



"THY WORD IS A LAMP UNTO MY FEET, AND A LIGHT UNTO MY PATHS." - Psalm 119:105

Take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark place

THE SAINT'S SURE AND PERPETUAL GUIDE



WORD OF GOD.

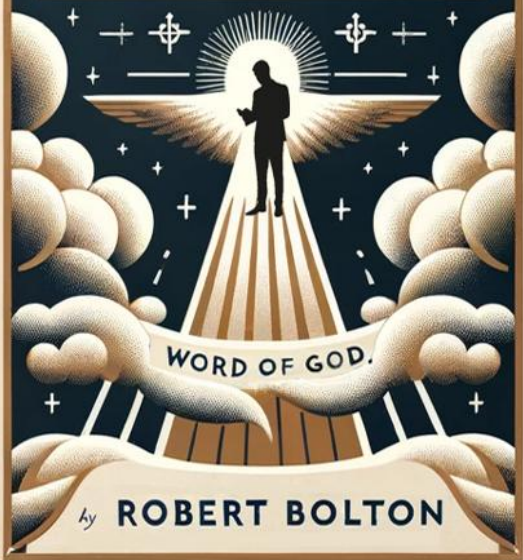
By **ROBERT BOLTON**



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Or, A Treatise Concerning the Word.

Which, as the Israelites Cloud, conducts us from Egypt to Canaan;
whereunto we must take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark
place, till the Day dawn, and the Day-star arise in our hearts.

BY ROBERT BOLTON, B.D.

That Reverend, Learned, and Godly Minister of Christ Jesus, and late
Preacher of God's Word at Broughton in Northampton-shire.

JOHN 3:20,21.

Everyone that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light,
lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

But he that doth the truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be
made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

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Editor's Note - During the TCP Transcription Process, all the text was hand transcribed according to visual representation; and as such, sometimes the letters s, l, f & t are misconstrued with each other, these letters regularly being almost illegibly similar in the original facsimile script. Though it is rare for these errors to remain post-edit, unfortunately they may remain if uncaught. My apologies in advance where such errors occur. Also, the symbol <H&G> signifies omitted Hebrew & Greek. Because a majority of readers are not fluent in the original languages; it was thought best to omit, instead of possibly misconstrue; since most original

languages are written in antiquated script in the original facsimiles. Lastly, some archaic words may be updated to more contemporary terminology; but changes have been kept to a bare minimum.

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THE SAINTS SURE AND PERPETUAL GUIDE.

Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my paths. -
PSAL. 119:105.

Of all other parts of the holy Bible, this Book of the Psalms, (penned for the most part by David, the sweet Singer of Israel, and a man after God's own heart) is stuffed and filled with greatest plenty and variety of precious Lessons and instructions unto eternal life. The choice and flower of all things profitable and comfortable for the right course of a Christian life, is therein briefly contained, and very movingly and feelingly expressed. In them we may be acquainted with the Majesty and Mysteries of God, with the Sufferings of Christ, with unfeigned Repentance, unwearied Patience, spiritual Wisdom, and wonderful Courage of the godly man, and true Christian. In

them we may behold the terrors of Wrath, and the anguishes of an afflicted Conscience, the comforts of Grace, and great Deliverances, the wonderful works of Providence over this World, and the promised Joys of that World which is to come. In a word, all good necessarily to be either known or done, or had, is plentifully, as out of a rich Treasury, revealed and offered unto us in these heavenly Songs of David.

Amongst which, this 119. Psalm (a part of which I have now read unto you) is, as it were, a precious Jewel, or clear Crystall; wherein we may see the right temper and state of true godliness, and sincerity, the marks and properties of all true worshippers of God, the zeal and affections of all faithful Christians, the very lively Anatomy and laying open of a good and gracious Soul.

This whole Psalm doth consist of 22 Parts or Portions of Staves, or Octaves, even just so many as there be Letters in the Hebrew Alphabet; and every Portion containeth in it eight Verses; and every Verse of every Portion, or Staff, begins with the same Hebrew Letter. The which special and extraordinary penning and disposing of the Psalm, doth declare and set out unto us these three things:

1. The diligent intention of mind, and careful meditation of the Author, in the framing and composing of it.
2. The preciousness and worth of the matter contained in it; in that it pleased the Spirit of God to deliver it in choice and special order.
3. A desire and purpose, that it might more easily be learned by heart, and committed to memory, and often and earnestly meditated and thought upon, being set down unto us in so fair and easy order of the Hebrew Letters.

This Part, or Portion, which we have now in hand, is the fourteenth; and doth contain in it many worthy and gracious Lessons for our instruction and devotion in heavenly things, proposed unto us out of the practice and Christian carriage of this holy Prophet, and Man of God, David, a perfect pattern of all true zeal and piety.

In the thirteenth Portion, immediately going before, David had delivered specially two things.

First, How by his love, reading, study, and meditation in God's Word, he had attained most excellent knowledge, wisdom, and understanding; so that thereby he was become far more wise than his enemies; that is, than Saul and all his politic Courtiers and Counselors of State. He had more understanding than his Teachers, than the great Doctors, and Rabbins; for all their deep Learning being not sanctified unto them. He understood more than the grave and ancient men, for all the worldly wisdom and great experience they had gathered in many years, and through length of days. Where, by the way, take this Lesson.

There is no wit or policy, not all the Learning in the World, or worldly wisdom, can make a man truly wise, (that is, wise unto salvation) but only a powerful and working knowledge out of the holy Word of God.

The Reason is: Because all other wisdom doth only provide for the Body, for a temporal happiness in this life, for a few and evil days, and leaves the Soul in a sinful and wretched estate; shortly, in the day of Visitation, to be overtaken and fearfully confounded with strange astonishments, horrors, and despair; and hereafter, woefully to be tormented amongst wicked Devils in the Lake that burns with fire and Brimstone for evermore. But wisdom out of the Word of God doth so furnish a man's Soul with Grace, and all holy Virtues, that in

despite of all creatures, he may live comfortably in this Vale of tears, and in endless joys in the World to come.

Now (I pray you) tell me, whether is truly the wiser man; he, that for an inch of time makes much of his wretched Body, that must shortly rot in the grave, and be devoured of Worms, and turned into dust; but in the meantime lets his immortal Soul, that can never die, sink into the Dungeon of everlasting woe and misery: or he, which by taking sound and saving counsel and direction out of the Word of God, and howsoever he be hated and neglected of this vain World, yet yielding cheerful and constant obedience thereunto, provides unspeakable comfort, rest, and blessedness both for Body and Soul, through all eternity?

Secondly, In the second part and four last Verses of the former Portion, David sets down the fruit, use, and benefit which sprung from his divine knowledge. It sweetened his heart with much comfort, and sound contentment, and cheered him with joy unspeakable, and glorious, amidst all crosses and discomforts; it bridled and restrained him from every evil way; it kept and preserved him in the paths of righteousness; it bred in him a hatred and loathing of the ways of error, falsehood, and hypocrisy. Where, by the way, I would give you this other Lesson.

We must labor and be sure that we draw our knowledge in God's Word into practice, action, and exercise; otherwise, it will not only be unprofitable and unfruitful unto us, but indeed bring upon us a greater and more fearful condemnation. For, For, He that knows his Masters will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, Luke 12:47. All our knowledge is in vain, except by the power of it our inward affections be sanctified, our words seasoned with grace, our

actions and conversations guided with spiritual wisdom and unfeigned sincerity.

After David had thus, in the former Portion, laid down unto us, and confessed what excellent knowledge he had got out of the Word of God, and the precious fruit and benefit he had reaped and enjoyed by it: Now,

In the first Verse of this present Portion, he makes, as it were, a protestation and profession, that he is wholly and only enlightened and led in all his ways by this holy Word of God, as by a Light or Lantern: The brightness thereof doth not only bring him into the ways of righteousness, and blessed estate of Christianity, but doth also conduct and guide him in all the paths and particulars of his life and actions, in all the parts and passages of his special calling: For he saith, Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet] that is, whereby I see and discern the way to Heaven, and the narrow path through the Kingdom of Grace; and a Light unto my paths] that is, a guide to direct me in every particular step, at every turning, that so I may keep a straight course, and the ready way to the Kingdom of Glory.

That David had thus wholly yielded and resigned up himself to be guided and governed by the glorious Light of God's holy Word, appears in the Verses following.

First, in Vers. 106. by a solemn Oath and sacred resolution to keep God's righteous judgments, and an unfeigned and constant purpose to perform the same; I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Secondly, in Vers. 107. by his patience and sufferance of wrongs, disgraces, and afflictions, which the wicked and profane World heaped upon him, for his profession of holiness and sincerity. For,

except he had loved and followed the Light of divine Truth, whensoever the fire of persecution and tribulation, because of the Word, had been kindled against him, he had shrunk back and fallen away; I am afflicted very much, quicken me, O Lord, according to thy Word.

Thirdly, in Vers. 108. by the offerings of his mouth, and calves of his lips; that is, the spiritual sacrifices of prayers, thanksgiving, and gracious Vowes for God's service, which with a free and fervent spirit, and earnest desire of acceptation, he continually offered unto the Lord; O Lord I beseech thee, accept the free-will offerings of my mouth, and teach me thy judgments.

Fourthly, in Vers. 109,110. by his steadfastness and sticking to the Law and Word of God, though he was beset and strongly encompassed with snares, with dangers, and with death itself: His soul was continually in his hand; that is, he was ready and resolved every hour rather to part with his life, than with a good Conscience; to shed his blood, rather than to forsake the Truth and Commandments of God: My soul is continually in my hand, yet do I not forget thy Law: The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I erred not from thy Precepts.

In the two last Verses, upon the former reasons he concludes the Point; That his heart and inward affections do dearly embrace God's blessed Word, as a most rich and lasting Inheritance, as his sweetest and greatest joy; and, that he bends all the powers of his soul, and best endeavors, to be led with, and to follow the Light thereof even unto the end, until it bring him to immortality and Light, that no man can attain unto: Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart: I have inclined my heart to perform thy Statutes always, even to the end.

Thus you see in general the meaning of this Portion.

Before now I descend unto particulars, and come to gather Notes severally from the Verses in order, let us take notice, I beseech you, (for our instruction and examination of our own souls) of six notable marks, and signs, by which a true Christian may be discerned from a Temporizer; a sincere server of God, from a carnal Gospeller.

The first I gather out of the first Verse: Every son and servant of God doth with humility, cheerfulness, and obedience, yield and submit himself to be wholly and only directed and guided by the Light of God's Word, in all his ways, both generally, of Christianity, and particularly, of his special calling; as David here did. But the natural man, that is not yet entered into, or acquainted with the state of Grace, is led and guided in his courses only by the Light of Reason, and worldly Wisdom; by good Meanings, without ground and warrant out of the Word; by a blind and ignorant Devotion; by the Multitude, Examples, Custom of the Times, and such like blind Guides: But if he take any advice and direction out of the Word of God, it is but in part, by halves, and for a time.

A second ariseth out of the second Verse: Every Child of God doth not only promise, vow, and purpose to forsake and abandon all his known sins, to watch carefully and conscionably over all his ways, to delight in and to sort himself with godly and gracious company, to have a respect to all his Commandments, and to keep his righteous Judgments; but he doth also truly and thoroughly perform it: he goes through-stitch with his spiritual affairs, and with constancy and courage walks in a settled course of Christianity. But the unregenerate man, not yet soundly seasoned with the power of Grace; howsoever he hath sometimes good motions and purposes arise in his heart, to forsake his former evil ways, and to fall to

godliness; howsoever in the time of Sickness, of some great Judgment, or when his Conscience is terrified by the Ministry of the Word, when he seriously thinks upon the day of his death, and of that great and last Judgment, or the like; he makes Vowes with himself, perhaps, that he will be a new man, and change his courses: But when he is once out of danger again, when he comes to the point, and practice, he is not so good as his word, he doth not pay and perform his former Vowes and purposes; he is presently choked again with worldly Cares, and drowned in earthly Pleasures: And so all his goodness is as a morning Cloud, and as the morning Dew it goeth away.

The third mark lieth in the third Verse: Every Child of God doth with contented patience, with strong dependence upon God's providence, with rejoicing in his sufferings, bear and endure many miseries and pressures laid upon him, for his profession and practice of sincerity. He well knows out of the Word of God, and feels by his own experience, That all which will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution, 2 Tim. 3:12. And therefore he makes up his account with the World, and is at a point with all that is under the Sun; he is persuaded, that all the afflictions of this life are not near worthy the glory which shall be revealed, Rom. 8:18.

But the carnal Gospeller he thinks it is good sleeping in a whole skin; he looks for a Gospel of ease, for a soft and silken service of God; for a Church (as one speaks) all of Velvet. And therefore, rather than he will suffer any loss, or worsening, any diminution or disparagement in his outward estate, in his reputation, wealth, and worldly happiness, he will make shipwreck of a good Conscience; he will yield to the corruptions of the Times, and with the greater part, rest and repose himself peaceably and pleasantly upon his Bed of ease, and carnal security: never considering, that the Cross is the

Christians triumph; that Christ himself was crowned with Thorns; and, that we must through many afflictions enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, Act. 14:22.

A fourth mark may be gathered out of the fourth Verse: The prayers and praising's of God, in the mouth of God's Child, are frequent, free, and fervent; but with the carnal Gospeller, they are very rare, cold, and formal. The Reason is; God's Child is very sensible of his corruptions, and wants, he still longs and gasps for more grace, with a spiritual taste he sweetly relisheth God's great mercy and goodness unto him; he hath the love of God and the spirit of prayer shed into his heart by the Spirit of Adoption; and therefore his heart is as full as the Moon, of godly motions and meditations, which like a continual Spring sends out groans and sighs unutterable, many zealous and faithful prayers and thanksgivings unto his gracious God with a free and feeling affection. But the carnal Gospeller, because his understanding was never enlightened, his heart never truly humbled, his affections never sanctified; because he hath no sense of his wretched estate, nor present feeling of grace, nor sound hope and assurance of happiness in Heaven; why, therefore he hath no great mind, or heart, or list to prayer; he hath no great delight, or exercise, in this holy business: and if he do pray (which is but seldom, and coldly) it is but lip-labor, and lost labor, because it is without faith, and feeling; for fashion, custom, or company, because he was so taught in his youth; or that he superstitiously thinks, the very work wrought, and a number of prayers solemnly said over, will sanctify him.

A fifth mark may be gathered out of the sixth and seventh Verses: The Child of God doth not only pass through with patience, for the profession of God's truth and sincerity, less and inferior miseries; as loss of goods, loss of friends and reputation with the World, slanders,

disgraces, and wrongs: but he also holds his soul (as it were) continually in his hand, as David here says of himself; ready (if need be, and the times so require) even to shed his blood under the Sword of Persecution, or to lay down his life in the flames, rather than to dishonor so merciful a God, to betray his holy Truth; or, by his backsliding and falling away, to hazard that Crown of Glory, which by the eye of faith he hath already in sight. But the carnal Gospeller, in time of peace and plenty, while he lives quietly, and at ease, without cross or trouble, in fair and Sunshine days, may perhaps be a stout and peremptory Professor, but he ever shrinks in the wetting; he pulls in the head in the fiery trial: ever, when trouble or persecution cometh, because of the word, by and by he is offended.

The sixth mark is gathered out of the two last Verses: The Child of God holds his Word far more dear than any precious Treasure, than the richest Inheritance, than great Spoils, than thousands of Gold and Silver: It is the joy of his heart; and therefore it inclines and inflames his affections with love and zeal to do God's will, and fulfill all his Commandments. And no marvel though the true Christian find most sound and inconceivable delight in the Word of God, the Doctrine of Heaven: For by it, he is born anew, and made heir of Heaven: by the Light of it, he sees his Name written in the Book of Life, never to be raced out by man, or Devil; all the sweet and gracious promises of salvation and comfort revealed in it, are sure his own: So that thence he knows, and is persuaded undoubtedly, that after a few and evil days spent in this miserable life, he shall remain and reign eternally in the glory of God, of Christ Jesus, the blessed Spirit, and the holy Angels. But it is otherwise with the carnal Gospeller; for whatsoever show or protestation he makes to the contrary, yet indeed in his heart, affections, and practice, he prefers his pleasures, riches, and profit, before hearing of God's Word, sanctifying his Sabbaths, and obedience to his Commandments. And

no marvel: for because he yet never lived the life of faith, but is a mere stranger to the mystery of godliness, he hath no true interest nor sound assurance in the joys of another World; and therefore feeds only and fills himself with transitory and earthly contentment's.

Now I beseech you (beloved in Christ Jesus) let everyone with singleness of heart and sincerity examine his own Soul, and the spiritual state of his Conscience, by these signs and marks which I have now delivered to you, out of the example and precedency of the Christian affections and holy disposition of David, a sanctified man, and a principal pattern of piety and zeal for all faithful ones. Know you not (saith the Apostle) that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates? So undoubtedly, if Jesus Christ be in you, if you be of David's stamp and temper, that is, already possessed of the state of grace, and marked out by the Spirit of sanctification, for the glory that shall be revealed; you do find in some good measure these marks and signs of a holy man in yourselves.

1. That you are enlightened and guided by the Word of God in all your ways.
2. That you have not only good motions and purposes for a zealous and constant service of God; but do faithfully, with sincerity and integrity of heart perform the same.
3. That you suffer joyfully and patiently afflictions and disgrace in the World, for the testimony of God's Truth, and profession of sincerity.
4. That you freely and faithfully, with much feeling and fervency of spirit, offer daily prayers and praises unto the Lord.

5. That you had rather part with the dearest and most precious things in this life, nay, life itself, than leave the service of God, and the testimony of a good Conscience.

6. That you have more comfort and delight in hearing, reading, meditating, conferring of, and applying unto your own souls the holy Word of God, than in the treasures and glory of the whole Earth.

Such marks as these you must find in your selves, if you ever mean or hope to find true contentment in this life, or the comforts of Heaven in the life to come.

Now I come to a more special and particular consideration of every Verse in order; and thence to gather such Notes and Doctrines, as may best instruct us in the way to Heaven.

First, David tells us in the first Verse; That God's Word is a Lantern to his feet, and a Light unto his paths: Which, that you may better understand, I will tell you the meaning of the words, and explain unto you the several terms.

First, the Word may be taken three ways.

1. For the substantial Word of God, the second Person in the Trinity, John. 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God.

2. It may be taken for the written and sounding Word; as it only strikes the ear, and informs the understanding; but it is not conveyed, neither sinks it into the heart by the powerful assistance and sanctified concurrence of God's Spirit, it being not prayed for to the conversion and sanctification of the whole

man. And so the Word is heard and understood of many, that shall never be saved, but returns unfruitful.

3. It may be taken for the working and effectual Word, as it is the power of God unto salvation; as it is rightly understood, applied unto the heart and Conscience, possessed of the thoughts and affections, and practiced in the life and conversation. This Word thus understood, inlived, managed, and powerfully applied by the Spirit of God, was a Light unto David's steps; and so is a guide unto the paths of all true Christians, to the worlds end.

That you may understand how the Word is a Light, you must consider,

1. That Christ is called Light, John. 1:4. The Ministers are called the Light of the World, Mat. 5:14. The faithful are Lights, Phil. 2:15,16. The way of the righteous (saith Solomon, Prov. 4:18.) shineth as the Light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The Word of God is also called a Light; as in this place. But first,

Christ is Light of himself, and originally; he is the Fountain and everlasting Spring of all the Light of Grace and Glory, both in Heaven and Earth; He is called, The Sun of Righteousness. The Sun, you know, hath his Light rooted in his own fair Body, and receives that from none other; and with that, he enlightens the Moon, the Stars, the Air, the Earth, and all the World: Even so the blessed Son of God, the Sun of Righteousness, hath in himself, and from himself, the Light of all Wisdom and Knowledge, Mercy and Comfort; and from him floweth and springeth whatsoever Light of Glory is revealed unto his blessed Saints and Angels in Heaven, or whatsoever Light of Grace is shed into the hearts of his sons and servants here upon Earth.

2. The Preachers of the Word are Ministers and Messengers of this Light; and therefore are but Light ministerially. They are as the Stars, and so they are called, Rev. 1:20. They receive all their Light from the Sun of Righteousness, Christ Jesus, and either do or should convey and cast their borrowed beams upon the earthly, cold, and darksome hearts of the people of God, that they might turn from Darkness to Light, from the power of Satan unto God, Act. 26:18.

3. The Word is Light instrumentally; which being powerfully sanctified unto us for our salvation, and being holden out unto us by a conscionable Ministry, is as a Candle or Torch, to guide us through the darkness of this World, unto our eternal Rest.

4. Lastly, the faithful are Lights Subjective; because they receive this Light into their Understandings, (whereby they see the Wonders of God's Law, the Secrets of his Kingdom, and the great Mystery of Godliness, and the way to Heaven;) into their Consciences, (whereby they have their sinful miserable estate by nature discovered unto them, and the way to Christ for remedy and salvation;) into their affections, (whereby they are enkindled with zeal for God's truth, honor, and service,) into their actions, and conversation, whereby they shine as Lights in the World, amid a naughty and crooked generation, Phil. 2:15. And after the Sun of Righteousness once arise in their hearts, like the Sun in the Firmament, they shine more and more in all holy Virtues, unto the perfect day, until they reach the height of Heaven, and the full glory of the Saints of God.

In the third place, [by Feet] is meant his mind and understanding, his affections, thoughts, actions, his whole life, all his ways. All these in David, were guided by the Light of God's Word.

Lastly, by Paths, are meant every particular step, every turning and narrow passage in his special calling. For this Light, the Word of

God, doth not only guide a man's feet into the way of peace, and put him in the right way to Heaven; but also goes along with him, enlightens and directs every step, that his feet do not slide. It so informs him with spiritual wisdom, that he lays hold on every occasion for the glorifying of God, descries every little sin, and appearance of evil, disposeth every circumstance in his actions, with a good conscience, and warrant out of God's Word.

This then is the meaning of this Verse. David, the man of God, had the Word of God working powerfully upon his soul, as a Light: that is; As a Lamp is to the life and safety of the body, in dark and dangerous places; so was this Light to the life and salvation of David's soul, in the darkness of this World, and shadow of death: To guide his feet and paths; that is, his mind, affections, thoughts, actions, his whole life, all his ways, and every particular step and passage thereof.

This Verse being thus understood, let us now come to gather some Lessons and Doctrines for our instruction.

The first shall be this:

There is no man can hit the way to Heaven, or walk in the paths of Righteousness, through the Kingdom of Grace in this World, unto the Kingdom of Glory in the World to come, except he be enlightened, informed, and instructed in the holy Word of God.

The second Note we gather out of this Verse, shall be this:

The Word of God is a Light, not only to guide us into the way to Heaven, and instruct us in our general calling of Christianity; but also to lead us along in a course of godliness, and to direct us particularly in our special calling.

I will first follow the former Doctrine; which in few words, and plainly, I thus propose unto you.

No man can at first find the entrance, or after hit the way to Heaven, except he be enlightened and led along by the holy Word of God. For David, as here we see, a man of great worth, and understanding, otherwise excellently and extraordinarily qualified; could not find out, or follow any other Guide, or direction to Heaven, but only the Light of God's Word.

The Reasons of this Doctrine, may be these which follow.

The first may be taken from the insufficiency and inability of all other means, to bring us to Heaven: as,

1. All the greatest Learning and deepest knowledge in the World, will stand us in little stead in this business: Otherwise it had gone well with many ancient Heathens and Philosophers of old, who fathomed as deep, and reached as high in the depths and mysteries of all human Learning and knowledge, as the light of Reason and strength of Nature could possibly bring them: And yet they were utterly strangers to the life of grace, and without God in the World. When they professed themselves to be wise, they became fools, saith Paul, Rom. 1:22. They were puffed up with a little vain-glorious knowledge here upon Earth, and got them a Name amongst men: But, alas, what was this? When as for the want of the Light of Divine Truth, they lost their Souls in another World, and their Names never came in the Book of Life. Where is the wise? (saith Paul in another place) Where is the Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this World? As if he should have said: All the knowledge of the greatest Doctors and learnedest Rabbins in the World, without Grace, vanisheth into nothing, into vain-glory, emptiness, and air; nay, casts them with greater horror, and confusion, into the Pit of Hell. Every man (saith Jeremiah) is a

Beast by his own knowledge, <H&G>, Jer. 10:14. Except, besides all other knowledge, he be enlightened from above, and have that Divine knowledge sanctified unto him, he can come no nearer the happiness of Heaven, then a very Beast.

2. Worldly wisdom and policy is so far from making men wise unto salvation, that it is not only stark foolishness with God and good men, but it doth strongly set itself and is at enmity against God. Therefore, saith God; I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will cast away the understanding of the prudent, 1 Cor. 1:19. Ahithophel was so wise even in the affairs of Kingdoms, and business of State, that the counsel which he counseled in those days, was like as one had asked counsel at the Oracle of God; and yet all this great wisdom in the end ended in extreme folly: for upon a little discontent and disgrace in the World, he saddled his Ass, and went home unto his City, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, 2 Sam. 16:23. and 17:23. Although the end of all worldly wisdom be not so shameful in the eye of the World, yet undoubtedly it is most miserable and woeful in the World to come, except their wisdom be sanctified and over-ruled by the Light of God's Word. Carnal wisdom can neither preserve a man from death, nor prepare him to die blessedly: it cannot stay his Life from going, neither can it stop the Curse from coming; it cannot deliver him from damnation in the World to come, but rather increaseth the grievousness of his punishment: for in this life it hath kept possession against heavenly wisdom, it made him incapable of all good instructions, it made him impatient of any rebuke, and held him in ignorance and disobedience all his life.

3. No good meanings or intentions, without knowledge and warrant in the Word of God, will ever serve our turn for salvation; nay, indeed they are abominable and hateful in God's sight. Howsoever,

thousands deceive themselves in this point. Uzza had a good meaning, in 2 Sam. 6:6. when he put his hand to the Ark of God, and held it; for the Oxen did shake it: but notwithstanding, the Lord was very wroth with Uzza, and God smote him in the same place, and there he died. James and John had good meanings, when they called for fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritan, that would not entertain Christ; but Jesus rebuked them, and told them, they knew not of what spirit they were. Saul, in 1 Sam. 15. had a good meaning, when he spared Agag, and the best of the Sheep, and of the Oxen, to sacrifice them unto the Lord; but notwithstanding Samuel tells him, that he had done wickedly in the sight of the Lord, and that the Lord had rent the Kingdom of Israel from him that day. Peter had a good meaning, when in John. 13:8. he would not suffer Christ to wash his feet; but Jesus answered him, and told him, If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me. Good meanings then are wicked missing's of the true service of God, except they be guided by knowledge, warrant, and ground out of the Book of God. Let no man then tell of his good meaning, if he be ignorant in the Will and Word of God, for certainly it will never serve the turn, it will never hold out in the Day of Christ Jesus.

4. No will-worship, or will-service, or voluntary Religion, as the Apostle calls it, Col. 2:23. which is forged and framed out of a man's own brain, humor, and conceit, without ground or warrant in the Book of God; though it be performed with never so glorious a show of zeal and pains, yet it is not any way available for our spiritual good, and eternal happiness: nay indeed, it is most odious in the eyes of God, and ever liable to a very high degree of his wrath and vengeance.

Baals Prophets, 1 Kings 18:28. were so hot and hasty in their will-worship, that they cut themselves with knives, and lancers, till the

blood gushed out upon them. The Papists they whip themselves, they vow Continency, perpetual Poverty, and Regular Obedience, and yet is the profession and practice of both, bloody and idolatrous. When the Jews worshipped God after the devised fashions of the Gentiles, though their meaning was to worship nothing but God, yet the Text saith, they worshipped nothing but Devils, Deut. 32:17. And God there protests, that therefore a fire was kindled in his wrath, that should burn unto the bottom of Hell, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. So hated of Almighty God is all service and worship devised by the wit and will of man, without warrant in the Word of God.

5. Lastly, not the Word of God itself in the Letter, without the spiritual meaning, and the finger of God's Spirit to apply it powerfully to our souls and consciences, is any sufficient rule of life, or able to bring us into the Light of Grace. This appears in Nicodemus, who was a great Doctor in the Law, and the Prophets, a chief Master and Teacher in Israel; yet was a very Infant and Idiot in the power of Grace, and mystery of godliness. For all his learning in the Letter of the Law, he had not yet made one step towards Heaven; for he was not only ignorant of, but had a very absurd and gross conceit of the new birth; which is the very first entrance into the Kingdom of Grace. For when Christ told him, he could not be saved, except he were new born, he strangely and foolishly replies; How can a man be born, which is old? How can he enter into his mothers Womb again, and be born? Thus you see, there can no other means be named, or thought upon; not all human Knowledge, nor worldly Wisdom, nor good Meanings, nor Will-worship, nor the Word itself in the Letter, which can lead us into the ways of Righteousness, or bring us unto Heaven; but only the Light of God's holy Word, holden out unto us by a profitable Ministry, and the power of the Spirit.

A second Reason of my Doctrine may be this: No man can ever see the Kingdom of God, except he be born again, except he be a new creature, a new man, as is plain in Christ's words unto Nicodemus. For our new birth, or regeneration, is the necessary passage from Nature to Grace; from profaneness, to sincerity: It is that whereby we are wholly sanctified and set apart unto God, from the sinful corruption of our natural birth, and the evil fruits thereof, to serve God in our whole man, both body, soul, and spirit. Now you must conceive, that this new birth must necessarily spring from the immortal Seed of the word of God; for so it is called, 1 Pet. 1:23. It is the Seed of our new birth, salvation, and immortality. And you may as well look for Come to grow up in your fields without sowing, without casting any Seed into the furrows, as to look for Grace to grow up in your hearts, or to reap the fruit of holiness, everlasting life; except this immortal Seed, the Word of God, be first cast into the furrows and fallow ground of your hearts, and be there received with reverence and attention, nourished with prayer and meditation, and fructify in your lives and conversations. Hence it is, that God's Word is called, The Word of Salvation, Act. 13:26. The Word of Grace, Act. 14:3. The Word of Life, Phil. 2:16. The Power of God unto Salvation, Rom. 1:16. For there is no power of Grace, or spiritual life, to be had ordinarily upon Earth, or salvation and eternal life to be hoped for in Heaven; except a man be enlightened with the knowledge, and enlived with the power of the holy Word of God. There is no entering into the Kingdom of God, except a man be new born, except he be first renewed in his spirit, soul, and body: And there is no new birth, without the immortal Seed, the Word of God. And therefore, without knowledge and direction in the Word of God, no salvation.

The third Reason of my Doctrine, is this: The Word of God hath only the power and property to search into and to sanctify the whole man, even to the inmost thoughts and the secret cogitations of the heart.

All the devices and imaginations of man's heart lie without the walk of human justice, and censure: no word or writing of man is able to bridle them, or bring them within compass; no Law of Nature, or Nations, can affright or restrain the freedom and wanderings of thoughts: only the Word of God can amaze, search, and sanctify them. The weapons of our warfare (saith Paul) are not carnal, but mighty through God to cast down Holds; casting down the imaginations, and everything that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. 10:4,5. The Word of God (saith the Apostle to the Hebrews) is lively and mighty in operation, and sharper than any two-edged sword; and entereth through, even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart, Heb. 4:12.

The Word of God may be said to be living or lively in three respects.

1. Because, whereas we naturally live under the shadow of death, and in the darkness of sin, it quickens us with a new and spiritual life, it cheers and comforts us with heavenly Light.
2. The Word may be called Living, because itself is immortal, and lasteth forever; as doth the living and eternal God, the Author of it.
3. But most especially, and agreeably to the place in the Hebrews, it is called lively, because it enters with great power and secret insinuation into every part and power both of soul and body: So that as our life is scattered and dispersed into every little part, and least vein in us, and we feel it both in pain and pleasure; even so the virtue of the Word of God pierceth into every member, into the most secret and hidden Closet of the heart, either to break and bruise with terror and astonishment the very bones, and crush the sinews of the sinful

soul; or to fill them with marrow and fatness, and to refresh the affections of the truly penitent with joy unspeakable, and glorious. God tells us in Jeremiah, that his Word is like fire; and therefore it can easily insinuate into all the creeks and corners of our corruptions; it can fully and clearly enlighten our Consciences, and discover unto us the sinfulness of the most lurking and secret thoughts.

Thus you have this first Doctrine plainly proved and confirmed unto you.

No man can at first find the entrance, or after hit the way to Heaven, except he be enlightened and led along by the saving knowledge of the holy Word of God.

No other means, which the power of Nature, Wisdom, Learning, or the whole World can afford, will serve the turn in this business of Salvation. It is the Seed of our new birth (as I told you;) there can be no growing of grace, or reaping of glory, without it: It hath only power to shake, ransack, and search into the inmost secrets of the heart: It only can sanctify us both inwardly and outwardly, both in soul and body, both in thoughts and actions; without which, both inward and outward holiness, no man shall ever see the face of God.

Now I come unto the Uses of this Doctrine. And in the first place, it may serve for confutation of the Papists, those great empoisoners and murderers of infinite souls of men. Is the Word of God as a Lamp, and a Light, without which we cannot see the first step, or set one foot aright towards Heaven? Why then, sinful and pestilent is their practice, who hide this blessed Light from the people of God, in an unknown Tongue; and by their bloody Inquisition, damme up the holy Fountains of heavenly Truth, which should spring up in every man's heart unto eternal life: Whose cruel and crafty Religion (for,

blood of Princes, and cursed Policy, are the principal supporters of Popery) teacheth them to blindfold and hood-wink the poor Laity in forced ignorance, lest they should know God's will, or any way to Heaven, but theirs; which indeed is the right, direct, and desperate down-fall into the Pit of Hell: So that millions of souls live no less without Scriptures, than if there were none; and woefully walk in this World, through darkness of sin, shadow of death, and ignorance both of God and his Word, unto endless and utter darkness in the World to come. The Prophet David tells us, in Psal. 19. That the Law of the Lord is perfect, and giveth wisdom unto the simple: The Commandments of the Lord is pure, and giveth light to the eyes. In this place he tells us, That the Word was a Lamp unto his feet, and a Light unto his paths. Christ himself, John 5:39. bids us, Search the Scriptures: even all, without exception; so many as look for eternal life. Not lightly, and at leisure to read them, but with diligence to dive into them; for so the word signifies in the Original: To seek for the right knowledge, and true sense of them, as for Silver, and to search for it as for Treasures. The Noblemen of Berea, Act. 17:11. searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, that were preached unto them. Saint Peter, 2 Pet. 1:19. calls the Word of the Prophets, a Light, which shineth in a dark place, to which we should take heed. But the Pope, and his Factors, teach other Lessons. The Catholic Church (saith one of their chief Champions, out of the Council of Trent) forbids the reading of Scriptures by all, without choice, or the public reading, or singing of them in vulgar Tongues. The wise will not here regard (say the Rhemists in their Preface to their Testament) what some willful people do mutter, that the Scriptures are made for all men. And soon after, they resemble the Scriptures to Fire, Water, Candles, Knives, and Swords; which are indeed needful, &c. but would mar all, if they were at the guiding of other than wise men: And this is indeed one of their principal reasons.

Many abuse the Scriptures by ignorance, infirmity, or malice, to Errors, Heresies, Schisms, and their own destruction: therefore they are not to be read of all, without choice.

I answer; they might as well reason thus: Many men abuse Meat and Drink, by surfeiting and excess, to the destruction both of their souls and bodies: therefore men are to be deprived of Meat and Drink. Some men are infected with the Pestilence, by drawing in corrupted and empoisoned air: therefore the air is to be taken away, and removed. But as those men which are deprived of Meat and Drink, presently languish and pine away, and die a temporal death; and those that enjoy not the benefit of the air, are presently stifled, for want of breath: even so, all those that want the spiritual Food of their souls out of the Word of God, and the holy inspirations of his good Spirit built thereupon; howsoever they be fat and flourishing in their outward estates, yet they are full lean and lank in their souls; and if they so continue, must needs die an eternal death, and perish everlastingly. Let us then learn to detest and hate the bloody Policy of the Synagogue of Rome, which cruelly keeps from many thousand Souls that blessed Light of God's Word, which should lead them to eternal life. They indeed pretend other Reasons: But the truth is, if the Word of Truth should be permitted and published to all, there would be old running out of Babylon; all their Pomp and Policy would down; their shameful juggling's and Cousinages, their strong Delusions and Impostures would be laid open, in the sight of the Sun. The Princes of the Earth, that have so long been drunken with the wrath of her empoisoned Wine, would no longer commit Fornication with her. The Merchants would buy no more her Wares; but would stand afar off from her, for fear of her torment, weeping, and wailing. No marvel then, though the Papists labor might and main, and to this end maintain a bloody Inquisition, to suppress this

Light of God's Word, lest it should discover their darkness, and hasten their destruction.

