

DIRECTION TENTH.

THE SEVERAL PIECES OF THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD. SIXTH PIECE—THE CHRISTIAN'S SWORD.

‘And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God’ (Eph. 6:17).

Here we have the sixth and last piece in the Christian's panoply brought to our hand—A SWORD; and that of the right make—‘the sword of the Spirit.’ The sword was ever esteemed a most necessary part of the soldier's furniture, and therefore hath obtained a more general use in all ages, and among all nations, than any other weapon. Most nations have some particular weapons or arms proper to themselves; but few or none come into the field without a sword. A pilot without his chart, a scholar without his book, and a soldier without his sword, are alike ridiculous. But, above all these, is it absurd to think of being a Christian, without knowledge of the word of God and some skill to use this weapon. The usual name in Scripture for war is ‘the sword.’ ‘I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth,’ Jer. 25:29; that is, I will send war. And this because the sword is the weapon of most universal use in war, and also that whereby the greatest execution is done in the battle. Now such a weapon is the word of God in the Christian's hand. By the edge of this his enemies fall, and all his great exploits are done. ‘They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony,’ Rev. 12:11. There are two observables we may take notice of, before we fall to the closer discussion of the words. The first from the kind or sort of arms here presented for the Christian's use. The other from the place or order it stands in.

TWO OBSERVABLES DRAWN FROM THE WORDS.

FIRST OBSERVABLE. Mark the kind or sort of arms here appointed for the Christian's use. It is a weapon that is both defensive and offensive. Such is the sword. All the rest in the apostle's armoury are set out by defensive arms, girdle, breastplate, shield, and helmet—such as are of use to defend and save the soldier from his enemy's stroke. But the sword doth both defend him and serves to wound his enemy also. Of like use is the word of God to the Christian.

First. It is for defence. Easily might the soldier be disarmed of all his other furniture, how glistening and glorious soever, had he not a sword in his hand to lift up against his enemies' assaults. And with as little ado would the Christian be stripped of all his graces, had he not this sword to defend them and himself too from Satan's fury. ‘Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction,’ Ps. 119:92. This is like the flaming sword with which God kept Adam out of paradise. The saint is oft compared to Christ's garden and orchard. With the sword of the word he keeps this his orchard from robbing. There would not long hang any of their sweet fruit—either graces or comforts—upon their souls, were not this great robber Satan kept off with the point of this sword. O, this word of God is a terror to him; he cannot for his life overcome the dread of it. Let Christ but say, ‘It is written,’ and the foul fiend runs away with more confusion and terror than Caligula at a crack of thunder. And that which was of such force coming from Christ's blessed lips to drive him away, the saints have always found the most successful instrument to defend them against his fiercest and most impetuous temptations. Ask David what was the weapon with which he warded off the blows this enemy made at him, and he will tell you it was the word of God. ‘Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer,’ Ps. 17:4. That is, by the

help of thy word I have been enabled to preserve myself from those wicked works and outrageous practices, to which others, for want of this weapon to defend them, have been harried.

Second. It is for offence. The sword, as it defends the soldier, so it offends his enemy. Thus the word of God is, as a keeping, so a killing sword. It doth not only keep and restrain him from yielding to the force of temptations without, but also by he kills and mortifies his lusts within, and this makes the victory complete. A man may escape his enemy one day, and be overcome by him at another time. We read of some that for a while escaped the pollutions of the world, yet because their lusts were never put to the sword, and mortified in them by the power of the word applied to their hearts, were at last themselves overcome and slain by this secret enemy that lay skulking within their bosoms, II Peter 2:20, compared with ver. 22. Absalom, notwithstanding his being hanged by the hair of his head, might have lived to have taken revenge afterwards on them by whom he was then beaten, had not Joab come in timely and sped him, by sending his darts with a message of death to his heart. We have daily sad experiences of many that wriggle themselves out of their troubles of conscience—by which for a time they are restrained, and their sins, as it were, held by the hair—to rush afterwards into more abominable courses than they did before; and all for want of skill to use, or courage and faithfulness to thrust this sword by faith into the heart of their lusts.

SECOND OBSERVABLE. Observe the order and place wherein this piece of armour stands. The apostle first gives the Christian all the former pieces, and when these are put on, he then girds this sword about him. The Spirit of God, in holy writ, I confess, is not always curious to observe method; yet, methinks, it should not be unpardonable if I venture to give a hint of a double significancy in this very place and order that it stands in.

First. It may be brought in after all the rest, to let us know how necessary the graces of God's Spirit are to our right using of the word. Nothing more abused than the word. And why? but because men come to it with unsound and unsanctified hearts. The heretic quotes it to prove his false doctrine, and dares be so impudent as to cite it to appear for him. But how is it possible they should father their monstrous births on the pure chaste word of God? Surely it is because they come to the word and converse with it, but bring not the girdle of sincerity with them, and being ungirt, they are unblest. God leaves them justly to miss of truth, because they are not sincere in their inquiry after it. The brat is got upon their own hearts by the father of lies, and they come to the word only to stand as witness to it. Another reads the word and is worse after it, more hardened in his lusts than he was before. He sees some there canonized for saints by the Spirit of God, the history of whose lives is notwithstanding blotted with some foul falls, possibly into those very sins in which he lies wallowing, and therefore is bold to put himself into the saints' calendar. And why so impudent to do this? Truly because he comes to the word with an unholy heart, and wants the breastplate of righteousness to defend him from the dint of so dangerous a temptation. Another, for want of faith to give existence to the truth of the threatening in his conscience, runs boldly upon the point of this sword, and dares the God of heaven to strike him with it. Thus we find those wretches mentioned by the prophet playing with this edge-tool: 'Where is the word of the Lord? let it come now,' Jer. 17:15. As if they had said mockingly, 'Thou scarest us with strange bugbears—judgments that in the name of God thou threatenest are coming on us. When will they come? we would fain see them. Is God's sword rusty that he is so long getting it out of the scabbard?' And the despairing soul, for want of a helmet of hope, deals little better with the promise than the presumptuous sinner with the threatening. Instead of lifting it up to defend himself against the fears of his guilty conscience, he falls upon the point of it, and destroys his own soul with that weapon which is given him to slay his enemy with. Well, therefore, may the apostle first put on the other pieces, and then deliver this sword to them to use for their good. A sword in a madman's hand, and the word of God in some wicked man's mouth, are used much alike—to hurt only themselves and their best friends with.

Second. It may be commended after all the rest, to let us know [that] the Christian, when advanced to the highest attainments of grace possible in this life, is not above the use of the word; nay, cannot be safe without it. When girded with sincerity—his plate of righteousness on his breast, the shield of faith in his

hand, and the helmet of hope covering his head, that his salvation is out of doubt to him at present; yet even then he must take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. This is not a book to be read by the lowest form in Christ's school only, but beseeching the highest scholar that seems most fit for a remove to heaven's academy. It is not only of use to make a Christian by conversion, but to make him perfect also, II Tim. 3:15-17. It is like the architect's rule and line—as necessary to lay the top-stone of the building at the end of his life as the foundation at his conversion. They therefore are like to prove foolish builders that throw away their line before the house be finished.

