Paul argues most irrefragably, *if righteousness is by the law, then is Christ dead in vain*: since upon this supposition there can be no necessity of Christ or Christianity; and the gospel itself were but a needless and a superfluous thing: for it is but for a man to set up and traffic for heaven upon his own stock; and to say to himself, *I will do this, and live: my own arm shall bring salvation to me, and my righteousness shall uphold me.*

But who art thou, O vain man! that durst reason thus about thy eternal state? when, if God should enter into judgment with the best of his servants, *no flesh living could be justified in his sight*: a sight that endures not the least unpardoned, unremitted transgression; that *charges the very angels with folly*. So infinitely exact, searching, and spiritual, is the eye of divine justice, and so vastly great is the prize of glory that we run for, so much higher and more valuable than our choicest and most elaborate performances!

And can we think then, that a few broken prayers, a few deeds of charity, a few fastings and abstinences, and restraints of our appetites, will carry in them such a commanding, controlling value, as to bear us through God's tribunal, and to make the doors of heaven fly open before us, that we may even with the confidence of purchasers enter and take possession of the mansions of glory? Some perhaps may think so, who suppose they can never think too well of themselves.

But as arrogant as such a thought is, its arrogance is not greater than its absurdity. For as Job says, *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* And as our Saviour, *Who can gather figs from thistles?* or the grapes of a perfect righteousness from the briers and thorns of a corrupt and degenerate nature? Since the ruins of our faculties by original sin, let the devoutest and the sincerest Christian in the world bring me the best and the exactest duty that ever he performed, and let him sift, examine, and compare it to the rigid measures of the law, and the holiness of the divine nature, and then let him venture the whole issue of his eternal happiness upon it if he dares. Did men consider how many things go to the making of an action perfectly good, and how many such good actions are required to integrate and perfect a legal righteousness; it were impossible for them to reflect with any fondness upon the very best of their services, which are always allayed with such mixtures of weakness and imperfection.

And therefore let not any pharisee be too confident; for be his righteousness what it will, yet if he hopes to justify himself by it, he will find that persons justified in this manner

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are never glorified. Men may saint themselves as they please; but if they have nothing to read their saintship in but their own rubric, they may chance to find themselves condemned in heaven, after they have been canonized on earth.

And thus I have shewn the three great defects cleaving to the righteousness of the pharisee, who is here represented as the grand exemplar and standard of hypocrisy; all hypocrites more or less partaking of both the nature and defects of the pharisaical righteousness. And if we now grant, as with great truth and readiness we may, that the pharisee or hypocrite may live up to such glorious externals and visible shows of religion, as to astonish the world with an admiration of his sanctity; so that in the judgment and vogue of all, he shall stand heir apparent to a crown of glory and immortality; which yet in reality and truth he has no more title to, than he who acts the part of a king upon the stage has a claim to a sceptre or a kingdom: then what judgment can we pass upon the generality of men that wear the name of Christians, and upon that account seem big with expectations of a glorious eternity, yet are as much short of a pharisaical righteousness, as that is short of sincerity? Alas! they are not arrived so far as to approve themselves to the eye of the world, so far as to appear godly, or so much as to be mistaken for religious. But by an open sensuality and profaneness, their behaviour seems a constant defiance of heaven, and a confutation of their religion. It were worth the knowing by what reasonings and discourses such men support their minds and reconcile their future hopes to their present practices: for if he, whom the world judges a saint, may yet be *in the gall of bitterness* and *a son of perdition*, is it possible that such an one, whose actions proclaim him even to the world for a reprobate and a castaway, should yet indeed be a pious and a sincere person? No, assuredly; for though the piety of a man's outward actions may very well consist with the villainy of his heart, yet it is impossible, on the other hand, for a life outwardly bad, to be consistent with an heart inwardly good; and those that set forth for heaven in the contrary persuasion and principle, when they meet with hell in their journey's end, will find that they missed of their way.

And thus much for the first thing, which was, to shew the defects of the hypocritical, pharisaical righteousness. I proceed now to the

Second, which is, to shew those perfections and qualities by which the righteousness that saves and brings to heaven does transcend and surpass that. Many might be recounted, but I shall insist upon four especially.

1. As first, that it is entirely the same, whether the eye of man see it or see it not. It can do its alms where there is no trumpet to sound before it, and pray fervently where there is no spectator to applaud it. It finds the same enlargements and flowings of affection when it pours forth itself before God in private, as when it bends the knee in the solemn resorts of the multitude, and the face of the synagogue. It is contented, that the eye of Omniscience is upon it, and that it is observed by him who sees in secret, as scorning to move upon the inferior motives of popular notice and observation.

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For it acts by a principle that holds no intercourse with the world, even the pure abstracted love of God, which would be as active and operative, if there were no other person in the world but him alone in whose breast it is. And therefore there is no external interest that can bear any share in the heat and activity of such an one's devotion. It needs no company to keep it warm. For he transacts with God, and with God alone: so that if he can be heard above, he cares not whether or no he is seen here below.

But it is much otherwise with the hypocrite; his devotion grows cold, if not warmed with the crowd and the throng. He designs not to be, but to appear religious. He can willingly want the inward part of a Christian, so he may be esteemed and commended for the outward. For as it is said of some vainglorious pretenders to science, that they desire knowledge, not that they may know, but that they may be known; so some affect the garb of the pious and the austere, who abhor the rigours of a real and a practical piety. They can be infinitely pleased with the dress and fashionable part of religion, while they hate and loathe the grim duties of self-denial and mortification. In short, they are like fire painted upon an altar; they desire not to be hot, but only to shine and glister.

And it is this worthy principle that brings so many to the worship of God, only to court the eye of some potent, earthly great one, who perhaps commands and lords it over their hopes and their fears; so that when he is present, they will be sure to be so too; and when he is absent, they can be as ready to turn their back upon heaven, and to think it below their occasions, if not also their prudence, to sacrifice business to prayer, which is a thing that they never make their business.

But what would or could such a person plead, should God arrest him in the church, and summon him to his tribunal in the midst of those his solemn mockeries of heaven, and ask him who and what it was that brought him thither to that place? Surely he could not answer that it was God; for then why should not he be there as well in the absence of the grandee his patron, unless he thought that God also was one of his retinue, and so was no where to be found out of his company?

But this very thing makes it but too, too evident, that it is a mortal eye that every such hypocrite adores; so that in all his most solemn addresses he cannot so properly be said to act the Christian, as to act a part. Such pharisees come to church, and frame themselves into postures of zeal and devotion, as women dress themselves, only to be stared upon and admired. If they were sure of no beholders, they would not be fine; for it is the spectator that makes the sight.

I wish all those would lay this consideration to heart who are concerned to do so, and measure the sincerity of that holiness they so much value themselves upon, by this one mark and criterion; for can they answer from their hearts, that it is purely the love of duty that engages them in duty? Is there nothing of pageantry and appearance that models and directs and gives laws to all the little designs they bring along with them to church? Does not the



consideration of what such or such an one will say or think of them bring many to sermons, and, which I tremble to think of, even to the sacrament, who neither by the necessity or excellency of the duty itself would ever be induced to vouchsafe their attendance upon it; but could be contented to live without sacraments for ever, and to end their days like heathens and outlaws from all the graces of the second covenant and the mysteries of Christianity?

If there be any such that hear me, let them lay their hands upon their hearts, and assure themselves, that God loathes all their services, and detests their righteousnesses the highest affront that can be passed upon all his attributes, and consequently has assigned it its reward in the lot and portion of hypocrisy.

But now the sincere and the really holy person apprehends a beauty and a worth in the very exercise of duty, and upon that account still carries the reason of his devotion about him and within him; so that when he has shut to his door, and sequestered himself from the popular gaze, then chiefly he sets himself to the work of prayer and piety, and accounts his closet a temple, and his conscience an amphitheatre.

2. A second property of such a righteousness as is saving and sincere, is an active watching against and opposing every even the least sin. How small and almost indiscernible is a dust falling into the eye, and yet how troublesome, how uneasy, and afflicting is it! Why just so is the least sin in the eye of a sanctified person; the sense of it is quick and tender, and so finds the smallest invasion upon it grating and offensive. We know when David cut off the skirt of Saul's garment, at which time he was far from any hurtful designs upon his person, yet it is said of him, that immediately upon the doing of it *his heart smote him*; so fearful was he, lest he might have transgressed the lines of duty, though his conscience did not directly accuse him of any such transgression. Now as solicitous as David was after this action, so cautious and timorous is every sincere person before he attempts a thing. That plea for sin, *Is it not a little one?* which is the language of every rotten heart, is no argument at all with him for its commission.

For he knows that there is no sin so little, but is great enough to dishonour an infinite God, and to ruin an immortal soul; none so little, but designs and intends to be great, nay the greatest, and would certainly so prove, if not cut off and suppressed by a mature prevention. Every lustful thought left to its own natural course and tendency would be incest, every angry thought murder, and every little grudging of discontent and murmuring would at length ripen into blasphemy and cursing; did not the sanctifying or restraining grace of God interpose between the conception and the birth of most sins, and stifle them in the womb of that concupiscence that would otherwise assuredly bring them forth, and breed them up to their full growth.

And this the new creature in every truly righteous person is sufficiently aware of, which makes him dread the very beginnings of sin, and fly even the occasions of it with horror.

For he knows how easily it enters, and how hardly it is got out; how potent and artificial it is to tempt and insinuate, and how weak his heart is to withstand a suitable temptation.

He considers also how just it is with God to give those over to the highest pitch and degree of sin, who make no conscience of resisting its beginnings; and withal how frequently he does so, withdrawing the supports and influences of his grace, and leaving the soul, after every yielding to sin, more and more defenceless against the next encounter and assault it shall make upon him. All which considerations of a danger so vastly and incredibly great, are certainly very sufficient to warrant the nicest caution and fearfulness in this case, upon all accounts of prudence whatsoever.

But now if we examine the righteousness of an unsound, pharisaical professor by this property, we shall find it far from being thus affected toward sin; it easily connives at and allows the soul in all lesser excursions and declinations from the rule, readily complies with the more moderate and less impudent proposals of the tempter: so that such an one never comes so much as to startle, or think himself at all concerned about the security of his eternal estate, till some great and clamorous sin begins to cry aloud and ring peals of imminent approaching vengeance in his conscience; and then perhaps he looks about him a little, prays twice or thrice, dejects his countenance, and utters a few melancholy words, and so concludes the danger over, his sin atoned, his person safe, and all perfectly well again. But this is a righteousness took up upon false measures, a righteousness of a man's own inventing, and consequently such an one as can never determine in the peace of him that has it.

But the truly pious is never at rest in his mind, but when he stands upon his guard against the most minute and inobservable encroachments of sin, as knowing them upon this account perhaps more dangerous than greater; that the enemy that is least feared, is usually the soonest felt. For as in the robbing of an house, it is the custom for the sturdiest thieves to put in some little boy at the window, who being once within the house may easily open the doors, and let them in too: so the tempter, in rifling of the soul, despairs for the most part to attempt his entrance by some gross sin of a dismal, frightful hue and appearance, and therefore he employs a lesser, that may creep and slide into it insensibly; which yet, as little as it is, will so open and unlock the bars of conscience, that the biggest and the most enormous abominations shall at length make their entrance, and seize and take possession of it.

Let no man therefore measure the smallness of his danger by the smallness of any sin; for the smaller the sin, the greater may be the stratagem. We may have heard of those who have been choked with a fly, a crum, or a grapestone. Such contemptible things carry in them the causes of death; and it is not impossible, though some have had swallows large enough for perjuries, blasphemies, and murders, yet that others may chance to be choked and destroyed with sinful desires, idle words, and officious lies. How many ways a soul may be ruined, few consider; those that do, will not count it scrupulosity to beware of the least

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and slenderest instruments of damnation. But if to be so very nice and suspicious be called by any *scrupulosity*, such must know, that no scrupulosity about the matters of eternity can be either absurd or superfluous, but in these affairs is only another name for care and discretion.

3. The third discriminating property of a sincere, genuine, and saving righteousness is, that it is such an one as never stops, or contents itself in any certain pitch or degree, but aspires and presses forward to still an higher and an higher perfection. As the men of the world, when they are once in a thriving way, never think themselves rich enough, but are still improving and adding to their stock; just so it is with every sanctified person in his Christian course: he will never think himself holy and humble and mortified enough, but will still be making one degree of holiness a step only to another; when he has kindled the fire in his breast, his next business is to make it flame and blaze out. If it were possible for him to assign such a precise measure of righteousness as would save him, yet he would not acquiesce in it; since it is not the mere interest of his own salvation, but of God's honour, that principles and moves him in the whole course of his actions. And then he knows, that if God cannot be too much honoured, he cannot be too righteous; and that if he cannot too intently design the end, he can never too solicitously prosecute the means. It was an expression of a father, concerning the apostle Paul, that he was *insatiabilis Dei cultor*, an insatiable worshipper of God: so that having pitched his mind upon this object, his spiritual appetites were boundless and unlimited.

It is observed of the two nobler senses, the seeing and the hearing, that they are never tired with exerting themselves upon such things as properly affect them; for surely none ever surfeited upon music, or found himself cloyed with the sight of rare pictures. In like manner the desires of the righteous are so suited and framed to an agreeableness with the ways of God, that they find a continual freshness growing upon them in the performance of duty; the more they have prayed, the more fit and vigorous they find themselves for prayer: like a stream, which the further it has run, the more strength and force it has to run further.

Such persons are earned forth to duty, not upon designs of acquisition, but gratitude; not so much to gain something *from* God, as (if it were possible) to do something *for* him. And we all know, that the nature and genius of gratitude is to be infinite and unmeasurable in the expressions of itself. It makes a David cry out as if he even laboured and travailed to be delivered of some of those thankful apprehensions of the divine goodness that his heart was big with; [Psalm cxvi. 12](#), *What, says he, shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?* All that he could do or say for God seemed to him but a short and slender declaration of those aboundings of affection, that within he found and felt inexpressible.

But now if we come to try the spurious, unsound righteousness of the hypocrite by this test, how pitiful, how false, and how contemptible a thing will it appear! For he designs not



to excel or to transcend in the ways of sanctity. If he can but patch up such a righteousness as shall satisfy and still his conscience, and keep it from grumbling and being troublesome, down he sits, and there takes up, as being far from the ambition of making a proficiency, or commencing any degree in the school of Christ. But, believe it, a man may be righteous in this manner long enough before he is like to be saved for being so. For the truth is, such an one does not really design to be righteous, but only to be quiet. And in this one thing you will find a never-failing mark of difference between a pharisaical hypocrite and a truly sanctified person, that the former measures his righteousness by the peace of his conscience, and the latter judges of the peace of his conscience by his righteousness.

4thly, The fourth and last property of a sincere and saving righteousness, which most certainly distinguishes it from the hypocritical and pharisaical, is humility. For I dare venture the whole truth of the gospel itself upon this challenge. Shew me any hypocrite in the world that ever was humble. For the very nature and design of hypocrisy is, to make a man a proud beggar; that is, by the most uncomely mixture of qualities, at the same time poor and vain-glorious. We have the exact character of him in [Rev. iii. 17](#); *Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; but knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* It is the business of every hypocrite to make a show, to disguise his penury with appearances of plenty and magnificence: and upon that account it concerns him to make the utmost improvement of the little stock he has; to look upon every duty as meritorious, every prayer as not so much asking a mercy as claiming a debt from heaven, till at length, as it were, even dazzled with the false lustre of his own performances, he breaks forth into the pharisaical doxology, *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men.* Thus pluming and priding himself in all his services, as if in every action of piety he did God a courtesy, and passed an obligation upon his Maker.

But how does the sincere person behave himself both in and after every duty performed by him! Surely with a very different spirit. Self-abhorrence and confusion of face, like the poor publican, makes him cast down his eyes while he is lifting up his heart in prayer: and when he has exerted his very utmost zeal in the divine worship, he lays his person and his services in the dust before God, and is so far from expecting a reward for their value, that he counts it a mercy not to be condemned for their imperfection; and though God condemns him not, yet he is ready to condemn himself.

God be merciful to me a sinner, is the constant language of his heart in the conclusion of his choicest performances: for when he has done his best, he knows that it will scarce amount to so much as well: so that if there was not a gospel to qualify and mitigate the rigours of the law, he knows the demands of it were too high and exact to be answered upon the stock of nature, attainted with guilt, and disabled with infirmity. And knowing so much, he never expostulates the injustice or unkindness of God's judgments, be his afflicting hand never so pressing and severe upon him. He acknowledges that severity itself cannot outdo

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the provocation of his sins; which, though it were possible for God to be cruel, yet had rendered it impossible for him to be unjust. And therefore he kisses the rod and embraces the scourge, and confesses the righteousness, even where he faints under the burden of an affliction. In a word, after he has done all to purge, purify, and reform himself, he is not yet pleased with himself; but in the very exercise of his graces finds those flaws, those failures and blemishes, that makes him wonder at the methods and contrivances of divine mercy; that God can be infinitely just, and yet he not infinitely miserable.

Having thus finished the second thing, and shewn those perfections and qualities by which the righteousness that saves and brings to heaven does transcend and surpass that of the hypocrite and pharisee; I descend now to the

Third and last, which is, to shew the grounds, the reasons, and causes of the necessity of such a righteousness, in order to a man's salvation, and entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

1. The first shall be taken from the holiness of God; whose nature will never suffer him to hold so strict and intimate a communion with his creature, as he does with those whom he admits into heaven, unless the divine image and similitude, defaced by sin, be in some degree repaired and renewed upon him. For surely there is none who admits his swine into his parlour or his bedchamber; and the corruption of man's nature, unmortified, and unre-moved by the contrary habits of holiness, degrades a man to the same vileness, the same distance from, and unfitness for, all society with his Maker. It cannot but be the most offensive and intolerable thing to nature, for the healthful and the sound, the curious and the cleanly, to converse with sores and ulcers, rottenness and putrefaction; and yet a soul covered with the leprosy of sin is infinitely more loathsome and abominable in the most pure eyes of God. For how is it possible for truth to cohabit with hypocrisy, purity with filth, and the transcendently holy and spiritual nature of God to associate with lust and sensuality? And these are the endowments, and ornaments, and commending qualifications of every unsanctified person, every hypocrite and pharisee, let him shine with never so fair and bright a reputation in the eye of the credulous and deluded world.

But the matter stops not here. Such an one is unfit for the presence of God, not only upon the account of his impurity, but also of his enmity. For what should a sinner do in heaven, any more than a traitor or a rebel do in court? The exasperated justice of God will prey upon the unpardoned sinner wheresoever it meets him, even in the highest heaven, if it were possible for him to come thither; and whensoever it does so, it is that that makes hell; which is not so properly the name of a place as of a condition; a condition consigning the soul over to endless misery and desperation. And could we imagine a person locally in Abraham's bosom, yet if he brought with him the worm of conscience, and the secret lashes of an infinite wrath, that man were properly in hell, or hell at least in him, wheresoever the place of his abode or residence might fall.