A second Use, is for terror, fear, and amazement to all them that do not live and delight in the Light of God's holy Word, but yet are walking in the darkness of ignorance, and in the shadow of death. The whole World, and every man in particular, lies in darkness; that is, in ignorance, under sin; and so subject and liable to damnation and eternal death. There is no way to come out of this state of Darkness, Damnation, and Death, but by the Knowledge, Light, and Ministry of the Word. Hence it is, that Act. 26:18. it is Paul's charge, and he is sent to this purpose, to open the eyes of men, that they might turn from Darkness to Light. And Paul himself, Eph. 5:8. speaks thus unto the Ephesians; Ye were once Darkness, but now ye are Light in the Lord; walk as Children of the Light. Out of 1 Pet. 2:9. it appears, that all God's Children are called out of Darkness into marvelous Light. Why then, fearful and most wretched is the state of all those, who by the Light and knowledge of God's Word are not translated and guided out of this Darkness. For, as in Darkness,

1. There is much fear, horror, and discomfort; a man cannot enjoy the lightsomeness of Heaven, the comfort of the creatures, the company of men: Even so ignorant men, not enlightened with saving knowledge, are utterly without all hope of Heaven; they have no sight or taste of the endless joys thereof; they have no company or conference in heavenly matters with true Christians; they have no comfort or interest in the Covenant of Grace, or Promises of Salvation: But Fear, Horror, and Despair are most justly treasured up for them against the Day of Wrath, and of the declaration of the just Judgment of God.

2. He that walketh in the Darkness (saith John) knoweth not whither he goeth: He cannot discern his way; he seeth not what is behind, or before him; he cannot descry or discover the dangers which are round about him: But especially, if the ways through which he passeth, be slippery, steep, and rocky, full of pits and holes, he is in danger at every step, by some grievous fall, to crush his body, bruise his bones, or break his neck. It is just so with everyone that lives in ignorance of God's Word, and Truth; he cannot possibly discern the way to Heaven, amongst the many by-paths of iniquity; he cannot judge in spiritual matters betwixt right and wrong, good and evil, Light and Darkness, Christ and Belial, profaneness and sincerity; though there be behind him, a Life spent in much wickedness, lewdness, and ignorance; before him, Despair, Hell, and eternal Damnation; about him, the World, with a thousand baits and pleasures, to entice and entangle him in sin; Satan, like a roaring Lyon, ready every hour to seize upon his Soul, and to tear it in pieces, while there is none to help; all the creatures armed, and in a readiness, with whole Armies of Plagues, and Vengeance, to be revenged upon him, for dishonoring God, by ignorance in his Word: Yet he sees none of all this. He neither knows, feels, or suspects these many dangers, with which he is encompassed; but goes on plodding, with ungrounded confidence, and wicked security, in the way of wickedness and destruction: he passeth, with much desperate boldness, through many dangerous and fearful ways; wherein, at every step, he wounds his Conscience with one sin or other in the meantime, and at length falls headlong, and suddenly, body and soul, into the Pit of Hell. This is certainly the miserable and woeful state of all those that live in spiritual Darkness, and are ignorant in God's Word, and the ways of godliness. It maybe they may flatter, please, and persuade themselves, that their case is good enough; that, when they hear of Heaven, and those everlasting pleasures at God's right hand, they think notwithstanding that they shall come thither at

length; though they know never a foot of the way, take no direction by the Light of God's Word, nor set one step, by new obedience, towards that place of blessedness. But indeed and truth they do very fearfully deceive and over-shoot themselves: And their case is just, as if a man should fall asleep upon the edge of some high and steep Rock; and there dream, that he is made a King, attended with a glorious Train of Nobility, furnished with sumptuous Palaces, and stately Buildings, enriched with the Revenues, Sovereignty, and Pleasures of a whole Kingdom: But upon the sudden, starting up, and leaping for joy, falls irrecoverably into the merciless and devouring Sea; and so loseth that little comfort, which he had in this miserable life. Many wretched men lie and sleep and snort in ignorance and spiritual blindness; thinking, that skill in the Book of God, and points of Religion, belongs only to those that are Book-learned; entertaining much vain hope of salvation, without all truth or ground: But when upon their Death-bed, their Consciences are awakened by the finger of God's justice, out of the slumber of sin, they then too late find and see, that all was but a Dream; for they suddenly fall and sink into despair, horror, and endless desolation. The state then of ignorant men, though perhaps they little think upon it, or take it to heart, is most fearful in this life, and will be most horrible hereafter. In this World; because they are unacquainted, and untaught in God's Truth, points of Religion, and way to Heaven; they neither know their own misery, the great mystery of godliness, or means to salvation; and therefore live as aliens from the Common-wealth of Israel, strangers from the Covenant of Promise, without hope, and without God in the World: Which is a misery of all miseries; They are condemned already: For as it is, John 3:18. He that believeth not in him, is already condemned. And Saint Paul saith, Rom. 10:14. How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear, without a Preacher? So, that without knowledge in God's Word, there can be no faith; and without faith, there is no salvation. You

may further see a notorious Linke of many wretched mischiefs, which arise from ignorance, Eph. 4:17,18,19. Vanity of mind, and darkness of understanding are naturally in all men; for we are all stark blind, and utterly dead, in respect of matters of Heaven, and spiritual affairs. From thence comes, gross Ignorance of God, and all godliness; and this Ignorance, if it be not removed and dispelled by the Light of God's Word, is the root and cause of strangeness from the Life of God: Hardness of Heart; Searedness of Conscience, and want of Feeling; an itching, wantonness, and eagerness to sin; a committing of any sin, without remorse, occasion being offered; an unsatisfiedness and greediness in the pursuit of sinful pleasures, and in fulfilling the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life. These are the bitter and poisoned fruits of Ignorance, and want of knowledge in the Word of God, and way to Heaven. And what is to be expected hereafter, appears 2 Thess. 1:7,8,9. The Lord Jesus will show himself from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, rendering vengeance unto them that do not know God, and which obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting perdition from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Seeing then the coming of the Lord will be so terrible and fearful to the ignorant, so that they shall desire the Mountains to fall upon them, that they might hide themselves from the fierce wrath of the Lord, and not behold his fearful countenance; and that they shall wish full many times, they had never been born; how ought every man, which lives without the Light and knowledge of God's holy Word, fear and tremble? And yet, God knoweth, he cannot conceive the thousand part of those horrible torments which the ignorant and wicked persons endure forever. For as the heart of man cannot comprehend those blessed and glorious joys, which God hath prepared for those that love him; so the woe, torments, and endless vexations, which shall be poured with wrath and vengeance upon the head of the wicked, infinitely pass the understanding of

man: None can conceive how horrible they are, but only he that feels them. It very deeply then concerns you (Beloved in Christ Jesus) as you tender the everlasting good and happiness of your own souls, to labor by all means to be instructed and enlightened by the holy Word of God, which is holden out unto you, as a Lamp and Torch, to lead you through this Vale of Tears, and World of Darkness, to the blessed fruition of the most glorious and everlasting Kingdom of Heaven. Otherwise, if you will needs continue in ignorance still, mark what is your woeful state and condition: howsoever you may seem to shine outwardly, to the eye of the World, or in your own conceits, in pleasures, in plenty, in civil honesty, in outward mirth, and other worldly contentment's; yet, in deed and truth, your life is a life of darkness. The god of this World, the Prince of Darkness, hath blinded the eyes of your minds, that your Understandings are not only darkened, but you are Darkness itself, Eph. 5:8. Your works are the works of Darkness, your way is the way of Darkness; you are fettered and enchained in the power of Darkness, Col. 1:13. In the darkness of crosses and afflictions of this life, you shall be without any glimpse of true comfort and refreshing from the Lord: upon your Death-beds, you shall meet with nothing but darkness of despair and horror: in the Grave, Satan will guard you with the Barres of the Earth, as in a Bed of hopeless Darkness, until the Judgment of the great Day. And that Day will be unto you, a Day of wrath, a Day of trouble and heaviness, a Day of destruction and desolation, a Day of Clouds and blackness: as it is, Zeph. 1:15. And at the last, you are to be cast, body and soul, from the presence of God, and joys of Heaven, into utter Darkness, there to be tormented amongst wicked Devils, forever and ever. This is certainly the state of all ignorant men, and those that will not be enlightened with saving knowledge out of his Word: There is nothing to be expected of them, but Darkness, Sorrow, Despair, and Horror.

A third Use of this Doctrine, may serve for admonition to all those, who by the Light of God's Word have already found and are entered into the way to Heaven; that they would suffer themselves with humility, obedience, and constancy, to be led along in a course of sanctification, by the holy guidance and direction thereof; that they would shine daily more and more in all Christian virtues, exercises, and duties. For it is the property of all those which are become new creatures, who are washed from their sins, sanctified, and new-borne by the immortal Seed of the Word, and the Spirit of Grace; to long after, and earnestly desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby in knowledge, comfort, and new obedience. A new-borne Babe will be pleased and satisfied with nothing but the Pap; not Gold, Pearls, or anything else will content it: even so a new-renewed Soul doth ever hunger and thirst after the sacred and sincere Milk of God's holy Word, as Saint Peter calls it, that it may daily gather strength in grace; otherwise, as the Child, so it would languish, pine away, and die. He that grows not, and goes not forward in grace, had never true grace. He that faithfully labors not to feed his soul with spiritual food, never passed the new birth. The way of the righteous (saith Solomon) shineth as the Light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect Day, Prov. 4:18. For if the Day-star of saving knowledge once appear unto a man, and the Sun of Righteousness arise in his heart; they never set, until they bring him unto that glorious Light above, that no man can attain unto. He proceeds and profits in the great mystery of godliness, in faith, repentance, and sincerity; he grows from virtue to virtue, from knowledge to knowledge, from grace to grace, until he become a perfect man in Christ Jesus. It may be, as the fairest Sun may sometimes be over-cast, and darkened with Clouds, and Mists; so the holiness of a godly man may be over-clouded and disgraced sometimes, by falls into a sin, upon infirmity, ignorance, heedlessness, or the like: But, if he be so overtaken; after his passing

through sorrow and grief of heart for the same, and his rising again by repentance; he shines far more brightly and pleasantly both to God and man, in sincerity and all holy graces; he afterwards runs a more swift and settled course in the race of sanctification. So that ordinarily all God's children shine as Lights in the World, in the midst of a naughty and crooked generation, being once enlightened with saving knowledge; and they still wax brighter and brighter, until at last they come to shine as the brightness of the Firmament, and the Stars in Heaven, forever and ever. Look to it then, I beseech you: whosoever hath already given his Name unto Christ, tasted of the good Word of God, and received into his soul some glimpses of heavenly Light; let him be sure to follow hard towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus: Let him set his best desires, affections, and endeavors, to grow and proceed in all holy knowledge, in the Light of God's Word, and cheerful obedience unto the same. For it is a special note and mark of a man that is truly religious, to go forward, and increase in grace and understanding: He must be like the Sun, which, rising in the East, enlargeth his glorious light and heat, until he reach the height of Heaven. But, as one well notes; the true Christian must not be like Hezekiah's Sun, which went backward: If a man back-slide, wax worse, and fall away from good beginnings, he adds weight unto the wrath of God, and doubles his damnation: He must not be like Joshua's Sun, that stood still. It is so far to Heaven, and the way so narrow, so rough, and full of dangers and difficulties, that he which stands at a stay, will light short: The Bridegroom will be entered in, and the Gate shut, before he come. He that hath so much grace, that he desires no more, did never truly desire any: And he that endeavors not to be better, will by little and little grow worse, and at length become stark naught. He therefore must be like David's Sun, that great and glorious Giant of the Heavens, that like a Bridegroom comes out of his Chamber, and as a Champion rejoiceth to run his Race. One grace in God's child,

begets another; and one holy action, performed with sincerity of heart, doth inflame his affections with love and zeal, with courage and resolution, to undertake more, and to go through-stitch with all the affairs of God, and good causes. For he alone knows the invaluable worth, and inestimable price of heavenly Jewels; and therefore he is ravished with their beauty, and grows insatiable in his desires and longings after them. He is still toiling and laboring in the Trade of Christianity, for more gain of grace, increase of comfort, and further assurance and security of the joys of Heaven. Since he hath already tasted and fed upon celestial and spiritual food, he finds in that such unutterable sweetness, and pleasant relish, that he forever after hungers and thirsts after it. If then you would be assured, that you are in the way to happiness, be sure to be led on by the Light of the Word in all heavenly knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and holy obedience.

A fourth and last Use of my Doctrine, is for instruction to all; whether they be natural, or spiritual; ignorant, or instructed in the Word of God: That they make it their chief and principal Christian care, zealously, and conscionably, and constantly to hear, attend, and understand the holy Word of God; and to be guided and conducted by the Light thereof in all the passages of their life, and ways of their conversation.

1. And in this point, I will, first, lay down unto you certain Motives, that may induce and stir you thereunto.
2. Cautions, or Caveats, to fore-arm and fore-warn you of Lets, and Temptations, that may with-draw you there-from.
3. Lastly, some needful instructions for your right carriage therein.

One Motive, to stir us up to a reverend regard and attention, in hearing the Word of God, to a love and liking of the heavenly knowledge therein contained, and to a sound and sincere practice of it, in our lives and conversations, may be this: The Word of God is, as it were, an Epistle or Letter (as one of the Fathers calls it) written from God Almighty unto us miserable men, published by his own Son, sealed by his Spirit, witnessed by his Angels, conveyed unto us by his Church, the Pillar and ground of Truth, confirmed with the blood of millions of Martyrs, which hath already brought thousands of souls to Heaven, and fills every heart that understands it, and is wholly guided by it, with Light and Life, with Grace and Salvation. Now let us imagine a man to have a Letter sent unto him but by an Earthly King, or some great Prince in the World; wherein he should have a Pardon granted him for some capital Crime, and high Offence, whereby he were liable to a terrible kind of death; or wherein he should be fore-warned of some great and imminent danger hanging over his head, and ready every hour to fall upon him; or, wherein he should have assured and confirmed unto him, under the Kings Seal, some rich Donation, or great Lordship. Now I say, if a man should receive but a Letter from some high and mighty Potentate upon Earth, wherein any of these favors should be conveyed unto him; how reverently would he receive it? How thankfully would he accept of it? How often would he read it? How warily would he keep it? How highly would he esteem of it? Why, in this royal and sacred Letter sent from the King and great Commander both of Heaven and Earth, all these favors, and a thousand more joys and comforts, are conveyed unto every believer and practicer thereof. In that, we are fore-warned, lest by our ignorance, impiety, and impenitence, we fall into the Pit of Hell, and everlasting horror: In that, we have promised and performed unto us the pardon and remission of all our sins, whereby we justly stand guilty of the second death, and the endless torments of the damned. By the virtue of it, we are not only

comforted with grace in this World; but shall undoubtedly be crowned with peace, glory, and immortality in the World to come. Such a Letter as this, hath the mighty and terrible God, most glorious in all Power and Majesty, who is even a consuming and devouring fire; sent unto us miserable men, by nature wretched and forlorn creatures, Dust and Ashes: why then, with what reverence, cheerfulness, and zeal, ought we to receive, read, hear, mark, learn, understand, and obey it?

A second Motive, may be the precious, golden, and divine matter which is contained in the Book of God, and that true and ever-during happiness, to which it only can bring us. There is nothing proposed and handled in the Word of God, but things of greatest weight, and highest excellency: As, the infinite majesty, power, and mercy of God; the unspeakable love and strange sufferings of the Son of God, for our sakes; the mighty and miraculous working of the holy Spirit upon the souls of men. There is nothing in this Treasury, but Orient Pearls, and rich Jewels; as, promises of grace, spiritual comfort, confusion of sin, the triumph of godliness, refreshing of wearied souls, the beauty of Angels, the holiness of Saints, the state of Heaven, salvation of sinners, and everlasting life. What Swine are they, that neglecting these precious Pearls, root only in the Earth, wallow in worldly pleasures, feed upon vanities, transitory trash, and vanishing riches, which in their greatest need will take them to their wings, like an Eagle, and fly into the Heavens? Besides, the Word of God is only able to prepare us for true happiness in this world, and to possess us of it, in the world to come. It only begets in us a true, entire, and universal holiness; without which, none shall ever see the face of God, or the glory of Heaven: for it is impossible, hereafter to live the life of glory and blessedness in Heaven, if we live not here the life of grace and sincerity, in all our ways. It is called the immortal Seed, because it regenerates and renews us both in our Spirits, Souls,

and Bodies: in our Spirits; that is, in judgment, memory, and conscience: in our Souls; that is, in our will and affections: in our Bodies; that is, in every member. If the Prince of this world hath not blinded the eyes of our minds, and that we be not reprobates, as concerning salvation, it only is able to enlighten our understandings, to rectify our wills, to sanctify our hearts, to mortify our affections; to set David's Door before our lips, that are offend not with our tongues; to set Job's Door before our eyes, that they behold not vanity; to manacle our hands and feet with the cords and bands of God's Law, that they do not walk or work wickedly: nay, and it is able to furnish and supply us with sufficiency of spiritual strength, to continue in all these good things, and in a godly course unto the end. And if we be once thus qualified, we are rightly fitted and prepared for the glory that is to be revealed. As before, this holy Word did translate us from the darkness of sin, into the light of grace; it can now much more easily, with joy and triumph, bring us, from the light of grace, to the light of immortality, and everlasting pleasures at God's right hand.

A third Motive may be this: We must be judged by the Word of God at the last Day. If any man (saith Christ, John. 12:47,48) hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the World, but to save the World: He that refuseth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, it shall judge him in the last Day. Whensoever we shall come to judgment, and appear before God's Tribunal, (and we little know how near it is) two Books shall be laid open unto us; the one, of God's Law; another, of our own Conscience: The former, will tell us what we should have done; for the Lord hath revealed it to the World, to be the rule of our faith, and of all our actions: The other, will tell us what we have done; for Conscience is a Register, Light, and Power in our Understanding, which treasures up all our particular actions

against the Day of Trial; discovers unto us the equity, or iniquity of them; and determines of them, either with us, or against us. Now we must not take any exception against the first; that is, the Law of God: For the Law of God (saith David, Psal. 19:7) is perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple. We cannot against the second; that is, the Book of our Conscience: for it was ever in our custody and keeping; no man could corrupt it; there is nothing writ in it, but with our own hands. Now, in what a terrible fearful case will a man be at that Day, when he shall see the Book of God laid open before him; in the Light whereof he should have led all his life, and by which he is now to be judged; and yet know himself to have had no knowledge, but to have been a mere stranger in it? Though the great things of the Law were many times published and preached unto him, yet he counted them but as a strange thing. Every man's Conscience is naturally corrupt, defiled, and uncomfortable; and can endure and digest reasonable quietly the rage of disordered affections, many vile corruptions, and sinful actions: and therefore, at the last Day, when it shall be awakened, opened, examined, it will bring forth nothing, but the Worm that never dies, strange confusion, and condemnation; except it hath been formerly in this World enlightened, purged, and sanctified by the Word of Grace, and the Blood of the Lamb. Most accursed then, and forlorn, will be the state of every ignorant man, when he shall appear before the Judge of all the World: When he looks upon his Conscience, he shall find nothing but guilt, and horror: when upon the Law, and upon the Word of God, after which he should have lived, and by which he must now be judged; it will be to him but as a sealed Book; he will see nothing but his own ignorance, blindness, and strangeness in it: And therefore, all the Plagues and Curses denounced in it against ignorant, wicked, and unrepentant sinners, shall be his portion, in the Lake that burns with fire and Brimstone for evermore. This ought then to stir up every man, with all care and

Conscience, to store himself, while he hath time, with saving knowledge and holy obedience unto that Word, which must be his Judge in the last Day: Nay, and let him take heed unto his feet, and look unto his behavior, when he enters into the House of God: For in that Day he must answer and be countable for every Sermon that he hath heard, and for every Lesson he hath been taught out of the Book of God: If they have not enlightened his understanding, they have hardened his heart; if they do not now reform him, they will hereafter confound him; if he do not profit by them, he shall be sure to be plagued for the neglect of them: For God's Word is unto every man that hears it, either the savor of life unto life, or the savor of death unto death: It is a two-edged Sword; it either kills the sin, or the soul, it must and shall prosper in the work for which it is sent. God will raise glory, he will win honor unto himself, from every man. If he cannot be glorified, by his conversion, and salvation; he will glorify his own Name, in his deserved overthrow, and just confusion.

A fourth Motive may be; That horrible and fearful punishment and destruction, which at length will certainly befall all negligent and contemptuous hearers, and those that practice not the power thereof in their lives and conversations. Whosoever (saith our blessed Savior) shall not receive you, or hear your words; when ye depart out of that house, or that City, shake off the dust of your feet: Truly I say unto you, it shall be easier for them of the Land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the Day of Judgment, than for that City. The infamous abominations, the damnable and crying sins of the Sodomites are known unto all: Who hath not heard of those floods of fire and Brimstone, which swept them away, as the hatefulest creatures that ever lived upon the Earth? How rueful then, and how lamentable will be their condition, who are liable and subject to more horrible plagues than these? We should therefore consider, that the negligent, irreverent, and unprofitable hearing of the Word of God, is a sin of a

far greater weight, and more fearful consequence, than we ordinarily imagine. When we hear the Ministers, and Ambassadors of God, delivering his mind, and revealing his Will unto us, out of such places as these, we are to conceive, that in a nearer and more special manner, we stand in the presence of the great God of Heaven and Earth, who is clothed with infinite terror, power, and majesty; and thereafter, we ought to proportion our behavior and carriage, with reverence, humility, and obedience to so great a presence. Earthly Princes will not endure contempt and disgrace at their subjects hands: They cannot abide to have their Majesty and authority lightly set by, their laws and commands to be neglected and trodden underfoot: Why then should the Lord of glory, of justice and power, bear such indignities at the hands of sinful men, which are his most abject vassals, and contemptible creatures? Certain it is, if we weight aright the greatness of that God, before whom we stand, and our own vileness, we should hold it most just, if he should presently in the place where we stand, punish and plague our sleepiness, talking, wandering thoughts, and irreverent carriage at hearing his Word, with some sudden and markable vengeance, to be a spectacle and example unto others, for neglecting so great salvation. It is God's great mercy that such plagues and judgments are respited, suspended, and deferred; for even all the curses in the book of God do naturally, deservedly, and in the course of God's justice, belong unto the negligent hearer, and disobedient unto the Word of God. All these curses (saith Moses Deut. 28:49) shall come upon thee and pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed, because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord thy God.

I come now in the second place to the temptations and lets whereby a man may be hindered from hearing the Word of God, profiting by it, and a conscionable practicing of the same.

The highest in impiety, and most horrible, is a spice of Atheism, which Satan suggests into worldly men, whereby they wickedly, and very blasphemously think, that the sacred Word of God, is but a politic invention and devise to keep men in awe and order, in Cities and societies, and to preserve them from wildness and outrages. But I would gladly know whose work and invention it is, if it be not God's Almighty?

It is not man's: For it directly and strongly opposeth against the stream of his sensual delights, and earthly pleasures: It curbs his most desired contentment's, and crosseth the natural bent of his affections.

It is not Satan's: For he in all ages hath fiercely and furiously set himself against it; and it is the engine that batters and beats down his kingdom of darkness.

It is not any Angels, or other creatures: For the Majesty, excellency, miraculous efficacy, and wonderful power of God's Word, is far above the reach and capacity of any creature; transcendent to all created understandings, and finite comprehension. Besides, the famous miracles, the many visions, the true fore-telling of things to come, the inward, lively and effectual workings upon the souls of the elect, and many other singular and sacred marks and characters of divinity stamped upon it, doth plainly show, that it is the alone holy invention of God's divine, pure and infinite understanding, and revealed to the world for the enlarging of God's glory, and the salvation of many a thousand souls; for the confusion of the kingdom of Satan, and just condemnation of the children of hell. Take heed then in the name of God, that you give not entrance or entertainment to any such fearful blasphemous temptation, whereby the love and zeal to God's Word may be cooled, or you grow less careful in

purchasing and practicing the knowledge and power of it. This let lays hold only upon men of a reprobate sense, and those that are already marked out for certain damnation.

A second let and hindrance from hearing the Word of God, is recusancy, the cozenage and imposture of Popery. For such is the wickedness and cruelty of that superstition and mystery of iniquity, that it labors might and main to keep all the world close prisoners in the dungeon of darkness and ignorance, and forever to deprive them of the light of the Gospel. The profane professors of this bloody Religion, hold ignorance to be the mother of devotion, and a very dangerous thing for simple people to pry into the Book of God. And so they do more safely and securely feed their followers with their own damnable principles of treason, rebellion, disloyalty and disobedience to lawful Kings. So they lead ignorant people which way, and as far as they will in the kingdom of darkness, even to believe that blowing up of whole states, and killing of Kings, are very glorious acts, and merit the brightest crown of immortality, and the highest seat in heaven. I hope in the Lord there is none of you, but with all his heart hates and detests this bloody, murderous, and Idolatrous generation; and will by no means suffer his right eye of knowledge in God's Word to be put out by these cursed Ammonites.

A third let and hindrance, is the height of hardness of heart, and most damned desperateness in sinning, when men are become so greedy of fulfilling their sinful pleasures, that they drink up sensual delights like water, draw on iniquity like cords of vanity, and sin as with cart-ropes: For then they begin to say with themselves, even to God himself, with them in Job 21:14,15. Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have if we should pray unto him? And with those to whom Isaiah in his fifth Chapter denounceth

a fearful woe; Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy one of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it. Men that are possessed with such a rebellious and scornful spirit as this, neither much care for God or his Word threats or promises, judgments or mercies, heaven or hell. No marvel then though they set light by God's ministers, and seek not for instruction in holy knowledge, and heavenly wisdom. That we may be preserved from this horrible and desperate case, and so fearfully hardening our hearts against the Word of life and salvation, we must be very careful and watchful, that we give not way, passage, and entertainment to wicked thoughts, and the first sinful motions: for in this manner, a man proceeds to the height of sin, and a reprobate sense. There first ariseth in his Heart an idle and wandering thought of some unlawful thing; as of Lust, Covetousness, Pride, Malice, profaning the Sabbath, Cozening, and circumventing his Brother; and such like. Secondly, it begins to allure, entice, and confer with the Will. Thirdly, the Will doth, as it were, take it by the hand, and is tickled, pleased, and delighted with it. Then follows Consent: Consent sets the affections on foot, and plots the accomplishment and practice of it; and sin practiced with pleasure, brings Custom. Custom sharpens a man's wit, and makes him look about, how to excuse it: From excusing sin, he grows to defend it: Defense of sin, makes him obstinate, and resolved to continue in it: Obstineness begets boasting, and glorying in it. And if a man once become impudent, and take a pride in sinning, there presently follows a brazen Brow, and whorish fore-head, an iron sinew in the neck, a heart as hard as the nether Millstone, a seared Conscience, and a reprobate sense. These are the steps, by which a man riseth into the Seat of the scornful: And upon the top of these stairs, Sin sits in the greatest triumph and sovereignty; and banisheth out of a man's heart, all fear of God, love to his Ministers, and zeal unto his Word.

A fourth Let and hindrance from hearing God's Word, and yielding entire obedience unto it, is a very pestilent and politic conceit, which possesseth the hearts of very many; whereby they are persuaded, That Laws divine are but like human or men's constitutions: As these execute none, but chief Malefactors; so these Decrees of God will at last condemn none, but infamous and notorious sinners. And therefore, if they be but petty Offenders, or only maintain but one sweet sin in themselves; if they be not of the worst sort, though they be not so forward hearers of Sermons, so Scripture-wise, or hold such a strict course of holiness in their conversation: yet they think with themselves, their case is good enough, and that it will go well enough with them at last. Hence it is, that they are cold, and careless, in esteeming of hearing, and conforming themselves to the Ministry of the Word. But let no man deceive himself: The destruction of the negligent hearer of the Word of God, and the disobedient to the Gospel of Christ Jesus, shall be as the destruction of Sodom, and far more grievous. He that lies and delights in any one known sin, of which his Conscience is convicted, is in a fearful case. Without faith, it is impossible to please God: and, Without holiness, no man shall see the face of the Lord. And none hath either faith, or holiness, without saving knowledge out of God's Book. Without the New-birth, and continuance in grace unto the end, no man shall be saved: And, sincere obedience to a constant and conscionable Ministry of the Word, is a means both to beget, nourish, and continue saving grace. And, let men's conceits be what they will; as sure it is, as God is in Heaven, not one jot or tittle of all the Plagues and Curses registered in God's Law, but shall be severely executed upon all ignorant and unrepentant sinners, and poured upon the hairy scalp of all such as go on still in their wickedness.

A fifth Let and hindrance of hearing the Word of God, is an excessive and immoderate delight, and an eager and earnest pursuit of the

sinful pleasures of a man's sweet sin. By a man's sweet sin, I mean that, which his corrupt nature hath singled out, and made special choice of, to follow and feed upon, with greatest delight and sensual sweetness; which, by custom and continuance, hath taken deepest root and surest hold in his heart: upon which, all his affections and desires are carried with sharpest edge, heat, and headlongness; and to which, he makes all occasions and circumstances, friends and acquaintance, Religion and Conscience, all the powers both of soul and body, and outward estate, serviceable and contributory, as to that which chiefly rules and reigns in him. This sweet sin, in some, is Worldliness, Earthly-mindedness, and Covetousness: In others, it is Voluptuousness, Lust, and Uncleaness; Pride, Pleasures, Drunkenness, or such like. Now certain it is, carnal, profane, and unregenerate men, do many times prefer the pleasures of their sweet and most delightful sin, before the comforts of God's House, the Congregation of the Saints, and the preciousness of the Word preached. And therefore, howsoever they may ordinarily come to Sermons, (though it be rather for fashion, and of custom, than with hearty and true devotion) yet if some special gain and profit be to be laid hold upon at that time; if some extraordinary pleasure, feasting, pastime, and company be then to be enjoyed; they make no Conscience to turn their backs upon the House of God, and the Ministry of the Word, even upon the Sabbath day: so, for a little sinful pleasure, or worldly contentment, wretchedly abandoning God's holy Ordinance, and the necessary means of their own salvation.

That many men are thus wickedly hindered from hearing the Word of God, appears in Math. 22. and Luke 14. The glorious magnificence, and rich comforts of heavenly Cheer in the House of God, are notably set out unto us there, by divers circumstances, in the Parable of the great Feast. First, it was a Wedding Feast; which usually is full of joy,

comfort, and great solemnity. Secondly, it was made by a King; and therefore, like unto himself, Royal, and Princely, in plenty and variety, answerable to his State and Greatness. Thirdly, it was made at the Marriage of a Kings son; which would make it yet far more sumptuous, full of pomp, and noble entertainment, than if it had been for a servant, friend, or ordinary person.

By all this, is meant the Ministry of the Word, and Gospel of Christ Jesus; wherewith every faithful man is feasted, made God's son, and married to Christ himself forever, in righteousness and in judgment, in mercy and in compassion. This Feast being in full readiness, Servants are sent out, to invite Guests: But for all the glory, comfort, and magnificence prepared for them, in this Wedding, and Royal Feast; many refuse to come, and make excuse: One saith; he hath bought a Farm, and must needs go to see it: another hath bought five Yoke of Oxen, and goes to prove them: another hath married a Wife, and therefore he cannot come: another is busied about his Merchandise, buying and selling, and can hardly spare so much time.

Thus one sinful delight or other, profit, pleasure, company, or the like, do many times stay and hinder profane and worldly men from hearing the Word of God, and from this spiritual and heavenly Feast in his House; whereby their souls might be satisfied, as it were with marrow and fatness, with the comforts of grace, and a taste of the joys of Heaven. It is very strange, that any man should be so bloody and cruel to his own soul; that, whereas by the breaking of the Word of Life unto him in such places as this, he might have it furnished with spiritual strength, towards everlasting life: yet for some earthly pelf, and temporal pleasure, absenting himself, he suffers it to starve in ignorance and profaneness; the immediate and certain passages to eternal death.

Let a man imagine with himself, when he purposes and resolves to absent himself from a Sermon, that he lays, as it were, in the one Scale of the Weights, the glorious Majesty, presence, and honor of God; the comfort, happiness, and salvation of his own Soul: and in the other, a little wretched pleasure, or profit; and so suffers this miserable Vanity to weigh down so infinite a Majesty.

For, first, God's House, where his Word is faithfully preached, is, as it were, the Presence-Chamber of the everlasting King of Glory. Here he sits in a Chair of State, with more special and eminent Power and Majesty, as anciently he sat between the Cherubim's.

Secondly, Christ himself is here present: For, Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his Name, he is in the midst of them. And so he is said, to walk in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks; and with special power and providence to direct and guide these holy Exercises.

Thirdly, the holy Spirit of God is present, in our Assemblies; plentifully shedding into the hearts of the faithful, the rich Treasures of Wisdom and Grace.

Fourthly, the blessed Angels of God are here; as appeareth, 1 Cor. 11:10. not only to do service unto the Lord, unto the Elect, and unto his Ministry; but also, after a sort, to solace and rejoice themselves in the beauty of God's House, and in the Mysteries published in the Gospel: as appears, 1 Pet. 1:12.

Fifthly, God's holy Saints here present themselves; in whom, all our delight and comfort ought to be: for they only are truly excellent, allied unto Christ, and heirs of Heaven.

Lastly, here alone ordinarily are to be had Blessings, Life, and Salvation: for the Word preached is the ordinary means to beget the unconverted unto God; by enlightening their eyes, opening their ears, softening their hearts, planting faith in their souls, and holiness in their conversations: so that, of the children of wrath, they become the sons of God. Hence it is, that it is called, a Ministry of Reconciliation, of Peace; a Word of Grace; of Salvation, and of Life.

If a man be already converted, and in the state of grace, he may receive these Blessings by it: It is a powerful means of the Spirit,

To increase his knowledge in heavenly things, and the affairs of the Soul; by daily clearing his judgment from ignorance and error, by informing it with spiritual wisdom, and all necessary truths, and needful knowledge.

To add strength, and vigor, and increase unto his faith; that he may grow and proceed, from the infancy and weakness in Christianity, to tallness and perfection in Christ.

To preserve him from luke-warmness, worldliness, and security; to recall him from his wanderings and straying's out of the way of sincerity; to settle, comfort, and confirm him in a godly course.

To prevent his falls, and relapses; because by it he is furnished with Christian armor, against temptations? He is resolved in all doubts, and cases of Conscience; he is admonished of all crooked ways, occasions, and down-falls to iniquity.

To reclaim him from backslidings; to raise and recover him out of falls, and to restore him to his first love; by discovering unto him the foulness and danger of sin, the power of his own infirmities, the bitter root of Original sin, the pestilent and empoisoned fruits

thereof; and by daily urging the blessings of true repentance, and the practice of a good Conscience.

Most absolutely to guide and conduct him in the way of righteousness, and whole course of Christianity; to furnish him with zeal and uprightness in all holy duties and services of God; with faithfulness and conscience, in the discharge and executions of his calling; with holy meditations, when he is alone; with harmless behavior, and Light of good example in company, and amongst others; with wisdom and care, ever entirely to sanctify the Sabbath, and to teach and pray with his family. Mark now, I beseech you; since the Ministry of the Word is ever graced with so glorious presence, and such incomparable blessings as I have now reckoned up unto you; he that turns his back upon a Sermon, for the enjoying of profit, pleasures, pastime, company, feasting, or any other worldly and by-respect; he willfully forsakes the salvation of his own soul, he casts behind him all these happy blessings and comforts, tendered unto him by the Ministry of the Word; he throws himself desperately out of the presence of God Almighty, Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit, his blessed Angels, the congregation of Saints, into the power and clutches of Satan, into the company of wicked and profane men, upon the just indignation and revenge of all the creatures, upon the wrath and curse of God, and the shipwreck of a good conscience. Take heed then I beseech you, how you be drawn by any worldly affairs from the hearing of the Word, especially on the Sabbath day, lest thereby you make it plain, that you prefer your own particular, before the glory of God; earthly gain, before a Crown of immortality; a little vanishing pleasure, before the endless joys of heaven; and that ye yet lie and delight in one sweet sin or other, which keeps all saving grace out of your souls.

A sixth let and hindrance from hearing the Word of God, are certain profane and unwarrantable persuasions and conceits, which are entertained and harbored in the hearts of ignorant and willful people.

Some of them think with themselves that there is no such great need of following Sermons, and frequenting holy assemblies, especially if at the same time they be not ungodly busied and exercised at home; and therefore they ask; What can we not save our souls, and come to heaven, unless we trudge and trot so often to Church? Have we not the Bible, and other good books at home to read upon? Can we not pray and praise God at home?