I come now to take up the weapon laid before us in the text, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' In which words these three parts. **FIRST.** The weapon itself; that is, 'the word of God.' **SECONDLY.** The metaphor in which it is sheathed—'the sword,' with he person whose it is—'the sword of the Spirit.' **THIRDLY.** An exhortation to make use of this weapon, and directions how—'and the sword,' &c. That is, take this with all the other before-named pieces. So that to whom he directs the former pieces, to these he gives the sword of the word to use. Now those you shall find are persons of all ranks and relations; husbands and wives, parents and children masters and servants. He would have none be without this sword any more than without the girdle, helmet, and the rest, &c., though this I know will not please the Papists, who would have this sword of the word, like that of Goliath, laid up out of their reach, and that in the priest's keeping also.

DIRECTION X.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[WHAT IS HERE MEANT BY THE WORD OF GOD.]

'The Word of God' (Eph. 6:17).

I begin with the weapon itself—'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' I shall first hold forth the sword naked, and then put it again into its sheath, to handle it under the metaphor of a sword. There is a twofold word of God. **FIRST.** A substantial or subsisting word, and that is the eternal Son of God. **SECOND.** There is a declarative word of God, differing according to the sundry times and diverse manners in which he hath been pleased to reveal his will to man.

[Twofold reference of the expression 'the word of God.']

FIRST. There is a substantial or subsisting word, and that is the eternal Son of God. 'The Word was with God, and the Word was God,' John 1:1. 'And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God,' Rev. 19:13. This is spoken of a person, and he is no other than Christ the Son of God. But he is not the word of God in the text. The Spirit is rather Christ's sword, than Christ the sword of the Spirit; in the 15th verse of the fore-named chapter, 'Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations.'

SECOND. There is a declarative word of God, and this is manifold, according to the divers ways and

manners whereby the Lord hath been pleased to declare his mind to the sons of men. At first, while the earth was thin sown with people, and the age of man so voluminous as to contain many centuries of years, God delivered his mind by dreams and visions, with such like immediate revelations unto faithful witnesses, who might instruct others of their present generation therein, and transmit the knowledge of the same to after ages. They lived so long that three holy men were able, from the death of Adam, to preserve the purity of religion by certain tradition, till within a few years of the Israelites' going down to Egypt. For, as a reverend and learned pen calculates the chronology, Methuselah lived above two hundred years with Adam, and from him might receive the will of God revealed to him. Shem lived almost a hundred years

with Methuselah, and Shem was alive to the fiftieth year of Isaac's age, who died but a few years before Israel's going into Egypt. Thus long did God forbear to commit his will to writing, because it, passing through so few, and those trusty hands, it might safely be preserved.

But when the age of man's life was so contracted, that from eight and nine hundred years—the then ordinary duration of it—it shrank into but so many tens, as it was in Moses time, Ps. 90; and when the people of God grew from a few persons to a multitude in Egypt—and those corrupted with idolatry—God now intending at their deliverance thence, to form them into a polity and commonwealth, thought it fit, for the preventing of corruption in his worship, and degeneracy in their lives, that they should have a written law to be as a public standard to direct them in both. And accordingly he wrote the ten commandments with his own finger on tables of stone; and commanded Moses to write the other words he had heard from him on the mount, Ex. 34:27; yet so, that he still continued to signify his will by extraordinary revelations to his church, and also to enlarge this first edition of his written word, according to the necessity of the times; reserving the canon of the sacred writ to be finished by Christ the great doctor [teacher] of the church, who completed the same, and by the apostles, his public notaries, consigned it to the use of his church to the end of the world. Yea, a curse from Christ's mouth cleaves to him that shall add to or take from the same, Rev. 22:18, 19. So that now all those ways whereby God directly made known his mind to this people, are resolved into this one of the Scriptures, which we are to receive as the undoubted word of God, containing in a perfect rule of faith and life, and to expect no other revelation of his mind to us. Such is the meaning of Heb. 1:1: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.' Therefore called the 'last days,' because that we are to look for no other revelation of God's will. And therefore for ever let us abhor that blasphemy of Joachim, Abbas, Wigelians, and others that have fallen into the same frenzy with them, who dream of a threefold doctrine flowing from the three Persons of the sacred Trinity—the law from the Father, the gospel from the Son,

which we have in the New Testament, and a third from the Spirit, which they call *evangelium eternum*—the everlasting gospel. Whereas, the Spirit of God himself, by whom the Scriptures were indited, calls the doctrine in them 'the everlasting gospel,' Rev. 14:6. Thus much to show what is here meant by the word of God. From whence the doctrine follows.

[THE DIVINITY of the Scriptures, and the SUFFICIENCY of their own testimony in proof of the same.]

DOCTRINE. That the holy Scriptures are the undoubted word of God. By the Scripture I mean the Old and New Testaments contained in the Bible; both {of} which are that one foundation whereupon our faith is built: 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,' Eph. 2:20. That is the doctrine which God by them hath delivered unto his church, for they were under the unerring guidance of the Spirit: 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God,' II Tim. 3:16, *θεοπνευστος*—breathed by God; it came as truly and immediately from the very mind and heart of God, as our breath doth from within our bodies. Yea, both matter and words were indited by God; for the things which they spake were 'not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth,' I Cor. 2:13. God did not give them a theme to dilate and enlarge upon with their own parts and abilities; but confined them to what he indited. They were but his amanuenses to write his infallible dictate; or as so many scribes, to transcribe what the Spirit of God laid before them. This is given as the reason why no scripture is to be sensed by our private fancy or conceit. We are to take the meaning of it from itself, as we find one place clears another; because it came not from the private spirit of any man at first, 'but holy men of God spake as they were moved,' or carried, 'by the Holy Ghost,' II Peter 1:20 and ver. 21 compared. Now *ejusdem est condere et interpretari*—the power that makes the law, that must expound it.

Question. But it may be some will say, Do you bring Scripture to bear witness for itself? The question is, whether the Scripture be the word of God? and you tell us the Scripture saith so, and is that enough?

Answer. This would carry weight, if it were the word of some sorry creature that stood upon the trial; but a greater than man is here. *Humana dita argumentis ac testibus eget; Dei autem sermo ipse sibi testis est, quia necesse est quicquid incorrupta veritas loquitur incorruptum sit veritas testimonium*: so *Salvan* (*De Gub. Dei, lib. iiii*)—men need arguments and witnesses to prove and vouch what they say to be true; but the word of God is a sufficient witness to itself, because what truth itself, which is pure, saith, can be no other than a sincere and true testimony. Christ, who thought it derogatory to the dignity of his person to borrow credit from man's testimony, did yet refer himself to the report that the Scripture made of him; and was willing to stand or fall in the opinion of his very enemies, as the testimony thereof should be found concerning him, *John 5:34*, compared with *ver. 39*. And therefore their testimony may well pass for themselves. He that cannot see this sun by its own light, may in vain think to go find it with candle and lantern of human testimony and argument. Not that these are wanting, or useless. The testimony of the church is highly to be revered, because to it are these oracles of God delivered, to be kept as a sacred depositum and charge. Yea, it is called 'the pillar and ground of truth,' *I Tim. 3:15*, and 'the candlestick, *Rev. 1:12*, from whence the light of the Scriptures shines forth into the world. But who will say, that the proclamation of a prince hath its authenticity from the pillar it hangs on in the market cross? or that the candle hath its light from the candlestick it stands on? The office of the church is ministerial—to publish and make known the word of God; but not magisterial and absolute—to make it Scripture, or unmake it, as she is pleased to allow or deny her stamp. This were to send God to man for his hand and seal, and to do by the Scriptures, as *Tertullian* saith in his *Apology* the heathens did with their gods, who were to pass the senate, and gain their good-will, before they might be esteemed deities by the people. And does not the church of Rome thus by the Scriptures? sending us to the pope for leave to believe the Scripture to be Scripture? The blasphemous speech of *Hermanus* is notoriously known, who said, that the Scriptures did *tantum valere, quantum Æsopi fabulæ, nisi accedat ecclesiæ testimonium*—that they are of no greater force than the fables of *Aesop*, unless the