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2dly, The other reason for the necessity of such a transcending righteousness, in order to a man's entrance into heaven, shall be taken from the work and employment of a glorified person in heaven; which is the continual exercise of those graces which here on earth were begun, and there at length shall be advanced to their full perfection: as also the contemplation of God in all his attributes, together with the whole series of his astonishing actions, by which he was pleased to manifest and display forth those great attributes to the world: whether in creation, by which he exerted his omnipotence in calling forth so beautiful a fabric out of the barren womb of nothing and confusion; or in the several traces and strange meanders of his providence, in governing all those many casualties and contingencies in the world, and so steadily directing them to a certain end, by which he shews forth the stupendous heights of his wisdom and omniscience; and lastly, in the unparalleled work of man's redemption, by which at once he glorified and unfolded all his attributes, so far as they could be drawn forth into the view of created understandings. Now a perpetual meditation and reflection upon these great subjects is the noble employment of the blessed souls in heaven.

But can any, whom the grace of God has not thoroughly renewed and sanctified, be prepared and fitted for such a task? No, assuredly: and therefore it is worth our observing, that those who, living dissolutely in this world, do yet wish for the rewards of the righteous in the other, commence all such wishes upon a vast ignorance and mistake of their own minds; not knowing how unsuitable, and consequently how irksome, the whole business of heaven would be to their unsanctified appetites and desires. For what felicity could it be to a man always accustomed to the revels and songs of the drunkards, to bear a part in the choir of saints and angels, singing forth hallelujahs to him that sits upon the throne? What pleasure could it be to the lustful, the sensual, and unclean person, to follow the Lamb, with his virgin retinue, wheresoever he goes?

Such persons deceive themselves when they wish themselves in heaven; and, in truth, know not what they desire: for however they may dread and abhor hell, yet it is impossible for them to desire heaven, did they know what they were to do there: and therefore, instead of making Balaam's wish, that they may *die the death of the righteous*, they should do well to live the life of such; and to hearken to Christ commanding them to *seek the kingdom of heaven*, by first seeking the *righteousness thereof*. For it is righteousness alone that must both bring men to heaven, and make heaven itself a place of happiness to those that are brought thither.

To which, the God of heaven, and Fountain of all happiness, vouchsafe to bring us all: to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

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The following alterations have been made by conjecture. See the Advertisement in the 5th volume.

- P. 54. l. *penult*, of some] *The original edition reads* or some
- 77. l. 21. intention] intentions
- 119. l. 12. brook] break
- 133. l. 26. abides; like] abides like
- 184. l. 17. are] is
- 198. 27. many a foil] many foil
- 230. l. 22. the first thing in] the first in
- 243. l. 6. were] was
- 255. l. 29. ancients] ancient
- 291. l. 18. or women] and women
- 348. l. 25. any thing of] any of
- 367. l. 29. sabbaths] sabbath



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APPENDIX.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE three following discourses were first published in a volume with the following title: “Posthumous works of the late reverend Robert South, D.D. containing, Sermons on several subjects; viz. I. On the Martyrdom of King Charles I. II. Ecclesiastical Constitutions to be strictly maintained. III. The Certainty of a Judgment after this Life. IV. An Account of his Travels into Poland, with the Earl of Rochester, in the year 1674. V. Memoirs of his Life and Writings. VI. A true Copy of his last Will and Testament. London: printed for E. Curll, at the Dial and Bible against St. Dunstan’s church in Fleet-street, M.DCC.XVII. Price 5s.”

The preface to this volume, as far as it relates to the contents of the present edition, is as follows:

“It is generally expected that upon publishing the posthumous works of any author, some account should be given of them; therefore the editor of these remains of the learned Dr. South thinks himself obliged to offer the following particulars, both for the reader’s information and satisfaction.

“The letter to Dr. Pococke, from Dr. South, when in Poland, was communicated to the gentleman who wrote his life, which is all that I can say as to that piece.

“The three sermons were given by Dr. South himself to Dr. Aldrich, late dean of Christ Church in Oxford.

“As to the first of them, that upon the 30th of January, it was preached at court, and from some passages in it, I think it is pretty plain that it must have been soon after the restoration of his most sacred majesty king Charles the Second. This discourse was printed some years ago; but besides a large paragraph which is enclosed between crotchets in the 8th page,¹ there are many considerable amendments and corrections throughout.

“The second, entitled, *Ecclesiastical constitutions to be strictly maintained*, has been lately published, but from so imperfect a copy, that there is not one single paragraph in it truly printed.

“The third, *Upon a future judgment*, was preached at St. Mary’s church in Oxford; and from a passage in it, and by the conclusion, it is apparent that it must have been composed for the anniversary of the royal martyr.”

The author’s life, including the letter to Dr. Pocock, is prefixed to the first volume of the present edition.

The first sermon is in substance the same with that printed in the third volume of the present edition, p. 415-449.

¹ See page 470 of this volume.

The second sermon may also be compared with p. 162-200 of the fourth volume. But the imperfect edition said in the preface to have been lately published, seems to be that, a copy of which exists in the Bodleian library, (8v^o S. 239. *Th.*) and bears the following title:

“Comprehension and Toleration considered; in a sermon preached at the close of the last century. London: printed for A. Moore, near St. Paul’s Church-yard, MDCCXVI. Price four-pence.”



On the Martyrdom of King Charles I.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT COURT ON THE 30th OF JANUARY.

JUDGES xix. 30.

And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such thing done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.

HERE is a certain fatal pertinency in the very phrase of the text; for when there were Judges, there was no king in Israel, though, as to the present purpose, they were judges of another nature that removed ours. We have an account of this prodigious and horrid action, clothed with all the circumstances of wonder and detestation, but yet well timed for its commission, it being done when, upon the want of the regal power, [Judges xxi. 25](#), *every man did what was right in his own eyes*; or, in another dialect, *as the Spirit moved him*. And as for the authors of this execrable fact, we have them defending themselves with their swords, and for some time asserting their villainy, with their success and victory against their brethren, twice beaten and massacred before them in a righteous cause, as you may see in the next chapter.

I do not profess myself either delighted or skilled in mystical interpretations, and to wiredraw the sense of the place, so as to make it speak the death of the king; as some who can interpret scripture, as if the whole book of God was only to tell things transacted in England and Scotland; so that there cannot be so much as an house fired, or a leg broken, but they can find it in Daniel or the Revelations. No, I pretend to no such skill; it is enough for me if I bring the present business and the text together, not by design, but accommodation: and as the phrase runs full and high, so I doubt not but to find such a parallel in the things themselves, that it may be a question whether of the two may have a better claim to the expression. The cause here, which was worded with so high aggravations, was an injury done to one single Levite, in the villainous rape of his concubine; the resentment of which was so great, that it engaged the rest of the tribes to revenge his quarrel with a civil war, in which the preeminence and conduct was given by God's appointment to the royal tribe of Judah: the sceptre being most concerned to assert the privileges and revenge the injuries of the crosier. We have the Benjamites sturdily abetting what they had impiously done, and for a while victorious in villainy, by the help of God's providence, trampling on those that fought by the warrant of his precept.



Let us now see the counterpart: he that dates the king's murder from the fatal blow given on the scaffold, judges like him that thinks it is the last stroke that fells the tree; the killing of his person was only the consummation of his murder, first begun in his prerogative. We have heard the knack of a double capacity, personal and politic, and I suppose they distinguish the king into two, that each party might murder him under one. And for those whose loyalty does only consist in designing that action which was taken out of their hands, and having laid the premises, they protest against the conclusion; they cover their prevarication with a fig-leaf, and only differ from the other party in this, that these endeavour to disguise the author of the fact, those only the executioner. Well then; when a long sunshine of mercy had ripened the sins of the nation, so that it was now ready for the shatterings of divine vengeance: the seed of faction and rebellion having been for a long time studiously sown by schismatical doctrines, and well watered by seditious lectures, the first assault was made against the tribe of Levi, by some implacable enemies of the church, the fury of whose lust and ambition nothing could allay, till they had full scope to prostitute her honour, and ravish her revenues; till at length, cut, divided, torn in pieces, as she was, she lay a ghastly spectacle to all beholders, to all the Israel of God.

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And as this was done to our English Levites, so it was acted by Benjamites; by so many Benjamites as raven like wolves, till by their rapine and sacrilege they had their mess five times bigger than their brethren's. The prosecution of which quarrel was armed by the royal standard, and the defence of the church managed by the defender of the faith; in which it pleased the all-wise God to cause Judah to fall before Benjamin, the lion to be a prey to the wolf; by which fatal trace of Providence the king being killed long before forty-five, by natural and immediate sequel to complete the action, Charles was murdered in forty-eight. And this is the black subject of this day's solemnity. In my reflections upon which, if detestation, (that is, a due apprehension of the blackest fact that ever the sun saw, since he withdrew upon the suffering of our Saviour,) chance to give an edge to some of my expressions, let those know, (the nature of whose actions has made truth look like a sarcasm, and descriptions sharper than invectives,) I say, let these censurers know, (whose innocency lies only in the Act of Indemnity,) that to drop the blackest ink and the bitterest gall upon this fact, is not satire, but propriety.

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Now since the text says, *There was no such thing ever done or seen*, the proper prosecution of the words, all applied to this occasion, must be to shew wherein the strangeness of this deed consists; and since the nature of every particular action is to be learnt by reflecting upon the agent and the object, with all the retinue of circumstances that attend it, under a certain determination, I shall accordingly distribute my following discourse into these materials: I shall,

- I. Consider the person who suffered.
- II. Shew the preparation or introduction to his suffering.

III. Shew you the qualities of the agents who acted in it.

IV. Describe the circumstances and manner of the fact.

Lastly, Point out the destruction and grim consequences of it.

Of all which in their order.

I. He that suffered was a king, and, what is more, such a king as was not chosen, but born to it; owing his kingdom, not to the voice of popularity, but the suffrage of nature; he was a David, a saint, a king, but never a shepherd: all the royal blood in Christendom ran in his veins, *i. e.* many kings went to the making up of him, and his improvement and education fell in ways not below his extraction. He was accurate in all the commending excellencies of human accomplishments, able to deserve, had he not inherited, a kingdom: of so controlling a genius, that in every science he did not so much study as reign, he appeared not only a proficient, but a prince; and, to go no further for a testimony, let his own writings serve for a witness, which speak him no less an author than a monarch, composed with such an unfailing accuracy, such a commanding, majestic pathos, as if they had been written not with a pen, but a sceptre: and as for those whose virulent and ridiculous calumnies ascribe that incomparable work to others, it is a sufficient argument that those did not, because they could not write it. It is hard to counterfeit the spirit of majesty and the inimitable peculiarities of an incommunicable genius. At the council-table he had ability enough to give himself the best counsel, but the unhappy modesty to diffide in it, indeed his only fault; for modesty is a paradox in majesty, and humility is a solecism in supremacy.

Look we next on his piety and incomparable virtues, though, without any absurdity, I may say, that his very endowments of nature were supernatural; so pious was he, that if others had measured their obedience to him by his to God, he had been the most absolute monarch in the world. As eminent for frequenting the temple, as Solomon for building one: no occasions ever interfered with his devotion, nor business outdated his time of attendance in the church. [And here I should not pay a due tribute to his memory, did I forget that remarkable instance of constancy of soul, (not to be shocked by the severest strokes of ill fortune,) with which he received the surprising news of the sudden loss of a dear friend and faithful servant, sacrificed by a vile assassin to the unjustifiable and groundless clamours of an ill-informed people, as well as to private spleen. How gallantly in this affair did he suppress human nature, and restrain that flood of tears due to the memory of his friend, till he had finished his duty towards God.] So firm was he in the protestant cause, though he lay in the midst of temptation, in the very bosom of Spain, and though France lay in his, yet nothing could alter him, but he espoused the cause of his religion more than his beloved queen. He ever filled the title under which we prayed for him. He could defend religion as a king, dispute for it as a divine, and die for it as a martyr. I think I shall speak a great truth in saying, that the only thing that makes protestantism considerable in Christendom is the church of England, and the only thing that does now cement and confirm the church of England is

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the blood of that blessed martyr. He was so well skilled in all controversies, that we may well style him in all causes ecclesiastical, not only supreme governor, but moderator, nor more fit to fill the throne than the chair; and withal, so exact an observer and royal rewarder of all such performances, that it was an encouragement for a man to be a divine under such a prince. Which piety of his was set off with a whole train of moral virtues. His temperance was so great and impregnable amidst all those allurements with which the courts of kings are apt to melt the most stoical and resolved minds, that he did at the same time both teach and upbraid the court; so that it was not so much their own vices, as his virtue, that rendered their debauchery inexcusable. Look over the whole race of our kings, and take in the kings of Israel to boot, and who ever kept the bonds of conjugal affection so inviolate? David was chiefly eminent for repenting in this matter; Charles for not needing repentance. None ever of greater fortitude of mind, which was more resplendent in the conquest of himself, and in those miraculous instances of his passive valour, than if he had strewn the field with the rebels' arms, and to the suffrage of his own cause joined the success of theirs; and yet, withal, so meek, so gentle, so merciful, and that even to cruelty to himself, that if ever the lion dwelt with the lamb, if ever courage and meekness were united, it was in the breast of this royal person; and, which makes the rebellion more ugly and intolerable, there was scarce any person of note among his enemies who did not wear his colours, and carry some particular mark of his favour and obligations; some were his own menial servants, and *eat bread at his table*, before they *lifted up their heel against him*; some received from him honours, some offices and employments. I could mention particulars of each kind, did I think their names fit to be heard in a church or from a pulpit. In short, he so behaved himself toward them, that their rebellion might be malice indeed, but could not be revenge.

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And these his personal virtues shed a suitable influence upon his government for the space of seventeen years; the peace, plenty, and honour of the English nation spread itself even to the envy of all neighbouring countries; and when that plenty had pampered them into unruliness and rebellion, yet still the justice of his government left them at a loss for an occasion to rebel, till at last ship-money was pitched upon as fit to be reformed by excise and taxes, and the burden of the subjects took off by plunderings and sequestrations. The king now, to scatter that cloud which began to gather and look black upon the church and state, made those condescensions to their impudent petitions, that they had scarce any thing to make war for, but what was granted them already; and having thus stript himself of his prerogative, he left it clear to the world, that there was nothing left for them to fight for, but only his life. Afterward, in the prosecution of this unnatural war, what overtures did he make for peace! Nay, when he had his sword in his hand, his armies about him, and a cause to justify him before God and man, how did he choose to compound himself into nothing! to depose and unking himself by their hard and inhuman conditions! But all was nothing: he might as well compliment a mastiff, or court a tiger, as think to win those who were now

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hardened in blood, and thoroughpaced in rebellion. Yet the truth is, his conscience uncrowned him, as having a mind too pure and delicate to admit of those maxims and practices of state that usually make princes great and successful.

Having thus, with an unheard of loyalty, fought against him and conquered him, they commit him to prison; and the king himself notes, that it has always been observed, that there is but little distance between the prisons of kings and their graves: to which I subjoin, that where the observation is constant, there must be some standing cause of the connection of the thing observed; and indeed, it is a direct translation from the prison to the grave; the difference between them being only this; that he who is buried is imprisoned under ground, and he that is imprisoned is buried above ground: and I could wish, that as they slew and buried his body, so we had not also buried his funeral.

But, to finish this poor and imperfect description, though it is of a person so renowned, that he neither needs the best, nor can be injured by the worst; yet, in short, he was a prince whose virtues were as prodigious as his sufferings; a true father of his country, if but for this only, that he was father of such a son. And yet the most innocent of men, and best of kings, so pious and virtuous, so learned and judicious, so merciful and obliging, was rebelled against, drove out of his own house, pursued as a partridge on the mountains, like an eagle in his own dominions, inhumanly imprisoned, and for a catastrophe of all, most barbarously murdered; though in this his murder was the less woful, in that his death released him from his prison.

II. Having thus seen the person suffering, let us in the next place see the preparations of this bloody fact; and indeed, it would be but a preposterous course, to insist only on the consequent, without taking notice of the antecedent. It were too long to dig to the spring of this rebellion, and to lead up to the secrecies of its first contrivance; but as David's phrase is, upon another occasion, it *was framed and fashioned in the lowest parts of the earth*, and there it was *fearfully and wonderfully made*, a work of darkness and retirement, removed from the eye of witnesses, even that of conscience also; for conscience was not admitted into their council. But their first aim was to procure a Levite to consecrate their design, and a factious ministry to christen it the cause of God: they still own their party for God's own Israel, and being so, it must needs be their duty to come out of Egypt, though they provide themselves a Red sea for their passage.

For their assistance they repair to the northern steel, and bring in an unnatural, mercenary crew, that like a shoal of locusts covered the land, such as inherited the description of those, which God brought upon his people the Jews; *a nation fierce, peeled, and scattered*: and still we shall read that God punished his people from the north; as *Jer. 1. 3, Out of the north comes destruction, which shall make the land desolate. Jer. iv. 6, I will bring evil from the north, and great destruction*. Now to endear and unite these into one interest, they invented a covenant, much like to that which some are said to make with hell, and an agreement

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with death. It was the most solemn piece of perjury, the most fatal engine against the church, and bane of monarchy, the greatest snare of souls, and mystery of iniquity, that ever was hammered out by the wit and wickedness of man. I shall not, as they do, abuse scripture language, and call it *the blood of the covenant*, but give it its proper title, *the covenant of blood*; such an one as the brethren, Simeon and Levi, made, when they were going about the like designs; their very posture of taking it was an ominous mark of its intent; and their holding up their hands was a sign they were going to strike. It was such an olio of treason and tyranny, that one of the assembly of their own prophets gives this testimony of it, in his narration upon it, (and his testimony is true;) “that it was such a covenant, that whether you respect the subject-matter of it, or the occasion of it, or the persons engaged in it, or lastly the manner of imposing it, the like was never read, seen, or heard of.” The truth is, it bears no other likeness to other ancient covenants, than as at the making of them, they slew beasts and divided them, so this was solemnized with blood, slaughter, and division. But that I may not accuse in general, without a particular charge; read it over as it stands prefixed to their catechisms (as if without it their system of divinity was not complete, nor their children like to become Christians, unless they were schooled to treason, and catechised to rebellion,) I say, in the covenant as it stands here, in the third article of it, after they had first promised to defend the privileges of parliament, and the liberties of the kingdom; at length they also promised to defend the person of the king, viz. in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and the liberties of the kingdom; so that their promise of loyalty to him was not absolute, but conditional, bound hand and foot with this stipulation, so far as he preserveth the true religion and liberties of the kingdom. Now those very persons who covenanted thus, had already from pulpit and press declared, the religion and way of worship established in the church of England, and then maintained by the king, to be false, popish, and idolatrous; and withal, that the king had invaded their liberties. Now for men to suspend their obedience upon certain conditions, which very conditions they declared at the same time not performed, was not to profess obedience, but remonstrate the reasons of intended disobedience. We have seen the doctrine of the covenant; see now the use of this doctrine, as it was charged home with a suitable application, in a war raised against the king, in the cruel usage and imprisonment, killing, sequestering and undoing of all that adhered to him. All which home-proceedings, though his majesty now stupendously forgives, yet the world will not, cannot yet forget; his indemnity is not an oblivion: and for those persons who now clamour and cry out, they are persecuted, because they are no longer permitted to persecute, and who choose rather to quit the ministry, than disown the obligation of the covenant, I leave to all impartial and understanding minds to judge, whether they do not by this openly declare to the world, that they hold themselves obliged by oath, as they are able, to act over again all that hath hitherto been done by virtue of the covenant, and consequently that they left not places for being nonconformists to the church, but for being virtually rebels to the

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crown; which makes them just as worthy to be indulged as a dropsy or a malignant fever, which is exasperated by mitigations, and inflamed by every cooling infusion.