They might as well ask; Can we not have a harvest unless we have a seed time, and rain, yea, both the former and the latter rain? Or can we not live except we have meat? Certainly no. No more can any man be truly sanctified and saved, nor live either the life of grace here, or expect the life of glory hereafter, unless he follow the ordinary means appointed and sanctified by God for his salvation: Except he submit himself to that policy and order which God with great wisdom hath established in his Church. Would a man be taken for a good subject, who should peevishly oppose himself against a law agreed upon and commanded by the King and State, for the great good of the Common-wealth? God himself hath appointed a public Ministry in the Church; Pastors and teachers for the gathering of the Saints, and all that belong to life; and is it fit that any private exercise should cross God's public ordinances? No; It is both inconvenient and wicked, and God's blessing is never to be looked for, upon any action and exercise, though never so good in itself, if his will be not obeyed.

I, but some will say; It is good indeed sometimes now and then to hear a Sermon; but what needs so much preaching, and Sermon

upon Sermon; Would they have us Saints and Angels upon earth?

Wretched is that man which is weary of the Word of life. And he hath no true taste of holy things, which loathes this spiritual Manna, though never so often reigned from heaven. There is no saving and true knowledge of God in that man, who desires not to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Would we not think him mad and distracted that should thus reason against his own life? I hope I have eaten meat enough heretofore, and furnished myself with sufficient strength, so that I now need no more, and therefore I will neither eat nor drink more while I live. Even just so doth he reason and plead against the life of his soul, who complains of too much preaching, and too many Sermons. David, that blessed King, and holy Prophet, who was advanced both in knowledge and holiness, above the ordinary reach and perfection of men, and lived as an Angel upon earth; yet he acknowledgeth himself greatly to stand in need of stirring up, by means ordained of God for that end. As we may gather out of Psal. 84. and in many other places. In that Psalm he makes a most grievous and mournful complaint, that he is debarred and banished from all access unto the public worship and service of God; holding himself in this respect more miserable than some of the brute creatures, which had liberty to build their nests, and lay their young near the Altars of the Lord; which benefit he could not now enjoy. Now if this man of God so longed and labored after the means of grace and comfort, what ought those to do, who are of little or no faith; who are but Novices and petties in the School of Christ; who are but babes in Christianity, or utterly without grace?

I, but our forefathers (will others say) were never troubled with so many Sermons, and yet we hope they are well, and in Heaven.

Our forefathers wanted the means, and that full glorious Noone-tide of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which we by the grace and mercy of God enjoy. And therefore whosoever of them perished without them, shall certainly be beaten with fewer stripes, than those that shut their eyes against the fair and blessed Sun-shine of God's holy truth, which is shed round about us, and if it be hid, it is hid only to those that perish, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of their mind. Besides, if it so pleased the Lord in his just and secret judgment to suffer some of our forefathers to live and die under the tyranny and darkness of Antichrist; how much are we bound to bless God, that we are born and brought up in the light of the Gospel; and what heavy plagues and great damnation do we bring upon ourselves, if we neglect or despise so great salvation.

I, but yet further, (will some say) we have lived some of us forty, some thirty, some twenty years, without so much preaching, and yet have holden good credit and reputation in the world, and prospered in our ways, would you now have us so forward in running to Sermons?

Strange it is to see how wise the simplest are in matters of the world, about their temporal state, but how simple and blind the wisest worldlings are in the affairs of Heaven, and about their greatest, spiritual, and eternal good. Let us suppose a man to have lived long in a poor Cottage, and now at length to have some great and rich Lordship befallen him; do you think he would reason thus: Why, I have lived some thirty or forty years now already in this low estate with good contentment, and credit, amongst my neighbors; and therefore here I will rest, the rest of my days; I am too old now, to change my former estate? Would such a fool as this, be found in a whole Country? And yet many Countries are full of such fools, in respect of spiritual advancement, and the salvation of their souls. Me

thinks, those that have long lived in ignorance, and blindness, should rather conclude thus: Have I thus long and so fearfully lived without God in the World, without knowledge of his Truth, faith in Christ, and Conscience of my ways? Oh, then it is more than high time now at length to awake out of sleep, and to open mine eyes, and to embrace this glorious Sun-shine of the Gospel, which the Lord of his great mercy hath brought unto me, that so I may be enlightened to eternal life.

As for prospering in the World, that is no mark of a good soul; nay, it is commonly the Lot of the wicked, not to be plagued like other men, but to bring their enterprises to pass, Psalm 73. Nay, yet further: There is no greater Curse can befall any man, than to prosper in the World, and be out of the way to Heaven.

I, but (will others say) to the attaining of eternal life, what needs so much ado, so much preaching, catechizing, expounding, conferring, meditating, teaching and praying with our families, which are so much and so often urged upon us? When all comes to all, this is the sum and end of all; To fear God, and keep his Commandments; That we love God above all, and our neighbors as ourselves: And we hope we can do this, without all this ado.

To fear God, and keep his Commandments, (which is the whole duty of man, as the Preacher speaks in his last chapter) and to love God above all, and our neighbors as ourselves; (upon which hangeth the whole Law and the Prophets, as Christ tells us, Math. 22.) are indeed soon spoken, but not so easily, truly learned; and most hardly, sincerely practiced. Is it enough, think you, to make a man a good Carpenter, or Mason, to say; That, that is soon learned; and, I know as much as the best workman can teach or tell me: To build a House, is nothing but to lay the foundation, to rear the walls, and cover it

with a Roose? Is it enough to make a good Husbandman, to say; I know as much as the best Husbandman can teach me; for Husbandry is nothing else, but to sow and reap? Is it enough to make a good Preacher, to say; It is no such great matter, to make a Sermon; I know as much in that point, as the best Scholar amongst them can tell me: To preach, is nothing else but to expound the Text, gather Doctrines, and make use and application to the hearts and consciences of the hearers? But it would be long before these idle and empty vaunts would build Houses, fill Barns, or save Souls. There is far more required to these businesses, than so: There is to be undergone much toile and labor, much care and trouble, expense and exercise, before any of these works can be rightly accomplished. It is even so in the great work of salvation, and the attainment of Heaven. The state of grace, and trade of Christianity, is not so easily purchased and practiced. There goes more to saving of a soul, than bold and ignorant brags: than to say; If that be all, I hope I can quickly and easily learn to love God above all, and my neighbor as myself: For before these, there goes many things; as, knowledge of God's will, and Word; a thorough view of our own misery and corruptions, in the glass of the Law; strange agonies, and sore pangs in the new-birth, and sorrow for sin, refreshing's and cooling's by the mercies of God, and merits of Christ; faith, repentance, sanctification, a blessed and holy change in the whole man, both body, soul, and spirit. And then follows new obedience; which consists in the uprightness and sincerity of our own hearts; a conscionable and charitable carriage towards our neighbors, and a zealous constancy in all religious duties and right service of God: which must be universal, in respect of the object; that is, we must walk in all his Commandments: total, in respect of the subject; that is, we must serve him in all the powers of our soul, and parts of our body; in our thoughts, words, and actions: In all which things, and holy courses, if a man be not particularly instructed, experienced,

and practiced, his love of God and his neighbor is but in word and tongue, not in deed and truth. A man, if he be disposed, may quickly perceive and discern the truth or hollowness of his heart in this point. God hath straitly commanded an entire sanctification and keeping holy of the Sabbath. Let a man then consider, if he suffer himself to be drawn away from holy Exercise on that day, by pleasures, profit, pastime, company, ease, idleness, or other worldly occasions; why, then he prefers mere vanities, and the desires of his own heart, before the glory and honor of God; and so doth not love God above all. The true love of a man's self, doth chiefly and principally consist in furnishing himself with saving knowledge, sincerity of heart, godliness of life, a good Conscience, and spiritual comfort, against he come to Judgment. Now, if he love his neighbor as himself, he is not still talking with him of worldly matters; but especially labors with him for his conversion, entertainment of grace, and increase in godliness. If these be not his cares, both for himself and his neighbor, he truly loves neither. Thus may a man examine himself through all the Commandments in particular; and see, whether it be so easy to love his neighbor as himself, and God above all.

I, but where there is so much preaching, there is much disquietness and discontentment: for men are abridged of their former ancient pastimes, and pleasures, and urged unto more strictness of life. When as all was well before, in much quietness and peace, the preaching of the Word breeds new stirs and contrary affections in men.

No marvel, though there be much struggling and striving, great noise and stir, before the strong man in the Gospel can be dis-armed and dispossessed of his Holds; that is, before Satan, having long reigned in the hearts, and sat in the Consciences of ignorant and profane

men, will be cast out, by the Preaching and Power of the Word. This conquest costs full dear; it will not be had, without the loss of our dearest delights; without shedding the very hearts-blood of our beloved and bosom-sin; which flesh and blood will not yield unto, without blows and bloodshed. You may assure yourself, where the Light of God's Truth begins once to peep out, and the power of grace to work, for the driving away darkness, and subduing profaneness; you shall be sure ever there to have three fierce and implacable enemies, and opposites, to start up; Satan, wicked men, and a man's own corruptions. While men lie in sin, ignorance, and under the shadow of death, Satan lets them alone, meddles not much with them, never troubles or disquiets them, but procures them all temporal happiness, and carnal contentment's, that can be; (for he knows full well, if they so continue, they are sure his own, and children of endless perdition:.) But if once, by the power of the Word, they be enlarged out of the slavery of sin and death, and lay hold upon salvation, and the glorious liberty of the Saints; why then he begins to bestir himself like a maddened and enraged Lion, and labors with all his malice and policy to hinder and dash such proceedings. And in this Conspiracie, he joins unto himself wicked and reprobate men, to rail, revile, and rage against sincerity: I, and besides, a man's own corruption, and sinful flesh, doth fret and fume, when it feels itself curbed and snaffled by the Law of the Spirit.

The Gospel indeed is a Gospel of Peace: But of what Peace? Of Peace with God, with good men, and a man's own Conscience; of the Peace that passeth all understanding: But it ever proclaims open war against wickedness, profaneness, and corruptions; it will have no peace with impiety, carnal security, and rebellion unto the Laws of God. Hence it is, that our Savior tells us in the Gospel, that he came not to send Peace into the Earth; but rather, Fire, Debate, and the Sword: that is, Wheresoever his Word is published powerfully, and

conscionably, with fruit and effect upon the souls of his elect; there, by accident (as they say) it stirs up much rage and bitter opposition against God's children. For, as there is no true inward peace unto the wicked; so, in this World, there is no outward peace unto the righteous: but commonly they are still exercised with one cross and temptation, or other; either the Devil, or wicked men, are still plotting or practicing mischief and misery against them.

But you must conceive, that the disquietnesses and troubles that arise at the preaching of the Word, are not caused by it, but by men's corruptions. Would any man think, that Saint Paul, or his Preaching, were in fault, because there was much ado, and a hurly-burly almost wheresoever he came; and not rather the wicked Infidels, which could not endure to have their sins reprov'd? Neither the Sower, nor the Seed, Math. 13. are to be blamed, that it doth not prosper and fructify; it is the ground that is only in fault: which is either stony, or thorny, or barren; or else, it is the envious man, that soweth Tares: The Sower doth only his duty, and the Seed is pure and precious; it is men's corruptions, and profane hearts, that causeth all the stir. Amongst four kinds of Grounds, there is but one at the most (as appears in the Parable of the Sower, Math. 13.) in which the immortal Seed of the Word takes root, prospers, and fructifies: Only the good and honest heart profits by Preaching; to all others, it is the savor of death unto death: And whom it doth not humble, it hardeneth; whom it makes not so meek as a Lamb, and like a little Child in humility, it makes as fierce and furious as a Lion, against the power of grace wrought in others, and against the profession and practice of sincerity. No marvel then, though where the Word of Truth begins to bear sway, there be many times much ado, and resistance by carnal and profane men.

I, but (will some say) this Word is brought unto us by weak and frail men; sometimes by those, who are of notorious and infamous life and conversation: and therefore we have less heart to believe and obey them. If we had the Word published by an Angel, or an Apostle, or some more excellent and powerful means, and Ambassadors, we should more easily and willingly hear, believe, and obey them.

It is God's great mercy unto us, that it pleaseth him so far to condescend to our infirmity, as to open unto us the rich Treasures of his heavenly Word, by men of the same condition and frailty, and subject to the same passions with our selves. He might by terrible and astonishing Voices, out of Lightnings, Thunders, and Earthquakes, able to break the hardest Rocks, and stony Mountains, (as he did in the giving of the Law) force us to obedience: Or he might send his Angels, armed with power and puissance, to execute present vengeance upon all those which do not presently submit themselves to the Scepter of his Christ, and Sovereignty of his Word. But in great mercy and compassion unto us, he chooseth rather to teach us by a still and soft Voice; by a more fair, familiar, and fit instruction for us; even by such as ourselves, of our own nature, frailty, and condition.

Here in he shows his great love unto us, in that he vouchsafeth to put his fearful and glorious Word into the mouth of a mortal and sinful man. What an honor and advancement is it unto man's nature, unto mankind, that the high and mighty God of Heaven and Earth should single them out for so glorious a service; sanctify their Tongues, to deliver his good pleasure, and news of salvation unto the sons of men? That he should acquaint and put them in trust with such high mysteries, and heavenly matters, of so sovereign and saving use, both to themselves and others?

But it may be, besides common frailty and infirmity, the Minister and Messenger of the Word is of lewd and profane life, and condition.

If he be, more is the pity; the scandal of the Ministry is the greater, and his own damnation more smarting and terrible. See Psal. 50:16,17, &c. But notwithstanding, the profaneness of the Preacher is no privilege to the hearer, either of negligence or disobedience. He that turns his ear from hearing of the Law truly preached (though by a Pharisee) even his prayer is abominable, Prov. 28:9. He that despiseth the Word, shall be destroyed, Prov. 13:13. He that obeyeth not the Son, in his Ministers lawfully sent, though not sanctified themselves, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. Christ himself, in the Gospel; bids his followers to observe and do whatsoever they were bid by the Scribes and Pharisees, which sat in Moses Chair; but not to do after their works; for they said, and did not. Every Minister is to be heard, received, and followed, so far as he follows and delivers to the Church the Truth of God, and Doctrine of the Apostles. For therein he is an Angel of the Lord of Hosts, and Ambassador in the stead of Christ. And all the parts of the Ministry in his hand (he following the Word) shall as certainly be accomplished, as if an Angel, or Christ from Heaven should presently and potently execute them. If he denounce Judgments against sin, it is as if the voice of God himself should be heard from Heaven; as if the Lion of the Tribe of Judah should roar. If he pour the Oil of comfort into a wounded and distressed Conscience, it is as sure and certain, as soft and sweet to the believing soul, as if the Angels should comfort him, as they did Christ in his Agony; or, as if Christ himself should mercifully reach out his glorious hand, through the Clouds, and bind up his broken heart and bruised Conscience with a Plaster of his own precious Blood. If he instruct, admonish, reprove, exhort, persuade, from ground and warrant out of the Word; it is all one, as

if Christ himself should do it: who hath said; He that heareth you, heareth me.

Let men therefore pretend what they will; if they will not hear, believe, and obey the Lord, speaking in the Ministry of the Word, though the means and Messengers be never so base and vile, frail, weak, and sinful. Let an Angel come from Heaven, a Devil from Hell, or a man from the dead; yet would they not believe. For, if a man were truly humbled, he would tremble at God's Word, of whomsoever he heard it. If he had a spiritual taste, he would relish the heavenly food, whosoever ministered it. If he had God's holy Spirit, he would know and acknowledge his Sword, which is the Word of God, in whose hand soever he saw it. And until he have this spirit, a spiritual taste, and an humble heart, he will not believe; especially with effect, fruit, and practice, let him pretend whatsoever he will; neither Angels, nor men; dead, nor living; Moses, nor the Prophets; Peter, nor Paul; not Christ, nor God himself; if the one were living again upon Earth, or the other would be pleased, or it were possible, to speak immediately to him.

For conclusion of this Point, let us know, That the Ministry of the Word is God's Ordinance; which dependeth not upon the worthiness of him who delivereth it; neither is it made void and ineffectual, by his weakness and wickedness: but it hath it virtue, force, and power from the blessing of God, and from the inward operation of his Spirit; who applieth it to the hearts and consciences of men, and thereby illuminates their understandings, begetteth faith in them, and all sanctifying and saving graces.

I, but (will some say) it is a very wearisome, tiring, and tedious thing, to be tied to the hearing of so many Sermons, to meditate of them, confer of them with our neighbors, teach them our families, and

practice them; which are urged upon us, as necessary Christian duties.

It is a strange thing, and sore case, that some men will not be persuaded to take half so much pains to go to Heaven, and eternal Rest, as many thousands to go to Hell, and everlasting torment. How many tire and torture themselves with cark and care, with much toil and travel, to heap up those riches, which in the meantime are matter of much vexation unto them; and hereafter will be witnesses against them, and eat their flesh as it were fire, as James speaks? How many spend their wits, their spirits, their time, that they may become some-body in the World, and climb by indirect and unlawful means, and steps unto those high places, from whence hereafter they must be hurled with greater confusion, and a more fearful down-fall, into the Pit of Hell? How many waste their wealth, weaken their strength, consume their marrow, fill their bones with rottenness, and their bodies with diseases, with lust and uncleanness, with following the Whorish woman, whose paths lead unto the dead; with tarrying long at the Wine, and pouring in of strong Drink: for which, at length, they shall be sure to be filled with drunkenness, and with sorrow, even with the Cup of destruction, and trembling; they shall drink of it deep and large, and wring it out to the dregs? How unwearied have Idolaters ever been in the wicked worship of their false gods? And many Heretics, in the false worship of the true God? In thrusting towards Hell, they neither spared cost, nor charge; loss, nor labor: They have been prodigal both of lives, and living; of blood, and children. You know, amongst the Jews, some mingled the rueful cries of their dearest children with Music and melody, lest they should be moved to compassion, while they were cast into the fire, to be burned up in sacrifice unto the Idol Moloch. Scribes and Pharisees compass Sea and Land, to make a Proselyte. Baals Priests lanced and cut their flesh before their Idol, until the blood gushed out. The

blinded Papists at this day whip themselves, waste their goods, and consume their bodies with wearisome Pilgrimages, to see some counterfeit Relics, and rotten Bones, or to visit accursed Idols, and Popish Saints: Nay, some of them transported with a more bloody rage, and furious spirit of Antichrist, suffer as it were with senselessness, with desperate and damned boldness, most horrible and exquisite torments, for butchering of Kings; for which they hope to merit Heaven, and to sail through a Sea of Royal blood to the Haven of endless rest; though indeed and truth, they justly light short, and sink, before they are aware, into the deepest Lake of the hottest fire, and most consuming flame of Hell. Now, I pray you, shall these services of Satan be followed and pursued with such heat and eagerness, with such pains and patience of all miseries and vexations; and shall not the Lord's own Ordinances, and the true worship of the true God have power to make us step out of our doors with patience, and pleasure, to hear the Lord's will revealed unto us, to receive salvation to our souls, and a Crown of immortality to our heads? Can some be content to toil day after day, fare hard, break their sleep, eat the Bread of carefulness, and all to heap up a little wealth, perhaps, with the loss of their own souls, and sometimes they scarce know for whom; and shall not we with joy and cheerfulness pass through holy Exercises, for the enriching of our souls, wherein true and lasting comfort is only to be found, and whereby we may lay up for ourselves Treasures in Heaven, durable Riches, a Bag that cannot wax old, a Treasure that can never fail, Prov. 8:18, Luk. 12:33. unmixed joys, endless peace, and blessed immortality, presently to be entered upon after death, and then to be enjoyed forever and ever? Shall rebellious Superstition, and the Doctrine of Devils, and killing Kings, harden the Papists against any crosses, and tortures; and shall we be tired with the peaceable Exercises of sound and saving Religion? God forbid. In whom soever the true love of God and Christ hath taken up the heart, there their Gospel, and Word,

and services are sweeter and more tasteful than all outward delights. Little touch of Religion, or sense of Salvation hath he, that comes unto with uncheerfulness, and stays with weariness at the Ministry of the Word.

I, but (will some say) it was never good World since so much preaching came amongst us; when there was less preaching, there was more plenty: and therefore, it seems, there is little good in it. Since this new Religion was on foot, (for so some ignorantly and maliciously call it, though it be as old as God himself, whose eternal Truth it is; as old as the Patriarchs and Prophets, as Christ and his Apostles) there hath been (say they) more scarcity of all things, more Plagues, Famines, strange apparitions, extremity of seasons, and other Judgments, than ever our forefathers saw, or heard of. Hospitality, Charity, Pastimes, and Plenty were banished with the old Religion; for so they call the bloody and idolatrous Heresy of Popery.

This hath ever been the complaint of Idolaters, and the wicked, against the Truth of God; as it is now of the Papists and profane men amongst us, against the glorious Light of the Gospel, that shines round about us. When Jeremiah, chap. 44. had reproved the Jews, and denounced God's Judgments against them for their Idolatry, they answer him thus, in verse. 16. The word that thou hast spoken unto us in the Name of the Lord, we will not hear it of thee; but we will do whatsoever thing goeth out of our mouth: as, to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, both we and our fathers, our Kings and our Princes, in the Cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and felt no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have had scarceness of all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine. The very same

complaint was made of the wicked Heathens and Infidels, at the first plantation of Christian Religion among the Gentiles. Tertullian, an ancient Father, tells us in his time; If there were any inundation and overflowing of Tiberis, a great River in Rome; if there were any extraordinary and uncouth Hayle, or Frost, or any other misery or calamity; all the fault was presently laid on Christ, and the Christian Religion.

It appears also by Austin, another ancient Father, in his 122. Epistle, that there were wicked complaints and murmurings against the Christian Faith, in his time; the Infidels were still crying, that before the Doctrine of Christ was published to the World, mankind was not vexed and distressed with so many troubles and garboyles. To which, the good Father doth there excellently answer; Out of Luke 12:47,48. easily, saith he, may they thence take their answer: The servant that knew not his Masters will, and yet did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes; but he that knew his Masters will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

Hence then may we clearly see the reason why our Times, in all reason, should be more visited with Judgments, than former days of ignorance.

1. Because that the Light of the Gospel is come amongst us; and many love Darkness rather than that Light, because their deeds are evil: for every man that doth evil, hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.
2. Because the Gospel is not so thankfully received and entertained, as so excellent a Blessing and precious a Treasure ought to be.

3. Many that hear it, live not after it: Perhaps, only make a show of godliness; but deny the power thereof, in their lives and conversations. So, that negligence and disobedience to the Word of God, is the true cause of those Judgments and miseries, which are wickedly and wrongfully pretended to be a cause why they have so little care to attend and obey it.

As for Hospitality in the time of Popery, it did not so much spring from the truth of Religion, as

1. From a superstitious opinion of redeeming their sins, and purchasing Heaven by alms-deeds.

2. From an excessive cheapness of all things, by reason of the scarcity of money.

3. From the superfluity of the wealth, riches, lands and impropriations, the price of the blood of souls, which Monasteries, and other religious, or rather superstitious houses, had immeasurably and unconscionably engrossed and got into their hands. And when they had engrossed the world to themselves, (as one says) they seemed liberal in giving something; like unto some vain-glorious thieves, which having robbed wealthy Merchants, bestow some pence upon beggars.

As for works of Charity: Certain it is, and a reverend and learned man of our Church hath proved it, and it will more clearly appear hereafter; That the charitable benevolence, bountiful liberality, large expenses in building and enlarging Colleges, and erecting Hospitals, Libraries, Free-schools, and many other works of charity, and fruits of faith, since the light of the Gospel began to shine amongst us, may compare with, if not far excel any time of the like or longer continuance in any age.

As for greater dearth and higher price of all things now, than in former times, it is a clear and plain case, that the reason is; that the great store and plenty of treasure which is walking in these parts of the world, far more in these our days, than ever our forefathers have seen in times past. Who doth not understand of the infinite sums of Gold and Silver which are gathered from the Indies, and other Countries, and so yearly transported into these coasts? And this is confessed to be the true cause of the same unancient dearness of all things, even in other Kingdoms also, where Popery is professed. One Bodin, a great Politician of France, tells us, that the common people are much deceived, who think that the price of Corn, Cattle, and other necessaries, should hold the same rate it did of old. They do not understand and consider, that the price of things is more by ten parts (saith he) than it was anciently, by reason of the plenty and abundance of Gold and Silver, which is brought out of the West Indies into Europe, whereby it comes to pass that money is less esteemed, for plenty of anything lessens the estimation of it.

Besides, for our own Country, wise men have observed another particular reason. For (say they) immediately after our coin, in the time of King Henry the eighth, the prices of all things generally among all sorts of people rose; for that they think, that the alteration of the Coine was the chief and principal cause of a universal dearness of things. And why our English Coine being restored by our late Queen, that blessed Saint of glorious memory, to its former purity and perfection, the prices of all things fall not back to their old rate, they give sufficient reasons.

As for pastimes, Plays, and other fearful profanation of the Sabbath, it is a good sign the power of grace is there planted by the Word, from whence they are banished and abandoned. They are fit pleasures for Papists, which have no comfort in the joys above; and

well agreeing to the darkness of superstition. But the light of the Gospel dispels such vanities, and God's children have all their pleasures in holy exercises upon the Sabbath day.

This last objection then of Papists and profane men; That the world is worse since there was so much preaching, is idle, vain, and frivolous.

Many such like conceits, persuasions and objections as these, which I have now reckoned up unto you, there are abroad in the world, and in the hearts of profane men, by which they are hindered from hearing the Word of God, with that heart, zeal and diligence as they ought.

Now I come to acquaint you with some slights and temptations of Satan, whereby he labors to bereave us of the blessings and benefits of profitable hearers, and to hinder the effectual working of the Word in our consciences and conversations.

A first plot and practice of Satan, is to keep men from diligent hearing the Word; If he cannot that way prevail, in a second place he labors to make the Word in vain, fruitless, and unprofitable unto them. And that he doth, by such means as these:

1. If by the grace of God we break thorough all lets and snares which might withhold us from holy assemblies, and hearing of the Word; then Satan, that he might make it ineffectual for our conversion and salvation; first, labors to work in us a negligent carelessness and heedlessness, in listening to those things which are delivered, and that by a kind of heartlessness in holy things, by dullness of spirit, drowsiness, sleepiness, gazing about, talking, or such like. And such hearers as these, are never a whit moved or affected with the Word preached, but remain in the same state as they were before. There is

neither passion or impression wrought upon them for the present, nor any thought of it, profit or practice afterward.

2. But if he cannot speed this way, but that we rouse up and address ourselves to hear the Word of God, as desiring with care and good conscience to profit thereby: Why then, in a second place, he seeks by all means to fill our heads and hearts with idle musings, and wandering thoughts, which may distract and steal away our minds from attending to the Word. And that he doth, either by offering and suggesting to our consideration and memory, the world, and the vanities thereof, as our affairs and business, our profits and preferments; those pleasures and delights wherein our corrupt affections find most sensual sweetness: Or, if this will not prevail; by casting into our minds very craftily and cunningly, things which in their own nature may be good, honest, and religious: But because they are thought upon out of due and convenient time, they deprive us of the profit of the present holy Exercise; which ought for the time, only and wholly to take up our minds.

If this yet will do no good; but that we mark diligently and attentively, all the while, what the Minister delivers unto us from God, for our good: why then, in a third place;

1. In some, he makes it ineffectual, by nourishing in them a neglect of reading the Scriptures, and ignorance in the Principles of Religion: so that though they attend never so well, and stare the Minister in the face; yet they understand not the Sermons they hear. Let the younger sort therefore, to prevent this mischief, acquaint themselves with the Scriptures from their youth; by the example of Timothy, 2 Tim. 3:15. Solomon, Prov. 31:1, &c. Samuel, 1 Sam. 1:24. See also Psal. 119, Prov. 2:1. And let the misery upon Eli's House, terrify negligent and indulgent Parents; see 1 Sam. 2:1,2. &c. In this depth,

the Word is either buried as it is brought forth, or dies at the Church door.

2. In others, he earnestly endeavors utterly to extinguish and abolish all thought of it; quite to drive and banish it out of their heads, so soon as they have heard it. And that thus: If men's hearts be hardened through unbelief, or custom in sinning, and like the Highway in the Parable of the Sower; then the Evil one comes immediately, and catcheth the Seed of the Word so soon as it is sown, and stealeth it out of the heart. As we may see many times Birds hovering greedily after the Sower, to snatch away the Corn, before it be covered with Earth, or take root in the ground: even so Satan, the ravenous Crow of Hell, waits all opportunities to peck up the Seed of the Word out of the hearts of men, before it sink into their affections, or fructify in their conversations. Or otherwise, if the World hath stolen men's hearts out of their bodies, so that they have no hearts left within them, for matters of Holiness, and Heaven; but are wholly set upon Gaine, and exercised in Covetousness: then needs not Satan much to bestir himself; he knows full well, that worldly Cares will presently choke the Seed of the Word. As soon as the Sermon is heard, and ended, and they turned their backs upon the Church, there comes immediately into their heads whole swarms of earthly thoughts, and they are presently plunged over head and ears into the cares and plotting's of earthly businesses. So that these men, whom Satan conquers by this temptation, never meddle with meditation, conference, or talk about the points handled by the Preacher, by which the Word of God should be better, as it were, digested, and prepared for practice. Nay, they have no delight at all to hear others repeat the Sermon; but are very weary of the place and company, and never pleased, until they bring them back again unto talk of worldly matters and profane discourses.

If this yet will not serve the turn, but that the Word gets within a man, and works upon his understanding; so that by his diligent hearing of it, meditation, and conference, he furnishes himself with competent knowledge in the Book of God, and Divine Truth: why then, Satan casts about another way; which is, to make him to content himself with a bare fruitless knowledge, without practicing the power of it in his life and actions; to rest contented with an ability to talk and discourse only upon points of Religion, and places of Scripture, without inward sanctification, and subduing the will and affections to new obedience, and sincere exercise of Christianity. So that, for all his knowledge, he neither meddles with Conversion, nor mends in his Conversation.

He labors here, first, to hinder his Conversion, by planting in his heart a prejudice and disconcert against,

1. Preaching the Law.
2. Distinguishing several estates of unregenerate men, Math. 13. the three Reprobate Grounds.
3. The differencing the Children of God, and the Children of the Devil, by special marks and notes, Math. 5, Psal. 15. &c.
4. Pressing the Doctrine of Christ, of pressing in at the strait Gate, Luke 13:24 & 4:28. And gathering from Scripture those which shall be saved, into a short sum.
5. And by making him make God all of Mercy.

And mending in his Conversation, by motives unto presumption.

If this will not prevail, but that a man endeavors to draw his knowledge into practice, and fittles himself with care and conscience

to reform his former ways and courses of iniquity: why then Satan plots and practiseth, with all the cunning and policy he hath, to make him rest in a slight, superficial, and partial reformation; to content himself with an unsound, or unsaving conversion. For, by the way, I must tell you; there may be many conversions, changes, and alterations in a man, from worse to better; and yet he not truly sanctified, not become a new creature, nor possessed of the state of grace, and glorious comforts of true Christians.

1. He may be changed, from a notorious sinner, to a civil honest man: whereas he hath been before furious, and desperate in lewd courses, he may grow more sober and moderate in his carriage: And yet, for all this, continue in his ignorance, and a mere stranger to the ways of godliness.

2. From civil honesty, he may pass on to a formal Christianity, and become an outward Professor; and outwardly do, and perform religious services: and yet lie in his sins, and want the power of inward sanctification.

3. Yet further, by a general power of the Word, and inferior working of the Spirit, he may in some sort be outwardly reformed, and in some measure inwardly enlightened; he may have understanding and joy by the Ministry of the Word, and may do many things after it, and for sake many sins. Herod is said, Mark. 6. to have revered John, to have heard him gladly, and to have done many things: And yet for all this, he may come short of a sound conversion; if he suffer some main corruption, someone sweet sin, or other, to reign in him, which he still feeds upon with delight, and sensual sweetness; if he do not wholly and entirely resign and give up himself, his spirit, soul and body to the Lord's service, and to please him in all things; and with repentance, and resolution, forsake all his known sins. For this

is a certain Rule and Principle with Divines; That true turning unto God, and the advised and willing remaining in the practice of any one evil, which is discovered to a man's Conscience, by the Light of God's Word, to be a sin, cannot stand together.

These changes a man may have, and thus many passages, from worse to better; and yet the great and glorious work of regeneration not wrought upon him. For where there is a sound conversion, and through-reformation, there a man is wholly sanctified, and set apart unto God, from the sinful corruption of his natural birth, and the evil fruits thereof, to serve God in his whole man, both body, soul, and spirit. He shakes hands with all sins, he sells all for the precious Jewel of the Gospel; he regards not sin in his heart, but hath a regard to all God's Commandments.

Now since Satan, that old Serpent, knows full well, that it will never serve the turn for a man to part but with part of his sins; that his case is fearful enough, whatsoever good, or good deeds seem to be in him, if he yield not to the work of the Holy-Ghost, for the leaving but of any one known sin, which fighteth against the peace of his Conscience; he knows, that he hath haunt and hold enough in a man's Conscience, and affections; that he hath sufficient interest and claim to his damnation, if he can but keep his sweet sin in heart, and alive in him. And therefore, when any by the Ministry of the Word is moved to settle and address himself to a reformation of his ways, and to redress his former wicked life; he puts in, might and main, to preserve in his vigor, and sovereignty, one secret delightful sin, or other, at least, in the heart and affection of him, that goes about to reform himself: He singles out one corruption, or other, to which he finds a man most addicted; and this he conceals, and fenceth with all the policy that he hath, that if by any means it may escape unrepented of, unmortified, and unmeddled with.

Thus he dealt with Herod: Herod, by the preaching of John, reformed himself in many things; but Satan made sure to keep him his own, by that one sin of Incest. Naaman the Syrian, no doubt, believed, and followed the Prophet in many things; but he desired only, that the Lord would be merciful unto him, when he went into the house of Rimmon. The young man in the Gospel, in his outward carriage was unreprouable; but that one secret sin of worldliness, banished him out of the presence and Kingdom of Christ. In this point, Satan labors to persuade men to deal with God in the forsaking of their sins, as Ananias dealt with the Apostle, in parting with his Money. It was a custom, you know, in the Primitive Church, because of the necessity of the Times; that many, out of a zealous and extraordinary love unto the Gospel, sold their Lands, and brought the price, and laid it down at the Apostles feet. Ananias amongst the rest, would needs seem as forward and zealous in this glorious work of Charity, as any other: He sold his Lands indeed, and brought in the Money, and tendered it at the Apostles feet; but yet secretly, suspecting God's providence, and doubting lest himself, perhaps, at length should be brought into want, he kept back one part of the price of his Possession; making show notwithstanding, to have brought in all. So it is in many, by the malice of Satan, and bewitching enticements of natural corruption, in the forsaking of their sins. In a true Conversion indeed, when a man is about to buy the Pearl of great price and invaluable worth in the Gospel, the Doctrine of Salvation, the Way to Life, and Graces of God's Spirit; he makes a universal sale of all his sins; he selleth (as the Text saith) all that he hath: not some piece of his sinful Possession, but even the very whole Lordship, the entire Inheritance. But it is otherwise with those whom Satan inveagleth, and ensnareth in this point. He is well enough pleased, that they shall seem to be as forward in the reformation and amendment of their lives, as any other; and indeed, that they shall be reformed in good part, and carry some love and

affection toward the Word, and Ministers; so that he may keep hold and possession but in one corner of the heart: For he knows, that that is enough to keep the whole man, body and soul, his own. If he can stay but one sin unsold, he knows the man continues still, by the course of divine Law, a bonds slave of Hell. By one little hole a ship will sink into the bottom of the Sea. The stab of a Pen-knife to the heart, will as well speed a man, as all the Daggers that killed Caesar in the Senate-house. The soul will be strangled with one Cord of vanity, as well as with all the Cart-ropes of iniquity: only, the more sins, the more plagues, and fiercer flame in Hell: but he that lives and dies impenitent in one, it will be his destruction. One dram of poison will dispatch a man; and one reigning sin will bring him to endless woe and misery. Let us take heed therefore, when we go about reformation of ourselves, lest we be surprised and overtaken by this malicious craft of Satan. Let us resolve upon a through-reformation; which is only and ever undertaken, with a purpose not to hold on in the willing practice of any one known iniquity, or sinful course. Which, when we shall carefully and earnestly go about, Satan will be sure to set upon us, as Pharaoh did upon Moses and Aaron: When the Lord had commanded them to go three days journey in the Desert, to do service and sacrifice unto him, that by all means he might hinder them in this holy business.

1. He would have them to stay in the land, and to do sacrifice there. Nay (saith Moses) it is not meet to do so; for then we should offer unto the Lord our God that which is abomination unto the Egyptians.