testimony of the church be added. O how like is Rome to Rome! Superstitious Rome to pagan Rome! But we need not travel so far to be determined in this case. The Scripture itself will save us the pains of this wearisome journey to so little purpose, being more able to satisfy us of its own divine extraction, than the pope, sitting in his porphyry chair with all his cardinals about him. Neither is there any necessity to ask for a messenger to ascend on high, who may from heaven bring down their letters testimonial unto us; seeing they bear heaven's superscription so fairly writ upon their own forehead, as denies them to proceed from any but God himself. May a particular man be known from a thousand others by his face, voice, or handwriting? Certainly then it cannot seem strange that the God of heaven should be discerned from his sorry creature, by his voice and writing in the sacred Scriptures. Do we not see that he hath interwoven his glorious name so in the works of creation, that they speak his power and Godhead, and call him Maker in their thoughts, who never read the Bible, or heard of such a book?—so that they could not steal the notion thence, but had it from the dictate of their own consciences, exhorting the acknowledgment of a deity. And much more will an enlightened conscience and sanctified heart be commanded by the overpowering evidence that shines forth in the Scriptures to fall down and cry, It is the voice of God, and not any creature that speaks in them. Indeed the grand truths and chief notions found in the Scriptures, are so connatural to the principles of grace, which the same Holy Spirit, who is the inditer of them, hath planted in the hearts of all the saints, that their souls ever spring and leap at the reading and hearing of them, as the babe did in *Elizabeth's* womb at the salutation of the virgin *Mary*. The lamb doth not more certainly know her dam in the midst of a whole flock (at whose bleating she passeth by them all to come to be suckled by her), than the sheep of Christ know his voice in the saving truths of the Scriptures—the sincere milk whereof they desire, and are taught of God to taste and discern from all other. Indeed, till a soul be thus enlightened and wrought upon by the Spirit of God, he may have his mouth stopped by such arguments for the divinity of them, as he cannot answer; but he will never be persuaded to rest on them, and cordially embrace them as the

word of God. As we see in the scribes and Pharisees, who oft were nonplussed and struck down speechless by the dint of Christ's words, yet, as those wretches sent to attack the person of Christ, rose up from the earth—where the majesty of Christ's deity, looking out upon them, had thrown them grovelling—to lay violent hands on him; so those obdurate Pharisees and scribes, after all their convictions, returned to oppose the doctrine he preached, and that most of them unto death. Yea, that part of the Scripture they seemed to cry up so highly, the law of Moses, and made the ground of their quarrel against Christ, our Saviour is bold to tell them, that as great admirers as they were thereof, they did not so much as believe it to be the word of God. How could they indeed have a true divine faith on it who wanted the Spirit of God that alone works it? 'Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me,' John 5:46. Erasmus tells his friend in a letter, that he met with many things charged on Luther by the monks for heresies, which Augustine passed among them for sound truths. But certainly they did not really believe them to be truths in Augustine which they condemned in Luther. Neither did the Pharisees in truth believe what Moses wrote, because they opposed Christ, who did but verify what Moses before from God's mouth had spoke. But because, when the Spirit of God comes to raise the heart to a belief of the word of God, he doth it by putting his own weight and force to those arguments which are couched in the word, and so doth sigillare animum caractere illorum—leave the print or character of them sealed upon the soul; therefore I shall draw out an argument or two among many that are to be found in the Scripture itself, proving the parentage thereof to be divine. I know it is a beaten path I am now walking in, and I shall speak ἄλλῶς—otherwise, than ἄλλα—other things; the same things for substance which you may meet in many others, only a little otherwise shaped on my private forge. For my own part, I think it more wisdom to borrow a sword of proved metal at another's hands, than to go with a weak leaden one of my own into the field, and so come home well beaten for my folly and pride.

The two general heads from which I deduce my demonstrations, are these: **FIRST.** The matter of the Scriptures. **SECOND.** The supernatural effects pro-

duced by them.

FIRST GENERAL HEAD.

[Proof of the divinity of the Scriptures
FROM THEIR SUBJECT-MATTER.]

The very matter contained in the holy Scriptures demonstrates their heavenly descent; it being such as cannot be the birth or product of a creature. Let us search the Scriptures a little, and consider the several parts thereof, and see whether they do not all bear the image of God upon them. Consider, **FIRST.** The historical part of Scripture. **SECOND.** The prophetic. **THIRD.** The doctrinal. **FOURTH.** The preceptive, with its appendices of promises and threatenings to enforce the same. And see if a print of a Deity be not stamped upon them all.

[THE HISTORICAL Scriptures bear
the impress of Deity.]

FIRST PART. The historical part of the Scriptures. In this let us consider, **First.** The antiquity of the matter related. **Second.** The simplicity and sincerity of the penmen relating what concerns themselves.

First. The antiquity of the matter related. There are some pieces that could not possibly drop from a creature's pen. Where should or could he have his reading and learning to enable him to write the history of the creation? The heathen, it is confessed, by the inquiry of natural reason, have made a discovery thus far, that the world had a beginning, and could not be from eternity, and that it could be the workmanship of none but God; but what is this to the compiling of a distinct history, how God went to work in the production thereof? what order every creature was made in? and how long God was finishing the same? He that is furnished for such an enterprise, must be one that was pre-existent to the whole world, and an eye-witness to every day's work, which man, that was made the last day, cannot pretend unto. And yet there is history more ancient than this in the Scripture, where we find what was done at the council-table of heaven, before the world began, and

what passed there in favour of man, whom afterwards he would make. Who could search these court-rolls, I wonder, and bring us intelligence of the everlasting decrees then resolved on, and promises made by the Father to the Son of eternal life in time to be conferred on his elect? Titus 1:2.