But to draw the premises closer to the purpose, I argue: that which was the proper means to enable the king's enemies to make war against him, and upon that war to conquer, and upon that conquest to imprison, and inevitably to put the power in the hands of those, who by that power in the end did murder him; that, according to the genuine consequence of reason, was the natural cause of his murder. This is the proposition that I assert, but I shall not trouble myself to make the assumption: and indeed those who wipe their mouths, and lick themselves innocent by clapping this act upon the army, make just the same plea that Pilate did for his innocency in the death of Christ, because he left the execution to the soldiers; or what the soldiers may make for clearing themselves of all this blood that they have spilt, by charging it upon their swords. I conclude therefore, that this was the gradual process to this horrid act, this the train laid to blow up monarchy, this the step by which the king ascended the scaffold.

III. Come we now, in the third place, to shew who were the actors in this tragic scene. When through the anger of Providence, the thriving army of rebels had worsted justice, cleared the field, subdued all oppositions and risings, even to the very insurrections of conscience itself; so that impunity at length grew into reputation of piety, and success gave rebellion the varnish of religion; that they might consummate their villainy, the gown was called in to complete the execution of the sword; and to make Westminster-hall a place to take away lives as well as estates, a new court was set up, and judges packed, who had no more to do with justice, than so far forth as they deserved to be the objects of it: in which they first begin with a confutation of the civilians' notion of justice and jurisdiction, it being with them no longer an act of the supreme power. Such an inferior crew, such a mechanic rabble were they, having not so much as any arms to shew the world, but what they used in rebellion; that when I survey the list of the king's judges, and the witnesses against him, I seem to have before me a catalogue of all trades, and such as might have better filled the shops of Westminster-hall, than sat on the benches; some of which came to be possessors of the king's houses, who before had no certain dwelling but the king's highway; and some might have continued tradesmen still, had not want and inability to trade sent them to the war. Now that a king, such a king, should be murdered by such, the basest of his subjects, and not like a Nimrod, (as some sanctified preachers have called him,) but like Actaeon torn by a pack of bloodhounds; that the steam of a dunghill should thus obscure the sun; this so much enhanceth the calamity of this royal person, and makes his death as different from his, who is conquered and slain by another king, as it is between being torn by a lion, and being eaten up by vermin; pardon the expression, for it came into my mind by speaking of those, many of whom were some time beggars. For the feet to trample upon, yea kick at the head, would it not look like a monster? But indeed, these of all others were the fittest

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instruments for such a work; for base descent and poor education disposeth the mind to impiousness and cruelty; as of beasts those are the most savage, which are bred in dens, and have their extraction from under ground: these therefore were the worthy judges and condemners of that great king; even the refuse of the people, and the very scum of the nation, that was at that time both the uppermost and basest part of it.

IV. Pass we now, in the fourth place, to the circumstances and manner of proceeding in this ugly fact. And the circumstances, we know, have the greatest cast in determining the nature of all actions, as we judge of any one's parts or qualities by the nature of his attendants. First, then, it was not done like other works of darkness, in secret, nor (as they use to preach) in a corner, but publicly, coloured with the face of justice, managed with openness and solemnity, as solemn as the league and covenant itself. History indeed affords us many examples of princes clandestinely murdered, which though it be villainous, is in itself more excusable; for he that doeth such a thing in secret, by the manner of doing confesseth himself ashamed of the thing he does: but he that acts in the face of the sun, vouches his work for laudable, glorious, and heroic. Having brought him to the high court of justice, (so called, I conceive, because justice was there arraigned and condemned, or perhaps because it never shewed mercy) by a way of trial as unheard of as the court, he was not permitted so much as to speak in his own defence, but, with the innocence and silence of a lamb, condemned to slaughter; and it would have been well for them if they could as easily have imposed silence on his blood. Being condemned, they spit in his face, and delivered him to the mockery and affronts of the soldiers; so that I wonder where the blasphemy lies, which some charge upon those who make the king's suffering something to resemble our Saviour's: but is it blasphemy to compare the king to Christ in that respect, in which Christ himself was made like a servant? For can he be like us in all things, and we not like him? Certainly there was something in that Providence, that appointed so long ago the chapter to be read on the day of our Saviour's passion, to be read likewise on the day of our king's; and I am sure that the resemblance is so near, that had he lived before him, he had been a type of him. I confess there is some disparity in the case, for they shewed themselves worse than the Jews. But however, since they object that we make the king like Christ, I am willing it should be their commendation to be as unlike Christ as they please.

Let us now follow him from their mock-tribunal to the place of his residence till his execution. Nothing remains for a man condemned, and presently to leave the world, but these two things; 1st, To take leave of his friends, a thing not denied to the vilest malefactor, which is sufficiently apparent in that it hath not been denied to themselves: yet no entreaties from him or his royal consort could prevail with these murderers to let her take the last farewell and commands of her dying husband. He was permitted to take no farewell but to the world. Thus was he stript of all, even from the prerogative of a prince, to the privilege of a malefactor. The next thing desired by all dying Christians, is freedom to converse with

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God, and to prepare themselves to meet him at his dreadful tribunal; but with an Italian cruelty to the soul as well as the body, they debar him of this freedom also, and even solitude, his former punishment, is now too great an enjoyment. But that they might shew themselves no less enemies to private, than they had been to public prayers, they disturb his retirements, and with scoffs and continual calumnies upbraid those devotions which were then interceding for them; and I question not but fanatic fury was at that height, that they would have laughed at Christ himself, had he used his own prayer.

With these preludiums is he brought to the last scene of mockeries and cruelty, to a stage erected before his own palace; and for a greater affront to majesty, before that part of it in which he was wont to display his royalty, and to give audience to ambassadors, where now he could not obtain audience for himself, in his last addresses to his abused subjects. There he receives the fatal blow; there he dies, conquering and pardoning his enemies; and at length finds that faithfully performed on the scaffold, which was at first promised in the parliament, and perhaps in the same sense, that he should be a *glorious king*. And even this death was the mercy of the murderers, considering what kind of death several proposed, when they sat in council about the manner of it, even no less than to execute him in his robes, and afterwards to drive a stake through his head and body, to stand as a monument on his grave. In short, all kinds of death were proposed, that either their malice could suggest, or their own guilt deserve. And would these then now find in their hearts, or have the face to desire to live? And to plead a pardon from the son, who thus murdered the father? I speak not only of those wretches who openly embued their hands in the bloody sentence, but of those more considerable traitors who had the villainy to manage the contrivance, and yet the cunning to disappear at the execution, and perhaps the good luck to be preferred after it. And for those who now survive, by a mercy as incredible as their crimes, which has left them to the soft expiation of solitude and repentance; though usually all the professions that such make of repentance are nothing else but the faint resentments of a guilty horror, the convulsions and last breathings of a gasping conscience: as the mercy by which they live is made a visible defiance to government, and a standing encouragement to these alarms of plots and conspiracies: so I beseech God, that even their supposed repentance be not such, as both themselves and the kingdom hereafter may have bitter cause too late to repent of. And if indeed they should prove such as have no conscience but horror, who by the same crimes will be made irreconcilable, for which they deserve to be unpardonable; who would resume those repentings upon opportunities, which they made upon extremity; and being saved from the gallows, make the usual requital that is made for that kind of deliverance: I say, if such persons should only for a time be chained, and tied up, like so many lions in the tower, that they may gain more fierceness, and run again at majesty, religion, laws, churches, and the universities; whether God intends by this a repetition of our former confusions, or a general massacre of our persons, (which is most likely,) the Lord in his mercy fit and enable

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us to endure the smart of a misimproved providence, and the infatuated frustration of such a miraculous deliverance.

But to return to this blessed martyr. We have seen him murdered; and is there any other scene of cruelty to act? Is not death the end of the murderer's malice, as well as of the life of him that is murdered? No, there is another and viler instance of their implacable cruelty; in the very embalming of his body, and taking out of his bowels, (which, had they not relented to his enemies, had not been so handled,) they gave order to those to whom that work was committed, diligently to search and see, (I speak it with shame and indignation) whether his body was not infected with some loathsome disease; I suppose, that which some of his judges were so much troubled with. Now any one may see, that further to intimate an inquiry was in effect to enjoin the report. And here let any one judge, whether the remorseless malice of imbittered rebels ever rose to such an height of tyranny; the very embalming his body must be made a means of corrupting his name: as if his murder was not complete, if, together with his life, they did not assassinate his fame, and butcher his reputation. But the body of that prince, innocent and virtuous even to a miracle, had none of the ruins and genteel rottenness of our modern debauchery; it was firm and clear like his conscience: he fell like a cedar, no less fragrant than tall and stately. Rottenness of heart and bone belong to his murderers, the noisomeness of whose carcasses, caused by the noisomeness of their lives, might even retaliate and revenge their sufferings, and while they are under the execution, poison the executioner. But the last grand comprehensive circumstance, which is as it were the very form and spirit that did actuate and run through all the rest, is, that it was done with the pretence of conscience, and the protestations of religion, with eyes lift up to, heaven, expostulating with God with pleas of Providence, and inward instigations, till at last, with much labour and many groans, they were delivered of their conceived mischief. And certainly we have cause to deplore this murder with fasting, if it were but for this reason, that it was contrived and committed with fasting; every fast portended some villainy, as still a famine ushers in a plague: but as hunger serves only for appetite, so they never ordained an humiliation, but for doing something, which, being done, might find them matter of a thanksgiving; and such a fury did abused piety inspire into the church militant, upon these exercises, that we might as safely meet an hungry boar as a preaching colonel after a fast, whose murderous humiliations strangely verify that prophecy in [Isaiah viii. 21](#). *When they shall be hungry, they shall curse their king and their God, and look upwards*; that is, they should rebel and blaspheme devoutly. Though by the way, he that is always looking upwards, can little regard how he walks below.

But was there any thing in the whole book of God to warrant this rebellion? Instead of obedience, will they sacrifice him whom they ought to obey? Why yes: Daniel *dreamed a dream*, and there is also something in the Revelations concerning a *beast*, and a *little horn*, and a *fifth vial*, and therefore the king ought undoubtedly to die: but if neither you nor I

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can gather so much from these places, they will tell us, it is because we are not inwardly enlightened. But others, more knowing, but not less wicked, insist not so much on the warrant of it from scripture, but plead providential dispensations; God's works, it seems, must be regarded before his words; and their Latin advocate, Mr. Milton, who, like a blind adder, has spit so much poison on the king's person and cause, speaks to this roundly: *Deum secuti ducem, et impressa passim divina vestigia venerantes, viam haud obscurant, sed illustrem, et illius auspiciis commonstratam et patefactam ingressi sumus.*

But must we read God's mind in his footsteps, or in his words? This is as if, when we have a man's handwriting, we should endeavour to take his meaning by the measure of his foot. But still, is pleading conscience a covering for all enormities, and an answer to all questions and accusations also? What made them fight against, imprison, and murder their lawful sovereign? Why, conscience. What made them extirpate the government, and pocket up the revenues of the church? Conscience. What made them perjure themselves with contrary oaths? what made swearing a sin, and forswearing none? what made them lay hold on God's promises, and break their own? Conscience. What made them sequester, persecute, and undo their brethren, ravin their estates, and ruin their families, get into their places, and then say they only rob the Egyptians? Why still this large capacious thing is conscience. The poet says, *Vis fieri dives, Bithynice? conscius esto;* which I think may be properly construed thus: *If you would be rich, be (in their sense) conscientious.* We have lived under that model of religion, in which nothing has been counted impious but loyalty, nor absurd but restitution. But, O blessed God, to what an height can prosperous, audacious impiety rise! Was it not enough that men once crucified Christ, but that there must be a generation of men who would crucify Christianity? Must he who taught no defence but patience, allowed no armour but submission, and never warranted the shedding any blood but his own, be now again mocked with soldiers, and vouched the author and patron of all those hideous and rebellious acts, which an ordinary impiety would stand amazed at, and which in this world he has so plainly condemned in his word, and will hereafter severely sentence in his own person? Certainly, these monsters are not only spots in Christianity, but so many standing exceptions from humanity and nature.

V. In the fifth and last place, let us view the horridness of the fact in the fatal consequences that did attend it. Every villainy is like a great absurdity, drawing after it a numerous train of homogeneous consequences; and none ever spread itself into more than this. But I shall endeavour to reduce them all into two sorts; such as were of a civil, and such as were of a religious concern.

And first for the civil, political consequences of it; there immediately followed a change of that government, whose praise had been proclaimed even by its enemies. It was now shred into democracy; and the stream of government being cut into many channels, ran thin and shallow: whereupon the subjects had many masters, and every servant so many

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distinct services. But the wheel of Providence, which they only looked at, and that even to giddiness, did not stop here; but by a fatal vicissitude, the power and wickedness of those many were again compacted into one, and from that one returning again into many, with several attending variations, till at length we pitched upon one again, one beyond whom they could not go, the *ne plus ultra* of all regal excellencies, as all change tends to, and at last ceases upon its acquired perfection. Nor was the government only, but the glory of our nation also changed; distinctions of orders confounded, the gentry and nobility, who voted the bishops out of their dignities in parliament, by the just judgment of God were thrust out themselves, and brought under the lash of an imperious beggar on horseback. Learning was discountenanced, and the universities threatened; the law to be reformed; the model of the nation to be burnt: such an inundation and deluge of ruin, reformation, and confusion, had spread itself upon the whole nation, that it seemed a kind of resemblance of Noah's flood, in which a few men survived among beasts.

The second sort of consequences were of religious concern. I speak not of the contempts and rebukes lying upon the preachers of those days; for they brought their miseries upon themselves, and had a great deal more cause to curse their own seditious sermons, than to curse Meroz. They sounded the first trumpet to rebellion, and like the saints, had grace to persevere in what they first began; courting an usurper, and calling themselves his loyal and obedient subjects, never endeavouring [enduring] so much as to think of their lawful sovereign. I speak not therefore of these; but the great destructive consequence of this fact was, that it left a lasting slur upon the protestant religion: *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines triumph*, lest the papacy laugh us to scorn. I confess the seditious writings of some who call themselves protestants have sufficiently bespattered their religion. See Calvin warranting the three estates to oppose their prince, 4 Instit. ch. 20. sect. 81. See Mr. Knox's Appeal, and in that, arguments for resisting the civil magistrate. Read Mr. Buchanan's discourse *de jure regni apud Scotos*. Read *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, under the name of Junius Brutus, writ by Ottoman the civilian. See Pareus on the 13th to the Romans, where he states a large term, *atrocem aliquam injuriam*, and a very easy application, to be sufficient reason for the taking up arms against the king. But this is rather a comment on the covenant, than on the 13th to the Romans. Both of which, as they teach the same doctrine, so they deserved and had justly the same confutation. But these principles, like sleeping lions, lay still a great while, and never were completely awaked, nor appeared in the field, till the French holy league and the English rebellion. Let the powder-plot be as bad as it will, yet still there is as much difference between that and the king's murder, as between an action and an attempt: what bulls and anathemas could not do, seditious sermons have brought about. What was then contrived against the parliament, has since been done by it: what the papists' powder intended, the soldiers' matches have effected. I say, let the powder-plot be looked upon, as indeed it is, the product of hell,

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as black as the souls and principles that hatched it; yet still this reformation-murder will preponderate, and January always have the precedency of November.

And thus I have traced this accursed fact through all the parts and ingredients of it: and now, if we reflect upon the quality of the person upon whom it was done, the condition of the persons that did it, the means, manner, and circumstances of its transaction; I suppose it will fill up the measure and reach the heights of the words in the text, *that there was never such a thing done or seen since the day that the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt until this day*. For my part, my apprehensions of it overcharge my expressions; and how to set it off, I know not; for black receives no other colour: but when I call to mind all the ideas of horror, and all the records of the Grecian and barbarian murders, together with new-fancied instances, and unheard of possibilities, yet I find none parallel, and therefore have this only to say of the king's murder; that it is a thing, than which nothing can be imagined more strange, and amazing, and astonishing, except its pardon.

And now, having done with the first part of my text, does it not naturally engage me in the second? Must such a deed, as was never seen nor heard of, never be spoken of? or must it be stroked with smooth, mollifying expressions? Is this the way to cure the wound, by pouring oil upon those that made it? And must Absalom be therefore dealt gently with, because he was a sturdy rebel? If, as the text bids us, we consider the fact, and take advice with reason and conscience, we cannot but obey it in the following words, and speak our minds. For could Croesus's dumb son speak upon the very attempting a murder upon his prince and father, and shall a preacher be dumb, when such an action is committed? Therefore having not yet finished my text, nor, according to the command of it, spoken all my mind, I have one thing more to propose, and with that to conclude.