2. Since this would not then serve, but that they would needs out of the Land; I will let you go (saith Pharaoh) that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the Wilderness; but go not far

away. But Moses would yet none of this, he would not abate a foot of the journey the Lord had appointed.

3. Why then (saith Pharaoh) if you will needs go so far, I am content your men shall go; but, as it is fittest, your children shall stay at home. Nay (saith Moses) we will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our Sheep and with our Cattle will we go.

4. Well (saith Pharaoh) I will yield so far unto you, your children shall go with you to serve the Lord, only your sheep and your Cattle shall abide at home.

Nay (saith Moses) our Cattle also shall go with us. There shall not a hoof be left.

Now when all this would not do, when Moses would not accept of any capitulations, conditions, restrictions, or limitations in holy businesses, and the service of God, (for he was at a point, resolute, he would not leave so much as a hoof behind.) Now, I say, when all the enticements and policies of Pharaoh would not prevail to keep Moses from serving and sacrificing unto God, and that precisely and strictly, according to his own appointment and commandment, but that to this end, at length he wrung himself and all the Israelites, out of the bloody teeth of this persecuting Wolf; why then Pharaoh arms himself with rage and fury, with six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, with fifty thousand horsemen, and two hundred thousand footmen, as a Jewish Historian writes, purposing with bloody thirst to devour at once, and swallow up quick, even all the Israel of God: But you know the conclusion was; the Lord of Heaven gave a most glorious deliverance to his own people, wherein his bottomless goodness, and infinite mercy shall shine clear and bright forever, in all generations of the Church upon earth, and

through all eternity in Heaven: But upon their enemies he brought such a strange and terrible confusion in the Red Sea, which may strike astonishment and trembling into the heart and loins of all profane persecutors of godliness to the worlds end, and amaze the very maliciousest fiend in hell, while that Kingdom of darkness stands.

Even just thus doth Satan deal with all those who desire to be conducted by the light of the Word, out of the Egypt and slavery of ignorance, sin, profaneness; and who are resolved frankly and freely to give themselves, souls and bodies, to God's service, and to enter a settled course of holiness and sanctification; he useth all means and policies to keep and detain them in his Kingdom of darkness. If he cannot hold them in his chief palace and Court as it were, where sin especially reigns and revels it, yet he will so far hamper them, that at least they still hover upon the confines and borders of the Regions of death. If they will needs be meddling with reformation of their sinful lives, and that he cannot help it, but something must be done, he is content to yield unto them upon some terms or conditions, that they cast him not quite out of their consciences, but suffer him to sway and reign in their hearts, by some one gainful or delightful sin or other.

1. If they will needs fear God, he stands not much upon it, but that they may do it outwardly, and in profession, so that they will continue in Egypt, within the Kingdom of darkness, and lie still in their sins, and under the shadow of death.

2. If this will not content them, if they will not rest here, but will needs out of the Kingdom of darkness, and dominion of death, why he is not much against it, but that they may go the half way; that is, he will suffer them to forgo and forbear the outward practice and

perpetration of many sins, so that inwardly their heart and affections harbor, nourish and embrace them still, and feed upon with a sensual and delightful remembrance, the sinful pleasures of iniquities formerly committed.

3. If they desire and endeavor to become new men, both inwardly and outwardly, to be sanctified in actions and affections, to serve God both in soul and body, he will yet yield so far, that they may be rid of some sins both in heart and practice, as perhaps of sins of custom; but then he will be a suitor and solicitor unto them, to retain other sins, as perhaps sins of nature. For example: It maybe they may both forbear the outward practice, and also inwardly loath swearing, drunkenness, and other such like sins of custom; but they will nuzzle in the bosom of their affections, pride, lust, anger, and such other sins, the natural birth as it were of original corruption.

4. But if they also conquer these, why then he tempts them mainly to continue at the least in worldliness. For this in many men's hearts hath greater power, and bears more sway than nature, or natural affection. He will secretly suggest unto them, that upon an eager and excessive pursuit of gain and riches, depends their life and livelihood, their credit and reputation, their contentment and happiness in the world; so that perhaps at last of all, after all this, they rest and settle themselves upon sins of advantage, as usury, oppression, unlawful and excessive gaining, earthly-mindedness, serving the Times, and such like.

5. But if by the grace of God any be so blessed from God above, as resolutely to pass thorough all these trains and temptations, and like strong Samsons, break through all these Cords and Cart-ropes of iniquity and vanity; so that they will not yield an inch to that cruel Pharaoh of Hell, nor leave so much as an Hoof behind them, in his

Kingdom of Darkness: why then, this spiritual Pharaoh presently arms himself with all the crafts and policies of Hell, with Legions of Fiends, and Princes of the Darkness of this World; with all his malice, against the salvation of the souls of men; with the fire and furious rage of profane wretches; with the sharp swords and empoisoned arrows of lying and slanderous tongues; and with all other advantages, which either the lowest Hell, or the wide wicked World can afford. And thus appointed, he pursues and persecutes, with bloody and implacable fury, all those who have escaped out of this captivity, far more eagerly and enviously than ever Pharaoh did the Israelites: That either he may bring them back again into his bondage, or else take them quite away, and destroy them; that they may not attain the full Light of the Saints, nor do long service unto the Lord. And certainly, if all the power of Hell, the strongest temptations, the scourge of tongues, the Worlds malice, the spiteful spirit of profaneness, the frowning's of friends, the scornful insolences of enemies, the cursed and enticing cries of our old companions; if wicked men or damned Devils be able to prevail, he will be sure to stay them, before they enter into the state of grace, and true blessedness. But yet, if a man put on Paul's armor, in Eph. 6. David's royal courage, Psal. 3:6. Moses princely zeal, and truly Christian valor, that he will not leave a hoof behind; that is, that he will not leave one corruption unmortified, one affection unsanctified, one rebellious action unreformed, one known sin unrepented of, and unforsaken; one holy duty unperformed, one Commandment unbeyed: Why then, he may look for a more glorious spiritual deliverance, than Moses had a temporal: Hell, and confusion, shall swallow up all his enemies; but into his heart, in the meantime, shall be shed and plentifully poured comfort, joy, and peace, and upon his head shall a Crown of immortality flourish forever hereafter.

I have stayed very long upon the fifth plot and practice of Satan, whereby he labors to make the Word heard, unpowerful and ineffectual for the salvation of our souls: For, I know, it is much and often exercised, and with great success; and by it, he prevails with very many. When by diligent hearing of God's Word, faithfully urged upon them, they are driven, and do address themselves to a reformation and amendment of their sinful lives; he mightily endeavors to hinder, disquiet, and interrupt them in it; to make it a reformation unto them but in part, and by halves; unsound, and unsaving: So that, it may be, they may forsake sins of Custom, as Lying, Swearing, Drunkenness, and such like; but keep sins of Nature, as Pride, Lust, Anger, and the like: Or, it may be, they may forsake both these two kinds of sins, and yet keep sins of Advantage; as Oppression, unlawful Gaining, grinding the faces of the Poor, serving the Time, and such like: Or, they may leave all these, and yet keep sins of Company; as, idle and vain Talking, filthy Jestings, railing against and slandering their Neighbors, uncharitable judging and censuring their Brethren, and the like. It may be, they may be careful in their general calling of Christianity; but careless and unfaithful in those particular places and callings, wherein God in his providence hath set them: Or contrarily; they may be of Christian behavior abroad, and in public; as at Sermons, and in the Church: but unconscionable at home, and in their private families; never teaching, or praying with them: They may seem zealous in the Commandments of the first Table, and about the service of God; but in the second, and towards their Neighbor, unmerciful, unconscionable, and uncharitable: Or, they may deal justly and honestly with others, but be utterly void and destitute of the knowledge and fear of God: They may be outwardly reformed, but inwardly full of hollow-heartedness, and hypocrisy: They may leave all other sins, only keep one behind; which is called a man's sweet, delightful, and bosom-sin.

If Satan can prevail with a man any of these ways, he keeps him his own: for he that is soundly converted, justified, and sanctified indeed, must needs be out of love with every sin, with the whole course of iniquity; and with sincerity and cheerfulness embrace the entire body of Christianity, and have a regard to all God's Commandments.

6. Now I come to a sixth sleight and devise of Satan, whereby he labors to make the Word fruitless and unprofitable unto us. If he cannot stay us in our reformation, but that we will needs through, and cast away all sins; why then, he seeks by all means to hinder our continuance, and constancy. If the Seed of the Word be received with joy, and spring up for a time; that is, be practiced for a while; he raiseth up some persecution, tribulation, or crosses, whereby it is presently blasted, withers, and comes to nothing. The unclean spirit may for a time go out of a man, and walk throughout dry places; but if it be possible, he will return with seven other spirits worse than himself: and the end of that man, is worse than the beginning. A man may fly from the pollution and filthiness of the World, as it is, 2 Pet. 2:20. but by the policy of Satan, he may be tangled again therein: He may be washed (as it is in the same place) for a while, and yet after wallow again in the mire of sin: He may be endued with an inferior sanctification of the Spirit, Heb. 10:29. and yet after, by the malice of Satan, tread underfoot the Son of God: He may have a general participation of the Holy-Ghost, Heb. 6:4. and yet after a time fall away, to the very despiting of the Spirit of Grace. I speak not this, as though that any once effectually called, truly sanctified, possessed of the state of grace, and enrolled among the Saints, can possibly become a cast-away; it cannot be: for if once by the power of special grace, a man be built upon the Rock; not the Gates of Hell, not all the powers of Darkness, nor strongest assaults of Satan, shall ever prevail against him. Heaven and Earth shall sooner be removed, than

any of God's servants. For if God's eternal Decree of Election be unchangeable; if his Covenant be everlasting, and inviolable; if his Truth cannot change, nor his Mercy fail, nor his Power be weakened; if the sacred Seal of the blessed Spirit shall stand; if the precious blood and fervent prayers of Christ Jesus can prevail; if his Scriptures do not lie, and deceive; if his sanctifying Grace cannot die, and perish; if Himself cannot cease to be: then undoubtedly, if a man be once his, he is his forever; if he be once truly his servant upon Earth, he shall forever hereafter be a glorious Saint in Heaven. My meaning therefore in this point, is only this: There is a glimmering Light of the Spirit, some manner of taste of the sweetness of Christ, a kind of change, which may be wrought in a man by the preaching of the Word, and yet he not truly and constantly converted, but may by the malice and policy of Satan be repossessed by unclean spirits, and repolluted with the filthiness of the World.

Thus we may discern this changeable change (that I may so speak) and the saving change of God's servants: If, after we have given our Names to Christ, and begun to profess and practice sincerity, we pass on, and continually grow in grace, and stand for God's honor and service, against all comers; friends or foes, loss or disgrace, oppression or slanders, men or devils; why then, undoubtedly, we have the sanctifying Spirit of God, and saving grace; which makes his Children like Trees betwixt the Rivers of Waters, fruitful in goodness, and as bold as Lions, in good causes. But, if after we have begun well, we look back with Lots Wife; if we fall in love again with those sins which we have forsaken; if Rubs and Crosses in the World, will turn us out of the way to Heaven; and our righteousness be but as the Morning Dew, which a little heat of Persecution will dry up: why then, our change was changeable, and not that of God's children. The Seed of the Word, which we received with joy, was never deeply rooted in good and honest hearts; we were only temporary Converts,

not new creatures; temporizing Professors, not true Christians; and our End is like to be worse than our Beginning; and our Plagues more, than if we had never begun.

Let every man take heed then, in the Name of God, lest by the trains and temptations of Satan he be turned back again from any good course; lest after he be washed, he wallow again in the mire of worldliness, and worldly vanities; and after he hath escaped the filthiness of the World, lest he be again entangled therein. Let us beware of longing after those sins, which we begun in some measure to reform; let us not lust again after the flesh-pots of Egypt, like the Israelites, after we be in some good sort enlarged from the bondage of sin, and tyranny of the hellish Pharaoh. Lots Wife being delivered out of Sodom, was surprised with a sensual remembrance of the pleasures and vanities of the place which she had left, of the ease and prosperity which she there enjoyed; and so looked back upon it: But she was therefore presently turned into a Pillar of Salt, Gen. 19:26. there forever to be a monument and fearful spectacle of God's terrible judgments against all back-sliders. If the unclean spirit be cast out of a man by some degrees of reformation, and good beginnings of amendment of life, and have after leave and liberty to return; he brings with him seven Devils worse than himself, and makes a man far worse than he was before. Much better were it for any man never to have known or stepped into the way of righteousness, than afterward to turn from the holy Commandment of God, and out of a course of Christianity. It is a fearful Curse, to continue in hardness of heart, profaneness of life, and sinful courses: But to leave them for a little, and to sink back again, is to have God's Curse bitter against them, if they repent not, and the fire of Hell made more hot for them. First, sicknesses are curable; but relapses are very dangerous, if not irrecoverable. If a man (as it is Heb. 6.) hath once been enlightened, and then fall away, it is impossible to be

renewed by repentance. I know that place principally to be understood of the highest degree of Apostasy, and falling away; but he that falls away from any good course, and good beginnings, falls towards that irrecoverable fall, and makes himself more incapable of repentance, than if he never had been enlightened, or stepped into the way of Truth: And it is just with God, to punish such with a reprobate sense, and hearts that cannot repent.

It then deeply and nearly concerns us; for once we have felt the sweetness of Grace, and tasted of the Powers of the World to come; to drink deeper of the Waters of Life, and to follow hard towards the mark, for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. When we feel any good motions and purposes arise in our hearts, let us labor to follow them, to nourish them, to blow them up, to make a fire of them; lest they only but make a flash, and pass away as the Lightning. Let us put them in practice with zeal, and constancy, that we be not as the unfaithful Waters, which in the Summer are dried up; or as the dead Trees, which perish in Winter: but that we remain whole and sound, pure and perfect, as the living Waters and Olives of the Lord, that ever shed forth their sweetness and fatness. Let us make a Covenant, even a Covenant (as the Scripture speaketh) of Salt, durable, and perpetual, with the Lord, to live before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life: For to him that goes through with his holy business, that fights the good fight of Faith, finisheth his course, and overcomes; to him, and to him alone, shall all those glorious Blessings be performed, which are promised in the first Chapter of the Revelation: To eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God; Not to be hurt of the second Death; To eat of the Manna which is hid, and to have the white Stone of Victory given him; To have power given him to rule over Nations, and to be lightened with heavenly brightness, like the Morning Star; To be clothed with white array, (that is, with heavenly

Glory) and to have his Name continued in the Book of Life; To have a Pillar made in the Temple of God, (that is, a firm and immovable place of eternal Glory;) To sup with Christ, and to sit with him upon his Throne for evermore. Thus shall he be honored and crowned with the excellency, fullness, and variety of all glory, joy, and happiness, who enters with sincerity, and courageously ends his Race of Holiness, and conquers in his spiritual Fight. But all fearful men, (as it is, Rev. 21:8.) who slink back for fear of Men, or love of the World, or to serve the Times; all faint-hearted men in the Lord's Battles, and that fall away from good beginnings; they shall be punished with unbelievers, with the abominable, with Murderers and Whoremongers, with Idolaters and Liars, in the Lake which burns with fire and Brimstone; which is the second Death.

7. But, if by the grace and mercy of God, we quit ourselves like men, and hold on comfortably and constantly in a settled course of godliness; yet, for all this, Satan hath not done: though he can do us no deadly hurt, yet he will still do his worst; for his craft and spite is endless. If he see there is no hope of bringing us back again into his bondage, or making us anymore vassals and slaves to sin; yet he will labor to lay stumbling-blocks in our way, to bring us upon our knees: now and then, to turn us out of the right path; sometimes, even to over-turn us with some greater and more dangerous fall; he will lay his trains to entrap and entangle us, if it be possible, in some old sweet sin: Which, that he may bring about, he will use the benefit and advantage of custom, because before our calling, we have much practiced it; of the frailty of our own corruptions, because they have most delighted in it; of our old company, because we have formerly oftenest committed it with them. He will leave no opportunity, advantage, or circumstance omitted, and unassayed, to hale us back into one or other special sin, of our unregeneration. If this will not stop, he will follow all occasions, enticements, and temptations, the

tide of our own affections, the stream of the times, if by any means he can cast us into some gross and scandalous sin. These are Satan's plots and practices against those, who hold on in a constant course of holiness: if they will not be brought to tumble themselves again in the mire of sin, and sinful pleasures, yet he will do what he can, now and then, to spot and stain their Christian lives with some grievous fall, or other; that so, to his utmost, he may bring upon them God's disfavor, and angry countenance, disgrace and disconceit amongst their brethren, discomforts and fears of heart within themselves. But if a man, first, by keeping fresh in his mind the uncertainties and vanities of this vain World: secondly, by careful and continual watching over his deceitful heart: thirdly, by exercising and practicing with diligence and delight, all holy means of preserving grace, and starving sin; as reading, hearing, conference, meditation of the Word of God; Prayer, public and private; with himself, and with his family: fourthly, by declining profane, unprofitable, and unchristian company, and acquaintance; and frequenting, with joy and fruit, the fellowship of the Saints: fifthly, by an humble entertainment, nourishment, and practice of the good motions of the Spirit: sixthly, by a daily examination of the state of his Conscience, and reparation of the decays of Grace: seventhly, by his godly jealousy over little sins, and present renewing repentance after every slip. I say, if by such means as these (which are notable preservatives against the poison of sin) a man fence himself from gross and scandalous falls; or else, if by the politic malice of Satan, and weakness of his own flesh, he be overtaken with some fouler sin; and yet notwithstanding, besides pangs of grief, and anguish of spirit, for grieving his gracious God, he look better to his feet, and run faster in the Race of sanctification after his fall; if his falling into sin teach him these good lessons, which in such cases are ordinarily learned of all true Christians; for all things, even sin itself, makes to the best in God's Children.

1. He learns by his fall, to distaste his pride, and self-conceit, to let fall his Peacocks train, and despair of his own strength.
2. To depend only upon God, the Word of his Grace, and the power and perpetual influence of his Spirit, for his standing upright in the ways of Righteousness, and preservation from most fearful and dangerous down-falls.
3. To cling closer about him; to clasp faster hold with the hand of faith upon the glorious Passion and meritorious justice of Christ; with much heartiness and zeal of seek and sue unto him for his special aide and assistance against Satan's temptations, his own corruptions, and outward occasions of sin.
4. To blush and be ashamed of himself; for that he having had his soul washed with the precious blood of Christ, and having received so great favor, mercy, and pardon at the hands of God, yet hath wretchedly and unthankfully defiled it again; and so woefully and wickedly abused his extraordinary love and kindness.
5. With more resolute vow, protestation, and practice, to renounce and abandon Satan; with more perfect hatred, and detestation, to loath and abhor all manner of sin; the Garment spotted of the flesh, and all appearance of evil.
6. To become watchful, and wise; by taking special notice of all the motives, temptations, means, occasions, baits, allurements to that sin, into which he fell; for the avoiding and declining of it afterwards.
7. To think charitably of other men, that fall, and are suddenly overtaken in any offense; not to be too eager, hot, and censorious against them; but out of his own experience, to give them comfort, instructions, and directions, and to labor to restore them with the

spirit of meekness. Now, I say, if a man be either fore-armed and fenced (as I said) from falls; or else, after his fall, weep bitterly, repent sincerely, watch afterward more carefully, walk more zealously; and out of his spiritual wisdom, make that use and benefit of his fall, as I have told you: then he may have comfort, that Satan gets no great advantage this way.

8. Like a fierce cruel Dragon, since he cannot devour the Woman's Child so soon as ever it is brought forth; that is, he cannot repossess and reign again in a true Christian and regenerate man, brought forth by the power of the Word, in the Womb of the Church; he therefore casteth out of his mouth, after him, floods of outward crosses and vexations. If he cannot wound him in his soul, yet he will vex him in his body, goods, and good name: if he cannot hinder him of Heaven, he will give him little rest or quiet upon Earth: if he cannot bring him into disgrace and disfavor with God, he will be sure to raise him hatred enough, malice, and discountenance amongst men: He will do his worst, to fill and load him with all outward discomforts and discouragements; as poverty, sickness, slanders, scoffing's, railings, reproaches, contempt's, and a thousand other persecutions.

But in such cases as these, let every child of God comfort, refresh, and hold himself in heart, cheer, and courage, by such considerations as these.

First, it is a Decree of Heaven, resolved upon and ratified by the Lord our God, confirmed by the experience of all the Patriarchs and Prophets, of the Apostles and professors of Christ, of all the Saints and servants, nay, and of the Son of God himself; that, through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. So often therefore as we shall see any miseries or afflictions coming towards

us, for our profession of sincerity, and righteousness sake; let us acknowledge them to be as so many most certain and infallible marks, that we are in the right way to Heaven: through which, if we but walk a little further with patience, we shall descry a Crown of Glory, which is our own forever; of which, all the afflictions and pressures of a thousand Worlds are not near worthy.

Secondly, though by this means, by these outward crosses and afflictions, Satan dischargeth upon us the very gall of his bitterness, the poison of his malice, and arrows of his spite; yet, by the merciful and medicinal hand of God, they are returned upon his own head, they strike through the heart of sin, and become as precious restoratives, to repair in us the decays of spiritual life: for in God's children, crosses and afflictions have these worthy effects and workings.

1. They start us out of our security, carelessness, and coldness, which by little and little may grow upon the best: They breed in us a conceit and sense of our own wants, and the necessity of God's providence and protection: They add Oil unto the flame of our first love, put life into our religious exercises, and power and spirit into our prayers.

2. They curb and control the pride, insolency, and impatency of our nature: They cool and kill the heat, headlongness, and intemperance of our affections: They weaken indeed the whole old Adam in us, with all his lusts, concupiscence, and venom; but give strength to the new man, with all his godly and gracious motions, holy and heavenly actions.

3. They make us with indignation to spit in the very face of this vain, deceitful, and flattering World; the temporal love of which, is the eternal loss both of bodies and souls in the other World: They happily wean us from the love of it, and make us willing to part with

her paps; to bid all her enticements adieu, and to trample under feet the fading pleasures and vanities thereof: they make us to tear our groveling hearts, and rent our dull affections from the Earth, to which they cleave, and are glued so fast, and to lift up both our heads and hearts to Heaven, and to the glory which is to be revealed, longingly to desire the coming of Christ, the Life that lasteth, and to be clothed with our House, which is from above.

4. Lastly, they are as sharp and precious eye salves, to clear and enlarge the spiritual sight of our souls, too much dimmed and darkened with earthly dust, and with gazing too long on the painted glory of the World; that so we may see further into the great mystery of godliness, deeper into the mass and dunghill of our own corruptions and frailties, wider upon the vanities of the World, and higher into the happiness of Heaven, and that great Beauty, Glory, and Majesty above: They serve unto us as sour Sauces, and bitter Wormwood, to bring us out of love with our sweet sins, and to breed a distaste in our mouth against transitory delights: They are as sharp pruning-knives, to lop and cut away the excesses, vanities, and unnecessary cares that grow upon us; and so to trim us, that we may bring forth more profitable, plentiful, and fairer fruits in godliness and Christianity.

Thus Satan is disappointed in his plots, and policy; his malice makes a medicine for our souls: he purposeth and hopes, by crosses and afflictions to turn us back, or make us weary in our course of holiness; but by the mercy of God, they become as spurs, to prick us forward in our Christian Race; and as hedges to keep us in, from wandering out of the way.

Now, in a third place; That God's child may not too much be cast down, or put out of heart, for crosses and persecutions raised against

him for a profession, and the practice of sincerity; let him consider, that howsoever Satan and wicked men be the instruments, and executioners, which maliciously procure, and immediately inflict miseries and vexations upon the children of God; though they be the means to lay tortures and torments upon their bodies, crosses and losses upon their goods and outward estates, spots and impression and cruelty upon the face of their harmless innocence, slanders and disgraces, imputations and staining aspersion upon their reputations and good names; sometimes terrors, temptations, and amazements upon their minds: Yet in all these, our gracious God hath the chiefest stroke, a principal hand, and the greatest sway, he directs, limits, and moderates the rage and fury of all our enemies, whether they be Devils or men, as it pleaseth him; and ever certainly to the singular good of his children, if they be patient and faithful. Misery (saith Job, chap. 5:6.) cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth afflictions spring out of the Earth. Neither indeed, principally and originally from Man, the Lord of the Earth; nor from the Prince that rules in the Air; nor from the Host of Heaven: God himself is the chief commander, guider, and director of all vexations, and ill of punishment that befalls any man; and inflicts it, for our sins and corruptions, upon the reprobates, as appears in Pharaoh, for their further hardening and confusion; upon his elect, for their conversion and correction.

Let us then, in all our sufferings and afflictions, stirred up against us for sticking to sincerity, and keeping a good Conscience; lift up our eyes to the mighty Lord of Heaven and Earth: who, by the strong Arm of his Omnipotency, holds fast in a Chain, Satan, that raging Lion, and great Goliath, that he cannot stir one Linke further than he will give him leave; he cannot go a hairs breadth beyond his Commission: Nay, and that which he is suffered to do, makes one way or other for our far greater good. Let us consider, what a loving

and tender-hearted Father hath us under his correction; and holds in his hand the fury of Satan, the malice of men, the power and particular stings of all creatures, as Rods and Scourges, to reform and amend us; to keep us in a course of holiness, and in the right way to Heaven. His fatherly love and tenderheartedness unto his, and such as fear him, doth in dearness and unchangeableness as far surpass the most compassionate bowels of any earthly father, as God surpasseth man; and, an infinite nature, a finite creature. The kindness of a mother to her child, is nothing to that love which God beareth to a true Christian. A mother may forget her child, and not have compassion upon the son of her womb. But God neither can, nor will forget him. The stony Rocks and Mountains stick fast and sure unto their foundations; but God's love to his child, is far surer and sounder. The Mountains shall remove, and the Hills shall fall down (saith God by Isaiah) but my Mercy shall not depart from thee; neither shall the Covenant of my Peace fall away, saith the Lord, that hath compassion on thee. Can any man stop the course of the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars? Can he change the Seasons of the Day and the Night? No more can any creature, or a world of creatures, stop and turn aside the streams of God's endless mercies and favors to his faithful servants. If you can change (saith God by Jeremiah) if you can change the courses of the Sun, and of the Moon, and of the Stars; if you can break my Covenant of the Day, and my Covenant of the Night, that there should not be Day and Night in their season; then may my Covenant be broke unto David, my servant; then will I cast off all the Seed of Israel: Jer. 31:33. You may therefore make sure of it; every sanctified and sincere man is ever in God's sight, for his good and preservation; he is graven upon the palm of his hand, he is set as a Signet upon his arm, and as a Seal upon his heart. God is ever far more sensible, tender, and compassionate of the sighs, tears, and miseries of his children, than any man can be of the pricking of the precious ball and apple of his own eye. We have his Promise,

sealed with the precious blood of his own Son, bound with an Oath; That so, by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible that God should lie, we might have strong consolation; That, he will never fail and forsake his; That, he never lay more upon them, than he will make them able to bear. He gives them comfort in all their afflictions, deliverance from them, and benefit by them. In all troubles, he most certainly either quite frees them, or graciously preserves them, in them; so far as is best for his glory, and their good; and useful for the Church, and his other children.

Let no child of God then be dismayed or discouraged for any crosses, slanders, or persecutions, which befall him for his profession, and practice of holiness and sincerity. Though Satan hath his work in them, and profane and wicked men a part; yet our gracious God, so loving and tender-hearted a Father, hath the principal stroke and chief finger in them: Satan's work, and end is, to vex and discourage.

It is evermore the work of the Devil, (saith one of the ancient Fathers) that he may with Lyes tear the servants of God, and by false Opinions spread concerning them, may defame their glorious name; that such as are bright in the light of their own Conscience, may be darkened and disgraced by the reports of others.

Wicked and profane men, because they are in Darkness, and their works are evil, they cannot endure the children of Light, and their holiness of life. For this is the root and fountain of all their malice and cruelty; as appears, 1 John. 3:12. Cain slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brothers good. Hence grows and springs all the fury and rage, all the wrongs and slanders, which are wont to be laid on true Christians: They are hated even for their very goodness, and because they will not run with the wicked unto the same excess of riot: They are filled

with contempt and reproach, with the mocking's of the wealthy, and despitefulness of the proud, because they will not swear, swagger, lie, pour in strong drink, profane the Sabbaths, follow the fashions and corruptions of the Times. In a word, because they will not be profane in this World, and damned in the World to come. And besides, I know not how, wicked men think, that by the commonness of sin, their sinful courses become more commendable; and, that the multitude of offenders makes them more excusable, and their offenses pardonable. It is the comfort (saith an ancient Father) of evil men, to carpe at the good; thinking, that by the great number of offenders, the guilt of their faults is diminished and abated.

But God's work and end, in all false reports unjustly raised against his children, and in other crosses whatsoever; is to stir up and revive in them zeal, devotion, and faithfulness, in praying, praising, and serving him; to purge out of them the dross and relics of some old sin; to humble them, and to bring them to a true denying of themselves; to try their faith, patience, and constancy; or for their greater good, one way or other.

A fourth consideration, whereby the true Christian may be kept in heart and comfort against all crosses and calumniations which he shall meet with, in his course of holiness and sanctification, is this: It is no strange thing that doth befall him, when he is persecuted for sincerity; but the very beaten way to Heaven, trodden by all such feet, as ever walked in faith and obedience. Abel begun in this Cup of Persecution, and vexation, for his service to God, to all those who would give their Names to Christ, or fight under his Banner to the Worlds end. The Patriarchs and Prophets, and holy men of old, followed and pledged him: They were tried by mocking's and scourging's, by bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were hewn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the

sword; they wandered up and down in Sheeps-skins, and Goats-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented; whom the World was not worthy of; they wandered in Wildernesses, and Dennes, and Caves of the Earth. Nay, Christ Jesus himself, the Son of God, and our blessed Savior, drunk deep and large of this Cup; it was the Baptism wherewith he was baptized. His Apostles and Disciples followed; they endured all the bloody and merciless cruelties, which fierce and furious Wolves are wont to inflict upon silly and harmless Sheep: for they were sent out into the World, as Sheep amongst Wolves. There come after, and drink of the same Cup, millions of blessed men and women, under the primitive Persecutions: Of which, some were scalded, some burned, some broiled, some hanged, some beheaded, some thrown down from rocks upon stakes, some stabbed in with forks, some racked, and torn in pieces, their tongues cut out, their eyes bored out, their flesh twitched off with Pinsons, women's breasts feared off with hot irons, pricked under the nails with Needles, and a thousand more ways tormented, with as great variety and exquisiteness, as politic malice could devise, and profane cruelty execute. If we pass along from thence, even to these Times; yea, and if our eyes were so enlightened, that we could look upon the state of God's children, and their way to Heaven, even to the Worlds end; we should ever be able to trace them along by the tears of Brine, and blood, which are poured out and spilled for the profession of God's Truth, and practice of holiness. This then is, was, and ever will be, the lot and portion of all those who are fitting and preparing for Heaven. They are ever persecuted one way, or other. If by reason of the mild and peaceable Times, they fight not unto blood, and pass the fiery Trial; yet they shall have their troubles, oppressions, and disgraces; at least, they shall be ever sure to be paid home with the scourge of tongues: they shall be loaden with slanders, and false reports; they shall be made a gazing-stock, a by-word, and Table-talk; a scorn, reproach, and derision to them that are round about

them: as David was, Psal. 79:4. Which being so, why should not a common case, in the cause of God, breed a common comfort in true Christians? Why should any of them think much to drink of the same Cup, that the dearest Saints and souls, now blessed with the Lord, have begun to them in; and of which, all that will be saved, even to the last day, must taste, and follow? Why should any man, that truly loves God, or looks for the joys of the other World, seek or desire a privilege above all the children of God, that everywhere; and even above the Son of God himself, Christ Jesus? Most unworthy is he of the glorious comforts of Grace, of the inward Peace, that passeth all understanding, and of that Glory which is to be revealed; who, for a slanderous tale, a lying tongue, a reproachful term, or the fear and face of any mortal man, slinks back from a bold profession of sincerity, and from the true service of the living God.

In sufferings and afflictions for God's cause, there is not only matter of patience, but even occasion of glory. They are like stars in the forehead, honorable maims, conformities to Jesus Christ, Liveries of a Christian soldier.

Fifthly, let him consider, that his momentary crosses and afflictions cause an exceeding and everlasting weight of glory. Let his vexation be never so grievous, his persecutors never so great, and mighty; neither they, nor that, can last long. For the life of man, and all the glory thereof, doth pass away like a Ship in the Water, whose tract cannot be seen again; like an Arrow through the air, or a Weavers Shuttle through his work; like a fading Flower, suddenly plucked up and withered; like Grass, like Smoke, like a Dream, like a Bubble of the Water. Though a Christian therefore be never so deeply plunged into miseries, he shall abide but a while under the waters of affliction; the day of redemption cannot be far off. Though he should pass through the teeth of wild Beasts, upon the sword of the Tyrant,

through the flames of fire; though his brains should be dashed against the walls, his limbs lie scattered in the streets, and his blood run down every channel: yet shall he, ere it be long, gloriously rise again, in despite of all the powers of Darkness, and bloodiness of cruel men. He shall entirely be restored, by the mighty and immediate hand of God; he shall be clothed with Light, and immortality; his blood shall be revenged, and all tears wiped from his eyes; and there shall be set upon his head a Crown of everlasting joy, peace, and happiness.

Sixthly, comfort unspeakable, and glorious, may spring up in the heart of God's child, amidst his sufferings for the cause of God, out of a consideration, That in all afflictions, without exception, Christ suffereth with him. Paul was the mirror and miracle of all Christians, for the variety and gloriousness of his sufferings; you may see a strange and unmatched Catalogue of them, 2 Cor. 11:23. &c. He was in stripes above measure, plenteously in prison, in death oft. Of the Jews, five times received he forty stripes, save one; he was thrice beaten with Rods, he was once stoned, he suffered thrice shipwreck; night and day was he in the deep Sea: In journeying, he was often; in perils of Waters, in perils of Robbers, in perils of his own Nation, in perils among the Gentiles, in perils in the City, in perils in the Wilderness, in perils in the Sea, in perils among false Brethren; in weariness, and painfulness; in watching often; in hunger, and thirst; in fasting's often; in cold, and in nakedness. Yet all these, and what other crosses and afflictions befell him, he calls and accounts them the sufferings and afflictions of Christ. Now (saith Paul, Col. 1:24) now rejoice I in my sufferings for you, and fulfill the rest of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his Bodies sake, which is the Church. And 2 Cor. 1:5. As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth through Christ. Lazarus, in all his poverty, contempt, sickness, sores, or what other miseries, suffered

nothing wherein Christ was not partaker of his grief and sorrow. So sweet and blessed a consent and sympathy is there betwixt Christ, the Head, and all true Christians, his members; that so long as the great mystery of that mystical Union stands true and sure, (which is forever) all holy men, and servants of God, in all their sufferings for the Name of Christ, profession of his Truth, and practice of sincerity, shall have Christ himself partner and partaker of their miseries; which is able to refresh the heaviest heart, in the greatest extremities.

I have stayed long upon this point; to wit, how Satan labors might and main, by crosses and slanders, to discourage God's child, and to stop his course in the ways of righteousness; and in laying down some comforts against them: because thousands, at the very first entrance, or after some small continuance, are woefully turned back from grace, and sincerity, by temptations, reproaches, and troubles raised against them; by their own rebellious flesh, Satan, and profane men.

Now, in a ninth place, if all this will do no good; if the heat of persecution inflame the zeal of the true Christian; if reproaches and afflictions be so far from daunting and dulling his forwardness, that they set an edge upon his affections, and add strength to his resolution, in proceeding in the glorious state of Christianity: Why then, the last sleight and temptation of Satan, to hinder the sanctifying power and success of the Word, and to make it fruitless and unprofitable, is spiritual Pride; which, by his malicious cunning, and hellish Alchemy, he extracts even out of his graces and virtues; out of such sweet flowers, he raises poison: and since he cannot keep goodness utterly out of the soul, he uses itself as an instrument, to weaken and wound itself. For when a man is most endued and enriched with extraordinary gifts, holy graces, and spiritual strength; Satan seeks most busily to make him proud of them, and to puff him

up with an over-weening conceit of his own worth; that so himself may lose the comfort of them, his brethren the fruit of them, and God the glory of them. This spiritual Pride, is the same in our corruptions and sinful affections, that the Shirt is in our Clothing; that is to say, it sits the closest unto us, and is last put off: it is the white Devil (as a worthy Divine calls it.) That sin doth lie, and insensibly insinuate itself; and lurks amid our graces, and good actions, as a dead Fly in the Apothecaries Ointment. It is, as it were, Satan's last intrenchment, which he holds the longest, and with most resolute and desperate pertinancy, and is hardliest driven out; much spiritual wisdom, a great measure of humility, and the whole Armor of God is required to this combat. For he is so endless, and exercised in the point; that, if we be so humble, that he cannot make us proud of anything else, he will labor to make us proud even of our humility; and proud, that we are not proud of our gifts.