Second. The simplicity and sincerity of holy penmen, in relating what most concerns themselves, and those that were near and dear to them. We may possibly find among human authors, some that carry their pen with an even hand in writing the history of others, the making known whose faults casts no dishonourable reflection upon him that records them. Thus, Suetonius spared not to tell the world how wicked great emperors were, who therefore is said 'to have taken the same liberty in writing their lives that they took in leading them.' But where is the man that hath not a hair upon his pen, when he comes to write of the blemishes of his own house or person? Alas! here we find that their pen will cast no ink. They can rather make a blot in their history than leave a blot on their own name; they have, like Alexander's painter, a finger to lay upon these scars; or, if they mention them, you shall observe they learn their pen on a sudden to write smaller than it was wont. But in the history of the Scripture, none of this self-love is to be found, the penmen whereof are as free to expose their own shame and nakedness to the world's view as any others. Thus Moses brands his own tribe for their bloody murder on Shechem, Gen. 34. An enemy could not have set the brand heavier on their name than himself doth it; his own brother is not favoured by him, but his idolatry set upon the file, Ex. 32. The proud behaviour of his dear sister, and the plague of God which befell her, escapes not his pen, Num. 12. No, not the incest of his own parents, Ex. 6:20. So that we must say of him, concerning the impartiality of his pen in writing, what himself saith of Levi in the execution of justice, that he 'said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren,' Deut. 33:9. In a word, to despatch this particular, he is no more tender of his personal honour than he is of his house and family, but doth record the infirmities and miscarriages of his own life: as his backwardness to enter upon that difficult charge, Ex. 3, 4—wherein he discovered so much unbelief and pusillanimity of

spirit, notwithstanding his clear and immediate call thereunto by God himself; hid neglect of a divine ordinance in not circumcising his child, and what the sin had like to cost him; his frowardness and impatience in murmuring at the troubles that accompanied his place wherein God had set him, Num. 11:11-13; and his unbelief after so many miraculous seals from heaven set to the promise of God, for which he had his leading staff taken from him, and the honour of conducting Israel into Canaan denied him—a sore and heavy expression of God's displeasure against him, Num. 20:12. Certainly we must confess, had not his pen been guided by a spirit more than human, he could never have so perfectly conquered all carnal affections, so as not the least to favour himself in reporting things thus prejudicial to his honour in the world.

And the same spirit is found to breathe in the evangelists' history of the gospel—they being as little dainty of their own names as Moses was; as may be observed in their freedom to declare their own blemishes and their fellow apostles'. So far were they from wronging the church with a lame mutilated story of Christ's life and death, to save their own credits, that they interweave the weaknesses of one another all along their relations. Hence we read of the sinful passion and revenge working the sons of Zebedee; Peter acting the devil's part to tempt his Master at another time; the ignorance of all the twelve in some main principles of Christianity for awhile; their ambition who should be greatest, and their wrangling about it; their unbelief and cowardice, one denying his Lord, and the rest fleeing their colours, when they should have interposed their own bodies betwixt their Master and the danger, as resolved wither to die for him, or at least with him, and not save their lives with so dishonourable a flight;—these, and such like passages, declare them to be acted in their writings by a spirit higher than their own, and that by no other than by God himself, for whom they so willingly debase themselves in the eyes of the world, and lay their names in the dust, that the glory of his name might be exalted in this their free acknowledgment.

[THE PROPHETICAL Scriptures bear
the impress of Deity.]

SECOND PART. The prophetic part of the Scriptures; which contains some wonderful predictions of things to come, as could drop from no pen but one guided by a divine hand; all of which have had their punctual performance in the just periods foretold. Indeed from whom could these come but God? 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God,' Deut. 29:29. And predictions surely may pass very well for secrets; they are *arcana ejus imperii*—secrets of his government; such secrets, that God offers to take him—whoever he is—and set him with himself in his own throne, that is able to foretell things to come. 'Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods,' Isa. 41:23. This must be confessed to be a flower of the crown, and an incommunicable property and prerogative of the only true God, who stands upon the hill of eternity, and from thence hath the full prospect of all things, and to whose infinite understanding they are all present; for his will being the cause of all events, he must needs know them, because he knoweth that. The devil, indeed, is very ambitious to be thought able to do this, and to gain the reputation hereof, hath had his mock-prophets and prophecies in all ages, with which he hath abused the ignorant credulous world. But alas! his predictions are no more true prophecies, than his miracles are true miracles. He puts a cheat upon the understandings of silly souls in the one, as he doth on their senses in the other. For his predictions are either dark and dubious, cunningly packed and laid, that, like a picture in *plicis*—folds, they carried two faces under one hood; and in these folds the subtle serpent wrapped himself, on purpose to save his credit, which way soever the event fell out. And this got Apollo the name of *Loxias*, of *λοξός*, *obliquus*; *propter obliqua et tortuosa responsa ejus*—because he mocked them that consulted his oracle with such ambiguous answers, that sent them as wise home as they came to him. Indeed, the devil found it necessary thus to do. Had he not with this patch of policy eked out the scantiness of his own understanding, the nakedness thereof would have been seen by every vulgar eye, to his shame and to the contempt of his oracles. Or, if his predictions were more plainly

delivered, they were,

First. Of such things as he spelled out by the help of nature's alphabet, and came to the knowledge of by diving into the secrets of natural causes, before they discovered themselves unto the observation of man's duller understanding; and this made them cried up for wonderful predictions, and supernatural, by those who could not see this clue in Satan's hand that guided him. If a man should meet you in the street, and tell you such a friend of yours will die within a few months, whom you left well, to your thinking, but a few minutes before, and the event should seal to the truth of what he said, you might possibly begin to think this a wonderful prophecy. But, when you afterwards know that he who told you this was a physician rarely accomplished, and had upon much study and strict observation of your friend's bodily state, found a dangerous disease growing insensibly upon him, you would alter your opinion, and not think him a prophet, but admire him for a skilful physician. Thus, did we but consider the vastness of Satan's natural parts—though limited, because created—and the improvement he hath made of them, by the study and experience of so many thousand years, we shall not count his predictions for prophecies, but rather as comments and explications of the short and dark text of natural causes, and acknowledge him a learned naturalist, but not deserving the name of a true prophet.

Second. If he hath not his hint from natural causes, then he gathers his inferences from moral and political causes, which, compared together by so deep a pate as his, give him great help and advantage to infer many times what in very great probability, and all likelihood of reason, will come to pass. Thus what the devil told Saul would become of him, his army, and kingdom, was nothing but what he might rationally conclude from those premises which lay before him, in his being rejected of God, and another anointed by God's own command to be king in his stead, together with the just height, and full measure, to which Saul's sins might now be thought to have arrived—by his going to a witch for counsel—and a puissant army of the Philistines preparing against him, whose wonted courage now so failed him, that he went rather like a malefactor pinioned and bound with the terrors of his accusing conscience, to meet an

executioner that should give the fatal stroke to him, than like a valiant captain, to adorn and enrich himself with the spoils of his enemies. All these laid together make it appear the devil, without a gift of prophecy, might tell him his doom.