Would you be willing to see this scene acted over again? To see that restless plotting humour, that now boils and ferments in many traitors' breasts, once more display itself in the dismal effects of war and desolation? Would you see the rascality of the nation in troops and tumults beleaguer the royal palace? Would you hear the ministers absolving their congregations from their sacred oath of allegiance, and sending them into the field to lose their lives and souls, in a professed rebellion against their sovereign? Would you see an insolent, overturning army, in the heart and bowels of the nation, moving to and fro, to the terror of every thing that is noble, generous, and religious? Would you see the loyal gentry harassed, starved, and undone, by the oppression of base, insulting committees? Would you see the clergy torn in pieces, and sacrificed by the inquisition of synods, triers, and commissioners? And to mention the greatest last; would you have the king, with his father's kingdoms, inherit also his fortunes? Would you see the crown trampled upon, majesty haled from prison to prison, and at length, with the vilest circumstances of spite and cruelty, bleeding and dying at the feet of bloody, inhuman miscreants? Would you, now Providence has cast the destructive interest from the parliament, and the house is pretty well *swept* and *cleansed*,

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have the old *unclean spirit return, and take to itself seven other spirits*, seven other interests, worse than itself, and dwell there, and so make our *latter end worse than our beginning*? We hear of plots and combinations, parties joining and agreeing; let us not trust too much in their oppositions among themselves. The elements can fight with each other, and yet unite into one body; Ephraim against Manasses, and Manasses against Ephraim, and both equally against the royal tribe of Judah. Now if we fear the letting loose these furies again upon us, let us fear the returns of our former provocations: if we would keep off the axe from our princes and nobles, let us lay it to our sins; if we would preserve their lives, let us mend our own. We have complained of armies, committees, sequestrations; but our sins are those that have sucked the blood of this nation. These have purpled the scaffold with royal blood; these have blown up so many noble families, have made so many widows, have snatched the bread out of the mouths of so many poor orphans. It is our not *fearing God*, hath made others not *honour the king*; our not benefiting by the ordinances of the church, that hath enriched others with her spoils. And how is our church (the only church in Christendom we read of, whose avowed principles and practices disown all resistance of the civil power) struck and laid at, at this time! But when I hear of conspiracies, seditions, designs, covenants, or plots, they do not much move or affright me: but when I see the same covetousness, the same drunkenness and profaneness, that was first punished in ourselves, and then in our sanctified enemies; when I see joy turned into revelling, and debauchery proclaimed louder than it can be proclaimed against: these, I confess, stagger and astonish me; nor can I persuade myself we were delivered to do all these abominations. But if we have not the grace of Christians, yet have we not the hearts of men? have we no bowels nor relentings? If the blood and banishment of our kings, if the miseries of our common mother the church, ready to fall back into the jaws of purchasers and reformers, cannot move us, yet shall we not at least pity our posterity? Shall we commit sins, and breed up our children to inherit the curse? Shall the infants now unborn have cause to say hereafter in the bitterness of their souls, *Our fathers have eaten sour grapes* of disobedience, and our *teeth are set on edge* with rebellions and confusions? How doth any one know, but the oath that he is now swearing, the very lewdness he is now committing, may be scored up by God as an item for a new rebellion? We may be rebels, and yet not vote in parliament, nor sit in committees, nor fight in armies: every sin is virtually treason; and we may be guilty of murder in breaking other commandments besides the sixth. But at present we are *made whole*: God hath by a miracle healed our breaches, cured the maladies, and bound up the wounds of a bleeding nation. What remains now, but that we take the counsel that seconded the like miraculous cure, *go our ways, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon us*. But since our calamities have reached that height, that they give us rather cause to fear a repetition, than a possibility of gradation; I shall dismiss you with the same advice upon a different motive, *Go, sin no more, lest the same evil befall you*. Which God of his infinite mercy prevent; even that God, *by whom kings*

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reign and princes decree justice, by whom their thrones are established, and by whom their blood will be revenged. To whom, &c. Amen.



Ecclesiastical Constitutions to be strictly maintained.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT OXFORD.

GALATIANS ii. 5.

To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

CHRISTIANITY having been now in the world above sixteen hundred years, there is hardly any condition that can befall the church, but may be paralleled, or at least resembled by the condition it has been in, in some place or age before. That which our church labours under at present, is the bold and restless encroachments of many amongst ourselves, upon the bishops and pastors of it.

1st, By an endeavour to cast out of our public worship some ceremonies and usages hitherto received in it; and instead of submitting to their spiritual governors in such matters, they insolently require of their governors to comply with them, though contrary to their own judgment, and that also backed with truth and reason, as well as law and authority. And then (upon their refusal to yield to such innovators) by traducing them as persons of another religion, of a different Christianity; and, in a word, as papists and idolaters, for persisting in the use of those ceremonies, which, upon the most serious deliberation had about these things, by such as laid down their lives against popery, have by full authority, both ecclesiastical and civil, been established in our church.

Not much unlike this case of ours, we have one mentioned here, in the church of Galatia, and that as early as the times of the apostles themselves; in which many, both Jews and Gentiles, being converted to Christianity, a great dispute arose, whether the Jewish customs were to be joined with the Christian profession, and consequently, whether the converted Gentiles ought not to have been circumcised according to the law of Moses, as well as baptized according to the religion of Christ. The Jewish converts, who were most infinitely fond of the Mosaical rites, even after their enrolment under Christ's banner, fiercely contended not only for the continuance of circumcision amongst themselves, but for obliging the proselyte Gentiles to the same custom also. And in this their error they were the more confirmed by the example and practice of St. Peter, the great apostle of the circumcision, (it being the fate of the church then, as well as since, to have some of its chief leaders betray the truth and interest of it, by unworthy and base compliances with its enemies.) St. Peter, I say, thus judaizing in some things, and that even contrary to his own conscience, as well as to the



truth of the gospel, (for the text tells us in the [12th and 13th verses](#), that it was neither better nor worse than downright dissimulation; and such an one is like a contagious pest, which spreads the infection on many more besides himself,) did by his example mightily encourage those Jewish Christians, not only to have confidence in their errors, but also to an expostulation with St. Paul himself, who, being an apostle of the Gentiles, both taught and practised quite otherwise; and so far did it carry them, that they questioned the very truth of his doctrine, calling it another gospel, and by no means the same that Christ and the rest of the apostles had taught before, as is intimated in the first chapter and the 9th verse. They reflected also very slightly on his person and apostleship, extolling St. Peter and others as pillars, but despising St. Paul, as nothing in comparison. Upon which, St. Paul coming to visit these Galatian converts, with Titus his companion, they press him very earnestly, and with an importunity next to compulsion, to have Titus circumcised, according to their false notion of the necessity of circumcision. And yet, as false as this opinion was, it wanted not some colour of arguments; for might not these Galatians plead, in behalf of the continuance of circumcision, that Christ himself declared, *he came not to destroy the law of Moses, but to confirm and fulfil it?* And was not this circumcision one of the most considerable parts of the law? So considerable indeed, as to be the grand obligation to bind men to all the rest. Did not also Christ command his own disciples to hear and do what the pharisees taught them out of Moses's chair, and did they teach or own any thing equally necessary, or more necessary than circumcision? As a confirmation of all this, did not St. Peter, who was the proper apostle of the circumcision, agree and concur with them in the practice of it, or at least not dissuade them from it; nay, and did not St. Paul himself cause Timothy to be circumcised? And if in this matter there should be any difference between these two apostles, was not the advantage clearly on St. Peter's side, who, having conversed personally with Christ in the flesh, might rationally be presumed to know the true sense and design of the gospel more than St. Paul, who had not that benefit; and consequently, that it must be much safer for them in that controversy to adhere to the former than to the latter? Lastly, over and above all, might they not plead themselves extremely scandalized, grieved, and offended at the disusage of circumcision, which they were sure was at first instituted by God, and never since (for what they could find) forbidden by Christ, but rather, on the contrary, countenanced by his own practice? These things certainly carry some show of reason in them, and were much more forcible allegations for circumcision, than any that our sectaries bring against our ceremonies; and yet, as forcible as they seemed, they had no other effect on St. Paul, than that with great stiffness he rejects both them and those that urged them; and upon a full hearing of the merits of the whole cause, resolves not to give place to them, no, not for an hour.

This was the occasion of these words; in which are five particulars worth our observation.



1st, A fierce opposition made by some erroneous private Christians in the church of Galatia against St. Paul, a great apostle, and consequently of prime authority in the church of Christ.

2dly, The cause of this opposition, the violent and unreasonable demands made to him, to confirm the practice of a thing as necessary, which in itself was not so.

3dly, The methods taken in this opposition, viz. slandering his doctrine, and detracting from the credit and authority of his person, for withstanding these their encroaching demands.

4thly, The wholesome method made use of by the apostle in dealing with these violent encroachers; that was, not to give place to them in the least, no, not for an hour.

5thly and lastly, The end and design intended by the apostle in this his method of dealing with them, viz. the preservation of the gospel in the truth and purity of it, that those sacred truths might have their due regard among them.

The sum of all which particulars I shall connect into this one proposition, which shall be the subject of this following discourse; namely, That the best and most apostolical way to establish a church, and to secure it in a lasting continuance of the truth and purity of the gospel, is, for the governors and ministers of it not to give place at all, or yield up the least received constitution of it, to the demands or pretences of such as dissent or separate from it; all which is a plain, natural, undeniable inference from the practice of St. Paul in a case so like ours, that a liker can hardly be imagined. The prosecution of this proposition I shall endeavour to manage under the following heads.

First, I shall consider and examine the pretences alleged by dissenters for our remitting or yielding up any of our ecclesiastical constitutions.

Secondly, I shall shew you the natural consequences of such a tame resignation.

Thirdly, I shall shew what influence and efficacy a strict adherence to the constitutions of the church, and an absolute refusal to part with any of them, is likely to have upon the settlement of the church, and purity of the gospel amongst us.

But before I enter upon the discussion of any of these, I must premise this observation, and rule of all I shall say upon this subject, viz. that the case is altogether the same, of requiring upon the account of conscience forbearance of practices in themselves lawful, through a pretence of their unlawfulness, and an imposing upon the conscience practices in themselves not necessary, upon allegation and pretence of their necessity; which latter was the case between St. Paul and these Galatians, as the former is between our church and the sectarists. Now both of these courses are superstitious, and equally so. For though lewdness and ignorance have still carried the cry of superstition against our church ceremonies, yet (as a learned prelate² hath fully proved in his Visitation sermon) that charge truly recoils upon our dis-

2 Bishop Sanderson.

senters, in the very point and matter before us. For as to urge the practice of a thing indifferent as a part of God's worship, and for itself necessary to be practised, (which our church never did nor does in the injunction of any of her ceremonies,) is superstitious; so to make it necessary to abstain from practices in themselves lawful, or at least indifferent, alleging that they are sinful, and consequently that an abstinence from them is part of our obedience to God, this is altogether as superstitious, and diametrically opposite to and destructive of the Christian liberty that Christ has invested his church with.

This premised, I shall now enter upon the first thing proposed; which was, to consider and examine the pretences alleged by dissenters, for the quitting or yielding up any of the constitutions of the church. And here in a noted discourse so acceptable to such as hate the church, and hope shortly to ruin it, we have their chief pretences already gathered to our hands under very few heads, viz. the infirmity, the importunity, and plausible exceptions of our sectarists: concerning the first of which, the plea of infirmity or weakness, if it be meant of such a weakness (as it must be, if it argues any thing) as in the [14th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans](#), or the [8th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians](#), St. Paul speaks of in those weak brethren, who in his time, being newly converted from Judaism or Gentilism, were for a while to be borne with in some things; it is most evident that the case of these converts then, and of our dissenters now, are so widely different, that where people have from their infancy been brought up in a Christian church, and by Christian parents and teachers, such infirmity or weakness the apostle there mentions, in persons newly converted from other religions, neither is nor can be pleaded; since, after so many opportunities of instruction, there can be no doubting or dissatisfaction in things necessary to be known, practised, or forborne, but what in all persons enjoying those means is very culpable, and in most inexcusable; so that the plea is impertinent.

2dly, And for that other, of importunity, it is so senseless, and withal so shameless a pretence, that it may be referred even to the judgment of those that make it; whether, in case this was admitted against things legally established, any laws in the world could possibly subsist or continue, where people were bold and violent enough to oppose and exclaim against them. And since the civil state has found it necessary to arm itself with laws against sturdy beggars, it is, methinks, somewhat hard, that in the ecclesiastical state sturdy beggars should control the laws. In the last place therefore, let us see what is to be ascribed to their phrase of plausible exceptions; where it will concern us, first of all, to inquire into the force and meaning of this word *plausible*, this high and mighty word, to which the long received constitution of a whole church ought to give place. Now *plausible*, I conceive, may have one of these two significations.

1st, It may be taken for that which carries with it more appearance and show of reason than its opposite, in the judgment or opinion of the multitude: or,

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2dly, For that which carries a greater appearance and show of reason in the judgment of the more sensible part of mankind. In either of these senses, I shall shew that it makes nothing for them, and that from the following considerations.

1st, Because there is actually a church, a greater number of persons in the nation, that practise and conform to the use of those things now in debate between us, than there is of those who stand off, and abstain from them. This being so, unless we will judge those men gross hypocrites, we are bound in reason and Christian charity to believe, that there appears to them a greater ground of reason why they should so conform, than why they should not; and consequently the first signification of plausibility fails our dissenters, since the number of those to whom conformity appears more rational is much larger than the number of those to whom the exceptions against it appear to be so. In this sense therefore the exceptions cannot be allowed to be so much as plausible; but then,

2dly, Admitting (which as they cannot prove, so neither do we grant) that there were this kind of plausibility in their exceptions brought against conformity, yet I deny that which is plausible in this sense, that it appears reasonable to the opinion and vogue of the multitude, ought to take place of that which is deemed to have greater reason for it in the sense and judgment of the more knowing, though much inferior to the other in number: which is the other sense in which I shewed the word *plausible* may be taken.

3dly, The third consideration is, that since the governing part of the church and state have declared for conformity, by making laws to enjoin it; and since in all governments the advantage of wisdom and knowledge, in making or changing, must in reason be presumed to be rather on the side of those that govern, than of those that are to be governed; it follows that, according to the other sense of plausibility, conformity and the reasons for it are more plausible, than the exceptions and arguments alleged against it.

4thly, The fourth and last consideration, which eradicates the foregoing pretence, is, that the ground of passing a thing into a law, and of retaining that law when once made, is not the plausibility of the thing or law to the sense of the vulgar, but the real conducibility of it to the good of the multitude; and that accords to the sense and judgment of those who are to govern and make laws for it. To which I add further, that a thing may be really and practicably conducing to the good of the multitude, though neither suitable to the opinion or humour of it, and consequently no ways plausible to it.

Now from these four consequences it being manifest how insignificant that pretence, taken from the plausibility of the nonconformists' exceptions against the constitutions of our church, proves to be, since they are neither plausible, as proceeding from the wise and governing part of the nation, nor yet as from the greater or more numerous part of it; nor lastly, ought to have any control upon the laws, though they were never so plausible upon this last account: I shall pass from the plausibility to the force of the exceptions, and see whether we can meet with any strength of reason, where we have not yet found the show.

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And here I shall not pretend to recount them all in particular, but only take them as reducible to, and derivable from, the following three heads.

First, The unlawfulness, or,

Secondly, The inexpediency, or,

Thirdly and lastly, The smallness of the things excepted against. I shall only touch briefly upon each of them, for the compass of this discourse will allow no more.

1st, For their leading plea of the unlawfulness of our ceremonies, grounded upon the old, baffled argument drawn from the illegality of will-worship, and the prohibition of adding to and detracting from the word and worship of God: no other answer can or need be given to it, but that which has been given over and over; that our ceremonies are not esteemed by our church either as divine worship, or as any necessary essential part of it, but only as circumstances and external appurtenances for the more decent performance of the worship. For that man should of his own will impose on us any thing as the necessary worship of God, or add any thing to the worship as a necessary essential part of it, this questionless, as the aforementioned allegations sufficiently prove, must needs be sinful. But if from hence it be affirmed also, that no circumstance is to be allowed in divine worship, but what is declared and enjoined by express scripture, the consequence of this is so insufferably ridiculous, that it will extend to the making it unlawful for the church to appoint any place or house for God's worship; nay, it will lead also to the very taking down of pulpits, reading-desks, fonts, and every thing else circumstantially ministering to the discharge of divine service, if not expressly mentioned and commanded in the word of God. And let them, upon the foregoing principle, avow the absurdity of the consequence if they can. But it has been well remarked, that these men do not indeed believe themselves, when they plead our rites unlawful. For when an act of parliament enjoined all persons in office to take the sacrament according to the use of the church of England, (and that, we know, is to take it kneeling,) we find none of them refusing, how idolatrous soever at other times they esteemed it, rather than turn out of the least office of gain they were possessed of; which, had it been unlawful, surely men of such tender consciences, as they own themselves to be, would never have been brought to do, since not the least unlawful thing ought to be committed for the greatest temporal advantage whatsoever. But since these men have, by so many other instances, manifested to the world that they look upon their own will as their law, they would do well hereafter to allege no other argument for the unlawfulness of our ceremonies; and therefore to pass to their second plea of inexpediency, or inconveniency of them; to which I shall give the two following answers.

1st, That *inexpediency* being a word of a general, indefinite sense, and so determinable by the several fancies, humours, apprehensions, and interests of men about the same thing, so that what is judged expedient by one man is thought inexpedient by another; the judgment of the expediency or inexpediency of matters formed into laws ought in all reason to rest

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wholly in the legislators and governors, and consequently no private persons ought to be looked upon as competent judges of the inexpediency of that which the legislative power has once enacted and established as expedient.

2dly, I affirm also, that that which is not only in itself lawful, but highly conducive to so great a concern of religion, as decency and order in divine worship; and this to that degree, that without it such order and decency could not subsist or continue; this cannot otherwise be inexpedient upon any considerable account whatsoever. But then all these considerations of inexpediency will be abundantly overbalanced by this one great expediency: for since the outward acts of divine worship cannot be performed but with some circumstances and posture of body, either every man must be left to his own arbitration, or use what circumstances and postures he pleases, or a rule must be laid down to direct these things after one and the same manner. The former of necessity infers diversity and variety in the discharge of the same worship, and that by the same necessity infers disorder and indecency; which by nothing but an uniformity in the behaviour and circumstances of persons joining in one and the same worship can be prevented. This argument, I confess, concurs directly for the necessity of ceremonies in general about divine service; but so far as ours are argued against upon a general account, and till they are proved particularly unfit for the general end, the same may be also a defence of ours in particular. Come we now to the

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3d and last exception, grounded upon the smallness of the things excepted against; to which also my answer is twofold: (1st,) That these things being in themselves lawful, and not only so, but also determined by sufficient authority, the smallness is so far from being a reason why men should refuse and stand out against the use of them, that it is an unanswerable argument why they should, without any demur, submit and comply with authority in matters which they themselves confess to be of no very great moment. For it ought to be a very great and weighty matter indeed that can warrant a man in his disobedience to the injunctions of any lawful authority; and that which is a reason why men should comply with their governors, I am sure can be no reason why their governors should give place to them. But (2dly,) I add further, that nothing actually enjoined by law is (or ought to be looked upon as) small or little, as to the use or forbearance of it, during the continuance of that law, nor yet as sufficient reason for the abrogation of that law, since, be the thing never so small in itself, yet, being by great deliberation first established, and for a long time since received in the church, and contended for with real and great reason on its side, be the reasons never so plausible (which yet hitherto does not appear) on the other, yet the consequence of a change cannot be accounted small, since it is certainly very hazardous at best, and doubtful what mischief it may occasion, how far it may proceed, and where it may end; especially since the experience of all governments has made it evident, that there was hardly any thing altered in a settled state, that was not followed by more alterations, and several inconveniences attending these alterations; not indeed at first foreseen, but such as in the event made too

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great impressions on the public to be accounted either small or inconsiderable. These exceptions being therefore stripped of their plausibility and force too, and retorted upon the patrons of them, it follows, that notwithstanding all our harangues concerning our difference in smaller things, as the phrase now is, and our contending about shadows and the like, made by some amongst us, who would fain be personally popular at the public cost, and build themselves a reputation with the rabble upon the ruins of the church, that by all the obligations of oaths and gratitude they are bound to support, as I am sure that supports them. It follows, I say, that for the governors of our church, after all this, to be ready to yield up the received constitutions of it, either to the infirmity, or importunity, or plausible exceptions, (as their advocates are pleased to term them,) of our clamorous dissenters, is so far from being a part either of the piety or prudence of those governors, that it is the fear of many both pious and prudent too, that in the end it will be like to prove no other than the permitting of a thief to come into the house, only to avoid the noise and trouble of his knocking at the door. And thus much for the first thing proposed; which was to consider and examine the pretences alleged by dissenters for our quitting or yielding up any of our ecclesiastical constitutions. I come to shew now the second thing, which is, what are naturally like to be the consequences of such a tame resignation. In order to which, I shall consider these two things.