Except a Christian continually and carefully watch over his heart, and guard it with humility, and a lowly conceit of himself; this privy Pride may steal upon him, before he be aware.

And first, it may spring out of a consideration of the excellency of his estate, and the variety of his peculiar blessings, and special privileges, which the ungodly men neither can, nor do enjoy. For when he is once translated from Darkness to Light, from profaneness to sincerity, from Nature to Grace; out of the Dominion of Satan, into the Kingdom of Christ, by the great work of regeneration: he is presently made partaker of the Divine Nature, 2 Pet. 1:4. he is entitled, by the right of the Son of God, to an inheritance immortal, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the Heavens for him. While he is thus looking upon himself, possessed of this happiness, and planted in this glorious Paradise; Satan is secretly blowing the coals of his hidden corruption, to enkindle and raise

there-out an over-weening conceit of his own worth, and to puff him up with pride of his own gifts and graces; whence may ensue two foul and hateful inconveniences: For so he may grow by little and little to justify himself too much, whereby God's glory may be lessened and darkened; and to despise his Brethren, whereby his exercise of charity may be hindered.

This spiritual Pride may occasionally, and by accident, spring out of a godly and gracious care, to keep and preserve himself unspotted and undefiled in his happy and glorious state of grace, and regeneration. For while he is casting with himself, and concluding upon some sound and substantial course of holiness and obedience in the ways of godliness; Satan labors might and main, to draw him to a singularity of unwarrantable conceits and opinions; that by a tedious and unnecessary pursuit and possession thereof, he may keep him cold and uncomfortable in the practice of the chief and most material duties of Christianity; and to make him place the height of Religion, and heat of zeal, in continual conference and most peremptory defense of some groundless fancies; from whence Satan busily strives to toll him out, to separation. Which course of separating from, and condemning our Church, in the judgment of our sincerest Divines, is full of pride, contention, and confusion.

For first, certain it is, our Church, in that most exquisite and worthy confession of Faith contained in the Articles of Religion, doth hold and profess all substantial points of Divinity as soundly, as any Church in the World, none excepted, neither in this Age, nor in the primitive times of the Church.

Secondly, it hath communion with, and testimony of all other true Churches.

Thirdly, in it are to be had the means of salvation, in a powerful and plentiful manner: and in the bowels thereof, even they that go out of our Church, if they be truly converted, received that precious and blessed vigor, which is able to quicken them to eternal life.

Fourthly, a Church may be a true Church, though it should have spots, and blemishes; though there be some Swine and Dogs in it. In S. Paul's time, the Corinthians were called the Church of God, 1 Cor. 1:1,2. And yet, at that very time, were some in a Heresy, some in Incest, some that had not repented of their filthiness, 2 Cor. 12:20,21. The like may be said of the Churches of Asia, Rev. 2:3.

Fifthly, though outward prosperity, worldly honor, and plenty, be rather the lot of false, heretical, and Apostatical Churches, than an individual and necessary mark of the true Church; yet, if unto our unparalleled Peace, both for duration and entireness, we add our many and miraculous deliverances, strange defeatments, and preventions of Popish Plots; of their Bulls, Conspiracies, and hostile Invasions; of their Powder, Poisons, Daggers, Dags, and all manner of execrable attempts, machinations, and undermining's, which either Hell could devise, or that desperate and bloody Faction adventure upon, and manage: I say, if all these be put together, and well weighed; it is impossible, but that we should therein see, acknowledge, and adore the special finger of God's holy providence, upholding his own Ark amongst his own people; and pointing out to all the World, the truth of that Church, upon whose side, and for whose safety and glory he so mightily stands. This most extraordinary grace and favor of Divine assistance, having not in one thing, or two, showed itself, nor for some few days or years appeared; but in such sort, so long continued, our manifold sins and transgressions striving to the contrary: What doth it else import, or what can we less thereupon conclude, than that God would thereby

tell and teach the World, That the thing which he blesseth, defendeth, and keepeth so strangely, cannot but be of him, and his saving and sacred Truth?

Ill do they then, who transported with a pang of spiritual Pride, abandon, forsake, and separate from our Church, as though God's true worship and salvation were not there to be found. You see how Satan by spiritual Pride may carry and cast a man, from a settled and sound course of holiness and sincerity, upon the dangerous Rocks of singularity and separation. But understand me aright, what I mean by singularity. I mean that only which ariseth out of privy Pride, is upholden by self-will, and obstinateness, and many times ends in separation; and hath neither ground nor defense from sound judgment, spiritual wisdom, or true tenderness of Conscience, joined with humility, and willingness to be rightly informed. I mean not singularity, in respect of holiness and unspottedness of life, in respect of difference and distance from the sinful fashions of the times: For in this sense, every man that will save his soul, must be singular. Hence it is, that our Savior asketh his followers, in Math. 5. what singular thing they do, if they do but as the Publicans do? As if he should have said: You that will be Christians, must be of a more heavenly temper, and higher strain, than the most men, and the greater part of the World: You must be singular, and shine as Lights amid a naughty and crooked generation. Hence is it, that God's children ever were, and ever will be, Signs and Wonders, Miracles and Monsters, in the opinion and censure of most, amongst whom they live; gazing stocks, both by reproaches and afflictions, Heb. 10:33. Behold (saith Isaiah, Chap. 8:18.) I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are as signs and as wonders in Israel, by the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion. I am become (saith David) as it were a monster unto many, (or, to the great men of the World, as some render it) Psal. 71:7. And in another Psalm, Psal.

79:4. We are a reproach to our neighbors, even a scorn and a derision unto them that are round about us. But especially you may see in Wisd. 2. (though the Book be Apocryphal) what is the counsel and conceit of the wicked about the oddness and singularity of the Saints: Let us defraud the righteous (say the wicked) for he is not for our profit, and he is, contrary to our doings; he checketh us for offending against the Law, and blameth us as transgressors of Discipline; he maketh his boast to have the knowledge of God, and he calleth himself the son of the Lord: He is made to reprove our thoughts. It grieveth us also to look upon him: for his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion; he counteth us as bastards, and he withdraweth himself from our ways, as from filthiness; he commendeth greatly the latter end of the just, and boasteth that God is his father.

Thus, as God's children and godly men are indeed more excellent than their neighbors; and singular, in respect of their sanctification and sincerity: so they are scorned and reviled by the World, and the greater part of men, as odd fellows, and such as must have ways by themselves, and a trick above others. They are pointed at, as matter of scorn and contempt; they are set up, as marks of slander and oppression; and gazed upon, as strange creatures. We are made (saith Paul, 1 Cor. 4:9, meaning himself, and other of God's faithful servants) a gazing-stock unto the World, and to the Angels, and to men. And no marvel though it be so: For, besides that all profane and unregenerate men are naturally ineagered, and enraged with implacable malice and hatred against God's Children; they are, in all places, but few in number; which makes them more noted, and pointed at.

That they are but few; besides many certain demonstrative Reasons out of Scripture; it may thus plainly appear: as a good Divine tells us.

First, let there be taken from amongst us, all Papists, Atheists, and scornors of godliness, and Religion.

Secondly, let there be removed all notorious and infamous evil livers; as Swearers, Drunkards, Whoremongers, Usurers, Worldlings, Deceivers, proud persons, profaners of the Sabbath, Gamesters, and all the profane and ignorant multitude.

Thirdly, let all those be passed over, that are but only civil honest men, and meddle not with any profession, or practice of holiness; without which, no man must see God.

Fourthly, set aside all gross Hypocrites; who for advantage, or by-respects, are outwardly religious, but inwardly corrupt, hollow-hearted, and abominable.

Fifthly, let there be sorted out and rejected all carnal Protestants, formal Professors, backsliders, cold and unzealous Christians; who falsely think, that they may both enjoy the World, and a good Conscience too; live pleasantly on Earth, and yet save their souls at last; and, that it is not necessary to hold any such strict course of holiness, to come to Heaven. Let all these kind of men, I say, (all which in one measure, or other, are in the state of death, and under the power of Satan) be separated and shoaled out; and how many do you think will remain amongst us, sound, sincere, faithful, and zealous professors, and practicers of saving Truth, the power of Grace, and holy Obedience to all God's Commandments? For such only are God's servants, and in the state of Grace. Let a man come into any Town, Village, City, or Corporation, and let all such men as are before mentioned, be removed; and how many should he find of these last? They would certainly be thin scattered, and like the Grapes after the gathering of the Vintage, two or three in the top of the upmost boughs, and four or five in the high branches. Singularity

then of sanctification, is no fruit of Pride, but an inseparable mark and necessary state of true Christianity.

I come now to a third ground, whence Satan may raise a temptation to privy Pride: When a man is faithful, and diligent, in the discharge and executions of his civil calling; he may cast a conceit into his head, that such base, earthly, and worldly employment, and spending his time, is disgraceful and derogatory to the providence of God, and his Christian liberty; and, that it hinders him in his calling of Christianity, and duties of Religion. Whence may follow dangerous effects of spiritual Pride; quite leaving, or neglect, discontent or distaste of his civil calling. And so his heart and affections may be put quite out of order, and deceive themselves, in the very main point of making towards Heaven.

Satan, by his subtle malice, may work out matter and occasion of spiritual Pride, from the special providence of God, conducting the Christian the best and the nearest way to Heaven. To give example, in some particulars.

1. When God, out of his great wisdom and mercy, humbles him with afflictions and pricks, the swelling of his Pride; when he cuts and lops away his vanities, excesses, and superfluities, with some visitation, or other; and fills him with bitterness in this life, to the end he might long for the life to come: Why then, Satan labors mightily to kindle in his corrupt nature a flash of spiritual Pride, that he may drive him to grumbling and impatency, and so make God's fatherly corrections and chastisements fruitless and unprofitable to him; which in God's children should ever work amendment and comfort.

2. When the true Christian looks about him in the World, and sees the wicked spreading themselves like green Bay-trees, in worldly

plenty, and pleasures; Satan here thrusts in, and labors to cast into his mind a consideration of his own worth; and that, how in respect of the wicked, he far more, and rather, deserves the fruition and enjoyment of the creatures, and benefits and comforts of this life: because all wicked men are but usurpers, and intruders; himself being a true owner, by the right of Christ Jesus, Lord of the whole Earth: And that, whereas he stands for the glory, service, causes, and children of God; the wicked labor for nothing more, than the disgrace and ruin of goodness, and the upholding and enlargement of the Kingdom of Satan. From such conceits as these, mixed with spiritual, he easily draws him on to fretting and repining at the prosperity of the wicked men, and puts him into one of David's fits, and pangs, Psal. 73:12. Loe (saith he) these are the wicked, yet prosper they always, and increase in riches: Certainly, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. Or, at least, brings him to question with God; as it is, Jer. 12. O Lord, if I dispute with thee, thou art righteous; yet let me talk with thee, of thy Judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Why are all they in wealth, that rebelliously transgress? Thou hast planted them, and they have taken root; they grow, and bring forth fruit.

3. When the Christian doth presently feel, or after call to mind God's great mercies, gracious preventions, strange protection, wonderful deliverances, against expectation, and beyond hope, vouchsafed unto him in his direction and conduction towards the glory that is to be revealed; then doth Satan busily blow the Bellows of his corrupt nature with the poisonous breath of his hellish malice, that so he may puff him up with spiritual Pride, and exalt him out of measure.

4. When he beholds and observes some sudden destruction, or fearful judgment, to overtake and seize upon his enemies; Satan may secretly solicit him, out of a spice of spiritual Pride, to applaud and

please himself in the ruin and misery of his adversary: which, besides the tainture of impiety, tastes deeply also of inhumanity, and is quite cross and contrary to the practice and protestation of holy Job, Chap. 31. In that Chapter, he imprecates and invokes upon himself many fearful Curses, if he hath done so, or so. Let mine arm (saith he) fall from my shoulder-blade, and let mine arm be broken from the bones, if I have done such and such things. And after follows: If I rejoiced at his destruction that hated me; or was moved to joy, when evil came upon him; or if I have suffered my mouth to speak evil of him, or to utter Curses against him.

5. When the Christian is sadly and heavily musing upon his many troubles and distresses, which many times come thick and three-fold upon him, as fast and boisterously, as one wave overtakes another; so that he finds one vexation to be still a step unto another: Satan then he puts in, and seeing the season advantageous for his feats, and insinuations, works what he can to make him take on; and out of a proud conceit of better deserving's, to be weary of waiting the Lord's leisure; and out of the anguishes and agonies of his heart, to wish and desire death; especially to be rid and freed from those crosses and calamities, which unworthily haunt and persecute his innocence. Holy Job was strongly assailed with this temptation, Chap. 3. when he cried and said: Let the day perish wherein I was born; and the night, when it was said, there is a manchild conceived, &c. And so was the Prophet Jonah, Chap. 4. Therefore now (saith he) O Lord, take I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die, than to live.

6. Sometimes, when the Christian is crossed and disappointed in his expectation, God wisely and sweetly diverting, moderating, and disposing all things to his own glory, and to the true good of his children (though they do not presently see, and acknowledge it;)

Satan steps in, and by the secret and insensible poison of privy Pride, labors to suggest unto him, that he is prejudiced and disgraced; that so by his inward fretting, he may make it plainly appear, that he prefers his own particular credit, before the glory of God. Thus was Jonah tempted, in Chap. 4. Fearful destruction was denounced by him from God, against the Ninevites: They put on sackcloth, humbled themselves, and repented; God stays his hand, forbears his Judgments, which were proclaimed by Jonah: Therefore (saith the Text) that displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry; and he prayed unto the Lord, and said, &c.

When he begins to observe, and admire himself for some special acceptation in Christian company; for his abilities to pray, confer, discover temptations, and the Devils depths; to press a holy preciseness, and mortifying points, &c. Oh then, too often a wide gap is opened in his deceitful heart, for the Devils wild-fire of spiritual Pride. So that many times, a humble silent soul doth quickly out-strip such an one, doting dangerously upon his present perfections, in the substantial's of Christianity.

Thus, and many more ways, doth Satan labor by privy Pride, to weaken the power of Grace, and efficacy of the Word; to stain and disgrace the best Graces and godliest actions; to grieve the good Spirit, and cool their first Love, even in God's children; after that, by the help of God, they have struggled through other temptations, and obtained much spiritual peace and Christian perfection in the doctrine of salvation, and ways of godliness.

Before I pass from this point, I would propose some remedies against this swelling spiritual malady of privy Pride, and some sovereign considerations, to keep down the Christian heart, and to preserve it in the sweet and peaceful state of a gracious humility.

First then, let every Christian, when he first feels any over-weening conceit, or proud persuasion of his own worth, and spiritual graces, stealing into his heart; lift up the eyes of his mind, in a divine meditation, unto those brightest and purest eyes of God Almighty; which are ten thousand times brighter than the Sun, and purer than purity itself: so that they see the least and secretest infirmity in its true and native foulness; and before them, our best righteousness is as a menstruous clout. If he soundly and sincerely entertain this consideration, it will so humble him, and keep him under, that he will rather be affrighted and surprised with fear and terror, for his many frailties and infirmities, than be lifted up with a conceit of his graces, and spiritual endowments.

When he begins once proudly and self-conceitedly to gaze upon that little spark of holiness he finds in himself; let him presently turn back the edge and eye of this dangerous speculation, upon the infinite purity and endless perfection of God Almighty; before whom, the Cherubim's and Seraphim, the Crown of God's workmanship, and the glory of creatures, do hide and cover their faces, as not able to behold and endure the perfect brightness of his most pure and undefiled Majesty. In whose sight, the unstained splendor of the Heavens, and the glorious beauty of the Stars are unclean, and foul; darkness, and deformity. The Sun, the fairest Body in the World, made all of beauty and brightness; if it were put near unto that unaccessible and incomprehensible Light, which encompasseth the Lord of Heaven, it would vanish away as a darksome Moat, and Lump of Vanity. Nay, in respect of God, those divine and heavenly creatures, the blessed Angels, pure and immaterial spirits, are chargeable with folly and vanity. Behold, he found no steadfastness in his Saints; yea, the Heavens are not clear in his sight. How much more is man abominable and filthy, which drinketh iniquity like water? Job 15:15,16. What art thou then, wretched man, that carriest

about thee a Body of death? Shall not his excellency make thee afraid, and his fear fall upon thee? Behold (saith Job) he will give no light unto the Moon, and the Stars are unclean in his sight: How much more man, a Worm; even the son of a man, which is but a Worm? Behold, he found no steadfastness in his servants, and laid folly upon his Angels: How much more in them that dwell in Houses of Clay, whose foundation is in the Dust, which shall be destroyed before the Moth? These considerations are able to confound and cast down below the Earth, and Dust, the greatest admirer and applauder of himself, for his graces, good actions, and spiritual perfections.

When the Christian is tempted to a proud conceit of his spiritual sufficiency's; let him compare himself with other Saints of God: which (perhaps) having been less sinners than himself, in the time of their unregeneration; and having less means, parts, occasions, and encouragements to glorify God: yet excel him in zeal, sanctification, and the service of God. Paul, that great Doctor of the Gentiles, and glorious Angel upon Earth, for all his spiritual blessings, and incomparable graces, cries out, Rom. 7:24. Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? David, a man after God's own heart, and a special royal Mirror for variety of spiritual excellencies, is so far from being proud of his graces; that he is everywhere complaining of the burden of his sins, spiritual poverty and want, and the miseries of his soul: There is no health in my flesh, (saith he) because of thy displeasure; neither is there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin: for my wickedness's are gone over my head, and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear. For his reputation in the World, he tells us; that he was a Worm, and no man; a very scorn of men, and outcast of the people. In all times, the best Christians have ever been most sensible of the weight of their sins, and corruption of their nature; and from thence, entertained a lowly conceit of themselves. Where there is the greatest measure of

sanctification, there is ever the greatest humility. If those then that be indeed in the highest favor with God, lesser sinners than ourselves, and most sanctified, be of an humble and lowly mind, of a meek and quiet spirit, which is before God a thing much set by, 1 Pet. 3:4. let us take heed how we be proud of those graces; which, if we look for God's blessing upon them, and comfort from them, must bring forth in us humility and thankfulness.

Let him compare, and examine, and measure himself, his ways, and works, by the Law of God; and he shall there find much matter of humiliation, repentance, fear, and trembling, with continual supply in abundance ministered unto him: so that there shall be no room left for any proud and over-weening conceit of any good thing in him. That elect Vessel, and great Apostle, after he was regenerate, (for the unregenerate feel no such strife) found such a vast and wide distance between the Law, and his own affections, and best works; that for horror thereof, he cried out; Oh miserable man, that I am! What spiritual good then is there in any of us, miserable wretches, wherein we should glory? Let our best works be as glorious as we can imagine, let them be performed with never so great integrity and resolution, cover them with grace, derive them from the Holy-Ghost, dip and die them deep in the blood of Christ, put upon them all the rich attire, and Papal magnificence, with which the Church of Rome hath invested them; yet to the purest eyes of God, and in the clear Crystall of his undefiled Law, they appear to be foul, and spotted; impure, and like a menstruous clout. The measuring then of ourselves by the Law and Word of God, is a notable means to keep us in humility, and to make us work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Let him consider, what a foul and wretched, what a damned and an accursed creature he had been; had not his gracious God, out of the

unsearchable depth of his infinite goodness and mercy, singled him out to be his servant upon Earth, and a Saint in Heaven. It was only God's free mercy, that before all eternity, by the great Decree of his eternal election, marked him out for Heaven and endless joys, from amidst the huge mass of all mankind. It was the same, that after caused him to send his own and only Son, out of his own Bosom, and height of Majesty; that with his dearest and precious blood, he might redeem his Soul from the snares of Hell, into which he was fallen, by Adams fall: which in due time, by the inward, special, and effectual power of his unspotted Spirit, called him into his Kingdom of Grace, washed him, justified, and sanctified him, in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Else, otherwise, had not these everlasting and inconceivable Blessings been cast upon him, by God's free mere mercy, without all cause or motive from man, or any other created thing, out of his infinite Self; his case had been unspeakably woeful: For he should have lived in this Vale of Tears, without God, without Grace, without Comfort, without Conscience; in Sin, in Darkness, in Prophaneness, in all Spiritual Miseries: And after the closure and period of these few and evil days, he should have been endlessly divided and abandoned from the joys and comforts of God's presence, enchained without all redemption, to despair and horror, and the hateful fellowship of the Devil and his Angels: and (that which is the extremity and upshot of all hellish misery) he should have had the fierce and horrible wrath and vengeance of God poured in full measure upon his body and soul; which would have fed upon them, as fire doth upon Pitch and Brimstone, for ever and ever. Out of these considerations, me thinks a man should rather with humility and thankfulness admire and magnify the mercies of God, that he is not already a Fire-brand in Hell; than any ways be puffed up with any worthiness in himself, or dote upon his own nothingness.

When a Christian is tempted to spiritual Pride; let him deeply and thoroughly weigh with himself, what fearful inconveniences and discomforts will ensue, if he give way to such temptations: For so, many follow, in the course of God's just judgment, upon spiritual Vanity, and Pride; dullness, and deadness of heart; a restraint of the influence of the Spirit; a diminution and lessening, or a slumber and cessation of the operations of grace, a cooling of zeal, and falling from the first Love. Or, when he sees us so presumptuously to trust to our strength, and stay ourselves with our own staff; he may quite give us over, in some great temptation, to some gross sin; so that we may take the foil in the Conflict. And then, if we once be over-taken with the old sweet sin of our unregeneration, or be ensnared with some new notorious transgression; we must of necessity, to our great discomfort, enter again the agonies of Soul, anguish of Conscience, and horror of Hell; we must enter combat again with all the powers of Darkness; we must have our regeneration, regenerated; our new-birth, new-borne; and the precious blood of the Son of God, as it were, shed for us again. We turn thereby God's favorable countenance from us, and the hearts and affections of true Christians: we put again a sting into our own Consciences, and weapons into the hands of Satan, to vex, wound, and torment us: we bar and bereave ourselves of God's gracious protection, of the guard of Angels, of peace of Conscience, of joy in the Holy-Ghost, of boldness in our ways, of reconciliation in the creatures, and of all the comforts of godliness. As a man tenders the preservation of his Soul, from all these spiritual miseries; let him take heed of entertaining a proud and over-weening conceit of his own graces, gifts, or good actions.

Let him consider, that the more spiritual gifts and graces he hath received from the free mercy of God, the more will be required at his hands. Me thinks, this should cool and allay any swelling conceit, or

proud persuasion, that may arise in the heart; and not suffer a man to play with them, and dote upon them, or give him any leisure, with an over-weening and self-conceited flattery, to gaze upon them, or to applaud and admire them in himself, as though they were his own; but rather, with all vigilancy and solicitousness, with all care and good Conscience, to occupy and employ them for his Masters greatest advantage.

There is no gift or good thing in any man, either of Nature or Grace, of body or mind, of wealth or honor, of reputation or authority in the World; but he must give shortly a strict and exact account of the usage and employment of it, before the impartial and uncorrupted Tribunal of Heaven: And the more excellent his gifts and endowments have been in any kind, he shall in proportion be answerable, and countable for the more. If the Lord hath enlightened, heated, and inspired any one with much saving knowledge, with a great measure of zeal, with a high Christian courage, and resolution; he looks and expects for great gain of glory unto himself, many spoils and conquests over his enemies, a blazing and exemplary brightness, in holiness of life; much beauty and luster to the Church, much good and comfort unto Christians: For much is required of them, to whom much is committed.

Let a man then not labor to make himself glorious, by those graces which are none of his own; but how, by glorifying God with them, in humility, faithfulness, and sincerity, and by improving and making the best of them, for the Owners advantage, he may make a comfortable account at that great Day.

Thus far I have proposed unto you some Motives, to quicken and stir you up to a conscionable and constant hearing and understanding of the holy Word of God; and acquainted you with many sleights, lets,

and temptations, which Satan usually casts in our way, to hinder us therein.

Now, in a third place, I will lay down unto you certain rules, directions, and instructions, for your right, holy, and conscionable carriage, behavior, and importment, in and about the hearing of God's Word.

That the holy Word of God may be unto you the Word of Grace, the savor of Life unto Life, of power unto sanctification and salvation; you must look carefully and conscionably unto your preparation, before you come; unto your carriage, while you are there; and unto your behavior, afterward.

First, for Preparation.

I am persuaded, the want and neglect of a due and profitable preparation, is the cause that thousands receive no benefit or blessing by the Word of Life; but that the Sermons they hear, are registered, as in a Table of Remembrance, before God, as so many witnesses against them, for their more fearful confusion and greater condemnation at the Day of Accounts.

1. For hence it is, that to many it is the savor of death unto death; because, before they come, they do not address and prepare themselves for so glorious a Presence, and royal Embassy from the King of Heaven: though they hear it with their outward ears, yet it hardens their hearts, makes them inwardly more peevish, grumbling, stubborn, rebellious, and refractory to the power thereof, and prepares and ripens them for more heavy vengeance. It is of itself the Word of Grace, Salvation, and Life; a blessed preservative against Sin and Death, Damnation and Hell: but by accident, if men do not reverence it, tremble at it, and submit themselves to the power of it,

it is a strong Hammer, and Iron Scepter, to harden their hearts more and more, like an Anvil, or Adamant; and at length, to break them in pieces like a Potters Vessel. Though in itself, it be a saving and wholesome Medicine; yet men of a rebellious and stubborn humor and temper, turn it into Poison.

2. To some, this holy Word, by reason of unpreparedness, is but as the water spilled upon the ground, and the breath of the Minister scattered in the Air: If you call them to an account, after Sermon, how they have profited; they are as wordless, and witless, and indeed as graceless in repetition, as if they had been deaf, asleep, in a trance, or stark dead all the while.

3. Others, by their rash and profane rushing into the House of God, without all premeditation, reverence, or regard of that holy business they go about; become hearers only, of form and custom, for fashion and company. It may be, they may hear, attend, and understand what is delivered; but it breeds no more reverence, impression, or spiritual reformation, than an ordinary Tale, or human discourse: As though that holy toil, and sacred breath, were spent only to entertain the Time, and busy men's ears for an Houre; and, not as Christ tells Paul, To open their eyes, that they might turn from Darkness unto Light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

4. Upon some, the Judgment and Curse of coming without Conscience, and due preparation, doth so far prevail, and hath such power, that they become scorners and railers against the Minister, or his Doctrine, or both; at every Sermon they catch something, that they may cavil at, deprave, and calumniate: And so, wickedly and wretchedly oppose their discourse, wit, and spirit of contradiction against the face of Heaven, and heart of Divine Truth. They wrangle and repine (in deed and truth, whatsoever their pretenses or

protestations may be to the contrary) against that Great Majesty, whose Message it is; against that Holy Spirit, which should sanctify them; and the Word of Grace, which should save them.

5. Others there be, even of good hearts and affections, Professors, and in some good measure practicers of the power of godliness; yet because they are careless and neglective of this needful Christian duty of preparation, are possessed with much deadness of heart, and dullness of spirit, at those holy Exercises. Their zeal, and fervency, which should be quickened and inflamed at every Sermon, is dulled and benumbed with senselessness and satiety: They do not so tremble, or are cast down with Divine Commination's and denouncements of God's Judgments against sin, or so refreshed with the gracious promises of Life, and Salvation, as they ought to be: They do not enjoy and reap the thousandth part of that delight, comfort, and benefit as they well might, by the Ministry of the Word, because their hearts are not purged and prepared: They do not with that cheerfulness receive, with that sweetness taste and relish, with that life and vigor digest the Food of Life: The eye of their mind, for want of premeditation, doth not so clearly see and discern the infinite beauty of that sacred Majesty represented unto them, or that glorious grace shining unto them, in the face of Christ Jesus: Their hand of Faith doth not with that feeling, and fastness, lay hold upon and clasp about, the rich Treasures revealed in the Gospel. In a word, they bereave themselves of much good, blessing, comfort, and growth in grace, which they might and ought to have, by hearing of the Word, for want of due preparing, and disposing the heart thereto.

This duty of Preparation then, though that it be not much thought upon, or ordinarily practiced; yet it is of great necessity and special use for all those, which look for benefit or blessing by the preaching of the Word.

There is no great Affaire, or of weight and consequence, either in Nature or Art, in necessary businesses and civil Negotiations, or in matters of Complement, Ceremony, and Interview; but there is required some bethinking preparation and pre-dispositions, for the more happy and successful accomplishment, execution, and performance: how much more in the affairs of God, matters of Heaven, businesses of eternity, and salvation of men's souls?

The Ground must be manured and prepared for the Seed, if we look it should fructify and prosper: how much more should our dull and dead hearts be stirred up, and furrowed, as it were, with humiliation, reverence, and repentance; that by the grace of God, and the sanctifying power of the Spirit, it may lodge and take deep root in them, and spring up to eternal life?

The Body must be fitted with a Preparative, and the humors, as it were, gathered unto a head, if we desire the Physic should work forcibly and kindly, and rid us of their noxiousness, and superfluity: how much more ought our Souls, with an impartial and narrow inquisition, to be searched and laid open, before they receive the Water of Life, and spiritual Manna; that so they may more seasonably and soundly be washed and purged from corruptions and imperfections, preserved in spiritual health, and prepared for eternal life?

The Ground must be laid, and some imperfect Draughts, Shadows, and resemblances premised, before a Picture can be done to the Life, or a full proportion and lively representation portrayed or presented to the eye; how much more ought the ground of our hearts to be fitted and prepared, that by the preaching of the Word, the Image of Christ Jesus may with a lively and fresh impression be stamped upon them?

Were a man the next day to go about a business that mainly concerned either his life, or livelihood; the state of his Lands, or danger of his life: Would not his mind be troubled beforehand? Would it not break his sleep the night before? Would he not be musing, and plotting, by what means he might work out his deliverance, and safety? What behavior and carriage might be fittest, to win favor and grace in so weighty an affair? How much more ought we, before we intrude into the House of God, where matters of our greatest and highest interest, are proposed, handled, and debated by the Minister of the Word; even life eternal, and everlasting estate in another World? I say, how ought we to think with ourselves, how we may make our souls fittest to understand and accept the Covenant of Grace, to receive the Seal of the Spirit, and to get assurance of that glorious and royal Inheritance in the Heavens?

Nay, yet further, even in matters of complement and interview, there is wont to be preparation, especially if the presence and persons were the greater.

Joseph, when he was sent for to go before King Pharaoh, he shaved his head, and changed his raiment, because he was to appear before so high and royal a presence.

Queen Hester durst not press into the presence of King Ahasuerus, before she had prepared herself.

How much more ought we to fit and prepare ourselves, base and miserable wretches, Worms and no men, as we are, with fear and trembling, when we come into the House and presence of the mighty Lord of Heaven and Earth; before whom, the Seraphim hide their faces, the Nations are as a drop of a Bucket, and the inhabitants of the Earth as Grass-hoppers: especially, since there he offers and tenders unto us enlargement from the slavery of sin, purgation from

our pollutions, and a Crown of life, upon that condition, that we repent, forsake all our sins, and resign up ourselves in sincere and humble obedience unto all his Commandments?

Inducements we have, and Motives many, both from Precept, and Practice, in the Book of God, for the performance of this Christian duty of Preparation.

Take heed to thy foot (saith the Preacher) when thou enterest into the House of God, and be more near to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they know not that they do evil.

Before thou set foot into the Church, to hear the Word of God, be sure to settle thy affections, that they be sober, moderate, and sanctified, fit to entertain the Word of life, and salvation; let thy heart be seasoned with, first, Softness; secondly, Humility; thirdly, Honesty; fourthly, Faith; fifthly, Teachableness.

First, if thou do not preserve thy heart tender, soft, and flexible, the power of the Word will not make any such print or deep impression upon it; all holy admonitions, reproofs, and instructions, will be unto thee as Arrows shot against a Stone wall.

Secondly, we must bring with us a humble heart, to the hearing of the Word; for, the Lord resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Them that be meek, will he guide in judgment, and teach the humble his way. The proud heart is so swelled with the wind of vanity and vain-glory, of self-love, and over-weening conceit, that there is left no room in it for the precious Treasure of saving grace. If it either be puffed up with a conceit of knowledge, or a persuasion of holiness enough, or a boisterous peremptiousness against the power of the Word; the Water of Life will be unto it, but as Water poured upon a drowned man; or as a Seal thrust upon Water, which

will receive no impression. A lowly heart, broken and bruised with Conscience of sin, is a fit Seat for the mighty Lord and his saving graces, Isa. 57:15.

Thirdly, we must come with a good and honest heart; which hateth all corruptions, both in itself, and others; which hath no delight in any sinful pleasures, or wicked vanities; which hath no manner of purpose to live and continue in any one sin whatsoever; but is ready and resolved, though it be much cumbered with its own corruptions, the Worlds enticements, and Satan's craftiness; yet to serve and please God, in all the ways of his Commandments, and that sincerely and continually. All profitable and fruitful hearers have such good and honest hearts, and are resembled by the good ground, Luke 8:15. But that is a wicked and sinful heart, and not fit to be wrought upon by the Ministry of the Word, which purposeth and resolveth to cherish and maintain but any one sin whatsoever.

Fourthly, our hearts must be seasoned with Faith; otherwise, it will not sink and soak into them with power and profit. The old Jews heard the Word, but it profited them not, because it was not mingled with faith in those that heard it, Heb. 4:2. The fearful threatening's and thunderbolts of the Law, by Faith receive an edge to wound, and pierce and strike through our souls, with amazements and trembling. And Faith it is, that animates and inspires the promises of the Gospel with such a sovereign sweetness, and powerful comfort; that they are able, not only to raise and revive us from the depth and extremity of remorse, and fear; but also to put us into a Paradise of spiritual pleasures, and possession of Heaven, as it were already. But if the Word light upon a faithless heart, it dies, it does no good.

Fifthly, we must bring with us into the Lord's Sanctuary, teachable and hearing hearts, that will willingly and readily open themselves,

to receive the Lord of glory, with whatsoever he shall reveal unto us out of his holy Word. Sacrifice and burnt offerings (saith David) thou wouldest not, but mine ears hast thou prepared. As if he should have said: Thou hast bored new ears in my heart, that I can now reverently attend unto, rightly conceive, and with a holy greediness devour the mystery of grace.

With such hearts as these, must we come to the hearing of the Word, if we look that it should be unto us a Word of power, salvation, and life; and not to be of the number of those, that offer the sacrifice of fools, and yet know not that they do evil.

Many there are certainly, which offer these foolish sacrifices; I mean, hearers, without care and conscience: Who, if they come into the House of God, and vouchsafe their presence in the place, and lend their ears to the Preacher for the time; they think themselves presently jolly fellows, for matters of Religion; and that they are sanctified, as it were, by the Work wrought, and their only presence in that holy place: when as yet the Word hath had no more power, nor wrought more alteration upon them, than upon the Seats where they sat.

And that which makes these fools much more miserable, and foolish, is this; They know not that they do evil: as it is in the Text. They think their case good enough, that they are in the right course of Christianity; and that no more is required, for matters of Heaven: when as, in respect of saving grace, they are wretched, miserable, and poor; and blind, and naked.

Besides this place of the Preacher, the Evangelist S. Luke, Chap. 8:18. bids us, take heed how we hear. And good reason, in a matter of such great weight and consequence. For there is not a Sermon we hear, but we must be countable for it at the Day of our Visitation. God is

countable unto us for every hair of our head; is it not reason, we should be countable to him for those precious Lessons he reacheth unto us by the Ministry of the Word? Assuredly, there is not a Sermon, which we have heard fruitlessly, and without profit, but it will be a shrewd and sore witness against us at that Day.

Besides these Precepts, we find much practice in the Book of God, of this holy duty of Preparation, when any sacred business was to be undertaken.

Moses could not approach so glorious and sacred a Presence, or tread upon the ground, made holy by so great a Majesty as the Lord of Heaven and Earth, before he had put off his shoes. Neither ought we to presume or press into his Sanctuary, where he hath promised his Presence in a solemn, special, and powerful manner, and is ready to shower down his blessings of salvation into all truly humble and prepared hearts; before we have shaken off and cast from us all earthly incumbrances, and secret corruptions, all dullness and deadness of heart, which makes us unworthy and undisposed to stand upon so holy ground, and utterly incapable of all that heavenly Wisdom, and holy instructions unto eternal life, that are there taught, and tendered unto us; nay, turn the blessings of the Ministry into curses and condemnation unto us.