Third. God may, and doth, sometimes reveal future events to Satan, as when God intends him to be his instrument to execute some of his purposes, he may, and doth, acquaint him with the same some time before. And you will not say the hangman is a prophet, that can tell such a man shall, on such a day, be beheaded or hanged, when hath a warrant from the king that appoints him to do that office. Thus Satan could have told Job beforehand what sad afflictions would certainly befall him in his estate, servants, children, and his own body; because God had granted him a commission to be the instrument that should bring all these upon him. But neither Satan nor any creatures else are able of themselves to foretell such events as neither arise from natural causes, nor may be rationally concluded to follow from moral and political probabilities; but are locked up in the cabinet of the divine will, how they shall fall out. And such are the prophecies which we find in the holy Scriptures, by which they plainly prove their heavenly extraction. They must needs come from God that tell us what God only knew, and depended on his will to be disposed of. Who but God could tell Abraham where his posterity should be, and what should particularly befall them, four hundred years after his death?—for so long before was he acquainted with their deliverance out of Egypt, Gen. 15, which accordingly came to pass punctually on the very day foretold, Ex. 12:41. How admirable are the prophecies of Christ the Messiah, in which his person, birth, life, and death, even to the minute, and circumstances of them, are as exactly and particularly set down, many ages before his coming upon the stage, as by the evangelists themselves, who were upon the place with him, and saw all that was done with their own eyes. And though some things foretold of him may be thought, because small and inconsiderable in themselves, not to deserve a mention in so high and sacred a prophecy—as our Saviour’s riding on an ass, Zech. 9:9; the thirty pieces given for him, and the purchase of the potter’s field afterwards with them, Zech. 11:12, 13; and the preserving his bones whole, when they that had

suffered with him had theirs broken—these, I say, and such like, though they may seem inconsiderable passages in themselves, yet upon due weighing the end for which they are mentioned, we shall find that our weak faiths could not well have spared their help to strengthen it in the belief of the prophecy. Indeed, a great weight of the argument to prove the truth and divinity of the prophecy, moves upon these little hinges; because, the less these are in themselves, the more admirably piercing and strong must that eye be that could see such small things at so great a distance. None but an infinite understanding could do this! And now I hope none will dare ask ‘But how may we be sure that such prophecies were extant so long before their fulfilling, and not foisted in after these things were done?’—seeing they were upon public record in the church of the Jews, and not denied by those that denied Christ himself. And truly this one consideration cast into the scale after all the former, doth give an overweight to the argument we are now upon—I mean, that these prophecies were so long, and that so openly, read and known. And consequently [it were] impossible that Satan should be ignorant of them, and not take the alarm from them to do his utmost to impede their accomplishment, seeing his whole kingdom lay at stake, so as either he must hinder them, or they would ruin it; and that notwithstanding all this, together with his restless endeavour against them, they should be all so fairly delivered in their full time; yea, many of them by the midwifery of those very persons that would, if possible, have destroyed them in the womb, as we see, Acts 4:27. Here breaks out the wisdom and power of a God, with such a strong beam of light and evidence, that none of the Scriptures’ enemies can wishly look against it.

[THE DOCTRINAL part of Scripture
bears the impress of Deity.]

THIRD PART. The doctrinal part of the Scriptures; by which, in this place, I mean only those grounds and principles of faith that are laid down in Scripture, and proposed to be believed and embraced of all that desire eternal life. There is a divine glory that is to be seen on the very face of them, being so sublime, that no creature can be the inventor of them.

To instance but in a few for all. First, God himself, who is the prime object of our faith. Who but God could tell us who and what his nature is? That there is a God, we confess is a notion that natural reason hath found the way to search out. Yea, his Godhead and power are a lesson taught in the school of nature, and to be read in the book of the creatures. But how long men who have no higher teaching are learning the true knowledge of God, and how little progress they make therein, we see in the poor heathen, among whom the wisest philosophers have been such dunces, groping about this one principle one age after another, and yet not able to find the door; as the apostle tells us when he saith that ‘the world by wisdom knew not God,’ 1 Cor. 1. But, as for the trinity of persons in the Godhead, this is such a height as the heart of man never could take aim at, so much as to dream or start a thought of it; so that, if God had not revealed it, the world of necessity must have for ever continued in the ignorance thereof. And the same must be said of all gospel truths, Jesus Christ, God-man, justification by faith in his blood, and the whole method of grace and salvation through him. They are all such notions as never came into the heart of the wisest sophists in the world to conceive of; and therefore it is no wonder that a little child, under the preaching of the gospel, believes these mysteries which Plato and Aristotle were ignorant of, because they are not attained by our parts and industry, but communicated by divine and supernatural revelation. Yea, now they are revealed, how does our reason gaze at them as notions that are foreign, and mere strangers to its own natural conceptions, yea, too big to be grasped and comprehended with its short span, which makes it so malapert—where grace is not master to keep it in subjection—as to object against the possibility of their being true, because itself cannot measure them? As if the owl should say the sun had no light, because her weak eyes cannot bear to look on it. These are truths to be believed on the credit of him that relates them, and not to be entertained or rejected as they correspond to, or differ from, the mould of our reason. He that will handle these with his reason, and not his faith, is like to be served as the smith—it is Chrysostom’s comparison—that takes up the red-hot iron with his hand, and not with his tongs, what can he expect but to burn his

fingers with them?

[THE PRECEPTIVE part of Scripture bears the impress of Deity.]

FOURTH PART. The fourth and last part in our division is the preceptive part of the Scriptures, or that which contains commands and precepts. And this will be found to carry the superscription of its divinity on its forehead, and that with as legible and fair characters as any of the former, if we do but consider, First. The vast extent of Scripture commands; and Second. Their spotless purity.

First. The vast extent of Scripture commands. This is such as never any human laws, though of the greatest monarch that ever swayed a scepter, could pretend unto. Where is the prince, among the sons of men, that ever went about to give laws to all mankind, and did not rather, in his royal edicts and laws, respect that particular people, and those nations, whose lot fell within the circle of their empire? Of all the empires the world ever had, the Roman was without compare the greatest; and yet when the Roman eagle’s wings were best grown, they could not overspread more than the third part of this lower world. And how vain and ridiculous had it been for the emperor to have attempted to make a law for those nations which neither knew him, nor he them? But in the Scripture we find such laws as concern all mankind, wherever they live, and which have been promulgated, where the Bible was never seen. Their sound has gone into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Many of the laws in sacred writ, they are but a second, and that fairer, edition of what was found written in the consciences of men and women before the Scripture came forth. So that, if those laws that are cut with so indelible a character in the consciences of all the sons of Adam, be of God, then the Scripture must be confessed to proceed from God also.

Yet further. As the Scripture takes all mankind to task, and lays its bonds on all, high and low, rich and poor; so its laws bind the whole man. The heart with its most inward thoughts is laid in these chains, as well as the outward man. Indeed, the heart is the principle subject, whose loyalty is most provided for in the precepts of Scripture. Those commands that

contain our duty to God, require that all be done with the heart and soul. If we pray, it must be ‘in the spirit,’ John 4:23, or else we had as good do nothing, for we transgress the law of prayer. If it be a law that respects our carriage to man, still the heart is chiefly intended: ‘Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart,’ Lev. 19:17; ‘Curse not the king, no not in thy thought,’ Ecc. 10:20. And accordingly the promises and threatenings, which attend the commands of Scripture—as the arteries do the veins in man's body—to inspire and enforce them, are suitable to the spiritual nature of those commands; the rewards of the one, and punishments of the other, being such as respect the spiritual performance or neglect of them. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,’ Matt. 5:8. Not blessed are they whose hands are clean, though their hearts are foul and filthy. So, ‘But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing,’ Mal. 1:14. The deceiver there is the hypocrite, that gives God the skin of the sacrifice, the shape of the duty for the substance, the lean of an outside obedience instead of the fat of the inward man, viz. the obedience of the heart. And as the principle object that these are levelled to and against, is the obedience or disobedience of the heart; so the subject or vessel into which the one emptieth its blessings, and the other its curses, is chiefly the soul and spirit: ‘They shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever,’ Ps. 22:26. ‘I comfort you...and your heart shall rejoice,’ Isa. 66:13, 14. ‘Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse O God!’ Lam. 3:65.