1st, What the temper and dispositions of those men who press so much for compliances have usually been.

2dly, What the effects and consequences of such compliances or relaxations have been formerly.

And first for the temper of these men. This certainly should be considered; and if it ought to give any force to their demands, it ought to be extremely peaceable and impartial. But are there any qualities incident to the nature of man, that these persons are further from? For did they treat the governors of the church with any other appellation but that of priests of *Baal*, idolaters, persecuting *Nimrods*, formalists, dumb dogs, proud popish prelates, haters of God and good men, &c.? I say, is not this their usual dialect? And can we imagine that the spirit of Christianity can suggest such language and expressions? Is it possible, that where true religion governs in the heart, it should thus utter itself by the mouth? And to shew yet further that this temper can manifest itself by actions as well as words, did not these who now plead conscience against law, persecute, plunder, kill, and murder those who pleaded and followed conscience according to law? And can any one assure the government that they will not, under the same circumstances, do again the same things? And for their impartiality, did they ever grant allowance or toleration to any that were dissenters from them? The presbyter would grant none; and so much has he given the world under his own hand, in those many clamorous libels, and that spawn of pamphlets composed on that subject. And when his younger brother, the more able and more successful sectarist of the

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two, had undermined him, and introduced toleration, yet still episcopacy as well as popery stood expressly excepted from any benefit by it, or part in it. This is the way and temper of the persons we have to deal with; and what pity is it that the whole government, both ecclesiastical and civil, should not lean to and bear with them! A faction that will be sure to requite such a favour once done them, by using it to the reproach and ruin of them that did it. And thus having given some short account of the temper and disposition of these men, the next thing is to consider,

2dly, What the effect and consequences of such compliances or relaxations have been heretofore. And for this I appeal to the judgment, reading, and experience of all, who have in any measure applied themselves to the observation of men and things, whether they ever yet found, that any who ever pressed for indulgencies and forbearances rested in them once granted, without proceeding any further? None ever yet did, but used them only as an act and instrument to get into power, and make every concession a step to a further demand; since every grant renders the person to whom it is made so much the more considerable, when he thinks fit to ask more. To grant, is to give ground; and such persons ask some things only in order to their getting others without asking; for no other encroachers upon or enemies to any public constitution ask all at first: sedition itself is modest in the dawn, and only toleration may be petitioned, where nothing less than empire is designed. The nature of man acts the same way, whether in matters civil or ecclesiastical; and can we easily forget the methods by which that violent faction grew upon the throne? Did not the facility and too fatal mercy of a late prince embolden their impudence, instead of satisfying their desires? Was not every concession, every remission of his own right, so far from allaying the fury of their greedy appetites, that, like a breakfast, it rather called up their stomachs, and fitted them for a dinner? Did not craving still grow upon granting, till nothing remained to be asked on one side, or given on the other, but the life of the owner? Thus it was with the state; and I would fain hear any solid reason to prove that it will not happen alike to the church: for how has the papacy grown to that surprising height, and assumed such an extravagant power over sovereign princes, but by taking advantages from their own grants and favours to that see? Which still took occasion from them to raise herself gradually to further pretences, till courtesy quickly passed into claim, and what was gotten by petition was held by prerogative; so that at length insolence, grown big and bold with success, knew no bounds, but trampled upon the necks of emperors, controlled the sceptre with the crosier, and in the face of the world openly avowed a superiority and preeminence over crowned heads. Thus grew the papacy; and by the same way will also grow other sects; for there is a papacy in every sect or faction; for they all design the same height and grandeur, though the pope alone has had the fortune to compass it. And thus having shewn what have been the effects of such concessions heretofore, as well as described the temper of the persons who now press for them, I suppose it will not be very difficult for us to judge what are like to be the

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future effects and consequences of the same amongst ourselves: concerning which, I shall lay down this assertion; that what effects and consequences any thing had formerly, and what in its own nature it tends to, and is apt to produce, it is infinitely sottish and irrational to imagine or suppose that it will not produce and cause in the world for the future; and, I believe, hardly any nation but ours would suffer the same cheat to be trumped upon it twice immediately together. Every society in the world subsists in the strength of certain laws, customs, and received usages uniting the several parts of it into one body. And accordingly the parting with any of these laws or customs is a real dissolution of the continuity, and consequently a partial destruction of the whole. It certainly shakes and weakens all the fabric; and weakness is but destruction begun; it tends to it, and naturally ends in it; as every disease of the body will be death, and no mischief cures itself. But to pass by arguments deduced from the general nature of things, to the same made evident to sense in particular instances, let us first of all suppose our dissenters to be dealt with upon terms of comprehension, (as they call it,) and took into the communion of the church, without submitting to the present conditions of its communion, or any necessary obligation to obey the established rules of it, then these things must follow.

First, That men shall come into the national ministry full of their covenanting rebellious principles, even keen upon their spirits, and such as raised and carried on the late fatal war. Then it will also follow, that in the same diocese, sometimes in the very same town, some shall use the surplice, and others not; each shall have their parties prosecuting one another with the bitterest hatred and animosities; some in the same church, and at the same time, shall receive the sacrament kneeling, some standing, and others probably sitting; some shall make use of the cross in baptism, and others shall not only not use it themselves, but also inveigh and preach against those who do; some shall preach this part, others that, and some none at all. And where, as in cathedrals, they cannot avoid the hearing of it read by others, they shall come into the church when it is done, and stepping into the pulpit, conceive a long, crude, extemporary prayer, in reproach of all those excellent ones just offered up before. Nay, in the same cathedral you shall see one prebend in a surplice, another in a long coat or tunic, and in performance of the service, some standing up at the creed, the doxology, or the reading of the gospel, others sitting, and perhaps laughing and winking upon their fellow schismatics in contempt of those who practise the decent order of the church: and from hence the mischief shall pass to the people, dividing them into parties and factions, so that some shall come to the assembly of the saints only to hear a favourite preacher, and for ever after be sure to be absent. I will “give no countenance, says one, to the formalist; nor will I, says another, with much better reason, give ear to the schismatic: all this while the church is rent in pieces, and the common enemy gratified. And these are some of the effects of comprehension; nor indeed could any other be expected from a project so nearly allied to fatal forty-one; so that I dare avow, that to bring in comprehension is, in plain

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terms, nothing less than to establish a schism in the church by law, and settle a plague in the bowels of it, that shall eat out the very heart and soul; so far consume the vitals and spirits of it, that in the compass of a very few years, it shall scarce have any visible being or subsistence, or so much as the face of a national church to shew.

But from comprehension let us pass to toleration, that is, from a plague within the church to a plague round about it. And is it possible for the church to continue sound, or indeed so much as to breathe, in either of these cases? Toleration is the very pulling up the floodgates, and breaking open the fountains of the great deep, to pour in a deluge of wickedness, heresy, and blasphemy upon the church. The law of God commands men to profess and practise the Christian religion; the law of man, in this case, will bear you out, though of none, or of one of your own choice. Therefore, an hundred different religions at least shall, with a bare face and a high hand, bid defiance to the Christian; some of which, perhaps, shall deny the Godhead of Christ, some the reality of his manhood, some the resurrection, and others the torments of hell. Some shall assert the eternity of the world, and the like, and all this by authentic allowance of law. Upon this footing, it shall be safe for every broacher of new heresy to gain as many proselytes to it as he can; and there is none of them all, though never so absurd, impious, and blasphemous, but shall have proselytes and professors more or less; and what a large part of the nation must this necessarily draw in! So that as number and novelty easily run down truth and paucity for a while, the orthodox part of the nation, the church, will quickly be borne down, and swallowed up. And since it is impossible for government or society to subsist where there is no bond or cement of religion to hold it together, confusion must needs follow. And since it is equally impossible for confusion to last long, but that it must at last settle into something, that will and must be popery, infallibly, irresistibly; for the church of England being once extinct, no other sect or church has any bottom or foundation, or indeed any tolerable pretence to set up upon, but that. And that this deduction of things is neither inconsequent nor precarious, we may be assured from the papists themselves; for did not their late agent, who lost his life in their service, and whose letters are so well known, tell us in one of them, “that the way by which he intended to have popery brought in was by toleration; and that if an act for a general liberty of conscience could be obtained, it would give the greatest blow to the protestant religion here that ever it received since its birth? Did he not also complain, that all their disappointments, miseries, and hazards were owing to the fatal revocation, (as he calls it,) of the king’s declaration for liberty of conscience?” And lastly, does he not affirm, “that all the advantage they expected to make was by the help of the nonconformists, presbyterians, independents, and other sects?” I purposely use his own words; and shall we not think that the papists themselves knew what were the properest and most effectual means for the prosecution of their own interests? So that let all our separatists and dissenters know that they themselves are the pope’s artificers, to carry on his work, and do that for him, which

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he cannot do for himself. They are his harbingers and forerunners, to prepare and make plain a way for him to come amongst us. Thus they, even they, who are the most clamorous declaimers against popery, are the surest and most industrious factors for it. It is the weakening the church of England by their separation from it, and their invectives against it, which gives Rome a handle to attack it, thus weakened to her hands, with victory and success. The thief first breaks the hedge of the vineyard, to filch away, perhaps, but a few clusters, but the wild boar enters the same breach, and makes havock of all.

As for the church of England, whatsoever fate may attend it, this may and must be said of it, that it is a church which claims no independent secular power, but, like a poor orphan, exposed naked and friendless to the world, pretends to no other help but the goodness of God, the piety of its principles, and the justice of its own cause to maintain it. A church not born into the world with teeth and talons, like popery and presbytery, but like a lamb, innocent and defenceless and silent, not only under the shearer, but under the butcher too; a church which, as it is obedient to the civil powers, without any treacherous distinctions or reserves, so would be glad to have the countenance and protection of that power; and though it cannot be protected by it, is yet resolved to be peaceable and quiet under it; and while it parts with all, to hold fast its integrity. And if God should, for the nation's unworthy and ungrateful usage of so excellent a church, so pure, so peaceable a religion, bereave us of it, by letting in the tyranny and superstition of another, it is pity but it should come in its full force and power. And then I hope that such as have betrayed and enslaved their country, will consider, that there is a temporal as well as ecclesiastical interest concerned in the case; that there are lands to be converted as well as heretics; and those who pretend they can with a word's speaking change the substance of some things, can with as much ease alter the properties of others. God's will be done in all things; but if popery ever comes in by English hands, we need not doubt but it will fully pay the score of those who bring it in.

3dly. I come now to the third and last thing proposed, which was to shew what influence and efficacy a strict adherence to the constitutions of the church, and an absolute refusal to part with any of them, is like to have upon the settlement of the church, and the purity of the gospel amongst us; and for this I shall point out three ways, by which it tends effectually to procure such a settlement.

First, By being the grand and most sovereign means to cause and preserve unity in the church. The Psalmist mentions this as one of the noblest and greatest excellencies of the Jewish church, [Psalm cxxii. 3](#), *that it was built as a city that is at unity in itself*. Unity gives strength, and strength continuance. The catholics abroad frequently tell us, that if we could be united amongst ourselves, we should be a formidable church indeed; and for this reason there was none they so mortally hated, as the late renowned archbishop and martyr, whose whole endeavour was to establish a settled uniformity in all the British churches. For his zeal and activity in which glorious attempt, the presbyterians cut him off, according to the

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papists' hearts' desire. Now a resolution to keep all the constitutions of the church, the parts of its society, and conditions of its communion, entire, without lopping any of them, must needs unite all the ministers and members of it, while it engages them (as the apostle so passionately exhorts his Corinthians, [1 Cor. i. 10](#)) *to speak all the same thing*: but if any one is indulged in the omission of the least thing enjoined, they cannot be said *to speak all the same thing*. In which case, besides the deformity of the thing itself, that where the worship is the same, the manner of performing it should be so different; this difference of practice will also certainly produce an irreconcilable division of minds, since such diversity cannot be imagined to proceed from any other thing than an opinion that one man understands and does his duty after a better and more spiritual manner than another, and consequently has the start of his neighbour or fellow-minister, either in point of judgment or devotion, in neither of which are men to allow precedency, especially when it comes once to be contested. Unity without uniformity, is like essence without existence, a mere word and a notion, and no where to be found in nature.

2dly, A strict adherence to the constitutions of the church is a direct way to settle it, by begetting in her enemies themselves an opinion of the goodness and requisiteness of those ways, for which they see the government and ministry of the church so concerned, that they can by no means be brought to recede from them. Let factious persons pretend what they will outwardly, yet they cannot but reason with themselves inwardly, that certainly there must be something more than ordinary in those things, that men of parts, reason, and good lives so strenuously contend for, and so tenaciously adhere to. For it is not natural to suppose that serious men will or can be resolute for trifles, fight for straws, and encounter the fiercest opposition for such things, as all the interests of piety and religion may be equally provided for, whether the church retains or parts with them. This is unnatural and impious: and on the other side, let none think the people will have any reverence for that, for which the pastors of the church themselves shew an indifference. And here let me mention a great, but sad truth, not so fit to be spoke, as to be sighed out by every true son and lover of the church, that the wounds the church of England now bleeds by, she has received *in the house of her friends*, her false, undermining friends; and that nonconformity, and a separation from it, and a contempt of the excellent constitution of it, have proceeded from nothing more than from the partial, treacherous, half-conformity of many of its own ministers; the surplice sometimes worn, and oftener laid aside; the liturgy so read, as if they were ashamed of it; the service so curtailed, as if the people were to have but the tenths of that for which they paid their own tenths; the ecclesiastical habit neglected, the sacrament indecently administered, the furniture of the altar abused, and the table of the Lord profaned. These and the like vile passages have made many nonconformists to the church, by their conformity to their minister. It was an observation of a judicious prelate, that of all the sorts of enemies that the church had, there were none so devilish and pernicious, and likely to prove so fatal

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to it, as the conforming puritan. It was a great truth, and not long after ratified by dreadful experience; for if you would know what the conforming puritan is, he is one that lives by the altar, and turns his back upon it; one that catches at the preferments of the church, but hates the discipline and orders of it. One that practices conformity as popery, takes oaths and tests with an inward abhorrence of what he does for the present, and a resolution to act quite contrary when occasion serves. One who during his conformity will be sure to be known by such a distinguishing badge as shall point him out to and secure his credit with the fanatical brotherhood. One that still declines reading the church-service himself, leaving the work to curates and readers, thereby to keep up an advantageous interest with thriving, seditious tradesmen, and groaning, ignorant, but rich widows; one that in the midst of conformity thinks of a turn, and is careful to behave himself as not to outshoot his home, but to stand right and fair, in case a revolution should bring fanaticism again into fashion, which it is more than possible he secretly wishes for.

These and the like are the principles that act and govern the conforming puritan; who, in a word, is nothing else but ambition, avarice, and hypocrisy, serving all the real interests of schism and faction in the church's livery.

Now if there be any such here, (as I hope there are none,) however he may sooth up and flatter himself, yet when he hears of such and such of his neighbours, parishioners, or acquaintance running to conventicles, such and such turned quakers, others fallen off to popery; and lastly, when the noise of the dreadful national disturbances and dangers shall ring about his ears, let him lay his hand upon his heart and say, "It is I, that by conforming by halves, and by treacherously prevaricating with my duty, so solemnly sworn to; I, that by bringing a contempt upon the service and order of the purest and best constituted church in the world, slabbering over the one, and slighting the other, have scandalized and tossed a stumblingblock before the neighbourhood, and have been the cause of this man's faction, that man's quakerism, the other's popery, and thereby have in my proportion contributed to those convulsions that now so terribly shake and threaten both church and state." I say, let him take his share of this horrid guilt, for God and man must lay it at his door; it is the genuine result of his actions; it is his own; and will stick faster and closer to him, than to be thrown off by him like his surplice.

Thirdly and lastly, a strict adherence to the rules of the church, without yielding to any abatement in favour of the dissenters, is the way to settle and establish it, by possessing its enemies with an awful esteem of the conscience and courage of the governors and ministers of it. For if the things under debate be given up to the adversary, it must be upon one of these two accounts; either,

1st, That the persons who thus yield them up judge them unfit to be retained; or,

2dly, That they find themselves not able to retain them. One or both of these of necessity must be implied in such a yieldance. In the first case then our dissenters will cry out, Where

has been the conscience of our church-governors for so many years in imposing and insisting on those things, which they themselves now acknowledge and confess not fit to be insisted upon? And is not this at once to own all the libellous charges and invectives which the nonconformists have been so long pursuing our church with? Is not this to fling dirt upon the government of it, ever since the reformation? Nay, does not the same dirt fall upon the very reformers themselves, who first put our church into that order it is in at present, and died for it when they had done? Such therefore as are disposed to humour these dissenters, by giving up any of the constitutions of our church, should do well to consider what and how much is imported by such an act; and this they shall find to be no less than a tacit acknowledgment of the truth and justice of all those pleas by which our adversaries have been contending for such a cession all along. The truth is, it will do a great deal towards the removal of the charge of schism from their doors to ours, by representing the grounds of their separation from us hitherto lawful at the least. For the whole state of the matter between us lies in a very little compass; that either the church of England enjoins something unlawful as the condition of her communion, and then she is schismatical; or there is nothing unlawful enjoined by her, and then those that separate from her are schismatics: and till they prove that the church of England requires of such as communicate with her, either the belief of something false, or the practice of something impious, it is impossible to prove the unlawfulness of those things that she makes the condition of her communion, and consequently to free those that separate from the charge of schism.

Now while this is the persuasion of the governors of our church concerning these things, the world cannot but look upon them in their unmoveable adherence to them, as acting like men of conscience, and, which is next to it, like men of courage. The reputation of which two qualities in our bishops will do more to the daunting the church's enemies, than all their concessions can do to the reconciling of them. Courage awes an enemy, and backed with conscience, confounds him. He that has law on his side, and resolves not to yield, takes the directest way to be yielded to. For where an enemy sees resolution, he supposes strength; but to yield is to confess weakness, and consequently to embolden opposition. And I believe it will be one day found, that nothing has contributed more to make the dissenting nonconforming party considerable, than their being thought so. It has been our courting and treating with them, that has made them stand upon their own terms, instead of coming over to ours. And here I shall shut up this consideration with one remark, and it is about the council of Trent. The design of which council, in all the princes that were so earnest for the calling it, was to humble and reduce the power of the papacy; and great and fierce opposition was made against it all along by the prelates and ambassadors of those princes; but so far were they from prevailing, that the papacy weathered out the storm, and fixed itself deeper and stronger than ever it was before. But what method did it take thus to settle itself? Why, in a word, no other than a positive resolution not to yield or part with any thing; not to give

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way either to the importunity or plausible exceptions, nor, which is more, to the power of those princes. So that (as the writer of the history of the council observes) notwithstanding all those violent blusters and assaults made on every side against the papal power, yet in the end the patience and resolution of the legates overcame all.; -:

Now what may we gather from hence? Why surely this very naturally; that if courage and resolution should be of such force to support a bad cause, it cannot be of less to maintain and carry on a good one; and if this could long prop up a rotten building, that had no foundation, why may it not only strengthen, but even perpetuate that which has so firm an one as the church of England stands upon? And now, to sum up all, could St. Paul find it necessary to take such a peremptory course with those erroneous dissenters in the church of Galatia, as *not to give place to them, no, not for an hour*; and is it not more necessary for us, where the pretences for schism are less plausible, and the persons perverted by it more numerous? Let us briefly lay together the reasons and arguments why we should deal with our dissenters as St. Paul did with those, not to give them place at all, because,

1st, By our yielding, or giving place to them, we have no rational ground to conclude we shall gain them, but rather encourage them to encroach upon us by further demands; since the experience of all governments have found concessions so far from quieting dissenters, that they have only animated them to greater and fiercer contentions.