When Joshua was to make a strong and lasting impression in the hearts of the Israelites (whom after the death of Moses, he conducted to the promised Land) of the power and providence of God for his people, by that miraculous parting of the Waters of Jordan, for the transportation of the Ark; he commanded the people to sanctify themselves, to prepare, and compose their hearts; to admire and reverence with greater intention and amazement, that omnipotent Majesty that wrought such wonders for his chosen: For hearts

emptied of worldly thoughts, and sanctified by heavenly meditation, are fit subjects for works of Heaven, and divine impressions. How much more ought we to prepare our souls, before we come into the Sanctuary of the Lord; since there, they are either to be hardened for the Scepter of destruction, and made ready for the flames of Hell, if we do not prepare ourselves, hearken, and obey: or else, to be softened and sanctified with saving grace, and fitted for a Crown of Glory; if with reverence, humility, and obedience, we submit ourselves to the power of the Word? There, if we be unconverted, the great and miraculous work of the new-birth is to be wrought upon them; if we be new-borne, they are to be fed with the spiritual Manna, unto everlasting life.

The same Joshua, when the excommunicate and execrable thing was to be found out, and put from amongst them; which was the cause, they could not stand against their enemies: he commanded them to sanctify themselves, that the Lord might prosper and pour his blessings upon that necessary and weighty search and inquisition. How much more ought we to prepare ourselves, before we step into the House of God; since there is to be discovered and cast out those hateful sins that fearfully incense God's wrath against us, and make us weak in the Lord's battles, and not able to stand against our spiritual enemies, the corruptions of our own flesh, the enticements of the World, and temptations of Satan?

Before the sacrifice, and anointing of David King of Israel, Jesse and his sons were sanctified: How much more ought we to be prepared, before we come before the Lord's Prophets, and Ambassadors; that there we may be anointed Kings and Priests unto our God?

Josiah, before the eating of the Paschal Lamb, did bid the people, not only sanctify themselves, but also prepare their brethren: How much

more ought we, when we come to the Ministry of the Word, to seed by faith upon that true Bread from Heaven, which giveth life unto the World; which if we once soundly taste with believing hearts, we shall not hunger, we shall never thirst?

But the most famous and fittest place for my purpose, and preparation in that particular holy business of hearing the Word, is that in Exod. 19:10. The people were sanctified, and washed their clothes, and prepared themselves for two days, and the third day they were ready to attend what the Lord would say unto them. As in that extraordinary promulgation of the Law, the people were to be prepared extraordinarily; so, from proportion of that practice, and precedency, ordinary preparation is necessary for the ordinary preaching of the Word, if we look that it should powerfully and profitably work upon our Consciences and affections. Their washing of their bodies, and clothes, their abstinence from their wives, and such solemn and ceremonious purifications, were typical significations and representations unto us, that we should wean our hearts from earthly thoughts, purge them from secret corruptions, and bring them fair and free, from sinful spot and worldly entanglement, when we come to hear the Lord speak unto us by his Ministers.

Holy men of God were wont, addressing themselves to prayer, to have their ejaculations, lifting up of their hearts, certain short prayers, before they entered into that sacred and solemn action.

Besides Precept and Practice in the Book of God, for Preparation; the profit is great, the benefits and blessings that redound unto us, and fall upon us by it, are excellent and precious. Look in the latter end of the eleventh Chapter of Job.

If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him.

If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let no wickedness dwell in thy Tabernacle.

Then truly shalt thou lift up thy face without spot, and shalt be stable, and shalt not fear, &c.

Preparation of the heart, is here the foundation and first step unto many glorious blessings. The heart must be first prepared, before other holy duties can be fitly performed, or God's blessings expected.

In the first place; first, prepare thine heart; secondly, then pour it out in prayer, before the Throne of Grace; thirdly, then purge it from corruption; banish far, and bar out all iniquity; fourthly, next, be sure to reform, instruct, and pray with thy family, or those that are about thee: Let no wickedness, ignorance, profaneness, swearing, swaggering, drunkenness, or the like, dwell in thy Tabernacle, harbor in thine house, or roust near thee.

And then open thy heart, and hands; for the Windows of Heaven shall be set wide open, that all manner of spiritual comforts, all the blessings of peace and happiness, may in abundance be showered down upon thee; the rich Treasury of everlasting Glory and Immortality shall be unlocked unto thee, and thou shalt row and tumble thyself forever after, amid mountains of heavenly pearls, and golden pleasures; through Rivers, nay Seas of endless joys, that no heart can comprehend, but that which is weaned from all worldly pleasures, and set apart and sanctified for holy services and businesses of Heaven.

[Then truly shalt thou lift up thy face without spot.] Though thou hast lain among the Pots, yet thou shalt be now as the wings of a Dove, that is covered with Silver, and whose feathers are like yellow Gold. Though thou be like the Kedarims, which dwell in Tents, the

black-Moors; that is, by reason of thy sin, subject to the condemnation of God, and deprived of his glory: yet shalt thou be in Christ, goodly and glorious, as those that dwell in exceeding glory, under the Curtains of Solomon. Though thou be black with the remnants of original corruption, and present infirmities; though the Sun have looked upon thee, and parched thee with the scorching heat of sore affliction, and chastisements: yet shalt thou now shine like the Sun in his strength, with the royal Robe of Christ's righteousness, with fresh comfort, and lasting cheerfulness.

[Thou shalt be stable, and shalt not fear.] Though the wicked tremble many times at their own shadows, and the sound of a Leafe shaken doth chase them, and strike a faintness into their hearts, and a trembling into their loins; yet thou shalt never be afraid of any evil tidings, whether they be forged by the spiteful and empoisoned tongues of profane men, to defame and disgrace thee, or fetched out of the bottom of Hell, by Satan's malice, to terrify thee; though the messengers of miseries and mischiefs come thick and three-fold upon thee, as they did upon Job; though the Earth be moved, and the mountains fall into the midst of the Sea; nay, though the whole World be on flames about thine ears, and the Heavens be rolled together like a Scroll: yet shalt thou be stable, and shalt not fear, because thy heart is fixed, and believeth in the Lord.

[Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that are past.] Thy happiness and comfort shall be so entire and unmixed, so absolute and overflowing, that the very remembrance of former miseries and terrors shall be drowned and devoured in the excess and excellency of that; even as the travels of a woman, in her joys for a new-borne son: Or, if it be, that thy former discomforts sometimes steal into thy mind, they shall not be able to rest or remain there, by

reason of the predominancy of spiritual pleasures; but glide away as swiftly, as the head-long stream of the most hasty Torrent.

[Thine age also shall appear more clear than the Noone-day; thou shalt shine, and be as the Morning.] The Morning is the very Crown of Time, and the beauty of the Day; the Poets call it, the Rosie-fingered Morning. When they labor to describe corporal Beauty to the life, and set it out in the best perfection and freshest colors that the utmost power and highest strain of wit and art can possibly devise; they take their Metaphors and amplifications from the ruddiness and brightness of the Morning: And yet thou shalt be as fair as the Morning, with all Divine Graces, spiritual brightness, and beauty of thy Soul; nay, a Soul set thick with spiritual Graces, is far more fair than the Firmament, with all those Eyes of Gold, and fairest Lamps, that shine from it. Neither shalt thou be only as the Morning, but as the Morning Sun; thou shalt rise higher and higher in degrees of holiness, and strength of Grace, until thou comest to the highest point of perfection in this Heaven upon Earth, the Kingdom of Grace. And after thou hast finished thy course, and left behind thee the comfortable heat of thy gracious zeal, much Light from thy good example, and the sweet influence of thy holy life; upon thy death-bed, thou shalt set with the sweetest and brightest beams of all heavenly comfort, into the immeasurable Ocean of endless joys.

[Thou shalt be bold, because there is hope; and thou shalt dignity Pits, and shalt lie down safely.] Thou shalt be assured of Heaven, and a Crown of Glory hereafter, that thou shalt walk through this Valley of Misery like a Lyon; nor Devil, nor man, nor beast, nor any creature, shall affright or amaze thee. Cast thine eyes, supernaturally enabled, and enlarged with the Light of Faith, from East to West, into the bottom of Hell, and glory of Heaven; and thou shalt clearly see, that all is thine, by the purchase, right, and conquest of the Son

of God: The stones in the street shall be at league with thee, the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee: The creatures shall be all sworn to thy safety; the purest spirits, the ministers of God, shall be thy Guardians; Saints and Angels are already in thy sight; Immortality hath lengthened thy days, and the glory of God is before thee in a Glass.

[When thou doest take thy rest, none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee.] When the darkness of the Night encompasseth thee, thou shalt not be affrighted with terrors and apparitions; when blackness and silence, the habitation of fears and astonishment, shall pitch round about thee, thou shalt be lightsome with inward comfort; when all thy Senses, the scouts and watch-men for discovering dangers, and preserving thy safety, shall be locked up; his providence, that neither slumbers nor sleeps, shall tenderly and carefully watch over thee; Whether thou die or live, whether thou sleep or wake, thou art the Lord's: And therefore, when thou sleepest, thou shalt not be afraid; and when thou sleepest, thy sleep shall be sweet: Thou shalt not fear for any sudden fear, neither for the destruction of the wicked, when it cometh; for the Lord shall be for thy assurance, and shall keep thy foot from being caught.

[Yea, many shall make suit unto thee.] Thou shalt be so encompassed with the blessings of God, so protected from above, so high in God's favor, that many will come for shadow and shelter unto thee; they will look for relief and comfort under the shadow of thy wings, thy power and authority shall be a refuge and repose for oppressed and disgraced innocence.

All these blessings, and a thousand more, are built upon a through preparation of the heart, as upon the first foundation stone:

Preparation is the very first step to all these degrees, and height of happiness.

But on the contrary part, if a man neglect preparing his heart, praying unto God, forsaking his sins, reforming his family; let him look for nothing but Curses and Plagues.

[But the eyes of the wicked (saith Job) shall fail, and their refuge shall perish, and their hope shall be sorrow of mind.] They think, their formal and customary service of God will serve the turn; and thereupon, with great greediness and confidence, expect and look for the salvation of their souls after this life: but they shall wail, and gaze, until their eyes sink into their holes, and yet shall never be able to taste of true comfort: They may cry until their tongues cleave to the roof of their mouth, with the foolish Virgins; Lord, Lord, open unto us, Math. 25. but the Gate of everlasting happiness shall forever be shut against them: They may struggle and strive, by the strength of their good meanings, and formal Christianity, to enter in at the strait Gate, but shall never be able.

[Their refuge shall perish.] They have stayed themselves upon broken staves of Reed, and now they will run into their hands and hearts too, unto their vexation and horror.

[And their hope shall be sorrow of mind.] Their end shall be despair, and horrible confusion.

I have stayed long upon the motives and inducements to preparation, before we come to the hearing of the Word, or undergo any sacred business; and upon the necessity, blessings, and benefits of so holy a duty. The reason is, I would gladly stir you up, and myself too, to a through and constant practice and performance of it: and, because the neglect and omission of it, is the cause that the Ministry of the

Word is not only fruitless, and in vain, unto thousands; but (which is a fearful thing) the savor of death unto death unto them.

I come now to the special points considerable in preparation, before we present ourselves in this place to the hearing of the Word.

This preparation is a holy action, or exercise, which by examination of our Consciences, purgation of our hearts, prayer unto God, and private reading the Scriptures, maketh our souls fit Vessels to receive and entertain the spiritual Treasures of Grace; and food of eternal Life, offered and tendered unto us by the Ministry of the Word; that so they may be the more effectually and fruitfully wrought upon, and happily subdued to the power and practice thereof.

In this preparation, I consider and require especially these four things: first, Examination of the Conscience; secondly, Purgation of the heart; thirdly, Prayer unto God; fourthly, Readiness of heart, to receive every truth.

First, for Examination of the Conscience.

Examination is a duty practicable by all true Christians, at many times, and upon sundry occasions.

It is either more extraordinary; and that is, either in the time of solemn Fast, and general humiliation, for some public Plague and calamity that lies upon the State or Church. We are then seriously to search and ransack thoroughly our Consciences, that we may throw that or those sins out of our affections, practice, and allowance, which have their part in pulling down those public Plagues upon us.

Or, secondly, when our family is singled out, and visited with some special and extraordinary scourge, and judgment: and then must we

make an impartial inquisition into our hearts; lest we be the Achan's, which by our secret sins provoke God's cause-full wrath.

Or, when ourselves in a more private and particular manner, are afflicted with some special vexation; as, by some malady and misery in our bodies, with some terrors and fears in our minds, or with some slanders, disgraces, and imputations upon our good names: when God's hand is upon us any of these ways, we are presently to conceive, that the sins of our souls are the true causes of all the miseries and crosses which befall us any manner of ways; and therefore we are narrowly and exactly to inquire into ourselves, and to cast out our secret beloved sins, those lurking rebels, the breeders of all our woe.

Besides, examination of our hearts in these or the like cases; there is also a more ordinary and usual examination necessary, and required of us, and that especially every day; that we may make the Score of our sins less, and our account shorter, against the Day of our Visitation; that we may more entirely and comfortably preserve and enjoy God's favor and protection, inward peace of Conscience, spiritual joy, and Christian cheerfulness in all our affairs and passages.

2. Before we come to receive, and be partakers of the holy Sacrament of the sacred body and blood of Christ; lest by neglect and omission of this duty, we become unworthy receivers, and so eat and drink our own judgment, and damnation, nay, be guilty of the innocent and precious blood of Christ Jesus; which one day will be a heavy and unsupportable burden to our Consciences. To be guilty of the sinful blood of profane men, is able to make the proudest heart and highest stomach to tremble and quake like an Aspen leaf, and to strike through his soul; with restless horror, and ghastly sights. Who is able

then to bear the guilt of guiltless blood? Abel's innocent blood cried for and pulled down strange and desperate vengeance upon cruel Cain. How loud then will be the cry of the blood of the innocent Lamb of God? How will it ring in the ears of God the Father? How fearfully will it fill Heaven and Earth, until it hath brought down Plagues and Curses upon those woeful Souls, who irreverently and unpreparedly profane so high and holy a mystery?

A third ordinary examination, is before we press into the House of God, and present ourselves before his Ministers and Messengers, to be instructed in his will from Heaven, out of his holy Word; lest this blessed Ordinance should be accursed unto us. You may see in the Prophet Ezech. 14:7,8. how the Lord threatens that person that comes to his Ministers to inquire of them, or to be informed by them, and yet separates himself from the Lord, and sets up any Idol in his heart, and stumbling-block of his iniquity, before his face; that the Lord will set his face against him, and make him a sign and a Proverb, and cut him off from the midst of his people. Whence we may well infer, that it will be very dangerous for any to come to the hearing of the Word, without examination of his heart, whether there be any such stumbling-block of iniquity in it, or no.

2. Because that examination of the heart, to find out our corruptions, tends especially to the cleansing of it; therefore the second duty before the hearing of the Word, is the purgation or cleansing of the heart, first, from sin; which the Scripture beats much upon, Jam. 1:21. Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, &c. It is not merely lay apart, but put away quite and clean all filthiness: and this is a fit preparative for the hearing of the Word, as appears also by that parallel place, 1 Pet. 3:1,2. Wherefore putting away all malice, all guile and hypocrisy, and envy, and evil speaking's, as new-born

babes desire the sincere Milk of the Word. And there is the same reason for any other sin to be put away, that there is for these mentioned. As it is with the body, when the stomach is foul, and clogged with bad humors, we should first purge it, before we feed it; for otherwise, whatsoever we eat, doth but nourish and increase the corrupt humors of the body: So it is with the soul, when it is stuffed or clogged with sin; whatsoever is heard in the Ministry of the Word, shall be perverted and abused by it, and wrested to the destruction of it.

It is no wonder therefore, that those that live in dissolute or scandalous courses, those that are drunk on the evening before the Lord's Day, or spend it in gaming, or company keeping, or have been acting of some soul sin, and then repair unto the Word; it is no wonder, I say, that such go away never a whit the better, but rather worse than they came. Did you ever know any Salve so sovereign, that would cure a wound that had a splint or an arrow-head remaining in it? Surely, every known sin unrepented of, hinders the saving operation of the Word in any man's heart; yea, it will make the Word the savor of death unto a man. See to this purpose, Jer. 7:9,10.

Secondly, the heart must also be purged from all worldly cares and thoughts, which may divide or draw away the heart: Math. 13:22. The cares of the World do choke the Seed of the Word: Luke 21:34. The cares of this life do surfeit the heart. Now, as it is with a man in a surfeit, he is not fit to eat, neither can he digest any wholesome food: so, when as the heart is surfeited with worldly cares, it is unfit for any spiritual food. You know how it was with Martha, Luke 10:41. Jesus said unto Martha; Thou art troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary: Martha had a clutter of many worldly matters,

that made a great noise in her head, and hindered better matters, that she cared not for hearing.

How then shall they profit by the Word, that do jump out of their worldly business, and from busying their heads about their callings, into the House of God, to hear and to perform the Exercises of Religion? Truly, though they be never so diligent in hearing, yet their hearts will go after their covetousness, Ezech. 33:31.

3. A third duty before the hearing of the Word, is Prayer; no good thing can be expected from God, as a blessing, if it be not sought by prayer, Deut. 4:7. and we find it laid down as a condition required, Prov. 2:1,2,3, &c. My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thy heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find out the knowledge of God. The reason is, Vers. 6. For the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. Because the Lord gives knowledge, therefore you must cry for it unto him. What is the reason that you do pray for your daily Bread, and a blessing upon it? Why, Deut. 8:3. Man lives not by Bread only, &c? If this be so, much more ought you to pray for a blessing upon your spiritual food.

Now for the particulars: First, you ought to pray for the Teachers, That they may so speak, as they ought to speak, Col. 4:3,4. so they are to pray for the power and peace of the Ministry, 2 Thess. 3:1,2. Secondly, you must pray for your selves, that through God's assistance you may hear profitably, and be blessed in the hearing: John. 3:27. No man can receive anything, except that it be given him from above. Therefore David prayed, Psal. 119:18. Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonderful things contained in thy Word.

Isaiah 48:17. God saith, I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit: Therefore no profiting by the Word, without seeking unto the Lord for it.

Now the profaneness of people in this case, is the general cause that our Ministry doth no more good: Few pray at all before they come to Church, either for the Minister, or for themselves; nay, few, even when they are in the Church, have any heart to join with the Preacher in the prayer that he makes before the Sermon: But the complaint of the Prophet may be taken up in this case, Isa. 64:7. There is none that calleth on thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.

4. You must be sure to go with an open heart, ready to receive every truth that God shall teach you in this Ordinance. Act. 17:11. it is said of those noble Bereans, that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, i. readiness to receive every truth. And Cornelius said, Act. 10:33. We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. It is well added (that are commanded thee of God:) not what any Minister shall teach, be he never so good, or so learned; nay, were he an Angel from Heaven, yet his Doctrine must be examined, Gal. 1:8. But when there is such a disposition in us, as to receive both in judgment and practice whatsoever God shall reveal unto us out of his Word; this is a precious disposition.

But, alas, the most come to hear with prejudicate and fore-stalled hearts, they bear a secret grudge, and quarrel, against some strict Truth, or other; as, against the sanctification of the Lord's Day, or Family-duties, or secret communion with the Lord, by prayer daily, &c. And these imaginations seem as strong Holds, to keep Christ and his Truth out of their hearts, 2 Cor. 10:4,5. And thus men, that in

their hearing do limit the Spirit of God, would (if it lay in their power) say as those wicked men, Isa. 30:10, to the Seers, see not; and to the Prophets, prophesy not right things unto us; speak unto us smooth things: And those that said so, the Lord calls them despisers of his Word.

These are the main and principal duties before the hearing of the Word.

Secondly, let me proceed briefly to those duties that are required in the hearing of the Word: Which we must the rather stir up ourselves unto, because we have naturally uncircumcised hearts, Jer. 6:10. and are dull of hearing, Heb. 5:11.

Now the principal duties in hearing, are five; which I will briefly set down as may be.

1. You must set yourselves in God's presence, whilst you are hearing of his Word: and consider with yourselves, that it is God that you have to deal withal in this business, and not man; and that it is God's Word, and not man's. It is the great commendation of the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 2:13. that they received the Word as the Word of God. This was that whereby the Lord would prepare his people to receive the Law, Exod. 20. God spake all these words. And he not only gave the Law, but the whole sum of the Gospel with his own voice, Mat. 3:17. Loe a voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Yea, it is the Lord himself that speaks unto you in our Ministry, Luke 10:16. So the Lord is present in a special manner, where his Word is preached, to observe and mark how it is received, or delivered; and either to bless or curse the hearers, or speakers, accordingly. So that of this and such like places, it may be said as Jacob said of Bethel, Gen. 28:16,17. Surely,

the Lord is in this place, and, How dreadful is this place? This is no other than the House of God, this is the Gate of Heaven.

And truly, this apprehension of God's presence in the Assemblies of his people, will work three things in us.

First, keep us in that awful and reverent disposition of body and mind that is meet.

Secondly, it will preserve our hearts from roving and wandering thoughts, which are great impediments of hearing; Psal. 119:113. I hate vain thoughts, but thy Law do I love.

Thirdly, it will make us to receive and obey that that shall be taught us; for so God hath been wont to prepare his people, to receive his Word: yea, he said of his people, when they were thus affected, Deut. 15:29. Oh that there were such a heart in them, to fear me and keep my Commandments always.

Now the want of this, is that which hinders abundance of benefit that the Ministry of the Word would otherwise do us: This is the root of all the mischief the Devil doth to poor souls, in the hearing of the Word; the practice thereof, is the fountain of all our good. Many graceless wretches there are in our Assemblies, like him, Luke 18:2. that neither feared God, nor regarded man; that despise the Church of God, yea, contemn the presence of the holy Angels, (1 Cor. 11:10) and of God himself in the Assemblies, who hath laid such a special charge upon us, Lev. 26:2. to keep his Sabbaths, and to reverence his Sanctuary; and he adds this reason, I am Jehovah.

2. The second duty in hearing, is diligent attention to that we hear: as it is said of our Savior Christ, Luke 19:48. The people were very attentive to hear him; or, as it is in the Original, they hanged on him:

as if their ears and minds had been tied to his tongue; there was such a dependency upon him. And that is a remarkable place, Ezech. 40:4. Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee. See what attention is required: He bids him set his eyes and his ears, and his heart and all, upon that he speaks; and not upon some things only, but upon all that he should declare unto him. So Prov. 4:20,21,22. My son attend unto my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings, keep them in the midst of thine heart, for they are life to those that find them: i.e. look as a condemned man will hearken to the Sentence of the Prince; every word he speaks, being life or death: As the servants of Benhadad, when they were in their enemies power, 1. King. 20:33. they observed diligently whether any word of comfort would come from him, and they did hastily catch it. Thus, with such diligence and attention, such poor condemned creatures (as we are) are to hear the Word of God.

Now to quicken attention, these means are profitable.

First, it is good to do as they did, Luke 4:20. They fastened their eyes upon Christ; so do ye upon the Minister, and suffer them not to wander up and down: A wandering eye is always a sure evidence of a wandering heart.

Secondly, if ye do not thus, it will be a good help for those that can write, to note the Word, as Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah, Jer. 36:4. This holds the mind close to all that is said. Some object indeed, that it hinders affection in hearing: but though it may do so in some, for the present; yet afterwards it will work more lasting affections upon the Word. Only they that use this help-means, must be careful that they do not presume upon their Notes so, as to neglect the recalling of what they have heard, (as many use to do)

and so lose all holy affections, and that impression that the Word would make upon their hearts.

Thirdly, entreat the Lord to open thy heart, as he opened Lydia's heart, Act. 16:14. Our hearts are shut up quite, and cannot attend unto anything that is good, except that the Lord opens them.

Observe then another cause, why the Word is so unfruitful unto many. Some are like the deaf Adders, that stop their ears against the voice of the Charmer, Psal. 58:4,5. And some sleepers there are, that fail in their attention, that the Devil usually rocks asleep, when they come to hear; but they that are such, should know, that their damnation sleeps not, the Devil sleeps not: he comes to the Assemblies, to pick up the good Seed that is sown; nay, he comes to pick up their souls indeed: for he cares not so much for the Seed, but he will take yourselves napping and your souls especially, and carry them to Hell. Besides, let them remember what befell Eutychus, Act. 20:9,10. he slept at a long Sermon, that lasted till midnight; but he was taken up dead, falling from the third Loft to the ground: What shall become of such then, that sleep in the day time, at a Sermon of an hour long? And let them also take heed of that spirit of slumber, that the Lord hath threatened to pour upon the despisers of the Word, Isaiah 29:9,10. The like might be said of our gazers and gapers about, and those that by their talking disturb others, and hinder themselves: they shut their ears, and turn them away from God; and may justly expect, that he shall turn away his ears from them: as it is threatened, Prov. 2:8,9, Zach. 7:13.

3. You must hear the Word with understanding and judgment; i.e., labor to understand what we hear: And to this end, the Minister must have a special care to teach plainly, so as he may be understood, Neh. 8:8. And Christ calls upon his hearers for this,

Math. 15:10. Hear, and understand: How should we else profit by that we hear? Act. 8:36. Understandest thou what thou readest (saith Philip to the Eunuch:) so say thou to thine own heart; Understandest thou what thou hearest?

Now the means to understand the Word, are these.

First, come to the Word, with a willing mind to learn: you know the Eunuch, Act. 8. though he understood not what he read, yet because he had a mind to learn, how the Lord provided for him, and what a comfortable success Philip's Sermon had with him. Men love to teach willing scholars; so doth God, when we come with willing and ready minds to be taught.

Secondly, exercise yourselves in the truth of God, Heb. 5. last; you must by continual use, get your senses exercised to discern both good and evil: but especially, be well acquainted with the principles and grounds of Catechism; it is the want of this, that makes men that they understand not what is preached: They that are not first well-nourished with Milk, will not be fit to receive and digest stronger meat: if the foundation be not well laid, it is in vain to build.

Thirdly, walk according to Light; Psal. 111:10. A good understanding have all they, that do his Commandments: Then, if thou wouldest get a good understanding, and know the mystery of godliness, walk according to knowledge, employ that little knowledge thou hast well, and then there is a promise to give thee more.

Fourthly, be diligent in instructing and teaching thy family: If thou art set over others, a little knowledge will increase greatly, by this means. Gen. 18:17,19. the Lord said; Shall I hide anything from Abraham? No: And he gives this reason; I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall

keep the way of the Lord. If you teach your families, God will teach you.

Well; there are a sort of doltish hearers, that will hear, and seem to be very attentive, from years end to years end, and be never a whit the wiser, 2. Tim. 3:7. The heavy judgment of God is upon many of them, that is mentioned, Math. 13:14. And in them is fulfilled the Prophecy of Isaiah; By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and that, Isa. 27:11. It is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them, shall not save them; and he that formed them, shall show them no favor.

4. You must hear the Word with affection, and delight. It is said of God's people in the Primitive Church, that they heard the Word gladly; and of Christ's hearers, Mark. 12:37. they heard him gladly: And it is noted for a great sign of grace, to hear the Word gladly, Psal. 119:162. I rejoyce at thy Word, as one that findeth great spoils. David had been a soldier; and ye know, that they that have lain at the siege of a City a long time, and at the last take it, will rejoyce exceedingly in the spoil of it: therefore he rejoyces in the Word, as they that do divide the spoils. And truly, whereas common people complain of the badness of their memories; this would be a marvelous help to their memories, if they would hear with delight: therefore David saith, Psal. 119:16. I will delight myself in thy Statutes, I will not forget thy Word. This delight he means will strengthen our memories.

Now contrary to this, are a great number, that hear without all delight, and account it a great weariness, Mal. 1:13. and those the dullest hours, that they spend in hearing. Well, the Lord hath threatened, that the Word shall never do us good, unless that we attend to it with love and delight, 2 Thess. 2:10,11. Because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved; therefore

God shall send them strong delusions, to believe Lyes. A fearful threatening, much to be considered in these days: For this is the reason, that Popish trumperies and hellish delusions have such entertainment, because God in his just judgment, gives up those to such strong delusions, that love not the strict Truth of the Word of God.

5. You must hear the Word, with application of it to your own hearts, and lives; apply every truth to yourselves, for your own use and comfort, and terror and instruction: as it is Job 5. last; Hear this, and know it for thyself; carry this truth home to thine own heart: And,

First, there is no truth of God taught out of his Word, but it concerns everyone of God's people, and was intended for our use; Rom. 15:4. Whatsoever is written, is written for our learning.

Secondly, there is no truth can be taught, to do us good, unless that we apply it: as no Plaster can do the Patient good, unless it be applied; no meat is able to do us any good, be it dressed never so curiously, unless it be eaten and digested. This comparison is applied by the Prophet to this purpose, Isa. 55:2. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good: unless we eat it, it will do us no good.

Thirdly, the faithful have been wont to apply all to themselves; as every member of the body draws nourishment from the stomach, to make it his own: to which the Apostle alludes, Eph. 4:16. So the Disciples of our Savior did, Math. 26:21,22. When our Savior had said, that one of them should betray him, they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him; Lord, is it I?

And surely, the want of this application, is one great cause that the Word profits not, because they believe it not, nor apply the Word

unto themselves: Heb. 4:2. The Word preached did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Now one principal work of faith, is to apply those things that are delivered in the Word: But this, the most hearers do exceedingly fail in; either not applying, or mis-applying of the truth; shifting off all upon others, and taking little or nothing to themselves. As we have a notable example of this, Rom. 1. ult. compared with Rom. 2:1. In the former place, the Apostle speaks of some, that knowing the judgment of God, That those that do such things, are worthy of death; yet not only do such things, but take pleasure in those that do them: yet in the beginning of the next Chapter, you find the same men judging and condemning of others; yet thinking and persuading themselves, that they (being guilty of the same sins) shall escape the judgment of God. Why? But because they apply not to themselves, but mis-apply to others the things they hear.

Many such hearers there are in these days, which are very cunning in shifting off the threatening's of God against their own Drunkenness, and Whoredom, and Swearing, &c. yet very apt to pin the same Word upon others. Well, these are not wise for themselves, and all their hearing shall do them no good. Thus much of the duties required in hearing.

Now follow those duties that are required after hearing. And these are chiefly thus.

1. We must be very careful to remember and keep that which we have heard, Prov. 4:4. My son, let thine heart retain my words: and, Vers. 21. Keep them in the midst of thine heart. As a man that hath a Jewel, will be careful to lock it up in the safest Chest he hath, lest it should be stolen away: Which is the very comparison of the Wiseman, Prov. 6:20,21. So Mary, Luke 2:51. kept all the sayings in

her heart: and David, Psal. 119:11, hid the Commandments in his heart; and he gives the reason, That he might not sin against the Lord. And the truth is, that as meat that is eaten, if it remains not in the stomach, it will never do us good: so the best spiritual food that can be, except it be retained by us, will not profit us: Luke 8:15. The good Ground are they, which with an honest and good heart having heard the Word, keep it, &c.

Many there are, that are very careless of this duty: They think they have discharged themselves abundantly, if they hear the whole Sermon attentively; as though there were nothing more required at their hands: Like our Savior's hearers, Math. 22:22. When they heard him, they marveled, and left him, and went their way: but we never hear more of them. So many hear desirously, and with open and greedy ears: but, as we say, it goes in at one ear, and out at another; it stays not for any after-use, but a little present admiration. Others hear, and the Word smites them a little on their Consciences, and wounds; and one would think, some good thing would be wrought upon them: but they go away, and the motion dies. They are as men that are Seasick, whilst the Word humbles them, and makes their Consciences to wamble within them; but they are as whole as a Fish, when as they are once landed at the Church door: Or like unto Metals, which are soft and pliable, whilst they are in the fire; so these are in the hearing: but shortly they lose all the efficacy of the Word, and become harder than before.

Well, let us in the fear of God, hearken diligently to the words of the Holy-Ghost, Heb. 2:1. That we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, or run out (like riven Vessels:) Why; what is the danger? How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?

2. We must meditate and seriously think of that that we have heard; that is more than remembering. There is a great deal of difference betwixt the possessing of goods, and the using and employing of them for our benefit; betwixt the laying up of garments in our Wardrobes, and the wearing of them upon our backs, to keep us warm: this latter is done by meditation. Prov. 6:22,23. My son, bind the Commandments continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck: It is a phrase of speech borrowed from garments that are bound about the body; for meditation binds the Word close to the heart. It is said of Mary, Luke 2:19. that she pondered the words of the Angel in her heart: and David was frequent in this duty, Psal. 119:15. I will meditate in thy Precepts (saith he:) And it was Paul's advice to Timothy, 1 Tim. 4:15. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.

First, this is the way to make men profit by the Word of God; and that so evidently, that all may take notice of it, this is one great benefit of the Word meditated upon, Josh. 1:8. Thou shalt meditate in the Book of the Law day and night: To what end? That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.

Secondly, this course will argue unfeigned love unto the Word, Psal. 119:97. Oh how I love thy Law, it is my meditation all the day.

Thirdly, this will greatly increase our comfort in the Word, and cause us to feel much more sweetness in it; even as the chewing of our meat makes us to taste much more sweetness in it. Psal. 119:15,16. he saith; I will meditate on thy Precepts, and have respect unto thy ways, I will delight myself in thy Statutes: Meditation ever brings with it delight.

Fourthly, this will greatly increase our knowledge: Psal. 119:99. I have more understanding than my teachers: Why? Because thy

testimonies are my meditation.

Now, if this be required after hearing; how is it possible that they should profit by the Word, that never scarcely think of it afterwards? It is noted of the Disciples, that though they had seen Christ's mighty power in the miracle of the Loaves; yet because they considered not the miracle, their hearts were hardened: i. because they did not meditate upon it, they were never the better for it. And thus it usually speeds with those that are careless in the performing of this duty.

3. We must confer of that we have heard, and repeat it amongst ourselves, and examine the Scriptures about the truth of that that is delivered. I join them all together; for so they may well be, in the practice of them. For conference, David saith, Psal. 119:172. My tongue shall speak of thy Word, for all thy Commandments are righteousness. This was ordinarily practiced by the Disciples of our Savior Christ, when he had taught how hardly rich men shall be saved, Mark. 10:26. They were astonished out of measure, and said amongst themselves, Who then can be saved? So they conferred about another Sermon of our Savior, John. 16:17,18.

Now repetition of Sermons is especially required of them that have families, to repeat the Word unto them: Deut. 11:18,19. You shall lay up these my words in your hearts, and you shall teach them your children; speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house: yea, it is said to be the chiefest thing that the Lord had respect unto, in giving us his Word, and the knowledge thereof, that we might instruct our families in it. Deut. 4:10. Gather ye my people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me, and may teach their children. And this, if it were practiced carefully, would both make children and servants more careful to hear and to attend unto the public Ministry; and better our memories, that we may be

much better able to retain that which we hear: and it will also work an inward feeling in us and our children, of that which we have heard. Therefore, Deut. 6:6,7. it is called the whetting of them upon our children; repetition doth set an edge upon their dullness.

Yea further, for the searching and examining of the Scriptures, we are commanded, 1 Thess. 5:21. to try all things, and to hold fast that which is good. And the example of those noble Bereans is commended unto us, Act. 17:11,12. that searched the Scriptures daily, concerning those things that were delivered by Paul; Therefore many of them believed.

Therefore it is a grievous neglect, that people in these days are guilty of; that neither confer concerning the Word, they are ashamed of it, and (which is a fearful reproach unto them) the Word of God is a reproach unto them, Jer. 6:10. nor yet repeat Sermons in their families; they are like Martha, Luke 10:41. troubled about so many worldly occasions: nor yet examine and search the Scriptures: And therefore are easily carried about with every wind of Doctrine, and never established and settled in the Truth.

4. We are to put in practice whatsoever we hear, till that our hearts and lives are quite changed by it: Jam. 1:22. Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls: i. they cozen themselves by false reasonings and arguments, or by sophistical Syllogisms, reasoning after this or the like manner.

He that hears the Word, is a good Christian.

But I hear the Word, &c.

Or thus:

He that hears not, shall be damned.

But I hear the Word:

Therefore I shall be saved.

But how doth this follow? For though the neglect or contempt of the Word is sufficient to condemn a man, yet the hearing of the Word is not sufficient to save a man.

Well, obedience is the end of hearing, Deut. 5:1. Hear, O Israel, the Statutes which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep them, and do them. The like ye find, Jam. 1:25. Yea, obedience to the Word must be speedy, without any delays, or procrastinations; as it is said of the Colossians, Col. 1:6. that the Gospel brought forth fruit in them, from the very day they heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth. And the Prophet David resolved, Psal. 119:60. I made hast, and prolonged not the time to keep thy Commandments. And this is a singular frame of heart; because the putting of the Word in practice immediately, is a great advantage to the hearer: seeing then, the affections of the heart are quick, and lively; which with delays die, and decay very suddenly.