Now I would fain know the man that ever went about to form such laws as should bind the hearts of men, or prepare such rewards as should reach the souls and consciences of men. Truly, if any mortal man—be he the greatest of the world's monarchs—should make a law that his subjects should love him with all their hearts and souls, and not dare, upon peril of his greatest indignation, to bid a traitorous thought against his royal person welcome in their souls, but presently confess it to him, or else he would be avenged on him; he would deserve to be more laughed at for his pride and folly, than Xerxes for casting his fetters into the Hellespont to chain the surly waves with them into his obedience, or Caligula, that threatened the air, if it durst rain when he was at

his pastimes, who yet, poor sneak, durst not himself so much as look into the air when it thundered. Certainly a bedlam would be fitter for such a madman than a king's throne and palace, that should so far forfeit his reason, as to think that the thoughts and hearts of men were within his territories and jurisdiction. Who need fear such a law, when none but the offender himself can bring in evidence of the fact? There have been indeed some that, intending to take away the life of their prince by a bloody murderous knife, have been attached by their own conscience, and forced by it to blab and confess their own wicked thoughts, before any other could be their accuser, so sacred are the persons of God's anointed ones; but not from the power of man or his law making them do so, but the dread of God arresting their conscience for violating his law, which indeed not only binds up subjects' hands from killing, but hearts also from cursing, kings in our very thought. This, this the law which rules in the consciences of the worst of men; a bit that God rides the fiercest sinners with, and so curbs them, that they can never shake it out of their mouths. Enough to prove the divinity thereof.

Second. The spotless purity of Scripture commands do no less evince their divine extraction. God is ‘the holy One,’ Isa. 43. He alone is perfectly holy: ‘The heavens are not clean in his sight,’ Job 15:15. He can charge the angels themselves—who may be the heavens in the forementioned place—‘with folly,’ Job 4:18, because, though they never sinned, yet they are sinable. It is possible they might sin, as some of their order have done, if not kept from it by confirming grace. And as God is the only holy person, so the Scripture is the only holy book. All besides this have their errata, which are corrected by this, ‘The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever,’ Ps. 19:9. That is, the word of the Lord is ‘clean’—called ‘the fear of the Lord,’ because it teacheth it; as God is called the fear of Isaac, because the object of his fear. The word is clean, and mark, it ‘endureth for ever;’ that is, it ever continues, and shall be found so. There are dregs and sediment that will appear in the holiest writings of the best men, when they have stood awhile under the observation of a critical eye; but the Scripture hath been exposed to the view and censure of all sorts of men, yet could never have the least impurity charged justly upon it. It is so clean and pure, that it

makes filthy souls clean: ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,’ John 17:17. That which is itself filthy may make our clothes and bodies clean, but that which makes our souls pure and clean must be itself without all defilement. And such is the Scripture. Nothing there that gratifies the flesh or affords fuel to any lust. No, it puts every sin to the sword, and strikes through the loins of all sinners great or small: ‘To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,’ Rom. 8:6. So that, as Athenagoras well said, ‘No man can be wicked that is a Christian, unless he be a hypocrite.’ For the Scripture which he professeth to be his rule of faith and life, will not allow him to embrace any doctrine that is false, or practice that is filthy and unholy. This is that which Christianity can alone glory in. The heathen were led into many abominations by their religion and gods whom they worshipped. No wonder they were so beastly and sensual in their lives, when they served drunken and filthy gods; and the very mysteries of their religion were so horribly unclean that they durst not let them be commonly known, as having a scent too strong and stinking to be endured by any that had not their senses quite stopped, and their foolish minds, by the judgment of God upon them, wholly darkened. But the Christian can charge none of his sins upon his God—who tempteth none to evil, but hateth perfectly both the work and also worker of iniquity; nor upon his Bible, which damns every sin to the pit of hell, and all that liveth therein: ‘Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile,’ Rom. 2:9, 10. O who could be author of this blessed book but the blessed God? If any creature made it, he was either a wicked creature or one that was holy.

1. No wicked creature could do it, neither angel nor man. Surely they would never have taken so much pains to pull down their own kingdom of darkness—the great plot which runs through the Bible from one end of it to the other. And if it were the birth of their brain, no doubt, as every one loves his own child, so would they have shown more love to it than yet they have done. The implacable wrath which the devil and his party of wicked ones in the world

have shown in all ages to the Scripture, declare sufficiently that it never came from them. No, no, it cannot stand with the interest of unclean spirits or wicked men to advance holiness in the world. The devil, though bold enough, durst never be so impudent as to lay claim to this holy, heavenly piece. But, if he should, the glorious beauty of holiness which shines on the face of it, would forbid any man in his wits to believe that black fiend to be the father of it. *Naturalissimum est opis omnis viventis generare sibi simile*—it is natural for every creature to beget his like. And what likeness there is betwixt light and darkness, it is easy to judge.

2. Neither can any holy creature be the author of it, be he angel or man. Can we think that any having the least spark of love to God, or fear of his majesty dwelling their breast, durst counterfeit his dreadful name by setting it to their work, and abuse the world with such a blasphemy and prodigious lie, as to say, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ and prefix his name all along, when, not God but themselves are the authors? Could this impudence and audacious wickedness proceed from any holy angel or man? Doubtless it could not. Nay further, durst any holy creature put such a cheat upon the world, and then denounce the wrath and vengeance of God against those who shall speak in God’s name, but were never sent of him, as the Scripture mentions? Certainly, that earth which swallowed up Korah and his ungodly rout, for pretending to an authority from God as good as the priests’, to offer incense, would not have spared Moses himself if he had spoke that in God’s name which he had not from him, but which was the invention of his own private brain. Thus we see that no creature, good or bad, angel or man, can be the author of Scripture. So that none remains but God to own it; which he hath done with miracles enough to convince a very atheist of their divinity.

SECOND GENERAL HEAD.

[Proof of the divinity of the Scriptures
FROM THEIR SUPERNATURAL EFFECTS.]