2dly, By our yielding or giving place to them, we make the established laws (in which these men can neither prove injustice nor inexpedience) submit to them, who in duty, reason, and conscience, are bound to obey those laws.

3dly, By our yielding or giving place to them, we grant to those, who being themselves in power, never thought it reasonable to grant the same to others in the same case.

4thly, By our yielding or giving place to them, we bring a pernicious, incurable evil into the church, if it be by a comprehension; or spread a fatal contagion round about it, if it be by toleration.

5thly, By our yielding to these men in a way of comprehension, we bring those into the church who once destroyed and pulled it down as unlawful and unchristian, and never yet renounced the principles by which they did so; nor (is it to be feared) ever will.

6thly, By such a comprehension we endeavour to satisfy those persons who could never yet agree among themselves about any one thing or constitution in which they would all rest satisfied.

7thly, By indulging them this way we act partially, in gratifying one sect, who can pretend to no favour, but what others may as justly claim who are not comprehended; and withal imprudently, in indulging one party who will do us no good, to the exasperation of many more who have a greater power to do us hurt.



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8thly, By such a concession we sacrifice the constitutions of our church to the will and humour of those whom the church has no need of, neither their abilities, parts, piety, or interest, nor any thing else belonging to them considered.

9thly and lastly, By such a course we open the mouths of the Romish party against us; who will still be reproaching us for going from their church to a constitution that we ourselves now think fit to relinquish, by altering her discipline and the terms of her communion; and may justly ask us where, and in what kind of church or constitution we intend finally to fix.

These, among many more, are the reasons why we contend, that our dissenters are not to be given place to.

But after all this, may it not be asked, whether it were not better to submit to the aforementioned inconveniences, rather than the church should be utterly ruined? To this I answer, that the case is fallaciously put, and supposes that if these things were submitted to, the church will not be ruined, which I deny; and upon the foregoing grounds affirm it to be much more probable that it will. To which I add, that of the two, it is much better that the church should be run down by a rude violence overpowering it, than be given up by our own act and consent. For the first can only take away its revenues, and discourage or suppress the public exercise of its discipline, but cannot destroy its constitutions; the latter does. The former will be our calamity; but the latter, being the effect of our own consent, will render us inexcusable to all, both our friends and enemies, and ourselves too; and in the midst of our desolation, leave us not so much as the conscience of a good cause to comfort us.

To explain which by instance: Suppose the land overrun by a foreign invasion, yet still the body of the laws of England may be said to remain entire, though the execution of them be superseded: but if they be cancelled by act of parliament, they cease to be, or to be called any longer, the laws of England. In like manner, if our church-governors and the clergy concur not to the disannulling of the canons, rules, and orders of the church, the constitution of it will still remain, though the condition of it be obscured by persecution, and perhaps disabled from shewing itself in a national body; just as it fared with it in the late rebellion: and who knows, but if force and rapine should again bring it into the same condition, the goodness of God may again give it the like resurrection: but if we surrender it up ourselves, to us it is dead, and past all recovery.

And therefore what remains now, but that we implore the continued protection of the Almighty upon a church, by such a miracle restored to us, and (all things considered) by as great a miracle preserved hitherto amongst us, that he would defeat its enemies, and increase its friends; and settle it upon such foundations of purity, peace, and order, *that the gates of hell may not prevail against it.*

The certainty of a judgment after this life.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S, OXON.

2 COR. v. 10.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

BESIDES instruction and exhortation, which have never been wanting (at least in this last age) to those of this church, there are but two ways or means more, in the ordinary course of divine Providence, by which the reasonable creature is to be wrought upon; I mean, by which man is either to be taken off from the forbidden evil he is inclined to, or drawn to the commanded good he is averse from; and those two are, the hope of a reward for one, and the fear of punishment for the other; that those who have neither ingenuity nor gratitude, nor will be allured to piety and obedience by the fruition of God's mercies, may yet, out of a self-love at least, and impatience of suffering, be frightened from disobedience and profaneness by feeling of God's judgments. And truly, if we of this nation had been so ingenuous and well-natured a people as that the former of these (I mean God's mercies) would have prevailed with us, we had long since been inwardly the best, as we were outwardly the happiest, of all nations. For never was there any people, since the creation of mankind, that enjoyed, for so long time together, so many of God's mercies of all kinds and degrees, and that with so many aggravating circumstances to improve and endear them to us, as we did, whilst, for almost a century together, God courted us and wooed us, as it were, without interruption or inter mission, by word and deed, by peace and plenty, and by all sorts both of temporal and spiritual expressions of his love, which were possible for a Creator to make to a creature: so that what God said once to the church and nation of the Jews, he might have said unto us not long since, [Isaiah v. 4](#), viz. *What could I have done more unto my vineyard?* What could I have done more, in love and kindness to the church of England, than I have done? Why should you be used kindly any more? You will revolt more, you will but abuse my goodness, and weary my patience, and turn my grace into wantonness, as much or more hereafter than you have done already. And therefore God having, according to his usual method, first, and so long, tried all fair means to win us and keep us to him, and all in vain, (most of us still growing the worse the better we were used by him,) he was compelled at last, (after many warnings and threatenings to no purpose,) he was compelled, I say, (for he delights not in the affliction of any creature,) to make use of his other, and that which is usually his most effectual, way of working upon man, I mean, the way of his judgments; and that, first, by taking away all his blessings, which we had so long and so unthank-



fully abused; and secondly, by making us feel, what we would not fear, the power and effects of his wrath, which we had before so often and so long provoked and despised; so that the measure of the afflictions we lately suffered, though it will still fall short of the measure of our sins, yet is it correspondent, in many respects, to the measure of that happiness we formerly enjoyed; our peace being turned into war, our plenty into scarcity, our health into sickness, our strength into weakness, our religion into hypocrisy on the one side, and profaneness on the other; and we ourselves, who before had nothing almost to wish for, had, in those times, nothing almost that we could hope for, being then the object of scorn or pity, who were before the object of envy and admiration to all our neighbouring kingdoms. And now one would believe the dismal account of those times, which our own sins brought upon us, should have some good effect on our lives and conversations; one would think, I say, that, if our foreheads were not of brass, our necks iron, and our hearts adamant, we should either have been bended or broken with these sufferings; and that the bitterness of our punishment would by this time have so far exceeded the sweetness of our sins, that we should willingly have quitted the one, upon condition we might have been (as certainly we should have been) delivered from the other. But alas! such is commonly either the blindness of our minds, the hardness of our hearts, or the searedness of our consciences, or rather the spiritual lethargy (as I may so term it) of our souls, that most of us sleep in as great security in the midst of all manner of judgments, as Jonas did in the midst of that storm which his own disobedience had raised. Or if perhaps we are awake with our eyes, yet our hearts, as Nabal's was, are dead within us. So that to all our other miseries this plague, which is the greatest any man can have in this world, is added also; I mean, *that seeing, we should not see; and hearing, we should not hear; and understanding, we should not perceive;* nay, that even feeling, we should not feel, or at least not feel what most hurts us, or what indeed was, is, and will be, the true and only cause of our sufferings. Whence it comes to pass, that very few of us are, like David, the better, but many thousands of us, like Ahaz, the worse, since we were afflicted; having, like the ground, often drank up both *the former and latter rain;* the former of God's mercies, and the latter of his judgments; and yet bring forth nothing but briars and thorns, nothing but hypocrisy and profaneness; and consequently must needs be (as the ground was) *nigh unto cursing,* and I pray God our *end be not burning.* For to men so heavily plagued, and yet for all that so incorrigibly wicked, as many of us are, what remains but (as St. Paul tells us) *a fearful expectation of judgment?* And by *judgment* he means not any temporal or worldly judgment, but the conclusion, or rather consummation, of all our miseries here, with hell and damnation itself hereafter. And indeed it is *the fearful expectation* of that future judgment, or nothing, that must work upon obstinate offenders. The truth is, our spiritual lethargy is not curable but by a spiritual fever, and it must be the horror of an awakened and affrighted conscience that must melt and mollify the hardness of our hearts. And therefore have I made choice of this argument to discourse on at this time, as being

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persuaded that, if any thing at all will humble us, it must be the apprehension of and meditation on the last judgment; and this, I hope, by God's blessing, may be effectual in some measure to this purpose; for surely no man can be so fast asleep in his sins, but the sounding of the last trumpet in his ears may startle him; neither can any man be running so fast or so furiously in *the broad way that leadeth to destruction*, but the flashing of hell-fire in his face may put him to a stand. And therefore let all profane persons or hypocrites, that live in any known sin or evil course of life, attend with fear and trembling to this most terrible and yet most infallible oracle of the great God. *For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

These words I shall not now consider (as they may be) as matter of consolation to the righteous; but only, upon this occasion, handle them in the severer sense, or that of terror only: and from these words thus considered I shall endeavour, (waving all needless criticisms,)

1st, To convince every man's conscience that there shall be indeed such an appearance, or such a general trial or doom of all mankind after this life, as is here spoken of.

2dly, I shall try to make clear to every one of our understandings what manner of appearance, or trial, this shall be; as also before whom, and in what form of proceeding, together with the issue, effects, and consequences of it.

3dly and lastly, I will, by way of application, do my best endeavour to work upon every man's affections, by shewing you how much all men, (of what quality and condition soever they are,) especially the wicked and ungodly, are concerned in it; and consequently how much it imports all men, especially such men, to think upon it and prepare for it, that, by a timely repentance, they may prevent the woful effects of it. To begin then with the

First of these general heads, in which I am to convince every man's conscience that there shall be indeed such an appearance, or such a general trial or doom of all mankind, after this life, as is here spoken of; neither let any man think this purpose unnecessary or superfluous, as if it supposed a doubt, where none was, by making a question of a principle; for though the affirmative of this proposition (viz. that there shall be certainly such a doom or judgment after this life) be, or ought to be, a principle undeniable, indisputable, and consequently unquestionable, amongst such as are truly Christians, yet because, as St. Paul says of the Jews, *all are not Jews that are Jews outwardly*, so may I say too, that all are not Christians neither that are so outwardly; and because many pretend to be of the church that hardly believe all the articles of her Creed; lastly, because there are some amongst us that do not only live, but talk, as if they thought there were no account to be given of their sayings or doings after this life, or at least as if they either doubted or had forgotten this truth: for the satisfaction of all it is therefore expedient to rescue from disbelief and contempt this fundamental article of our Creed, viz. *that Christ shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead*. For proof of this proposition against such as deny it, I desire only this fair *postulatum*,

the acknowledgment of that truth, which is ordinarily acquirable by the light of nature herself, viz. that there is a God, or such a power as made us, and observes our actions; and granting this conclusion, I question not but to make it appear even to the most profane persons, and that from the dictates of their own reason, together with such notions as they have or may have of the Deity by the light of nature itself, that there shall be a trial or judgment of all men after this life, for the things that all and every one of them have done here. in the flesh, and that,

1st, Because it is very agreeable to the nature of God.

2dly, Because it is also very consonant to the nature of the soul of man.

3dly, Because it is necessary for the manifestation of the divine justice.

4thly, Because the inequality and disproportion between actions and events; merits and rewards, men's parts and their fortunes here in this life, doth seem to require and exact such a judgment.

5thly, Because there is an inbred notion, or natural instinct and apprehension in all men, that there will be such a judgment.

And 1st, The truth of this doctrine is very applicable to the nature of God; for what can be more agreeable to the nature of the most pure and powerful agent, than to draw and unite unto itself whatsoever is like itself, as likewise to separate and remove from itself whatsoever is unlike itself? Now what is like God, but that which is good? and what unliker him than evil? And what is it to unite the one to himself, but to reward? or to separate and remove the other, but to punish? And yet we see God neither rewards all the good, nor punishes all the wicked in this world: there must be therefore a time hereafter, when both the one and the other shall be performed, and that time is what I call the last judgment.

2dly, The truth of this doctrine is very agreeable to the nature of the soul of man, because otherwise the chief agent both in good and evil should have little or no reward for the one, and little or no punishment for the other. For the principal or chief agent in all our actions (whether they be good or bad) is the soul; the body is but an organized instrument, or at most but an accessory in either. And yet all rewards and punishments appointed for good and evil by laws in this life, are bodily and sensual, at least I am sure they are finite, and mortal, and consequently no way suitable or proportionable to the spiritual, immaterial, and immortal nature of the soul. That therefore the chief agent or principal in all actions may have its reward or punishment proportionable and adequate to its own nature, it is necessary that at one time or other there should be an inquisition and judgment, whose effects, whether good or bad, may be spiritual and everlasting. Now if a judgment producing such effects cannot be here in this life, it must therefore necessarily be in another hereafter.

3dly, It is not only requisite, but necessary, that there should be a judgment after this life for the manifestation of the divine justice: for though whatsoever God doth is just, and that because God does it, yet does it not always appear to be so. Now God is not only just

in himself, but will appear to be so to others, and will have his justice confessed and acknowledged, at one time or other, by the hearts and consciences of all men. And though the Creator is not obliged to account to the creature for the manner how, or the reason why, he doth any thing; yet if he will have the creature convinced of a thing, that it is so or so, he must needs some way or other, or at some time or other, make it appear to the creature that it is so; and therefore I say for this reason it is necessary, that at some time or other there should be a general, a public, and a formal trial, wherein the actions of every particular man should be discovered to all in general, both angels and men; that so the actions being compared with the issue, and the merit balanced with the reward, God might (as the apostle says, [Rom. iii. 4.](#)) *be justified when he judgeth*, whether he absolves or condemns, and that not only by those that stand by, and are but the hearers of it, but even by those themselves that are judged. One of the main ends therefore, (as I humbly conceive,) why God *hath appointed a day to judge all the world*, (as the apostle speaks, [Acts xvii. 31.](#)) is, to give the whole world satisfaction, or to convince men and angels, whether they be good or bad, of the exact and precise integrity and impartiality of the divine justice in all and every one of the acts and effects of it. And hence it is, that this general doom is called in scripture, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; or the day wherein God will reveal and make it appear, that all his ways and all his judgments are righteous: though the very being of a God implies holiness and power, and consequently justice, yet the ways and means God makes use of to shew that infinite justice are not always obvious; though we know by his nature it is impossible for him to be unjust, yet are there some things, in which, though we search ever so diligently for the manner how they come to pass; yet I am apt to believe them beyond the capacity of human nature, and the measure even of divine revelation on this side the grave; for example, *that for the offence of one, condemnation came upon all men*, or that all men became liable to eternal wrath, because one man had eaten the forbidden fruit, is what we ought to deem exact truth, as consonant to express scripture; that the misery of all for the sin of one would be a most just punishment, if God should inflict it; but then we may believe likewise, that the reasons of God's justice in both these particulars are superior to the comprehension of mortality, and not now fathomable. The like may be said in regard of the punishment of finite and temporal sin with infinite and eternal torment; which though it be true, that it shall be so, and consequently just that it should be so; yet I believe it would perplex the wisest man living to give a satisfactory answer (according to our notions of equity and justice) how in equity or justice it can be so. And therefore in regard of these, and such other *δυσνόητα*, or hard truths as these are, it is, that St. Paul, (though bred at the feet of Gamaliel, and wrapt up into the third heaven, and consequently knowing as much or more of God than ever man did,) cries out, as one overwhelmed in admiration and astonishment, [Rom. xi. 33.](#) *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* But at the day of judgment,

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the reason and equity even of these, and of all other now seeming hard sayings, shall be disclosed to us, that the righteousness of all God's ways, and the impartiality of his dealings with the sons of men, may be so clearly manifested to all, that the very reprobates themselves shall be forced to see and acknowledge their own damnation to be most just, both in regard to the duration and intenseness of it, having not so much as the comfort of an excuse, nor any thing to accuse or complain of, but their own folly and fault for their destruction. And thus you see, in the third place, the necessity of a judgment after this life, for the satisfaction of the world, for the conviction of the wicked, and consequently for the full and perfect manifestation of the divine justice.

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4thly, The strange disproportion and unsuitableness betwixt actions and events, merits and rewards, men's parts and their fortune here in this life, doth seem to exact, as it were, at the hands of a righteous God, that there should be a day of an after-reckoning, to rectify this, which is in appearance so great a disorder and confusion: and to put a real and a visible difference betwixt the evil and the good, the holy and the profane; for now there seems to be none at all, it being long since the observation of one of the wisest of men, [Ecclesiastes ix. 2](#), *That all things happen alike unto all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.* Nay it were well, if it were no worse; but the same wise man tells us, [Eccles. viii. 14](#), *that there he just men, to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; and there he wicked men, to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous: for a just man, says he, [Eccles. vii. 15](#), many times perisheth in his righteousness, and a wicked man many times prolongs his life in his wickedness.* The self-evident truth of these propositions cannot be questioned by any man (though they were not in holy writ) that sees and observes the dispensation of good and bad things in this life. To conclude; we see that riches, honour, pleasure, and whatsoever the foolish world calls *good*, they are for the most part and in the greatest measure the portion of the worst of men; whereas poverty, pain, and shame, and whatever else we usually term *evil*, are for the most part and in the highest degree the lot of the righteous; Dives being a type, as it were, of the one, and Lazarus of the other. There must therefore, in all reason and equity, be another audit, or time of account after this life, to the end that, as Abraham said unto Dives, *those that have received good things in this life, and been evil, may be tormented; and those that have received evil things in this life, and been good, may be comforted; for if in this life only good men had hope in Christ, they were* (as the apostle tells us, [1 Cor. xv. 19](#)) *of all men most miserable.* This argument, drawn from the seeming unequal distribution of things here below, I mean the calamity of good men, and the prosperity of bad men in this life, is urged by the elder Pliny, and some few others of the heathen moralists, to prove the nonexistence of a God: for if, say they, there be a God, he must needs be just and good; and if he be just and good, he would not, he could not suffer good men to be unrewarded, and

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evil men unpunished; much less could he or would he endure, that evil men should thrive in and by their wicked courses, and good men fare the worse for their goodness, as in common experience we see they do. And truly if my conclusion concerning the certainty of a judgment to come after this life were not true, this argument of theirs would shrewdly shake the first article and foundation of all our creed, viz. the being of a God. But supposing such a judgment to come, wherein all good men shall finally and fully be rewarded, and all wicked men finally and fully punished, we do at once vindicate the power, the wisdom, the providence, the justice, and consequently the very being and essence of God, from all blasphemy and contradiction, notwithstanding any disproportion or incongruity whatever, that is or seems to be between actions and events, merits and rewards, men's parts and their fortunes, here in this life. And this is the fourth reason, why, granting there is a God, we must necessarily grant likewise, that there shall be a day of judgment.