Now, alas, for the wonderful paucity of such obedient hearers; for very few do practice anything they hear, leave any sin, or do any duty: and therefore they must needs prove like the House built on the Sand; when the time of trial shall come, they must needs fall, Math. 7:27. Again, there are many that in hearing have good motions and purposes; but they are like the sluggard, that said, Yet a little slumber, yet a little sleep; so, because they delay, they vanish and come to nothing: of whom, in respect of their spiritual poverty, it may be said which Solomon speaks; His poverty shall come as one that travelleth, and his want as an armed man.

AN APPENDIX OR ADDITION TO THIS TREATISE OF THE WORD.

He that despiseth the Word, shall be destroyed. - PROV. 13:13.

By the occasion of which words, let our Christian meditations be a little fastened upon the greatness of the sin of contemning and despising of the Word. My meaning is, not to handle it as a Text, but only to take a hint, to begin to lay down the danger of this epidemical and ordinary disease, that so exceedingly spreads in these days; and then to add some means and directions, to make us to be preparedly and profitably conversant about so great an Ordinance as the hearing of the Word.

We of this Land (let us now open our eyes to see it) have certainly most fearfully and cursedly sinned against God, and provoked his fierce wrath against us, by contempt of his holy Word; by shutting our eyes against the heavenly Light of the Gospel, which hath been brought amongst us; by not prizing the Ministry which we have now enjoyed a long time, nor profiting by it: nay, by wicked opposing it, with secret persecution at the least, and cruel mocking's.

In the first place, consider the cry of this sin, and the curses it brings, from such places as these.

First, Isa. 29:11. and both before, and after: And the vision of all (saith the Prophet) is become unto you as the words of a Book that is sealed, &c. So may I justly say: All the visions, revelations, discoveries of the mystery of Christ, opening of all God's counsels; all the expositions, interpretations, applications of the Ministry of most places, have been unto the most of us; a fearful thing I speak, but

most true, and to be lamented with tears of blood; as the words of a Book that is sealed, which they deliver to one that can read, saying, Read this, I pray thee: Then shall he say, I cannot; for it is sealed. And the Book is given to him that cannot read, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he shall say, I cannot read. That is, all the Sermons they shall hear, and all the heavenly Messages are brought them from God, shall be as a sealed Book to a learned man, or an open Book unto an Idiot. They shall stare in the face of the Minister, when he is clearly unfolding the great mystery of godliness, and shall not be able to understand him; they shall have their own Conscience unript to the quick, by the power of the Word, and shall not perceive it; they shall have their sweet sin discovered, and damned unto the pit of Hell, by evident and unanswerable demonstration out of the Book of God, and yet have no power to leave it: For the vision of the Prophets (saith the Prophet in the forecited Chapter) is become unto them as the words of a Book sealed up. And therefore, all the Doctrine of salvation, though it drop upon them as the rain, and still as the dew, shall be but unto their hearts as unto the hardest rocks; all holy admonitions and reproofs, as arrows shot against a stone-wall; all sacred Lessons offered and urged upon their Consciences, be as a Seal stamped upon water, which receives no impression. O most woeful and fearful estate!

Secondly, Isa. 28:9. Whom shall he teach knowledge, &c. This is not as many understand it, That people must have a little by little preached unto them, but it is a curse upon them. As if he should say: They are nothing fitter to the discipline of the knowledge of God, than infants newly weaned, to receive any instruction. For Precept must be upon Precept, &c. Vers. 10. As if he should say: They must be taught as little children, a little at once, and have oft repeated over and over; and yet they can learn nothing to do them good, chiefly concerning their repentance, and escaping God's Judgments: I would

to God it were not too evident, by long and doleful experience; That our Ministry hath done less good amongst the elder sort, and men of much worldly wisdom, for bringing them to any sound and comfortable knowledge in God's Word, than amongst little children.

Thirdly, Ezech. 33:30,31,32,33. And loe, thou art unto them as a very lovely Song of one that hath a pleasant voice, &c. And is it not so with us? That even to some that seem to be friends, and to delight in the Ministry, the Word is become as if it had lost all power to turn them from their sin, to the holy way; from plausible formality, to saving forwardness. Hear a Character of them, Isa. 58:2. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a Nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the Ordinance of their God: they ask of me the Ordinances of Justice, they take delight in approaching to God. They may hear the Word gladly, as Herod did, and perhaps observe the Messenger, &c. but they will not stir an inch further from sin, and nearer to God: say what he will, let him preach out his heart, they will still hug their bosom-sin, and hold exactly their heartless forms and formal fashions in Religion, after five thousand Sermons: They are all unto them, as a lovely Song of one that hath a sweet voice; and leave no more impression upon their Consciences, than a pleasant Lesson upon the Lute, upon the ear, when it is ended.

Fourthly, Jer. 23:33. And when this people, or a Prophet, or a Priest shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the Lord? &c. Nay, hath not the cursed sin of loathing this heavenly Manna, been found among us? Hath not our much Preaching been accounted a burden, a wearisomeness, and a trouble? Yea, as here it was once unto the Jews; a matter of scorn, and reproach? The Lord complains grievously, in the quoted place, of this sin; how they took up this custom amongst them, concerning the faithful preaching of all the true Prophets, to ask scoffingly; What is the burden of the Lord?

Thus making a scorn of all the right discovery of their sins, and the sound denunciation of God's Judgment, calling it by the name of a Burthen; the Lord chargeth them most severely, that they should not use that disdainful speech anymore. He tells them, how that they had perverted and abused the holy Word of the ever-living God, the Lord of Hosts: and withal directs them, what phrase of speech they should use, when they speak of his Word sent unto them by his true Prophets; That thus each should demand, in reverence of his Majesty: What hath the Lord answered; or, What hath the Lord spoken? And to leave off those reproachful taunting terms, What is the burden of the Lord? Or otherwise, he would surely be avenged of them for this sin; as we may see in the denunciation following.

Fifthly, Jer. 7:4,8,9,10,11. Trust not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, &c. They rested upon the outward forms of God's worship, without reformation. It is just our case. Many amongst us satisfy themselves, and think it will serve the turn for salvation, if they rest upon the Sabbath, hear the Word, receive the Sacrament, and conform to the outward exercises of Religion; though they abide in their sins, and have no acquaintance at all with the power of the Word, the Mystery of Christ, conversion to God, or holy conversation.

Sixthly, Isa. 6:9,10. Go tell this people; Hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not: make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest &c. Oh, this is heavy, that a Minister should be sent to a further hardening of a people! And yet it is just with God, and they shall feel it on their Bed of Death. The Thief on the Cross was converted with a piece of a Sermon, they are not wrought upon after many years: therefore it is just with God, as an act of judgment, because they

would not come in, after so long a time, to give them over to such judicial hardness.

Consider these things, and tremble all ye that have any ways struck at the face of Christ, by contempt of his Ministry. For the humbling of your souls into the dust, for this horrible sin; peruse in bleeding hearts, in secret, that black and bloody Catalogue of fearful provocations, which are ordinarily to be found in, and certainly set upon the Score of such as hate to be reformed under a conscionable Ministry. Which made Christ say, John. 15:22. If I had not come and spoken unto them, &c.

1. Despising it; shutting their eyes against that glorious Light, erected in their faces, to lead them to Heaven. See Math. 10:14. Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house, or City, shake off the dust of your feet.

Here is a notable place, to affright all those that are unworthy partakers of the Ministry. For the understanding whereof, take notice of these five points.

1. It is as if they should say; Here I have gone a long journey, and have contracted dust and sand by my travel, and taken a great deal of pains; and loe, here I shake off this dust, in witness, that you had Christ offered you, and you would not accept him.

2. To intimate unto them; I care not for any of you, or yours, but only I seek the good of your souls, I respect not so much as the dust; I prize more the conversion of any of your souls, than all yours: and this dust shall witness it.

3. They shook off the dust, as a witness: I will have nothing to do with this City; for I know, the Plagues and Judgments of God will

seize on this place, as it was with Sodom and Gomorrah; I will have no communion and society with these wicked people.

4. They did shake off the dust, to intimate that destruction should come upon them. For it is said, Psalm 1. That they should be driven away as the dust: As that is shaken with the wind, so shall they be with the wrath of God.

5. In testimony and witness against them: This very dust shall be witness against them. Do you think then, that their Sermons and Catechizing shall not? If the dust that they gathered by their pains, will be witness; what will all their Sermons, and praying, and such pains be? Now this sin of despising the Word, is a sin above that of Sodom, Vers. 15. Verily, it shall be more easy for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the Day of Judgment, than for that City.

2. Murmuring against it, Job. 6:41, Luk. 15:2.

3. Caviling against it, Act. 13:45.

4. Contemning it, Jer. 44:16, Act. 17:18. What will this Babbler say? They accounted Paul's precious preaching, vain babbling.

5. Mocking and scorning it, 2 Chron. 36:16, Act. 2:13.

6. Persecuting it, Math. 10:23. And so they become like mad Dogs thrown into a River, or tied up in a Chaine, which do snarl at, bite, and tear those that put out their hands to help, and set them free; fearing, they come to torture and to trouble them more. Just so it is with many profane wretches, which lie drowned in sin, and chained in Satan's fetters: If a man put out his hand, by the Ministry of the Word, to save them from sinking into Damnation, and to free them from the Snares of everlasting death; they rage and rail, they bark

and bite like mad Dogs, holding themselves to be disquieted, disgraced, and tormented before their time.

Thus you have seen the six Curses, and the six Sins, that the not profiting by the Word doth bring upon a people.

2. Now, in the second place, let me tender to your most serious thoughts some quickening Motives, for the stirring of you up to profit by the Word.

1. Some taken from the Word itself, the Ministry whereof you have slighted.

What then is the blessed thing you have so wickedly abused? It is,

1. The Word of Salvation, Act. 13:26. No other Word, or created Power, can save your souls from Hell.

2. The Word of Truth, Eph. 1:13. There is error in all other Truths, whether Natural, or Moral, or Political: and go to any Art, there is weakness and infirmity in the brain of man, that there can be no certainty; but here is all Truth, and here is infallibility, you need not doubt of any.

3. It is called the Word of Life, Phil. 2:16. All other Learning whatsoever, when it hath furnished you with ornaments and parts, it leaves your souls stark dead in sins and trespasses. But this is a Word of Life, it inspires spiritual Life, and brings eternal Life.

4. It is called a Word of Reconciliation, 2 Cor. 5:19. Let the Sea run nothing but Gold, and let Heaven and Earth be turned into Gold and Silver, and offered unto God, it could not reconcile us. If all the creatures would lose their being, be annihilated, and come to nothing; yet this could not save Judas, or any one reprobate: but the

Word hath been a blessed instrument, for reconciling many souls to God.

5. It is, as it were, an Epistle or Letter (as one of the Fathers calls it) written from God Almighty unto us miserable men; wherein he writes his Will and Word, and sends it to us: the Ministers are the readers of it, and they bring the news from Heaven. And what is the matter of it? Concerning eternal life, or eternal death, concerning the good of your souls. Now, if you had a private Letter come from the King, concerning your advancement, or your deliverance and forgiveness for some dangerous Treason, or both; how would you take this Letter, and how often would you read it, with what willingness of affection? Now, here is an Epistle sent from Heaven, to advise you, that you are all Traitors and Rebels against Heaven, and yet here in this Letter, God offers the blood of his Son, and you may be reconciled: and will you neglect it? This is the matter of this Epistle; it brings matter of deliverance from the greatest Curse that can befall the creature, and the greatest advancement.

6. It is the bottomless Treasury of all high, sweet, and excellent things: The Mystery of the Trinity, the Majesty of God, the Love of God, and of Christ; this sufferings, the Spirits workings, the happiness of the Saints, and the glory of Heaven, &c.

7. It must be our Judge at the last day, John. 12:48. Every honest Sermon, is but the Word of God unfolded; and a bunch of Arrows wrapped up, and unfolded, are all one.

8. It only can cure a wounded Conscience, the greatest calamity that ever the heart of man was acquainted with; and that which no Arm of flesh, or created Power, no man or Angel, can ease at all.

9. In it only are to be had Deeds and Evidences, to show for eternal Life; and Acquittances, for discharge from eternal Death.

10. It hath saved all the souls that are in Heaven, Rom. 10:13.

11. It only is the object of divine and infused Faith. Human testimonies and authorities beget only human Faith: Therefore you must reverence this Word.

2. Some Motives taken from the most fearful and cursed estate of those who neglect and reject the Ministry of the Word, hating to be reformed by it. Mark and take to heart thine unspeakable misery, whosoever thou art, that despisest the Ministry: Take a taste of it, in these passages.

1. They are deprived by this means of the love and favor of God, the only fountain of all comfort, peace, and glory; which is infinitely the dearest and most invaluable loss, that can be imagined.

2. Of their part and portion in the blood of Christ; one drop whereof, is incomparably more worth than Heaven and Earth, men and Angels, or the creatures of a thousand Worlds.

3. Of the fatherly protection, care, and providence of the blessed Trinity, the glorious guard of Angels, the comfortable communion of the blessed Saints, and all the sweet contentment's that follow thence.

4. Of the quiet joy and tranquility of a good Conscience; a Jewel far more worth than the whole World, were it all turned into one invaluable Pearl of invaluable price: and of all the heavenly illuminations, cherishment's, and comforts, wherewith the Holy-Ghost is wont to visit and refresh the hearts of holy men.

5. Of the sweet peace and true contentment in this life, and of all comfortable right and religious interest to any of the creatures: For, without a good Conscience, there was never found joy in any man's heart, or sanctified enjoyment of anything in the World; and never shall any man have a good Conscience, that gives allowance to any Lust, or lives delightfully in any sin.

6. Of a Crown of Life, the unspeakable joys of Heaven, that immeasurable and endless comfort that there shall be had with all the children of God, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, all our Christian acquaintance; yea, with the Lord himself, and all Angels, with Christ our Savior and Lamb, slain for us; the Prince of Glory; yea, the Glory of Heaven and Earth, and brightness of the everlasting Light, &c.

To these privative consequents, add a serious consideration upon those terrible flaming places; Deut. 29:19,20, Prov. 1:23,24, Isa. 6:9,10, 1 Sam. 2:25, Act. 13:46.

By continuing thy contempt, and rejecting the Light of the Gospel, thou mayest come, thou knowest not how soon, to sin against the Holy-Ghost, as the Pharisees did, Math. 12:24,31.

For sin against the Holy-Ghost may be committed as well,

1. By those, who although they do acknowledge and confess the Truth, which they do blaspheme; yet they have not yet professed it, or given up their names to it, as were those Scribes and Pharisees: and there are many such in these days, who have not as yet given their name to the Truth, which yet notwithstanding being well known and acknowledged, they do blaspheme.

2. As those, who have not only acknowledged in themselves the Truth that they blaspheme, but have professed the same before others, that are the favorers of Truth; as Julian, Porphyrius, Alexander the Copper-smith, and many others: of which, you may see Heb. 6.&10. So, many amongst us at this day.

3. Some taken from the survey of those judgments, which contempt of the Ministry may bring upon the place where it is planted.

1. It may remove the Candlestick, and be plagued with the utter loss of the Ministry. Consider, Math. 8:34 & 10:13 & 21:41.

2. They may have Prophets, but such as are fools; they may have men of the Spirit, but those that be mad, Hos. 9:7. By a fool, is meant not a natural, but spiritual fool, Prov. 1:8, Jer. 4:22, Isa. 5:20. By mad, is understood not a man out of his wit, or distracted in mind, but he that like a mad Dog rageth and raileth against the Truth of God, and sincerity of his Saints; which is a great judgment.

3. They may enjoy faithful Teachers, but to their further hardening, as the Israelites did Isaiah, Isa. 6:9,10. Which of all other judgments that God can inflict in this life, is the most fearful.

4. By this means, they may make sad the heart and affections of their Teachers, that they cannot with that cheerfulness as they desire, perform the offices of their Ministry: Which as it discourageth the Teachers, (and will one day light heavy on the causers and procurers thereof) so it is unprofitable for the hearers, and deprives them of much good they might otherwise enjoy; as appears, Heb. 13:17.

4. Some from consideration of those confusions and desolations, which it pulls with great violence even upon whole Kingdoms. Look

upon such places as these: 2 Chron. 36:16,17, &c. Jer. 25:3. &c., and Chap. 35:15, Rev. 6:4. &c.

The glorious Light of those seven Candlesticks in Asia, mentioned in the Revelations, was long since, for their unfruitfulness, coldness, and contempt of the Word, turned into the dark Midnight of Heresy, Apostasy, and Muhammadism. Rome, that was anciently the glory of the Western Churches, lies now drowned in Superstition, soaking in damnable Idolatry, and plunged over head and ears in the Doctrine of Devils. Many strong and noble Limbs of the reformed Churches in high Germany have lain for some years in their tears of blood, groaning under the merciless tyranny of the bloody Antichristians, and have woefully received the mark of the Beast again. Now assuredly, it was the loathing the heavenly Manna, which made the Lord to utter his Voice before the Army of the enemies at Prague, and other places. It was their spiritual coldness, which sharpened the Papists swords against them: It was their not entertaining the Truth, with the love and power of it, which gave the Imperialists power over them.

3. In a third place, take some helps and remedies, to become profitable hearers and saving proficiencie by the Ministry your enjoy; which hath thus long been (it is a reproachful and rueful thing I speak) the savor of death unto death unto the most.

1. Be persuaded to believe and obey the blessed Commandment of our Savior himself, Math. 6:32. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, in the first place; and all other things shall be added to you. To which be quickened, by considering,

1. To what end we came into this World. What a woeful and bewitched people are they, who being reasonable creatures, having an understanding Light, like the Angels of God; having eyes in their

heads, to fore-see the wrath that is to come; hearts in their bodies, that can tremble as the leaves of the Forest, which are shaken with the wind; Consciences, that are capable of unspeakable horror; bodies and souls, which can burn in Hell forever: and yet some have lived twenty, some thirty, some forty, some sixty years; and yet to this day, have not learnt one sound spiritual Lesson, for the true good of their souls, either out of the Book of God, the Book of Nature, the Works of God, or any other way? Why, to what end do you think were you created, and put into this World? To eat, and drink, and sleep; to lie, and swear, and root in the Earth; to Dice and Card, and go in the Fashion; to contemn the Ministry; shamefully to bely, slander, and rail upon God's people, as too precise; to die, and then not to be damned? Assuredly, thou wast not born, and placed upon the Earth, for to serve thine own turn, to please thine own heart, to follow thine own ways, to live for a while like a Beast in sensual contentment's, and then to go to Hell. Certainly, thou wast sent into this World for some other end, for some greater business and important affaire; even for that One necessary thing, Luke 10:42. to know, serve, and obey thy God, and to save that precious Soul of thine in the Day of Christ; to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven, to know and feel the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection. This, I say, is that One necessary thing: All other things are but respectively necessary, so far as they further this end; ought only to be subordinate, and contributory; nay, to be accounted but dross and dung, to this, Phil. 3:10.

2. Consider, that upon this moment depends eternity.
3. What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own soul? Math. 16:26.
4. The difference of the life and death of the Christian and Carnallist.

2. Take the counsel of the holy Apostle, Col. 3:16. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, &c.

1. By hearing it in season, and out of season, 2 Tim. 4:2. Preachers and hearers, are relatives. Christian hearers in ancient times heard their Pastors day after day.

(1) Because yesterday we made mention of the Thief, &c. saith Ambrose. Which implies his preaching the day before.

(2) You that were here yesterday, &c. Which implies his preaching the day before. In another place: I suppose, you remember how far me discoursed yesterday: from that very place, let us today begin. Elsewhere he saith: From whence we spake much yesterday. Again; Yesterday we came even to that Verse, &c. Yesterday's Sermon was protracted, &c. The latter part of the Psalm, of which we spake yesterday, &c. Yesterday a shorter Psalm was handled.

(3) First therefore let us persuade you, that you would amend and abandon your Oaths: For although I spake of the same matter yesterday, and the day before that; yet notwithstanding, I will not cease today, nor tomorrow, nor the day after that, to persuade the same things. Whence it appears, that he preached the day before, and the day before that; and would preach the day following, and the day after that.

(4) Yesterday's sight (Brethren) provoked me to this Sermon, &c. This Sermon was made upon Easter Monday; and no doubt, he had preached on Easter day.

(5) Yesterday, &c. Today we will discourse briefly of Baptism, and the benefits that flow from thence to us: Although yesterday our speech did flow more hastily from us, both because the time did urge, as also

least length of speech should beget disdain and satiety: for the satiety of speech is no less an enemy to the ears, than too much meat is to the body. These Orations were divine, and as Sermons; and this was made on the day immediately after a holy-day. The Greek Church at that time celebrated the day of Christ's Baptism.

(6) If you remember, in yesterday's Sermon, &c. Chrysostom in his tenth Homily upon Genesis, expostulating with his people, because they were so few, tells them, That every hour of the day is seasonable to hear a Sermon; nay, the very night is not unseasonable, for such a purpose: urging for proof thereof, the place I pressed before, 2 Tim. 4:2, and Paul's practice, Act. 20, preaching until midnight. These are his words. What means it, that there is a less assembly of you today, and not so frequent a multitude of those, who flock to us? For it is not so with spiritual things as with human, which are divided to determined times: Every time of the day is fit for a spiritual Sermon. And what do I say, the day time? Yea, if the night should come upon us, it doth not prejudice or hinder spiritual teaching. For both Paul writing to Timothy, said: Be instant in season and out of season, &c. And again, hear blessed S. Luke, saying: Paul being about to depart on the morrow, prolonged his Sermon to the middle of the night. Tell me, I pray thee, did the time hinder? Was therefore his word of Doctrine hindered?

Austin sometimes preached thrice upon the same day. Do not wonder, dear Brethren, if I have preached thrice today, God assisting me: There hath happened today a fearful chance, &c.

Chrysostom in the Evening, as we may see in his eleventh Homily upon 1 Thess. 5, saith he: Even as, if any one should cast water on the wick of this Candle, or should only take away the Oil, he would put out the Light; so is it with the gift of the Spirit. He took his example

from the Lamp that burnt by him when he was preaching, and says; You may quench this Lamp, by putting in water; and you may quench it, by taking out the Oil.

And great Basil also the like. The Evening and the Morning (saith he) is made one Day. But these our Sermons concerning that Evening, now begun from this Evening, do here put an end to our words.

Chrysostom almost in all his Homilies upon Genesis, saith in the beginning of his Sermon: Heri, &c. Yesterday I handled this or that, or the like. See 1. Hom. 7:2, Hom. 14:3, Hom. 17:4, Hom. 18:5, Hom. 24:6, Hom. 27:7, Hom. 28:8, Hom. 31:9, Hom. 34:10, Hom. 40:11, Hom. 44:12, Hom. 46:12, Hom. 48:13, Hom. 52:14, Hom. 53:15, Hom. 54:16, Hom. 55:17, Hom. 56:18, Hom. 57:19, Hom. 58:20, Hom. 59:21, Hom. 63:22, Hom. 65.

Austin preached twice a day.

Object. Except perhaps they preached every day only in Lent, &c. or besides the Lord's Day, but only upon holy-days, and their Eves.

Answ. Hear Chrysostom speaking generally. It is necessary, that a Bishop should sow his Seed every day, as I may so say; that at the least, by that daily custom of Teaching, the minds of his hearers may retain his words.

Austin hath the like. The Word of God, which is daily opened unto us, and after a sort broken to us, is our daily Bread: And as our bellies hunger for that Bread, so do our minds for this.

Object. If former and Primitive Times were so full of Preaching, how cometh it to pass, that our days will scarce down with twice a Sabbath? Since the ancient Fathers preached daily, how happeneth

it, that many reputed great Scholars in these Times, preach so seldom? &c.

Answ. First, one Reason may be an affected humor of man-pleasing, or self-preaching; which is ambitiously pursued, and mightily prevails abroad in the World.

This, King James out of his deep and Princely wisdom, conceived to be the cause of so many daily defections from our Religion, both to Popery and Anabaptism. He calls it a light, affected, and an unprofitable kind of Teaching, which hath been of late years too much taken up in University, City, and Country: In which (saith he) there is a mustering up of much reading, and a displaying of their own wits, &c. These are his own words, in the Reasons of his direction for Preaching.

Now you must know, that to the scraping and patching together of the garish and gaudy paintings and unprofitable Pomp of a self-Sermon, there is required and ordinarily expected such a deal of curiosity, variety of extraordinary conceits, and tricks of wit; that it puts the Penman to a great deal of pains, and tortures his wit extremely. He dives with much ado into the dung-hill of many a Popish Postiller, and fantastical Erier, &c. For such, as Tully said of Anthony, *do magno conatu magnas nugas agere*; they sweat at it, with much vexing anxiety: And what then? *Parturiunt montes*, &c. they detain and delude the itching ears of unjudicious hearers with a little airy nourishment, as the King speaks in the fore-cited place.

The painfulness then of this unprofitable way of Preaching; the irksome tediousness of committing of it so punctually and precisely to memory; the fearfulness of delivery, and danger of being out; vain-glorious doubting, that they shall not be applauded as they were

wont; fear, lest the next time they should lessen their former reputation of wit and reading, &c.

Secondly, another Reason may be, because Ministers do not so much meditate and study divine and heavenly things, but trouble themselves too much in the affairs of the World. Therefore the ancient Fathers, spending their time, wits, and understanding wholly upon heavenly things, diving continually into the mysteries of God's Book, and preaching daily, were able to preach often, and excellently: by their Ministerial diligence and faithfulness, they attained such a happy readiness and habit, and so enriched themselves with heavenly store, that they were able, as occasion was offered, to bring forth out of their Treasure things new and old; whereupon they were enabled to preach sometimes upon short warning: So Basil preached his two Sermons upon the six days work, when he had but that morning for meditation. Sometimes, without any premeditation; so it seems he preached his second Sermon. And so did Austin his Sermon, upon Psal. 95. It seems there, his Brother Severus failing to come, he preached himself. And I have told you heretofore of a Sermon which he made upon a sudden, occasioned by a heavy accident. And these Sermons were such, that they have been thought worthy by the Church from time to time, to be conveyed and communicated to posterity. For in all my discourse, I am so far from giving any allowance to idle, impertinent, or any way unsubstantial Preaching; that I hold it a very irksome, and loathsome, and wicked thing, liable to that heavy Curse; Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently. But let a man be well grounded before he begin, be godly himself, ply faithfully and painfully his Ministerial charge, in season and out of season; and it is incredible to what he may attain in the Point I pursue, by his much exercise, and God's blessing upon it.

But yet some say,

First, That a man cannot preach well, under a quarter of a year's provision. See the truth hereof, in the fore-going Reasons.

Secondly, That often Preaching will make it too cheap, and contemptible; which to affirm, is a base and carnal wrangling, and confuted by the practice of the Fathers.

Thirdly, That Reading is to be preferred before Preaching.

We do not deny, but that the Word read, is the rule of holiness, may convert, the Spirit accompanying companying his Ordinance; and therefore is to have place, and due respect in the Congregation: but we will not equal it to Preaching. If Reading were more excellent, and of greater force to convert, than Preaching; why are not the people converted, that have a Reader? To what end then serve Schools of the Prophets? Wherefore should men study the knowledge of Tongues, and Arts, to divide the Word aright, and to distribute to every man's present necessities? And why should Satan rage more against Preachers, than Readers; except the Word powerfully delivered did not the more batter and beat down his Kingdom? Besides, why did not Christ send out his Apostles with this charge, Go, read; but, Go, preach to all Nations? Wherefore doth Paul pronounce a Woe to them that preach not the Gospel? And why did he not charge his son Timothy before God, to read in season, and out of season?

Yea, but may some say, The ancient Fathers were extraordinary men, and therefore no Patterns for our Preaching, &c. They were glorious Lights, and we but Glow-worms; they were Cedars, we but Shrubs, &c.

Let them be what they were, I as much reverence and respect them, as any man alive, if we take truth and discretion with us. And therefore at this time, I will suppose (I say so, because I doubt not, but our Age hath brought forth as worthy Divines, if not worthier, as any of the ancient Fathers;) I say, I will suppose them to be as it were Giants, and we Dwarfs: Yet set a Dwarf upon a Giants shoulders, and he will see further, and so might certainly we, but for Sloth, Idleness, Worldliness, Ambition, and other such base and vile degenerations of these later Times.

It may be further objected, That there was more necessity of the Fathers frequent Preaching, especially in those Primitive Times, for more plentiful publishing and propagation of the Gospel, &c. and suppressing Heresies, &c.

Passingly weak, and untrue. There is far more need of much Preaching now, than in former times. For we live in the last days, wherein those perilous times are come upon us, which Paul fore-tells 2 Tim. 3:1. &c. and wherein iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold, &c. Math. 24:12. And at this day we oppose the Hydra of all Heresies, Popery; which opposeth even the whole Body of Christianity. Again, their Homilies are against Drunkenness, Pride, Swearing, Luxury, Covetousness, love of the World, Usury, painted Faces, false Haire, Anger, Envy, Ambition, &c. All which sins, and many more, reign and rage at this day with more heinousness, and a higher hand, than heretofore.

2. A second means whereby the Word may dwell plentifully in us, is, by a constant and conscionable reading the Book of God. This Exercise is commanded to Kings and Captains, Deut. 17:17,18,19, Josh. 1:8. who may seem most privileged, by their entanglement in many and weighty affairs.

Christ bids the Jews, John. 5:39. Search the Scriptures, as the well-spring of eternal life. The Holy-Ghost commends the Jews of Berea, as more noble than they of Thessalonica, because they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, Act. 17:11. See Deut. 6,7,8,9. See many Motives to this duty, before: It is the Word of Salvation, of Truth, of Life, of Reconciliation, a Letter from Heaven, a Treasury of all excellent things: it shall judge us, it only can heal a wounded Soul; it contains all our evidence for Heaven, and it is the object of divine Faith, &c.

Nay, and because the Papists have wickedly dammed up this Fountain of Life from the common people, hear the judgment and zeal of Antiquity, in pressing this duty.

First, hear Chrysostom.

Hear, I pray you, all ye Lay-men, (saith Chrysostom) get yet Bibles, a Medicine for your Souls, &c. You cast all upon our shoulders. You ought only to be instructed of us, but your Wives and Children should be by you, &c. But nowadays, your Children prefer devilish Songs and Dancing's, even as Cooks, and Caters, and leaders of Dances, but none knows any Psalm.

The same Chrysostom, to stir up men to diligent reading the Scriptures, maketh good this assertion; There is no affliction or misery of body or soul, but may receive a Medicine out of God's Book.

1. A man heavy-hearted, and of a sad spirit, (saith he) takes the Bible in his hand; after he hath met with that place, Psal. 42:11. (Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, &c.) he is refreshed.

2. Another (saith he) is oppressed with extreme poverty, beholds the wicked wallow in worldly wealth, and flourish like a green Bay-tree: But after he hath cast his eye upon that, Psal. 55:22. (Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee, &c.) he is comforted.

3. Another is hunted with calumnies and insidiations, &c. and no human help will be had; the Prophet (saith he) doth teach him what to do, in these words: They did speak against me, but I prayed.

4. Another is forsaken even of his friends and kinsmen, and contemned of those who were most beholding to him: Hear how the Prophet behaved himself in such a case, Psal. 38:11. &c.13. &c.

He concludes thus: Thou hast seen, whensoever any calamity doth oppress a man, how convenient an Antidote he may take from the Scriptures, and all care of this life may be driven back; neither should we be grieved for anything that falls out. Therefore, I beseech you, that you would come hither, and diligently attend to the reading of the holy Scriptures; not only when you come hither, but even at home take the holy Bible into your hands, and go reap the profit that is in them with great earnestness. Moreover, what that sensible Bread doth to increase bodily strength, that Reading doth to the soul; for it is spiritual nourishment, and makes the soul vigorous, &c.

But we may add to Chrysostom's Antidotes, these 16. more.

1. Art thou weary of the ways of vanity, and coming on with a grieved and sorrowful heart for thy sin, to meet thy dear Redeemer; and doth the conceit of the number and heinousness of thy transgressions, cross and confound thy hopes of being received to mercy? Why then look upon Paul; he shed the blood of the Saints with extraordinary rage and fury, Act. 9:1. upon Manasseh, a man of prodigious impiety, 2 Chron. 33:6, upon some of Peters hearers, who crucified the Lord

of Life, Act. 2:23. If these will not serve the turn, look upon Adam; who cast away himself, and undid all, and was the cause that all that issued out of his loins, unto the Worlds end, fell into the damnation of Hell: and yet all these, upon repentance, were received unto mercy. And therefore, if thou canst now heartily repent, fear no former sins.

2. Hast thou by the violence of Satan's temptations, the sly enticements of thine own sinful nature, and the cunning insinuations of thy former bosom-sin, been fearfully overtaken with some scandalous fall, since thou wast converted, and gave thy Name unto Grace; and upon illumination of thy conscience, remorse, and meditation of return, thou art ashamed to look Christ Jesus in the face, because thou hast so shamed thy profession; and thou art so troubled with horror and conceit, that thy case is singular, that thou canst find no ease to thine humbled and sorrowful heart? Why then look upon David, Peter, &c. transcendent instances, that thou may not sink into despair.

3. Art thou plunged into the perplexities and fearful apprehensions of a spiritual desertion? Art thou deprived of thy former comfortable feelings of God's favorable countenance? Hast thou no comfort in prayer? &c. Look upon David, Ps. 77.

4. It may be, upon thy Bed of Death, when Satan will make thy sins appear far more ugly and horrible to the eye of thy Conscience, than ever he did before; and will persuade thee all he can, that all thy holy services unto God, and new obedience, was quite marred with Pride, Hypocrisy, and by-respects; I say, it may be then thy heart will quite fail thee, and thy conceit of God's wrathful and angry countenance for thy sin, may so oppress and confound thy soul, that thou mayest fear lest thou be forsaken: Why then think upon thy Savior's

mournful cry upon the Cross; My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

5. It may be thou art a true-hearted Nathanael, in whose spirit there is no guile; hates all sin heartily, both in thyself and others, desirest and laborest to please God in all things, and to keep a good conscience before all things in the World; and yet thou findest and feelest in thy breast many times a heavy, sad, and uncheerful heart: why then, hear David, a man after God's own heart, of a more excellent spirit, and eminent graces, than thou art, complaining Psal. 43:5. Why art thou so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?

6. Art thou grievously troubled with the haunt and horror of some special sin, of which thou canst not be so easily rid; and doest thou therefore go mourning all the day? Why then look also upon David, Psal. 32. In such a case, he roared all the day, his bones were consumed, and his native moisture was turned into the drought of Summer.

7. Art thou vexed to the heart, and fearfully haunted with some horrible and hateful injections of Satan; thoughts framed by himself immediately, and put into thee; perhaps tending to Atheism, or to the dishonor of God in some high degree, or to the disgrace of his Word, or self-destruction, &c. or the like: thoughts which thou canst not remember, without horror; and darest not reveal, or name, for their strange and prodigious hatefulness? Why then consider, how this malicious Fiend dealt with the Son of God: He suggested unto his most holy and unspotted imagination, these propositions: first, Murder; Make away thyself, Math. 4:6, secondly, Fall down and worship the Devil, Vers. 9. What more fearful and horrible apprehensions? And yet these were suggested to our blessed Savior;

to him perhaps more sensibly, to thee more secretly. His pure and holy heart, uncapable of sin, did reject them with infinite contempt; and himself did utterly conquer and confound the Tempter, and that for thee, and thy sake too. And if thine heart rise against, abominate, abandon, grieve, and be humbled for them, they shall never be laid to thy charge, but set on Satan's Score. For all them, thou mayest go on cheerfully and comfortably in the course of Christianity: And so do. And let not Satan attain his devilish end by them; which is, to work astonishment in thy mind, horror in thy conscience, heaviness in thy heart, distractions in thy thoughts, &c. that thereby thou mayest be disheartened and disabled for the cheerful discharge and performance both of thy particular and general calling. Or else, art thou long after thy conversion, assaulted with perhaps sorer spiritual pangs, and more horror, than at thy change? Consider David, Job, Hezekiah.

8. Hast thou lost thy goods, or children? Doth the Wife that lies in thy bosom, set herself against thee? Do thy nearest friends charge thee falsely? Art thou diseased from top to toe? Do the Arrows of the Almighty stick fast in thy soul? Thy affliction is grievous enough, if thou hast any of these. But do they all, in the greatest extremity, concur upon thee at once? Hast thou lost all thy children, and all thy goods? Doth thy Wife afflict thy afflictions? &c. If this be not thy case, thou comest short of Job, a most just man, and high in God's favor.

9. Hast thou given thy Name to Religion, and art a Professor of Grace; and art thou therefore villainously traduced with many slanderous nicknames, and odious imputations? Art thou called Puritan, Precisian, Hypocrite, Humorist, Dissembler, &c? Why, graceless wretches, when he was upon Earth, called Christ Jesus,

Devil. See Math. 10:25, John. 7:20. Contemn thou therefore forever, the utmost malice of the most scurrile tongue.