The second argument I shall choose to demonstrate the divine extraction of the Scriptures, shall be

taken from the supernatural effects they produce. Nothing can be the cause of an effect higher or greater than itself. If therefore we can find such effects to be the product of the Scriptures, as are above the sphere of any creature's activity, it will then be evident that the Scripture itself is supernatural, not the word of a mere creature, but of God himself. What the psalmist saith of thunder, that loud voice of nature from the clouds, we may apply to the voice of God speaking from heaven in the Scripture, 'It is a mighty voice and full of majesty; it breaketh cedars'—kings and kingdoms; 'it divideth the flames of fire.' The holy martyrs have with one bucket of this spiritual water quenched the scorching flames of that furious element into which their persecuting enemies have thrown them. 'It shaketh the wilderness' of the wild wicked world, making the stout hearts of the proudest sinners to tremble like the leaves of the trees with the wind; and bringeth the pangs of the new-birth upon them whose hearts before never quailed for the most prodigious crimes. 'It discovereth the forests,' and hunts sinners out of their thickets and refuges of lies, whither they run to hide themselves from the hue and cry of divine vengeance. But, to speak more particularly and distinctly, there are four powerful and strange effects, which the word puts forth upon the hearts of men; all which will evince its divine original. **FIRST.** It hath a heart-searching power, whereby it ransacks and rifles the consciences of men. **SECOND.** It exercises a power on the conscience to convince and terrify it. **THIRD.** It has power to comfort and raise a dejected spirit. **FOURTH.** It hath the power of conversion, which none but God can effect.

[THE HEART-SEARCHING POWER of the word
attests to its divine origin.]

FIRST EFFECT. The word of God hath a heart-searching power, whereby it ransacks and rifles the consciences of men. It looks into the most secret transactions of the heart and tells us what we do in our bed-chamber—as Elisha did by the king of Syria, II Kings 6:12. It cometh where no prince's warrant can empower his officer to search, I mean the heart. We read that Christ came to his disciples 'when the doors were shut, and stood in the midst of them,' John 20:19. Thus the word—when all doors are shut, that men

have no intelligence what passeth within the breasts of men—comes in upon the sinner without asking him leave, and stands in the midst of his most secret plots and counsels, there presenting itself to his view, and saith to him as Elisha to Gehazi, 'Went not my eye with thee when thou didst this and that?' How often doth the sinner find his heart discovered and laid out of all its folds by the word preached, as if the minister had stood at his window, and seen him what he did within doors, or some had come and told tales of him to the preacher? Such I have known, that would not believe to the contrary, but that the minister had been informed of their pranks, and so leveled his discourse particularly at their breasts, when he hath been as ignorant of their doings as of theirs that live in America, and only shot his reproofs like him that smote Ahab, who drew his bow at a venture, without taking aim at the person of any. From whence can this property come but [from] God, who claims it as his own incommunicable attribute, 'I the Lord search the heart?' Jer. 17:10. God is in the word, and therefore it findeth the way to get between the joints of the harness, though sent at random out of man's bow. If any creature could have free ingress into this retiring room of the heart, the devil, being a spirit, and of such a piercing, prying eye, were the most likely to be he; yet even he is locked out of this room, though indeed he can peep into the next.

Now if God can only search the heart, then the word which doth the same can come from no other but God himself. Who indeed can make a key to this lock of the heart, but he that knoweth all the wards of it? Suppose you did lock up a sum of money in a cabinet, and none but one in all the world besides yourself besides yourself were privy to the secret place where you lay this key. If you then should find the key taken away, and the cabinet opened and rifled, you would soon conclude whose doing it was. Why thus, when you find your heart disclosed, and the secret thoughts therein laid open unto you in the word, you may easily conclude that God is in it. The key that doth this is of his making who is the only one besides yourselves that is privy to the counsels of your hearts, that seeth all the secret traverses of your inward man. Who but he can send a spy so directly to your hiding-place, where you have laid up your treasures of darkness out of the world's sight? There are

two secrets that the word discloseth:—

First. What a man's own heart knoweth, and no creature besides. Thus Christ told the woman of Samaria what her neighbours could not charge her with; from which she concluded him to be a prophet—a man of God. And may we not conclude the Scripture to be the word of God, that doth the same?

Second. Those things which a man's own heart is not privy to. God is said to be 'greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things,' 1 John 3:20. He knows more by us than we by ourselves. And doth not the word dive to the bottom of the heart, and fetch up that filth thence, which the eye of the conscience never had the sight of before, nor ever could without the help of the word? 'I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,' Rom. 7:7. And if the word findeth that out which escapeth the scrutiny of man's own heart, doth it not prove a Deity to be in it? So argueth the apostle, 1 Cor. 14:25, speaking of the power the word preached hath to lay open the heart: 'Thus are the secrets,' saith he, 'of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.'

[THE CONSCIENCE-TOUCHING POWER of the word attests its divine origin.]

SECOND EFFECT. The second effect the Scripture hath upon the spirits of men, by which its divine pedigree may be proved, is the power it exerciseth on the conscience to convince and terrify it. Conscience is a castle that no batteries but what God raiseth against it can shake. No power can command it to stoop but that which heaven and earth obey. He that disarms the strong man must be stronger than he. He that masters the conscience must be greater than it, and so God only is, 1 John 3:20¹. Now the word being able to shake and shatter this power of the soul, which disdaineth to stoop to any but God, must needs be from him. And that the word exerts such a power upon the conscience who will doubt? Do we not see it daily chastising the proudest sinners, even to make them cry and whine under its convictions, like a child

under the rod? Yea, doth it not slay them outright, that they fall down dispirited at one thunder-clap of the law let off by God upon them? 'When sin revived, I died,' saith Paul. He who before was a jolly man—as well provided in his own opinion for his spiritual estate, as Job was for his outward, when he had his flocks and herds, sons and daughters, health and prosperity, all as yet untouched by the hand of God—upon him, it stripped his conscience as naked as Job afterward was in his outward condition. The man's eyes are opened now to see how naked and void of all holiness he is. Yea his fair skin of pharisaical strictness, with the beauty of which he was formerly so far in love as if he had been another Absalom, without mole or wart, he now judgeth to be but odious deformity, and himself a most loathsome creature, by reason of those plague-sores and ulcers that he sees running on him. Yea, such power the word hath upon him, that it laid him trembling over the bottomless pit, in a despair of himself and his own righteousness.

Hath any creature an arm like this of the word? or can any book penned by the wit of man command the heart to tremble at the rehearsal thereof, as this can do? Even a Felix on the bench, when a poor prisoner preacheth this word at the bar to him, is put into a shaking fit. Who but a God could make those monsters of men, that had paddled in the blood of Christ, and who had scorned his doctrine so as to count the professors of it fools and idiots, yet come affrighted in their own thoughts, at a secret prick given them in Peter's sermon, and cry out in the open assembly, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?' Doth not this carry as visible a print of Deity, as when Moses clave the rock with a little rod in his hand?

Question. But haply you will say, If there be such a conscience-shaking power in the word, how comes it to pass, that many notorious sinners sit so peaceably and sleep so soundly under it? They read it at home, and hear it preached powerfully in the public, yet are so far from feeling any such earthquake in their consciences, that they remain senseless and stupid; yea, can laugh at the preacher for his pains, and shake off all the threatenings denounced, when sermon is done, as easily as the spaniel doth the water when he comes out of the river.

Answer First. I answer, many sinners who seem

1. The book cites 1 John 3:12; but that appears to be in error, hence the correction. — SDB

so jocund in your eyes, have not such merry lives as you think for. A book may be fairly bound and gilded, yet have but sad stories writ within it. Sinners will not tell us all the secret rebukes that conscience from the word gives them. If you will judge of Herod by the jollity of his feast, you may think he wanted no joy; but at another time we see that John's ghost walked in his conscience. And so doth the word haunt many a one, who to us appear to lay nothing to heart. In the midst of their laughter their heart is sad. You see the lightning in their face, but hear not the thunder that rumbles in their conscience.