5thly, The last reason I shall make use of, to necessitate the evidence and enforce the truth of the doctrine of a future judgment, is that inborn and inbred notion and apprehension, which all men have by nature, that there is such a thing, together with the general expectation of all men, that there will be such a thing: and this reason, how slight soever it may appear to others, to me it seems (what I hope I shall make it seem to you also) most effectual and convincing; for whatsoever it is that all men think will be, without doubt it shall be, because whatsoever all men agree in, is the voice of nature itself, and consequently must be true: for the dictates of nature are stronger than the probats of reason, I mean of reason not abstracted, but as it is in us mortals; and therefore of all other arguments, that which is drawn from natural impression and instinct is most forcible and concluding, and the knowledge arising from such impression or instinct, though it be not so full and perfect, yet it is more certain and infallible than any other knowledge whatsoever, arising from a man's own fallible discourse and reasoning. I confess indeed that knowledge, the produce of instinct and natural impression only, is not so full, so perfect, nor perhaps so properly termed knowledge, (because the word *scire* properly denotes *per causas scire*,) as that which is concluded by demonstration, or drawn from an evident connection of one thing with another, or a consequence of one thing from another; because when a man knows any thing by natural impression or instinct only, he knows not the reasons of what he knows; he knows ὅτι ἔστι, that there is such a thing, but not διότι ἔστι, why it is; no, nor perhaps τὶ ἔστι, what it is; I mean not what it is in the exact or distinct nature of it neither; and yet for all that, this knowledge is (as far as it reaches) more certain and infallible than any conclusion drawn from our own reasoning and discourse can be. 1st, Because this inbred notion, or this knowledge which we have of any thing by natural impression or instinct, is not (as all other human or acquired knowledge is) a conclusion made by us from our own discourse and judgment, which is always fallible, or subject unto error; but it is a conclusion made in us by nature, or rather by the God of

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nature himself, who can neither deceive nor be deceived; and therefore whatsoever we know in this manner, must needs be certain.

2dly, Because if the knowledge we have by our instinct were not certain or infallible, this received, and as yet undoubted maxim both in natural philosophy and divinity, viz. That God and nature do nothing in vain, would not be true: for if that were not so indeed, which all men in general, and every man in particular is naturally inclined to believe to be so; then that natural impression or instinct, whereby they are inclined to think so, should be planted in them to no purpose; the affirmation of which is not only a reproach in nature, but a blasphemy against God himself; because indeed that which we call nature is but God's ordinary method of working in and by the creature.

3dly, That the knowledge which is an effect of natural impression or instinct is indeed certain and infallible, will easily and clearly appear, if we but consider those creatures who have not the use of reason, or of instruction, of revelation, of tradition, or of any other means of knowledge, (excepting that of sense) but this of instinct or natural impression only; and yet we see, that those irrational creatures have their knowledge more immediately, more certainly, and more infallibly, than any man's deductions from his own discourse and reason. For instance, who amongst us is there that doth or can know his enemy (after the clearest discovery he can make of him) so certainly, or avoid him so suddenly, as the lark doth the hobby at the first sight? What sick man, nay, what physician, knows his own disease, and the remedy for it so exactly, as the dog knows his vomit, and that which will procure it? What husbandman knows his seasons more exactly, or observes them more duly or punctually, than the stork, the crane, and the swallow? Lastly, (pardon the lowness of the similitude,) what landlord or what tenant foresees the ruin of his own house so certainly, or avoids it so seasonably, as the vermin his inmates? And yet the lark never studied Machiavel, nor the dog Hippocrates, neither were the stork, the crane, or the swallow ever taught by natural philosophy to distinguish seasons; nor the vermin by judicial astrology to foresee casual and contingent events: but it has pleased the all-wise and gracious Creator to supply the defects of reason in these poor helpless animals, with a knowledge which, though it be not so large and perfect, yet it is more certain and infallible, especially in those things that are necessary for the preservation of their existence and species, than any knowledge attainable by men, by disquisition or speculation, because (as I said before) it is a knowledge not gotten by, but infused in them by God and nature, who cannot err; and such a knowledge as this (I mean for the kind of it) is that which all men have of a judgment to come, or of something to be suffered by evil doers after this life; a knowledge, I say, which is planted in them, and not learned by them, but originally in every man, and universally in all men; and whatsoever is so, must needs be taught them by God and nature, and consequently cannot be erroneous or uncertain. It is true indeed, that some particular men, or some particular sort or sect of men, may believe and maintain false and foolish opinions, such as have neither solidity of

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truth in them, nor reality of object without them: but then such opinions as these had their creation and production at first from some one man's fancy, and from thence derived by education and tradition, may afterwards infect many; and thus the opinion and practice of idolatry, or the worship of more gods than one, came into the world, and spread itself over most part of mankind, for it was not so from the beginning. But the dictates and impressions of nature do very much differ from conceits or imaginations of fancy, and from traditional errors of custom and education; in the first place, because the dictates and impressions of nature are not only general in most men, but universal in all men; whereas conceits of fancy, and traditional errors of custom or education, flowing from thence, though they may be, and often are consented to, and believed by many, yet none of them ever were or ever will be consented to and believed by all. Thus were the philosophers of old, and thus are the Christians at this day divided into their several sects and heresies.

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2dly, The dictates and impressions of nature, as they are universally in all men, so are they originally in every man without teaching. And hence it is that St. Paul tells us, [Rom. ii. 14](#), *that the Gentiles that had not the law*, (he means that were never taught the law as the Jews were,) had yet notwithstanding that very law in regard to the fundamental notions of piety, justice, and sobriety, written in all and every one of their hearts by nature itself, and together with the law, by necessary consequence, a belief and expectation of a reward for good and punishment for evil after this life; as appears by their *consciences accusing and excusing them*, even for those things which were not punishable or rewardable, nor perhaps discernible by any but themselves here in this world. Whence it follows, that those notions of law and suggestions of conscience (which St. Paul tells us were in all the Gentiles without teaching) must needs be dictates and impressions of a simple and uncorrupted nature.

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3dly, The dictates and impressions of nature, (*in quantum et quatenus*,) or as far as they are merely from nature, receive neither addition nor diminution (as they may do either) from other principles: as they are universally in all men without exception, and originally in every man without instruction, so are they equally and alike in all men without distinction, in the Gentile as well as in the Jew, in the Barbarian as well as in the Greek, in the Pagan as well as in the Christian, and in those that have no learning, as well as in those that have; whereas opinion, arising from conceit of fancy, and knowledge, which is the product of human reason, and faith itself, which is an effect of and assent to divine revelation, are all of them stronger or weaker, more or less in their several subjects, according to the strength, measure, and working of the several principles from whence they flow. And consequently they are none of them equal in all men, nor any one of them equally at all times in those that have them: but the other natural, impressive knowledge is quite contrary; such a knowledge as this is that apprehension which all men have or would have (if their natural impressions were not defaced in them) of a judgment to come, or of a reward for the good, and a punishment for the wicked after this life; for never was there any good man but hoped

for it, or any wicked man but at some time or other was afraid of it. In a word, there was never in any age in the world, either nation in general, or any one man in particular, that owned the being of a God, but he acknowledged a judgment to come also; although the notion they perhaps had of it was but in a confused and imperfect manner; as appears by those Elysian fields, or places of rest and happiness for the good, and Phlegethon and Cocytus, those black and burning lakes of fire and brimstone, the places of torment for the wicked, after this life; which the poets or heathen divines speak of, as the general and received opinion of all mankind, together with Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, which were to be the judges; Alecto, Megara, and Tisiphone, the fiends or furies which were to be the tormentors of the damned. This, I say, was the general and the constant doctrine and opinion of the heathen, which was registered, but not invented by the poets; being indeed in substance the same which we Christians are now taught more perfectly by divine revelation, but was always instilled by nature itself, though more obscurely and imperfectly, into all mankind. Nay, those very men themselves, who both by their words and actions would make others believe that they believed no God, do many times shake and tremble upon the apprehension and expectation of some terrible thing or other that is to come; so that whilst they deny a judge with their mouths, they acknowledge a judgment in their hearts. And indeed bad men are not always so bold as they would seem to be, nor so little afraid of God as they would have the world think they are. For of all men, these atheists, that would be, whenever they are in any great extremity or danger, have the poorest, the basest, and the most dejected spirits. Give me a man of the coldest and softest constitution, and let him be but innocent, and he shall look death (I mean a present, an evident, a deliberate, and an unavoidable death) with more courage and bravery in the face, than a man of the most fiery temper and most exalted spirit, if he be a villain, or guilty of any horrid or heinous crime. And what is or can be the reason of this, but that one is secure, and the other is afraid of some terrible thing after death, which can be no other but that general doom or judgment we now speak of, the harbinger or forerunner whereof hath taken up his lodging in the breasts and bosoms of all men; and that is conscience, which hath always (unless it be asleep, or *seared*, as St. Paul calls it, *with an hot iron*) one of its eyes upon sin here, and the other upon punishment hereafter; which whosoever tells me he does not believe, he must pardon me, if I tell him again, that I do not believe him; for it is impossible that those inborn characters, that handwriting of God and nature, I mean that innate impression or instinct which all men have of a future reward or punishment, should be utterly blotted out of any man; forgotten perhaps, or not thought upon, or defaced, it may be, but absolutely lost and annihilated it cannot be: and therefore if there be any man afraid or loath to own this truth, he betrays a secret belief of it by his fears; or if he do not now, he will do so at some time or other hereafter. But against this which has been said it may be objected, that if the belief of a judgment to come were, as I affirm it to be, an effect of natural impression or instinct, then it would be

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universally equal in all, and consequently equal in every one of the same kind; for we see, say they, that all larks are equally afraid of the hobby, and every particular lark as much at one time as at another. Besides, it is apparent, that all men do not equally believe this truth; nay, it is to be feared, that some men do not believe it at all; and of those who do, some believe it at one time more, and less at another. And therefore that this belief of a judgment to come (in whomsoever it is) is the effect of some other cause, and not of natural impression or instinct. To this objection I answer, that it is true indeed, that all inbred and inborn impressions or instincts are universally and constantly equal in all particulars of the same kind; and always continue to be so in those creatures which are not capable of either infection from without or corruption from within. And such are all living creatures, besides man; which neither sway the rule of nature, nor are swerved from it, but are always constantly and equally guided by it, as having no other principle from without to corrupt or control it. But with men it is far otherwise; for in them those notions of nature that are born with them may and do receive augmentation or diminution, alteration or corruption from some other principles either without us or within us. For instance, those inborn notions, that there is a God, that there will be a reward for those that live well, and a punishment for those that live ill, and that we should do unto others as we would have others do unto us, and the like, may and do receive augmentation from divine revelation, and from right reason, and from a good, either religious or moral education and conversation; so that what was imprinted in us by nature may be and is improved and confirmed in us by other principles; and therefore I will not deny, but a Christian may have a more constant and more confirmed and more perfect knowledge both of a God and of a judgment to come, and of that fundamental equity which ought to be betwixt one man and another, than he that hath no knowledge of these and the like things, but by the light of nature only. And by the same reason one Christian may have a more constant, distinct, and perfect knowledge of the same truths than another Christian, according as the one may be more or less enlightened by those higher principles than the other, or may make a better or a worse use of them. Again: as the knowledge we have by instinct may be augmented and improved, confirmed and perfected; so it may be lessened and weakened, defaced and corrupted; nay, and for a time so obscured, as it may seem both to ourselves and others to be quite extinguished, and that either by our own depraved reason, together with our perverse will and affections from within us, or by an evil education, or a worse conversation from without us, which many times infuse such opinions (both concerning God and ourselves) into us, as are quite contrary to and destructive of our first notions; and yet because they are more suitable to our perverse will and affections, they are frequently received and defended by our depraved reason against the light of nature itself. As a man may easily perceive, that will but read attentively the first and second chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, where the apostle having laid it down for an undoubted conclusion, that the law, (he means the moral law,) or the fundamental notions of our duty towards

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God and man, was written by nature in the heart of all the Gentiles, and has proved it to be so, because their consciences did justify them when they did well, and accuse them when they did ill; yet he affirms likewise, that this very law (though written in their hearts by nature) was so obscured, and almost quite erased from their judgment, by their more perverse wills and affections, that as they worshipped beasts for God, so they made beasts of themselves, and behaved themselves worse than beasts to one another. This behaviour does no way invalidate the forcibleness of this argument, but rather intimates a deep stupefaction by a long, inveterate habit of ill, fallen on their minds. So that, to conclude this point, there may be and is a natural knowledge in all men of a future judgment, as well as the existence of a God; though in some perhaps the impression of either of these truths is not always active or operative; for we see that some men are grown to such a habit of sensuality, or brutality, that they do nothing almost according to reason; and yet I hope that no man will from thence conclude, that such men are not reasonable creatures, or that they have no such natural principle or faculty as reason at all in them. And let this suffice for our conviction in point of judgment or conscience, that there shall be a day of judgment after this life; which was my first general. I am therefore now, in the

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Second place, to inquire (as far as the light of divine revelation will enable me) what manner of thing this judgment or last doom will be. Know then, that the great appearance, trial, or judgment which my text speaks of, is the general or grand assize of the whole world, held in a heavenly high court of justice by our Saviour, to hear, examine, and finally determine, of all thoughts, words, and actions, that ever were thought, spoken, or committed, together with the causes, occasions, circumstances, and consequences of all and every one of them, and accordingly to pronounce an irrevocable sentence either of absolution or condemnation upon all men. In which solemn description you have,

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1st, The Judge.

2dly, The parties to be judged.

3dly, The things controverted, or for what they shall be judged.

4thly, The form of this trial, or the manner of proceeding that shall be held in it.

5thly and lastly, The sentence itself, with the issue and execution of it.

First, then, for the judge at this general and grand assize; he must, as my text tells you, be Christ: *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*; God and man, in his two capacities of Godhead and manhood connected; for as he was our redeemer, so he is to be our judge in both his natures: he must in the first place be our judge, as he is God; because none but God has jurisdiction over all the parties that are to be tried at that judgment, which are angels as well as men, princes as well as subjects, and the greatest peers as well as the meanest peasants. Now though one creature may have jurisdiction over another, nay over many other creatures, yet no one has or can have authority over all his fellows, this being a royalty or prerogative of the Creator himself only. Again: Christ must be judge, as

he is God, because none but Omniscience can discern the main and principal things that shall be there called in question, which are not words and actions only, but the hearts, consciences, thoughts, purposes, and intentions of all men. Lastly: Christ must be judge, as he is God, because none but God can give life and execution to the sentence as pronounced then, whether of absolution or condemnation; for none else can render the creature infinitely and eternally happy, which is the execution of one of the sentences; or on the other side, render the other part of the sentence of infinite and everlasting misery effectual, but God only: and therefore the judge at that trial must necessarily be God, and consequently this very act or office of Christ, the execution of justice in this judgment, is an irrefragable argument of his godhead. But though God only is or can be our judge at that great tribunal, yet nevertheless he must not be God only, but man likewise; and that first in regard of the judgment itself, to manifest the equity, the indiscriminateness, and the impartiality of it; which might be perhaps doubted of, if the judge were either God or man only. For if he were only God, he would be the party offended; and if only man, the person offending: and a judgment, though really never so just, may be, or seem to be, suspected to be otherwise, when either of the parties concerned is judge; whereas Christ, being God as well as man, and man as well as God, must needs be acknowledged to be an equal, an indifferent and impartial judge betwixt God and man, as being equally allied unto them both. Again: Christ must be judge as he is man, in regard to the parties triable at that day, whether they be sheep or goats; I mean, whether they be the just that are to be absolved, or the wicked that are to be condemned. For among the just there is none so good but he might fairly be afraid to appear at that judgment, if the same person were not our Saviour who is to be our judge, who if he brought not to the bench with him the pity and compassion of a man, as well as the power and justice of a God; nay, if God at that trial did not look upon us through himself as man, and beholding the merits in his own person, impute them to us, not one of all mankind could be saved. He is to be judge as man therefore, that the just to be absolved may not fear to appear before him: and he must be judge as man too, that the condemned wicked may have no cause of complaint, how severe usage soever they find from him. For how can even the damned themselves murmur, repine, or except against the judgment, where the trial (as I shall shew you presently) is by the evidence of their own conscience, and their condemnation pronounced by that judge, who laid down his life to save sinners, and consequently cannot possibly be imagined to condemn any but such as would not be saved by him. Lastly: Christ must be judge, as he is man, in regard of all mankind, or in regard of humanity itself; I mean for the dignifying and exalting of human nature: that as the nature of man was debased, and brought down to the lowest degree of meanness in the person of our Saviour, in his birth, life, and at his death; so the same nature, in the same person, might be exalted and raised up to so high a degree of power, majesty, and honour, that not only men that had despised him, and devils that had tempted him, but even the blessed and



glorious angels themselves, whose comfort and assistance he once stood in need of, should fall down, and tremble at his presence. And thus much for the judge at this awful trial.

The second thing considerable in the description I gave you of this judgment are the parties to be judged; and those, briefly, (to speak nothing of the evil angels, who are then also to receive their full and final doom,) are all persons, of all sorts, qualities, conditions, and professions, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, one with another. For at this bar, princes have no prerogatives, the nobles have no privileges, nor the clergy exemptions and immunities, nor the lawyer any more favour than his client; the rich shall neither be regarded for their bags, nor the poor pitied for his poverty; but all indifferently shall have the same judge and the same trial, the same evidence and the same witness; and if their cases be alike, (how different soever their persons or estates may be here,) their fate shall there be the same: and thus much for the parties to be judged.

The next thing is, thirdly, the matters that shall be questioned at that trial; and those are not our actions only, but our words also, and not only our words, but our thoughts too, and not only our thoughts, but our very inclinations or dispositions themselves likewise; together with the place, time, occasion, intention, and end, for which every thing was done, thought, or spoken, and that from the first birth or instant of time, to the very last periodical minute of it.

And then, fourthly, for the manner of proceeding, there will be no occasion for examination of witnesses or reading depositions; there will be no *allegata* or *probata*; for every man shall be indicted and arraigned, cast or acquitted, condemned or absolved, by the testimony of his own conscience, which shall readily, though never so unwillingly, assent to whatever the Judge shall charge it with, whether it be good or evil; whether it be for him or against him. The book of life shall be opened, wherein is registered and recorded whatever good or evil, at any time, from the beginning of the world till the end of it, has been done, spoken, consented to, or imagined by any or all mankind: and what is more wonderful, this is written in such a character, that all men (of what nation or language soever) must needs understand and acknowledge the truth of it; this book being nothing else but the counterpart (as it were) of every man's conscience, which God keeps by him as an undeniable evidence to convince all men with at the last judgment.