10. Art thou a loving and tender-hearted Mother unto thy Children, and hast thou lost thy dearest? Why, the blessed Mother of Christ stood by, and saw her own only dear innocent Son, the Lord of Life, most cruelly and villainously murdered upon the Cross, and die a shameful death before her eyes, John. 19:25.

11. Art thou a woman, who in the time of thy travail art pressed with many wants; with want of comfortable company, desired helps, a fairer room, and other worldly comforts and conveniences? Why yet comfort thyself with this; That holy Virgin, which brought into the World the Worlds Savior, brought forth that blessed Babe in a Stable, and laid him in a Cratch, Luke 2:7. It is very like, far more poorly, in respect of worldly comforts, than the poorest sort of women amongst us; with less comfortable helpers, and in a less seemly and commodious place, for such a purpose.

12. Hath thy Faith lost its feeling; and besides, doth God look upon thee with an angry countenance, and is thy heart filled with heaviness and horror? Yet for all this, let the hand of Faith by no means loose it hold-fast upon the precious sufferings and saving blood-shed of thy dear Redeemer. Thou hast before thee, a matchless and transcendent precedent in this point. Thus cries holy Job, having, besides his unparalleled variety and extremity of outward afflictions, the Arrows of the Almighty sticking fast in him, and drinking up his spirits; Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him, Cap. 13:15. So Abraham, Rom. 4:18.

13. Doest thou, day after day, pour out thy soul in prayer before the Throne of Grace, with all the earnestness and instancy thou canst possibly; and doest thou still rise up dull and heavy, and

uncomforted, without answer from God, or comfortable sense of his favor and love shed into thine heart? Why, yet pray still; assuredly, at length thou shalt be gloriously refreshed, and registered in the remembrance of God, for a Christian of excellent faith. See a pattern of rare and extraordinary patience this way, Math. 15:23. &c.

14. Doth the World, Satan, carnal men, thine own friends, formal Teachers, suppose and censure thee to be a dissembler in thy profession, and will needs concurrently and confidently fasten upon thee the imputation of Hypocrisy? Why, yet for all this, let thy sincere heart, conscious to itself of its own truth in holy services, like a strong Pillar of Brasse, beat back and reject with noble contempt and glorious disdain, all their empoisoned Arrows of malice and slander this way. Thou hast a right worthy pattern in the Book of God, for this purpose. Job had against him not only the Devil, his enemy, pushing at him with his poisoned weapons; but even his own friends, scourging him with their tongues; yea, his own Wife a Thorn, pricking him in the eye; yea, his own God miserably lashing his naked soul with Scorpions; powerful motives, to make him suspect himself of former halting and hollow-heartedness in the ways of God: yet notwithstanding all this, his good and honest heart having been long before acquainted with and knit unto his God with sincerity and truth, makes him boldly and resolutely to protest; That until he die, he will never take away his innocence from himself; that he would keep his righteousness, and not forsake it, and that his heart should not reprove him for his days.

15. Hast thou an untoward Wife, that is a continual dropping and a perpetual Goad in thy side? Hear Job's complaint, Cap. 19:17. My breath is strange to my Wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of mine own body.

16. Art thou vexed with a profane dogged Husband? Abigail, a Wife, and precious woman, had a Nabal to her yoke-fellow.

Thus these patterns and precedents in the Book of God, purposely registered for the refreshing and recovery of his chosen, in spiritual or temporal straits, are ordinarily proposed in a transcendent and matchless degree; that in their greatest extremities, by reflecting their eyes upon such examples, they may be preserved from despair, have the stronger consolation, and not think their cases to be comfortless and singular. Let these considerations move us to be well read in these holy mysteries, and day and night exercised in reading and meditating on them. But to our purpose, hear further what others say in this Point.

Secondly, hear Gregory the great.

What is the sacred Scripture, but a certain Epistle of the omnipotent God to his creature? And surely, if a man should receive writings from his Emperor, he would not rest, he would not be quiet, he would give no sleep to his eyes, unless he had first known what that earthly Emperor had written to him. The Emperor of Heaven, the Lord of men and Angels, hath sent his Letters to thee, concerning thy life; and yet (my vain-glorious son) thou doest neglect earnestly to read those Letters. Study them therefore, I pray thee, and daily meditate upon the words of thy Creator: Learn the mind of God in the Word of God, that thou mayest aspire more earnestly to eternal things, and that your mind may with greater desire be inflamed to the heavenly Kingdom.

Thirdly, Origen teacheth, That the people should learn the Scriptures without book.

Fourthly, Jerome. counselleth, That by daily reading the Scriptures, we should get wisdom: His words import so much.

Fifthly, Read the Scriptures (saith Austin) for that they were written to the end we should be comforted.

Sixthly, Jerome writing to Gaudentius about the education of a young maid, would have her at seven years old, and when she begins to blush, to learn without book the Psalter; and until she come to be marriageable, to make the treasure of her heart the Books of Solomon, the Gospels, Apostles, and Prophets.

Object. 1. But the Scriptures are hard to be understood, &c.

Answ. Hear,

(1) Chrysostom. All things are clear and plain out of the holy Scriptures. Whatsoever things are necessary, are manifest.

(2) Jerome. The Lord hath spoken by his Gospel, not that a few, but that all should understand it. Plato wrote his writings, but not to the people, but to a few; scarce three understand him.

(3) Cyril. The Scriptures are profitably recommended unto us in an easy speech, that they should not go beyond the capacity of any.

(4) Again, Chrysostom, who having said much for often reading, and plainness of the Scriptures, concludes: Who is there, to whom whatsoever is written in the Scriptures, is not manifest? Who is there, who hearing, that the meek are blessed, the merciful blessed, the pure in heart blessed, and the like, shall want a Master, that he should learn any of those things which are spoken?

Object. 2. But I am entangled with variety of businesses, I have no leisure to spend time in reading Scripture, as you advise: I am still busied in my Trade, Husbandry, Merchandise, in some high room, &c. I have a great charge, Wife, children, and family to care for: Let Scholars, Ministers, Gentle-folks, &c. that have more time and leisure, ply such businesses, for I cannot.

Answ. Who are more busied than Kings and Captains? And yet they are commanded to be diligent readers of God's Book. See Deut. 17:18,19, Josh. 1:8.

But Chrysostom makes this Objection, and answers it himself excellently: What sayest thou, Oh man? Is it not thy duty to read the Scriptures, because thou art distracted with innumerable cares? Yea, it is thy duty rather than others, &c. In which Sermon also, he lets fall this confident assertion: Neither now can it be, it cannot be, I say, that any man should attain unto salvation, unless he be continually conversant in spiritual reading.

Object. 3. But, alas, I cannot read.

Answ. Hear then Austin:

Neither let this be sufficient for you, that in the Church you do hear divine reading; but also in your houses, either do you yourselves read, or get others that can read, and do you willingly hearken.

And he stirs them up to it, with these considerations:

(1) Remember, Brethren, (saith he) the saying of our Lord, in which he saith; If a man shall gain the whole World, and lose his own soul, what will it profit him?

(2) What remaineth and abideth in a man, but that which everyone, either by reading, or praying, or doing good works for the salvation of his soul, hath laid up in the treasure of his Conscience?

Object. 4. But will not public reading in the House of God serve the turn?

Answ. By no means. Hear Chrysostom:

Therefore often do I tell you beforehand, many days before the argument of which I shall speak, that in the days in the meanwhile, taking a Book, and weighing the whole sum of the matter, after ye have understood what hath been said, and what remains to be said, you may make your mind more fit to hear those things which afterward shall be declared; and that I always exhort to, and will not cease to do it, That you do not only attend here to those things which are spoken, but also when you shall be at home, you may daily attend to the reading of holy Scriptures. Which thing I have not ceased to press upon those who privately have talked with me.

Object. 5. But from this liberty of reading Scriptures, spring many Heresies.

Answ. The sacred Scripture is not the cause of Heresies, but the ignorance of the holy Scripture. Hear Chrysostom:

Hence arose so many thousand evils, from the ignorance of holy Writ: Hence sprung up so great a plague of Heresies.

Godly Books also, with which this Age is abundantly and plentifully enriched, must be diligently and profitably read.

3. Another means by which the Word may dwell plentifully in us, is Conference. See Deut. 6:7, Luke 24:19. That of Austin before, in the

second Reason of our seldom Preaching: That of Chrysostom, Walking with God. Rogers Seven Treatises, &c. my Walking with God. &c.

4. A fourth means, is Meditation. Of which, see Rogers Seven Treatises, &c.

Matter of Meditation.

We may meditate upon any part of God's Word, on God himself, his Wisdom, Power, his Mercy; or on the infinite variety of good things, which we receive of his free bounty; upon his works, and judgments; upon our sins, and the vileness of our corruption, that we yet carry about us; upon our mortality, and changes in this World; upon our manifold afflictions of this life, and how we may in best manner bear and go through them, and the benefit thereof; upon the manifold and great privileges which we enjoy daily, through the inestimable kindness of God towards us; upon the four last things, but especially of those things that we have most special need of.

Of the thing meditated upon, consider,

First, The definition, or description.

Secondly, The distribution, sorts, kinds, or parts.

Thirdly, Causes especially efficient, and final.

Fourthly, The fruits and effects which it bringeth forth.

Fifthly, The subject wherein it is, or about which it is occupied.

Sixthly, The qualities or properties adjoined. And know, that oftentimes, in common practice, these three, the final cause, the

fruit or the effect, the use or property of a thing, are often confounded.

Seventhly, The contrary.

Eighthly, The comparison.

Exemplify in the joys of Heaven; of which, see Hall: In sin; of which, see Practice of Christianity. Upon this occasion, let us peruse, in this manner, Fasting, and the Plague.

5. A fifth means to profit by the Word, is Teaching, Praying with, and Catechizing your children and servants.

To which Duty, be stirred up and strengthened, by

First, Scriptures; Deut. 4:9 & 6:7 & 11:19, Psal. 78:5,6, Exod. 12:26,27 & 13,14, Josh. 4:6,7,21,22, Deut. 6:20,21, Eph. 6:4.

Secondly, By the pattern and practice of holy Parents, from time to time. Consider for this purpose, the carriage of Abraham, Gen. 18:19, David, Prov. 4:4, Bathsheba, Prov. 31:1, Lois and Eunice, 2 Tim. 1:5.

Thirdly, By the authority of the ancient Fathers.

(1) Hear Austin.

Notwithstanding, my dear friends, in so great a difference of manners, and such abominable corruption, govern your Houses, govern your Children, govern your Families: As it behooves us to speak to you in the Church, so it pertains to you to do in your Houses; that ye may be able to give a good account of those who are under you. Again; I pray thee, my Brother, I pray thee, show to all under thee, of mere good will, from the least to the greatest in thy

House, the love and sweetness of Heaven, the bitterness and fear of Hell; and be thou solicitous and watchful, because thou shalt render an account to the Lord for all those under thee, that are in thy House. Declare, charge, command, persuade them, that they would take heed of Pride, of Slandering, of Drunkenness, of Fornication, of Luxury, Anger, Perjury, Covetousness, which is the root of all evil.

(2) Nazianzen. Hast thou a Child? Let not wickedness take advantage and occasion: Let it be endued with sanctity, and consecrated to thy spirit from the very Cradle.

I know he means it immediately of Baptism: but by Analogy, that binds also to have a care of religious education.

Fourthly, by Reasons.

First, Thy Children sprung from thy Loins, and came into the World, to increase the number of God's people, to learn the way to Heaven, and walk in it; not only to uphold thy House, inherit thy Possessions, and convey thy Name to future Generations. The glorifying of our God, serving our Brethren in love, salvation of our own Souls, are the chief ends why we live a little while in this World. Now Parents should be most solicitous to further their Children, for the attainment of the main end, and most sovereign good.

Secondly, Neglect of this Duty, makes Parents worse to their Children, than to their Beasts: For,

1. They provide for their Beasts all things necessary for them; but in their own dear Children, they neglect that One necessary thing.
2. They procure for, and put their Beasts to all things of which they are capable. Their Children are capable of Grace, and Immortality;

and they never meddle, nor move them to look that way, or lay hold upon eternal Life.

Thirdly, Let the remarkable and rueful example of Eli, be forever a keen spur in the sides of slothful Parents, to quicken them to this Duty.

Fourthly, Thou art far more cruel than the Ostrich and the Dragon, and mayest be said to have sucked the breasts of Tigers, and to be hewed out of the hardest Rock; if having brought thy Children forth into this World, limbs for the Devil, and fuel for Hell-fire, thou labor not might and main, to get them new-borne the members of Christ, and freed from everlasting flames.

Fifthly, Grace only is able to make thy Children truly obedient, serviceable, and everlastingly thankful; having now a double tie; first, birth; secondly, new-birth. Then only, and never before, do they begin to pray for their Parents, to deal faithfully in their businesses, not to long for their death.

Sixthly, A conscionable and constant performance of this Duty in their life time, will fill Parents hearts full of sweetest joy and heavenly comfort upon their Beds of Death; when they see, by their care and zeal for their spiritual good, that holy knowledge and wisdom planted in their Children's hearts, which will bring them after them to eternal bliss: or how soever, consciousness of a conscionable discharge of their Duty in this respect, will infinitely refresh them.

Seventhly, It is the way to make thy posterity truly honorable, and to meet thee in Heaven. Those Children which are taught by thee, may teach the same things unto theirs, and those to others, &c.

Eighthly, Thy Children neglected in this point, and so dying impenitently, will curse thee everlastingly in Hell, for thy bloody inexorable cruelty towards them in this kind.

Ninthly, Besides innumerable sins of thine own, (the least of which, merits eternity of Hellish torments) thou hast justly set upon thy Score, by this unconscionable murdering negligence, the sins and sinful courses of thine own Children; which will lie full heavy upon thy Conscience, when it shall be ragingly enlightened by the long provoked wrath of God.

6. The next means, is Prayer, Prov. 2:3,4,5.

7. The seventh means, is Practice. See John 7:17.

8. The eight, is Experience. See Dike, Of the Heart.

3. Be none of the reprobate grounds, Math. 13, of which, see Dike, Taylor.

4. Be none of those, who invited to the Marriage of the Kings Son, Math. 22. either, first, willfully contemn, Vers. 3, secondly, or carelessly disesteem, Vers. 5, thirdly, or cruelly persecute, Vers. 6.

5. Reject all those Hellish temptations, which do mightily keep off the dint and power of the most piercing Word; and being entertained, will cause the Word preached to be but as the breath of the Minister scattered in the Air, and as Water spilled upon the Ground, which cannot be gathered up again. They are like those strong Holds of Satan, mentioned 2 Cor. 10:4,5, which being set up in any heart, will blunt the edge of this spiritual weapon, that it will do no good. They be these that follow.

1. In the first place, and highest strain of impiety, the depth of our corrupt nature desireth, That there were no God: The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God, Psal. 14:1. That is, he labors for a resolution, and persuasion in his own heart, That there is no Tribunal in Heaven, before which he shall hereafter be arraigned; no Treasury of Plagues, and Woes in Hell, with which he shall hereafter be everlastingly fettered and enchained.

2. But if it so be, this spiritual fool cannot so abolish and extinguish those secret notions and apprehensions of a sacred and infinite Deity, which are naturally implanted in the bowels of the most desperate and damned miscreant; but that the terrors of the last Judgment, and plagues of Hell, do eftsoons vex and bite his Conscience with restless remorse and stinging's: Why then, in a second place, that he may procure some ease and quiet to his wallowing in sensual pleasures, he labors might and main to harden his forehead against Heaven, to make his heart like the nether-Millstone, with his own Soul-murdering hand to put a hot Iron to his Conscience; that so, if he cannot blunder and blot out of his mind those natural impressions of a God-head, yet at the least he may extinguish and banish out of his heart all fear of that God, of his Judgment-Seat, and vengeance against sin: That so he may rush like a wild Horse into the Battle, furiously and desperately upon all villainies and vanities, without all check of Conscience, and controlment, from the terrors of the Judgment to come. In this desperate and furious mood, he joins himself with these Giants of Babel, Isa. 5. who outrageously rear up Towers of Treason and defiance against Heaven, and throw mountains of pride and contempt one upon another, that they may climb up to the Seat of God, and pull him out of his Throne, crying aloud towards Heaven; Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it; and

let the counsel of the holy One of Israel draw near, and come, that we may know it.

3. If this will not be, and that he find no success in setting himself against Heaven, (Who ever opposed himself against God, and prospered?) but that he is crushed and confounded with the majesty and terror thereof: Why then, in a third place, he fastens the fangs of his malicious and wrangling wit, and the fury of his profane Atheism, upon his true and holy Word: And that,

First, Either by entertaining or harboring a reprobate and blasphemous conceit, that the sacred Word of God is but a politic invention, and device of State, to keep men in order, and moderation; to maintain Order and peaceableness in Cities and Societies; and to preserve the World, and mankind, from wildness and Barbarism.

Secondly, Or by proportioning his carnal conceit of God's pure and undefiled Law, to that which he holds of the Decrees and Constitutions of men.

And if it be either so, or so, it is well enough; he can, in the meantime, therewith still the cries of his Conscience, and stop the mouth of that Worm that never dies, that it gnaw not too eagerly, and fiercely, to the dis-sweetening of his carnal contentment's, and the making of his sensual pleasures more unpleasant.

Now, would it not vex a man, to have the meat pulled out of his mouth, his chain from his neck, his clothes from his back, his limbs from his body, his right arm from his shoulder, his eyes out of his head? So it is with every unregenerate man, and such is his torture, when that two-edged Sword, the Word of God, strikes at his sweet sin, and sensual pleasures: And therefore no marvel, though he strive

and struggle, shift and shield himself, by any means. Nay, the Lusts of the unregenerate man, are his very life. For, as every godly man liveth a double life; one of Grace, by the sanctifying power of the Spirit; another, of Nature: So every wicked man hath a double life; one, of Nature; and another, of corruption, by the cursed influence of Hell.

Nay, the sensual delights of the sinful man are dearer unto him than his life. Hence it is, (as we may observe by experience) that sometimes a covetous man losing the Life of his life, the Wedge of Gold, and Hoards of Wealth, makes an end of himself. That the Wanton, because he is rejected, and discarded from the object of his lustful pleasures, finds no pleasure in life; but cuts off himself, by a violent and untimely death. That Ahithophel being disgraced, and over-topped in a point of Policy, (the crown and pride of his worldly happiness) put his household in order, and hanged himself.

Nay, and yet further, the profane man prefers the sensual pleasures of his heart, before the loss of his immortal Soul. For, how oft may we see the honor of God, and everlasting blessedness, put as it were in the one Scale of the Ballance, and a little transitory Pleasure in the other? And in this case, the unsanctified man suffering one sweet sin or other to weigh down the exceeding weight of heavenly bliss, the invaluable treasure of a good Conscience, the infinite glory of God, and the salvation of his own dear Soul, in that great Day.

This groweth out of our corrupt nature: For we have all, even in the best of us, the source and seeds of all sin. If the Lord should leave and abandon us, to the full swing and sway of our own corruption, and not either bridle us by his restraining Spirit, or bless us with his sanctifying Spirit; we might every one of us become as bad as Julian the Apostate, who did maliciously abjure Christ; and as Judas, who

did perfidiously betray him. Naturally we would wallow in sin, without check of Conscience, or controlment by the terror of the Judgment to come.

4. But if he cannot arm himself against the terrors of God, and truth of his Word; but that he must needs acknowledge the one, and believe the other: Why then, in a fourth place, with much spite and malice, he flies in the face of God's Ministers, Ambassadors, which are his tormentors before his time: And that,

First, Either against his Preaching, or against his Person: as, too obscure, or too plain; too cold, or too boisterous; too particular, too personal, too precise, too imperious; too tart, and terrible; too full of Judgment; tending to Sedition, against the State, or the like. And therefore he labors, not only with his own heart, to breed within himself a distaste and disconceit of it; but also puts to his helping hand, to stay and stop the free course and current of it from others. He cannot abide to have his sweet sin struck at still, and still to have his Conscience grated upon, by the Ministry of the Word; and therefore he does what he can, to abandon and abolish it. When Jeremiah's Sermon, denouncing God's Judgment against Judah and Israel, were brought unto the King, Jer. 36:23. Jehudi had not read past three or four sides before him, but the King stamped and raged, he presently took the Roule, and cut it with a Pen-knife, and cast it into the fire that was on the Hearth, until all the Roule was consumed in the fire, that was on the Hearth. In the 38. of Jeremiah, when the Princes and Courtiers were nettled and stung with the down-right dealing and holy severity of Jeremiah's Preaching; they presently ran unto the King, and traduced the blessed Prophet, to be a transgressor of Policy, and an enemy to the State. Therefore the Princes said unto the King: We beseech you, let this man be put to death; for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of War that

remain in this City, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: For this man seeketh not the wealth of this people, but the hurt. And there you see what was the issue.

Thus Prophaneness and Policy doth ever interpret the Doctrine of Life, and powerful application of the word, to be the Source and Seeds of Faction and Sedition; to be incompatible with the civil State, and the very cutthroat of Kingdoms and States imperial. Paul, as we may see in the 24. of the Acts, for his upright dealing, was nicknamed a Seditious, and a troubler of the State. Certainly (saith Tertullus) we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of Sedition among all the Jews throughout the World, and a chief maintainer of the Sect of the Nazarites. Thus the Word of Life, and news of salvation from Heaven, is many times charged with Novelty, Sedition, and Heresy. But that which by the construction of carnal conceits, may be termed Heresy, Factious, and Precise, is the very right way to Heaven. I confess (saith Paul) that after the way (which they call Heresy) so worship I the God of my Fathers, &c. So may many good Christians, and godly Ministers, say in these Times to the men of this World; After the way, which you call Precisenesse, Singularity, and Faction, do we truly serve the living God, and save our souls.

Secondly, Or if the authority and power of his Preaching doth so astonish and confound him, that he hath no heart to meddle that way, or oppose against it; yet at least, rather than not be malicious, he will discharge his fury against his person.

Hence it is, that a faithful and conscionable Minister commonly, wheresoever he lives, is an eminent mark whereat Prophaneness and Policy, Malice and Cruelty, Hell and the World, discharge the utmost of their rage and poison. He above all others, is sure to be wrongfully

loaden with slanders, disgraces, lying imputations, and all manner of foul indignities; and many times by the baser sort, which is more intolerable. If he be but half so honestly careful, in providing for his family, as the carnal worldling is cursedly carking, he is covetous: If powerful in his Preaching, he is imperious: If he oppose against the sins of the Time, he is factious: If he be faithful in his Ministry, he is too precise, and plain: If he comes home to men's Consciences, he is too particular, and indiscreet. In a word, if he were Paul, he should be a pestilent fellow; if Christ Jesus, blessed forever (a horrible thing!) he should be Beelzebub: For so that glorious Lord, and blessed Servant, was nick-named and branded by the profane World.

Hence it is, that the generation of the profane and wicked Crue do ever furiously band themselves together, to transplant and root out a conscionable Minister, whensoever God brings him amongst them. Like an unquiet and raging Sea, they continually foam out spiteful speeches, filthy and shameful slanders, and lay things unto his charge, he never knew: That so, by discouraging him in his Ministry, weakening his hands, and breaking his heart, they may any ways be rid of him: Or else, by picking unnecessary Quarrels against him, they labor by Authority, and strong hand, to throw him out of his place. For their malice against a powerful Minister, is endless, and implacable.

It is ever the property of un-ingenuous profaneness, to hate and fear a faithful and conscionable Preacher as ill as the Plague, and so to esteem of him. This appears, by Tertullus censure of Paul; Certainly (saith he) we have found this man a pestilent fellow: When indeed himself was a pernicious Orator, and abused his cursed Eloquence, to the confusion of Goodness. In the Original, the word signifies, the Plague. The Plague, that great affrighter, and terror of the sons of men, is not half so terrible and vexing, as is that man to a carnal

heart, which preaches with power and authority, and not as the Scribes and formal Doctors; and no marvel. The Plague threatens but only the fears and pangs of a temporal death, and takes but away the natural Life; but the powerful Word, from the mouth of a conscionable Minister, doth strike to the very heart of a carnal man, the terrors of Hell-fire and everlasting Vengeance, and doth labor to bereave him of his Life of Corruption, and Pleasures; which, as I told you before, is more sweet and dear unto him, than his Life of Nature.

And hereupon it is, that as you see Towns and Cities busily bestir themselves, watch and ward, diligently inquire, and examine passengers, to keep out the Plague; so it is the policy and practice of those places, where Drunkards, Swaggerers, Worldlings, and profane men swarm, jointly to conspire and band together, for the banishing of godly Ministers, and driving them out of their Coast. Christ Jesus himself, who spake as never any man spake, was so used by the Swinish Gadarenes; as you may read in the fifth of Luke. Paul and Barnabas, that glorious pair of worthy Pastors, were so used by the rebellious and stiff-necked Jews, Act. 13. whereupon they told them to their faces, That thereby they judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Then Paul and Barnabas (saith the Text) spake boldly, and said; It was necessary, that the Word of God should have first been spoken unto you: But seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, loe we turn unto the Gentiles. The Book of God, Ecclesiastical Stories, experience of our Times, do plentifully verify and confirm this Point.

5. But if so be, this Spiritual Fool, whom we have carried along through so many steps of impiety, cannot have his will against the Preaching and the Person of the Minister; but that he sees the Power of the Word, which he cannot decline, is like continually to vex him, to strike through his loins, with fear and trembling still to grate upon

his Conscience for his sweet sin, to discern and discover the very thoughts and imaginations of his heart; or that he is more ingenuous and fair-conditioned than other unregenerate men (for sometimes sweetness and lovingness of natural disposition doth bridle men from raging against the power of holy Doctrine, and sincerity of an honest man:.) Why then, in a fifth place, he

First, Either resolves (as many do) to give the Preacher hearing indeed, and perhaps reverent attention too; but with this secret reservation, That he shall not stir and move him with all his Preaching; That say what he will, he shall never persuade him, that this or that sin is so heinous as he makes it; he shall never drive him from the Fashions of the Times, and Customs of his Fore-fathers; he shall never bring him out of conceit with good-fellowship. So, that as the deaf Adder stoppeth his ears against the Enchanter, charm he never so wisely; so shuts he the ears of his heart against the Word of Life: and though it sounds daily loud and strongly in his ears, yet will he by no means suffer it to sink feelingly and powerfully into his soul. Those men which rest upon this step of impiety, and in this degree of profaneness, though they hear Sermon upon Sermon, yet are they still the same men: They are Liars still, they are Drunkards still, they are Usurers still, they are Swearers still, they are luke-warm Professors still, &c. they are still as they were. Though these sins have again and again been cried against, and many times reprov'd, and their Consciences convinc'd; yet the Word which is preached amongst them, hath no more power, nor wrought more alteration upon them, than upon the Seats where they sit: Though the glorious Light of the Gospel shine fair and bright upon them, yet they lie still hard frozen in their dregs, and stark blind in matters of Heaven: Though the Hammer of the Word beat often upon their hearts, yet it doth not break and bruise them, but more and more harden and emmarble them, like an Anvill and Adamant: Though they be washed

with many plentiful Showers from Heaven, yet they still continue black Moors, and Leopards; still full of the blackness of Hell, and spots and pollution of Satan.

Let those that are such among you, in the Name of God beware in time: for assuredly, the Damnation sleepeth not, the Day of Reckoning and every man's particular Judgment is very near; and then we must be answerable and countable for every Sermon we have heard: Every Sermon will then stand up, either to witness for us, or against us; for everyone we hear, either advanceth us a step nearer towards Heaven, or throws us a stair lower down towards Hell.

Secondly, Or if he cannot so fence himself against the keen edge of the Word, that two-edged Sword, which day after day is laid to the root of his corruption; nor so hide his head from the heat of that glorious and sacred Sun of Truth, which every Sabbath shines on his face; but that the sharp Arrows of the Word of Truth and Righteousness do pierce his heart, and Sword of Spirit gets so far within him, that it strikes and astonisheth his Conscience: Why then he,

First, Either strives and struggles against it, by shifting and shielding himself with Distinctions, Exceptions, Excuses, carnal Reasons, Restrictions, Limitations, false Glosses, private and partial Interpretations, and opposing one place of Scripture, in his own false and enforced Sense, against the true meaning and natural power of the Word in another place, as I have told you largely before. So wretchedly and unhappily is he wedded to the sinful pleasures of this vain World, that he will wrest his wit, the Word of God, or anything, to wrest out of his heart those piercing Arrows of the Word of Truth, shot by the hand of a skillful Archer; which if he would suffer to

search and sink, would fetch out the poison of his natural corruption, mortify his lust, and save his soul.

Secondly, Or if he have not wit and understanding to furnish himself fitly with probable Interpretations, formal Distinctions, and plausible Exceptions, (for this ability only befalls profane men of better parts, and more understanding:) Why then, being resolved not to submit to the power of the Word, nor to forsake his carnal contentment's, he takes this course; he surfeits so immoderately, and drinks so deep of sensual pleasures of that bosom-sin to which he is so much wedded, that he casts his Conscience asleep, drowns his heart in earthly delights, and so goes on at all adventures, and throws himself upon God's mercies, without all ground or warrant, with such conceits as these: That he hopes he shall do as well as others, who are far worse and more wicked than himself: That God, no doubt, will be merciful to one sin: That all his other good parts and good deeds will countervail and make amends for one infirmity, (for so he will call it, and conceive of it, though it be a gross and grievous sin:) That one sin will not require so great repentance, but that it may be well enough done on his death-bed, and such like.

Thus I have acquainted you by the way, with the steps of impiety, and degrees of profaneness, wherein unregenerate men, which hate to be reformed, and refuse to yield up themselves to be mastered and guided by the Power and Light of the holy and heavenly Word of the true and ever-living God, do unhappily rest and repose themselves, to the eternal confusion both of their souls and of their bodies: Which you must take heed of, if you would profit by the Word.

6. Discover and defeat all those Snares of Satan, that we have formerly mentioned to you in this Discourse, under the Fourth Use.

7. Deject and demolish those two strong Holds of Satan; first, Carnal Reason; secondly, Corrupt Affection; which I thus define: It is the actuated strength and rage of original pollution, which furiously executes the sensual and unreasonable determinations of corrupted Carnal Reason; stands at open defiance, and professes open hostility against Grace, goodness, and good men, and courses of sanctification; feeds upon so long, and fills itself so full with worldly vanities and pleasures, that growing by little and little incorrigible and untamable, it breeds and brings forth, as its natural issue, Despair, Horror, and the Worm which never dies.

By Carnal Reason, I understand the whole speculative power of the higher and nobler part of the Soul, which we call the Understanding, as it is naturally and originally corrupted, and utterly destitute of all Divine Light; and doth afterward, through its own sinful working and sensual discourse, grow wise in the World and earthy affairs, but disconcerted and opposite to the ways of God, and heavenly wisdom, by concluding and commending to itself false Principles, from deluded sense, and deducing false conclusions from true Principles, and by a continued exercise and experience in contemplation of Earth, and passages of worldly Policy.

By Corrupt Affection, I mean and comprise all the active inferior powers of the Soul, Will, Affections, Sense, as they are polluted and poisoned in the puddle of original corruption; and afterward being fleshed in sensual pleasures, and enforced by Satan's suggestions, become the furious executioners of all the sinful decrees and unsanctified determinations of the mis-guided understanding and wisdom of the flesh.

8. In hearing the Word, be sure,

First, To give earnest heed, Heb. 2:1.

Secondly, To consider seriously, 2 Tim. 2:7.

Thirdly, That we be not in this respect like leaking Vessels, and have Sieve-like memories, Heb. 2:1.

Fourthly, To keep the Word with much ado, with great contention and colluctation, Luke 8:15.

9. Suffer the Spirit of Bondage to have its work upon thee. Conclude horror upon thy heart, by the working of the Law, from such places as these; Deut. 29:19,20, 2 Thess. 1:8,9, Rev. 21:8.

10. When thy Conscience is once thoroughly wounded by the preparative work of the Spirit of Bondage, and all thy sins, even those in which thou hast taken greatest delight, become heavy and a grievous burden upon thy heart; then let that heavy heart of thine receive spiritual warmth, refreshing, and life,

First, By perusing the Lord Jesus in all the passages of his Love, Sufferings, and Satisfactions, from his coming from the Bosom of his Father, until his returning unto his right hand again; especially hanging upon him, bleeding and dying, and crying under the burden of our sins, My God, my God, &c. and so conquering and concluding, It is finished.

Secondly, By a feeling survey and sure settling upon all the Promises of Life, sealed with his righteous blood.

Thirdly, By cleaving to God's sweetest Name, which is to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, Exod. 34:6,7.

Fourthly, By resting with all thankful and joyful acknowledgement, and rejecting resolutely all scrupulous and fearful injections, upon

that blessed Mystery of God's free grace, which reacheth from everlasting to everlasting.

11. Then ever after walk watchfully and fruitfully in the path which is called holy.

Now for continual growing and profiting by the Ministry, in that new and blessed course; and for thriving by the food of the Word which thou enjoyest, take these directions, look unto these things.

First, Look to the dressing of it; that thy spiritual Cook be cunning, and conscionable. Otherwise, it may sometimes turn into rank poison unto thy Soul, fill thee with wind, and puff thee up with a causeless good conceit of thyself; impair thy spiritual health, keep thee stinted, as it were, and at a stay, &c. Nay, an ill spiritual Cook, by his juggling Tricks, may make thee believe all thy life long, that thou growest in Grace, and shalt go to Heaven; and thou art stark dead in sins and trespasses, and shalt be damned.

Secondly, The emptying and disburdening of the Stomach of thy Soul, of all Humours, Passions, Prejudice, Crosses, Troubles, Temptations, &c. or anything that will hinder the purity and power of the Word from taking possession of thy Soul: even the Honey-comb, the sweetest thing in the World, is loathsome, as the Wiseman saith, to a full stomach. Thou must bring a Heart and Head, like two empty Buckets, to draw with greediness and joy the Water of Life out of the Wells of Salvation.

Thirdly, To procure and raise an Appetite before thou come: from consideration; first, of its Necessity: Where the Word of God is not preached, the people perish; as you had it in the former Treatise. Secondly, Excellency: It is far more precious than purest Gold, dearer than thousands of Gold and Silver. Thirdly, Sweetness: It passes the

Honey, and Honeycomb. David, in his absence from the means, holds the Swallow and Sparrow happy Birds. Fourthly, Profit: It builds up the inner man, &c.

Fourthly, The Reception of it; That it ever be entertained with far more attention and reverence, than if we were hearing the mightiest Monarch in the World speaking immediately unto us, by personal compellation, about the weightiest affaire, and nearest concerning us: That it be ever heard as the Word of the mighty and ever-living God.

Fifthly, Retention. The most wholesome and sovereign meat, if presently voided, nourisheth not at all; many fall into a Consumption of Grace, by reason of weakness this way. They are hot and fierce to get unto a good Sermon, and they do well, to be careful thereabout; but their forwardness and fervency cools and expires, when the Sermon is done. They after, have little more to do with it, save only to say it was a good Sermon: As, many have an insatiable appetite in devouring meat, who cannot keep it for any space of time. The retentive power of the Soul then must be strengthened, and exercised, or else the attentive and attractive adds but more deadness to a spiritual Atrophy.

Sixthly, Concoction. By repetition, either in way of conference, with our neighbors, and Christian friends; or in way of examination, without Wives, Children, Servants, Scholars, or other inferiors. But principally, by that, first, excellent Exercise of Meditation, which is the very life of profitable Hearing; and the want of it, the death of all good Lessons: It inflames the heart with a kindly heat, to practice; as in brooding, the Hen inspires heat, and begets life: secondly, and by the heat of Prayer; that both warms the heart, fits the food, and brings a blessing upon both.

Seventhly, Digestion. By application of the points unto our own particular; by sorting the particulars of the Sermon, unto our own necessities; for the conquering of this Lust, ruling of that Passion, leaving this Sin, performing that Duty, &c.

Eighthly, Practice. Walking in the strength of it afterward; which makes it our own, and keeps the Soul in health, and growth, and comfortable temper.

And thus we may constantly grow by the Ministry of the Word; which is the principal public Banquet, which the Lord hath provided for feeding his Children's Souls.

The Sacraments are a second Service.

Even by the first, that is, Baptism, we may grow, not only when we feel it in our own bodies; but also, when we see it administered unto others. And therefore, the custom which hath prevailed in most places, of neglecting and contemning this part of the Food of our Souls, is to be severely censured, and sharply reprov'd.

By the second, that is, the Lord's Supper, we may thrive excellently, if we follow those Directions in my Preparative to it: To which I refer you, in the succeeding Treatise.

FINIS.

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