In which I shall now consider the fifth and last thing proposed to this description, viz. the sentence itself, (whether of absolution or condemnation,) the form of both which is judicially set down by Christ himself, ([Matth. xxv. 34.](#)) That of absolution in these terms; *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:* but of this sentence the present occasion of our humiliation will not permit me to speak, as too triumphant a topic for this day. That other sentence, therefore, (the sad but reasonable object of our present meditation,) you may find in the [41st verse of the same chapter](#), in these words; *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his*

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angels. A dismal and woful sentence, my beloved, a sentence carrying hell and horror in the very sound of it; whilst every syllable does, as it were, stab the soul, and every word bring with it a new death (if I may so say without a paradox) to those that can never die. Have we any of us ever been present, when the sentence but of a bodily death has been pronounced upon a prisoner at the bar? and may not we observe what horror and amazement does instantly seize the poor wretch, what a deadly paleness covers his face, what a ghastly distraction rises in his countenance, what a faltering in his speech, what a trembling in his joints, what a cold sweat over his whole body? and yet all these were but weak and faint expressions of what his soul suffered. If any of us, who have seen and observed all this, had but once felt in ourselves what we have seen in others; then perhaps we might guess, and yet but guess, at the fear and trembling, the horror and amazement, which will not only seize and lay hold upon, but devour and swallow up the soul of man, upon the hearing of that dreadful knell, that direful and fatal sentence, which will at once both pronounce, and make him unspeakably, unconceivably, irrecoverably, and everlastingly miserable. But why do I compare things together so infinitely disproportionate, as temporal with eternal, corporeal with spiritual, the death of the body alone, with the death of soul and body too, or the benches of men with the tribunal of God? No, my beloved, if the sentence of that Judge were like those of ours here, it would be well for the greatest part of mankind; for then perhaps it might either be appealed from, or reversed; or if neither, yet at worst it might be endured, without their being utterly and for ever undone by it. Here on earth, perhaps, appeals may be lodged, and carried from one place to another, from an inferior to a superior authority. But at the last day, to whom shall we appeal from God our sovereign and supreme judge? Or what higher court of judicature is there than that of heaven?

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Lastly: when our Advocate himself condemns us, who will be so compassionate, or dare be so impudent as to plead for us? When, therefore, this sentence is once pronounced, there is no more hope left either of reprieve or pardon; of ease or intermission, of alteration or ending; but (which is the misery of miseries) that torment which is intolerable for a moment, must last for ever: a word that must vex and rack the understanding, puzzle and weary the imagination, distract and confound all the powers and faculties of the soul. What pain is there, or can there be so little, as man could be content on any consideration to endure for ever? What man amongst us is there so poor or so covetous, as that he would be hired, or so stout or so patient, (if he were hired,) that he could endure but the aching of one tooth in extremity, if he hoped for no end of his pain? And yet the toothache, the gout, the stone, and the strangury, the rack, and the wheel, with the rest of our natural diseases or inventions of cruel ingenuity, are but as so many fleabittings, or inconsiderable trifles, compared with the torments of the damned. All pains here are either tolerable, or not durable; either we may suffer them, or at least shall sink under them. But there, there I say, in hell, is acuteness of sense with acuteness of torment, extremity of pain and extremity of feeling, insupportable

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anguish, and yet ability to bear it, where the fire always burns, and yet consumes not, where fuel is still devoured, and yet it wastes not; where, if a man had a world of earth, he would give it all for one drop of water, and yet the whole ocean would not cool him; where there is perpetual darkness, without rest, continual night, void of sleep: and (to conclude what never shall be concluded indeed) where there is always distraction without madness, dying without death, misery without pity, and wishing without hope. Such things as these can hardly be thought of, much less dwelt on without the greatest horror. If St. Paul, a prisoner at the bar, discoursing on this argument, could make an insulting Felix tremble; how much greater fear ought they to have, who living in any known breach of God's commands, or open sin unrepented of, are therefore much more concerned in that future judgment than Felix could be! He, you know, was a heathen, but we are Christians; and you may be assured the least Christian sinner is greater than the greatest among the heathens: because they can sin but against the light of nature, and their own reason only; whereas wicked Christians sin not only against the light of nature and reason, but against divine revelation in the known precepts of the law, and those plainer ones of the gospel also; at once most desperately slighting the terrible threats of the one, and most profanely despising the gracious offers of the other. So that if the honour either of God's mercy or of his justice be dear unto him, it must necessarily be easier, not only for Felix, that never heard of Christ, but even for Pontius Pilate himself, who condemned him, than it will be for any wicked, impenitent Christian at the day of judgment. And therefore for application of all unto ourselves, let us now, (according to my third and last general,) endeavour to be informed how far we ourselves are like to be concerned in the future judgment, taken (as I have taken it all this while) in the worst sense, and consequently how we ought to think of and prepare for it. Well then, if there be indeed such a judgment to come, as I hope I have fairly proved, we may from thence conclude, 1st, That the greatest pretenders to wisdom in this world are not the wisest men; I mean those great Ahithophels, those subtle steersmen of states and kingdoms, those deep politicians, and civil oracles, (as it were,) of courts and councils, who think this doctrine of a future judgment, as well as most of the other mysteries of the Christian religion, to be indeed nothing else but reasons of state, or the politic devices and inventions of the wiser sort of men, (they mean such as they themselves are,) to keep the weaker judgments and stronger passions in the greatest awe, and so to make them the more pliable and conformable to the laws and commands of men. So that the end of all religion is (as these political Christians suppose) terminated in this life; and that whatsoever foolish bookworms may talk of after this life, whether it be the resurrection of the body, or the appearance of both body and soul in another place, with the eternal existence of them both in extremity either of pain or pleasure, with whatsoever else our Christian faith obliges us to believe, in order to another life, they are but so many bugbears to fright children withal. Or at best, (in those men's opinion,) they are but the vain speculations of idle and curious wits, or the issue and product



of melancholy brains, and fitter for the exercise of men's disputative faculties in the schools, than for the object of a wise man's hopes or fears in any of his actions, as having indeed nothing of solid truth or reality in them. But how miserably mistaken and shamefully deceived will these giant-wits, these mighty Solomons, (as they are now thought,) then find themselves to be, when awakened by the sudden, the general, and fearful alarm of the last trumpet out of that sleep, which they well hoped would have been endless, they shall see themselves (to their inexpressible horror and amazement) first summoned and haled to judgment, and afterwards hurried and dragged away by stranger and subtler spirits than themselves, to torment and execution; where their senses will quickly convince their intellects, that what they formerly supposed but a chimera, an idle speculation, or at best but a politic invention, is indeed a sad, a serious, and severe truth. Neither will it be the least part of these men's hell, that they shall eternally reproach themselves with folly, after so exalted an opinion of their own wisdom. To proceed, again, in the second place: all other hypocrites, as well as atheistical statesmen, are fools also; I say all other hypocrites, because indeed these Christian politicians, or politic Christians I just now mentioned, are a sort of hypocrites, viz. moral or civil hypocrites, (as I may so call them,) because they seem to believe what they do not, and enjoin others what they care not for themselves; I mean the belief of Christian doctrines and duties, and that for a moral and civil respect or end only; to wit, in order to the preservation of public peace and welfare in the state; which certainly were a very good end, if it were not their only end in so doing. But the other hypocrites I now speak of are religious hypocrites, and not so called because they are more religious than the other, but because they are such hypocrites as to pretend religion for their main end, though indeed they intend and use it only as a means to advance and compass, not the public, but their own particular designs by it, (whether they be honest or dishonest,) and that often to the prejudice of the public interest both of church and state; nay sometimes, (as in our late intestine broils,) to the apparent ruin or hazard of them both. And therefore this kind of hypocrites, as they are much more wicked and mischievous here in this world, so (supposing a future reckoning) they will be far more miserable in another state, than those hypocrites or atheists lately mentioned. Indeed, if God was as easily to be deceived as men are, with false, specious shews and pretences; or if these hypocrites could hope to work upon God, as they once did upon the populace, by false words and flattering insinuations; or, lastly, if they could make God (as they would fain have made the king) believe, that the demolishing of his palaces, the robbing him of his revenues, the persecuting of his ministers by their false interpreting and misapplying of his word, nay, and by driving himself (as much as in them lies) out of his own kingdom, the church; if they can, I say, when they come to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, make him believe that these and all other things they have done of the like kind, were all of them done in order to his service, and with an intention to make him a much more glorious God than he was before; then let them be thought as wise as they would

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seem religious: nay, let them name their own places and preferments in heaven, as they did here on earth in the time of their usurpation; for certainly no preferment can hardly be adequate to such transcendent spirits and undertakings. And yet all this would be no difficult matter for them to bring to pass; if either, in the first place, they might always be owned as the highest and supreme judicatory; that is, if they might be hereafter, as they will needs be here, their own judges: or, secondly, if they may not be their own judges, or absolved by their own votes, yet if they might at least be but tried (as they think it very equitable they should be) by their own ordinances, that is, by laws and rules of their own composure, without and contrary to the consent of the supreme legislator: or, lastly, if at that great assize they can neither be their own judges, nor be tried by their own ordinances, yet at least if they may but have their own preachers or advocates, (who pleaded so powerfully for them to the people,) to plead for them likewise before God; and withal, if those advocates of theirs may but be allowed to interpret that sentence which shall then be pronounced, with the same assurance and falsity as they have interpreted others of holy writ; neither they themselves, nor any of their party, will run any great hazard. For then (I mean if their scribes and pharisees, if their doctors of the law and interpreters of the gospel, may be believed) the meaning of *Go ye cursed* shall be the contrary, *Come ye blessed*; and on the contrary the blessing shall tacitly imply only a curse; as if that which was spoken to those on the left hand was meant to those on the right; and the words directed to those on the right intended for those on the left hand: it being the usual interpretation of those doctors to make the sense of God's word (how opposite soever to the letter of it) to be always in favour of themselves, and to condemn their foes; who because they are enemies to the good old cause, must needs be esteemed God's also. But whether this supposition be true or false, (with all other controversies betwixt us and them,) they will be fully, finally, and impartially determined, when they and we shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ; *For we shall all appear*, says my text; that is, we shall not only be there, but be present every one of us in his proper shape and likeness: no disguising of persons, no palliating of actions, no concealing of purposes, no dissembling of intentions at all there: *For we must all appear*, says my text, γυμνοὶ καὶ τετραχηλισμένοι, (as the same apostle says in another place,) naked and barefaced, and laid, as it were, flat upon our backs, not before a close or a grand committee of ignorant and partial men, who may deceive and be deceived, but before Christ, the most exact searcher and infallible discerner of all hearts; and before Christ attended on by all the holy angels and blessed saints, amongst whom, to their greater confusion, hypocrites shall perhaps see some sitting at Christ's right hand, whom they have formerly condemned and executed as malignants and delinquents. And amongst these, I doubt not but they will see him whom they have pierced, (I mean not Christ God, but God's Christ, or God's anointed,) that blessed saint and martyr their own sovereign, whom they so inhumanly and barbarously murdered; and whom though they would not look upon as an object either of reverence or pity here,

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they shall, though unwillingly, behold him as an object of horror and confusion there: an object which, next unto hell itself, shall be most dreadful and terrible unto them, whilst his wounds, bleeding afresh at the sight of his murderers, shall at once upbraid, accuse, and condemn them. Howsoever, I am sure they must appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that Christ who is truth itself, and in whose mouth there was no guile, and therefore he cannot choose but abhor an hypocrite beyond all sinners: that Christ, who would not have his own life defended against the unjust violence of the lawful magistrate, and therefore cannot endure a rebellious hypocrite, of all hypocrites, nor a rebel upon a false pretence of religion, of all rebels. Lastly, before that Christ that knows well enough that his name and his worship, his word and his sacraments, prayer, fasting, and the rest of his sacred ordinances were only made a stale by the hypocrites of those times, to conceal, to make way for, and to compass their own covetous, malicious, or ambitious ends: and consequently whilst they bragged of setting him upon his throne, they placed a reed in his hand instead of a sceptre, and crowned him in jest, whilst they crucified him in earnest, and what is this, but to mock Christ himself as well as the world here? And therefore they themselves shall be mocked by Christ before all the world hereafter: for as they have most unjustly made many innocent and upright men spectacles to men and angels here in this life, so shall they, unless a repentance followed, be made a spectacle to men and angels in the life to come, being first put to open shame by having their mask of piety plucked off, and consequently all the rottenness of their hearts and villainy of their designs made evident and apparent, and afterwards a double portion of the most exquisite torments that hell can afford shall be given to them; one moiety for their sins, and another for their hypocrisy; one for their great presumption in their daring to mock God, and another for their far greater impudence in pretending to honour and serve, whilst they did but mock him. This, I say, shall be the portion of the hypocrite at the day of judgment, which appears to be a very bitter one by that of our Saviour, [Matth. xxiv. 51](#), where it seems, a greater punishment cannot be threatened or given than a portion with the hypocrite; and yet even from thence we may collect, that some sinners who are not hypocrites, yet are equally bad, otherwise they would not have their portion assigned with them; and those are such, who are so far from hypocrisy, that they do not nor will not so much as pretend to be religious; I mean those that call themselves Christians, and yet are worse than the worst of pagans, such as sin with a high hand, those impudently presumptuous and profane persons, that are so far from concealing or disguising any of their lewd courses or practices, though never so sinful and shameful, that they not only own and avow them, but value themselves for them, as if to be a witty scoffer, a bold blasphemer, a strong drinker, a notorious fornicator or adulterer, and a desperate contemner of all divine and human laws, were the necessary ingredients towards the composition of a gallant man, and consequently, as if it were impossible to be a gallant man and a good Christian; nay, as if it were not possible to be a gallant man, and to be a man, that is, a rational creature, without

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being metamorphosed and transformed into a swine, a goat, or some such brutish creature, by giving up a man's self to all manner of beastly lusts, with as much liberty, and as little shame or remorse, as beasts themselves do: as if God had given men reason, not to govern and restrain, but to stir up and be subservient to their sensual appetite; and what is all this, but to do what is in a man's own power to unman himself, and turn a rebel, not against divinity and religion, but against humanity and nature itself also? And now though this, one would think, were as bad as could be, yet it were to be wished that some were not worse; by not worse, I mean, that they would be content and satisfied to walk alone by themselves in the ways and works of darkness, without making it their business (as we see they do) to draw as many others as they can down into hell with them, like the companions of Ulysses, who having drunk of Circe's enchanted cup themselves, and thereby become beasts, afterwards made use of all the beastly inducements they could to prove the preference of that to man's life, and so persuade their other fellows to drink of the same cup, and partake of a like fate with them. And what is this but to play the Devil's part, or to be the prince of darkness's agents or factors here in this world? For as the Devil himself is called Διάβολος, or the tempter, because it is his business, delight, and study to tempt others; so all that are tempters of others into sin may, by the same reason, be called devils; I am sure they do the Devil's work, and shall have (unless they repent) the Devil's wages for it. For if those that *turn other men unto righteousness* (as the prophet says) *shine like stars*, or have a much greater degree of glory in heaven than other good men, who have not been so zealous or industrious to convert others; by the same reason, those who tempt other men into sin shall have a much greater degree of torment in hell than other wicked men, who have not been so malicious or contagious in corrupting and infecting those who have conversed with them; which is an effect of the most diabolical spirit that any man whilst on this side the grave can possibly be possessed or endued withal. But whence, I wonder, is this courage against God? Or what is it makes some men so bold and confident, not only by being as wicked as they can themselves, but by endeavouring to make others their proselytes? Is it because they never think of any thing at all beyond the present? If so, they are no wiser than the brute beasts. Or is it because they think of nothing beyond death? And, of death too, perhaps, in the most gentle and comfortable notion; I mean, as death is a rest from all labours, a cure of all diseases, an asylum from all enemies, and generally, as it is an end of all worldly troubles, and a deliverance from all earthly calamities and vexations? Truly, I must confess, to have such a notion of death as this is, is no pleasant meditation, especially when we are ready to sink under any severe difficulties or troubles. But, alas! my beloved brethren, death is to be thought upon by Christians, not only as it is the end of one life, but as the commencement of another, which for better or worse must last for ever. Nay, death is to be thought upon by wicked Christians, not as the beginning of another life, but as the entrance or passage unto another death; where men shall be dead to all pleasure, to all joy, to all comfort, to all

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hope; this shall be their deathless life, or a lifeless death; they shall be however alive to pain, alive to shame and horror of conscience, and (which is worst of all) living to despair of ever attaining any end or ease of those torments. And now I would fain know, whether any the most profligate person has courage enough to think of such a death as this without fear, or the confidence to expect it without trembling? Let us therefore consider it, and you especially, whoever you are, must consider it seriously that forget God, or at least forget him as he is a judge. Consider it, you that by your drunkenness or uncleanness, or by any other profane course of life, do seem, as it were, to have made a covenant with death and hell, and think perhaps to have the more favourable usage from the prince of darkness hereafter, the more boldly you have avowed yourselves to be his servants in advancing of his kingdom here; you that have done what you can to prevent your Judge by pronouncing sentence upon yourselves, and damning yourselves as often as you swear, which is almost as often as you speak, (for such is the custom of common swearers,) think with yourselves, I beseech you, whether your courage, how great soever it be, will serve you, and your strength, how much soever it be, will support you, and for ever too, in such a place and such a condition as I have imperfectly described unto you; *Can any of you dwell, and dwell for ever, in everlasting burnings? And yet this shall be the dwelling, this shall be the portion of the hypocrite*, says the prophet, (Isai. xxxiii. 14.) And the like portion with the hypocrite shall the profane person participate. For though the way of the profane and the hypocrite seem contrary, yet they shall meet, and their -end shall be the same; and though they deride and laugh at one another here, yet they shall both of them weep and gnash their teeth together hereafter. For the hypocrite *shall be as tow*, and the profane person as flax, *and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them*. God of his infinite goodness give them both grace to foresee in time, and by repentance to prevent this their so great danger; for certainly for any man to despise the divine justice, with the endless and intolerable effects of it, is not courage, but madness. And therefore to conclude all in a word, the best method we can take is to judge ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord; and because *that day* (as the Lord himself tells us) *shall come as a thief in the night*, suddenly and unexpectedly, let us always be sure to have oil in our lamps, that is, faith and repentance in our hearts, justice and charity in our actions; and whatever else we have to do, let it be one part of our daily business seriously to meditate,

1st, Upon the vanity and shortness of our lives; and,

2dly, Upon the certainty and uncertainty of our deaths.

3dly, Upon the great exactness and severity of the judgment to come after death; and,

4thly, and lastly, Upon the eternity and immutability of every man's condition in the other world, whether it be good or evil. And then, I hope, by God's grace sanctifying these our endeavours, our condition there will be such, as we shall have no cause to desire either an end or an alteration of it.

Which God of his mercy grant us all, through the merits of his Son, and the happy conduct of his holy Spirit. Amen.

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