Answer Second. It is enough, that the word doth leave such an impression upon the conscience of any 'though not of all' to prove its divinity. One affirmative testimony speaketh louder for the proof of a thing, than many negatives do to the contrary. The word is not a physical instrument, but a moral, and works not by a virtue inherent in it, but [by a] power impressed on it by the Spirit of God that first indited it. And this power he putteth forth according to his own good pleasure; so that the same word sets one man a trembling and leaves another 'in the same seat may be' as little moved by it as the pillar he leaneth on. Thus as two at a mill, so at a sermon, one is taken, and the other left; one is humbled, and another hardened; not from any impotency in the word, but [from the] freeness of God's dispensing it. His message it shall do to him it is sent, and none else. It is as a man strikes with a sword, back or edge, a strong or weak blow, that makes it cut or not, gives a slight wound or deep. The word pierceth the conscience according to the force and divine power that is impressed on it. The three children walked in the fire, and were not singed, others were consumed as soon as they came within the scent of it. Shall we say, 'That fire is not hot,' because one was burned and the other not? Some, their consciences do not so much as smell of the word, though the flames of the threatening fly about their ears, others are set all on fire with the terrors of it.

Answer Third. The senseless stupidity of some under the stroke of the word, is not to be imputed to its impotency, but to the just judgment of God, wherewith he plagueth them for sinning against the convictions thereof. For commonly they are of that sort, whose consciences are so impenetrable 'the with-

ering curse of God having lighted upon them' that there is no wonder their judgments are darkened and their consciences seared. It was as great a manifestation of Christ's power 'and his disciples judged it so' when with two or three words the fig-tree was blasted, as if he had caused it to spring and sprout when withered and dry. The power of God is as great in hardening Pharaoh's heart as in melting Josiah's.

[THE COMFORTING POWER of the word
attests its divine origin.]

THIRD EFFECT. The word of God hath a power to comfort and raise a dejected spirit. Conscience is God's prison in the creature's own bosom, from whence none can have his release, except by his warrant that made the mittimus, and committed him thither. Indeed he is a weak prince that hath no prison to commit offenders into but what another can break open. This, where God lays sinners in chains, is not such. 'A wounded spirit,' saith Solomon, 'who can bear?' Yea, and who can cure? If any creature could, surely then the devils were as able as any to do it. But we see they have not to this day found the way to shake off those fetters which God keepeth them in; but lie roaring under the unspeakable torment of God's wrath. And they who cannot cure their own wounds, are like to be but poor physicians to help others. Indeed they acknowledge it beyond their skill and power: 'Wherefore then dost thou ask of me,' said the devil to Saul, 'seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?' I Sam. 28:16. The distress of an afflicted conscience ariseth from the dismal sense of divine wrath for sin. Now none can remove this but he that can infallibly assure the soul of God's pardoning mercy; and this lies so deep in God's heart, that God alone 'who only knoweth his own thoughts' can be the messenger to bring the news; and therefore the word which doth this can come from none but him. And, that is able not only to do this, but also to fill the soul with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory,' is a truth so undoubted, that we need not ascend up to heaven for further confirmation. That Spirit which first indited the word, hath sealed it to the hearts of innumerable believers.

Indeed all the saints acknowledge their comfort and peace to be drawn out of these wells of salvation.

‘In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul,’ Ps. 94:19. Nay, he doth not only tell us his own experience, whence he had his joy, but also to have had theirs from the same tap. ‘Fools, because of their transgressions, are afflicted’ Ps 107:17. And what then can ease them? Will all the rarities that can be got by sea or land make a diversion to their thoughts, and ease them of their pain? No; for ‘their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death,’ ver. 18. What cordial then have they left to use, or way to take for their relief? Truly none, but to betake themselves to prayers and tears, ‘Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses,’ ver. 19. And with what key doth God open their prison door? It follows, ‘He sent his word, and healed them,’ ver. 20. If you shall say all this is meant of outward trouble; yet surely you must grant in holds more strong concerning that which is inward. What but a word from God’s mouth can heal a distressed spirit, when the body pineth and languisheth till God speaketh a healing word unto it?

Great and mighty things are spoken of thee, and done by thee, O holy Word! Thou outviest the world’s joy, and makest the soul that hath but tasted thy ‘strong consolations’ presently to disrelish all sensual delights, as flashy and frothy. So pure and powerful is the light of that joy which thou kindlest in the saint’s bosom, that it quenqueth all sinful carnal joy with its beams, as the sun doth the fire on the hearth. Thou conquerest the horror of death, that it is not feared. Thou vanquishest the pains thereof, that they are not felt. Thou treadest on scorpions and serpents, and they have no power to sting or hurt those that believe in thee. Devils know thee, and flee before thee, quitting, at sight of thee, their holds, and leave those consciences which they had so long under their power and tyranny, for thee to enter with thy sweet consolations. Thou quenqueth the flames of hell itself, and makest the soul that even now was thrown bound by despair into the fiery furnace of God’s wrath, to walk comfortably and unsinged amidst the thoughts thereof. Thou bringest heaven down to earth, and givest the believing soul a prospect of that heavenly Jerusalem which is so far off, as if he were walking in the blessed streets thereof; yea, thou entertainest him with the same delicacies which glori-

fied saints—though more fully—feed on; so that sometimes he forgetteth he is in the body, even when pains and torments are upon him. This have the saints experienced, and more than my pen or their own tongue can express; so that we may say to him that yet questions whence the Scriptures came, as the blind man cured by Christ did to the Pharisees, ‘this is a marvellous thing’ saith he, ‘that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes,’ John 9:30. So here, this is marvellous, yea ridiculous, to say we know not whence the Scripture is, when it can do all this. Since the world began was it not heard, that the word of a mere creature could remove mountains of despairs, and fill the souls of poor sinners with such joy and peace, in spite of hell and the creature’s own unbelief, under the weight of which, as a heavy gravestone, he lay buried and sealed.

[THE CONVERTING POWER of the word
attests its divine origin.]

FOURTH EFFECT. The word of God hath the power of conversion, which none but God—who is the ‘God of all grace’—can produce. When John’s disciples came to Christ to be resolved who he was, whether the Messiah or not, Christ neither tells them he was, or was not he; but sends them to take their answer from the marvellous works he did. ‘Go,’ saith he, ‘and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them,’ εὐαγγελίζονται—are gossellized, Matt. 11:4, 5—that is, they are transformed into the very nature of the gospel, and acted by the spirit which breathes in the gospel. By all these instances Christ’s drift was to give an ocular demonstration of their faith, that he, who did such miracles, could be no other than he whom they sought. And that which brings up the rear, is the converting power of the word—not set last because the least among them, but rather because it is the greatest wonder of them all, and comprehends in it all the other. When souls are converted, ‘the blind receive their sight.’ You were ‘darkness,’ but now ‘light in the Lord.’ ‘The lame walk,’ in that the affections—the soul’s feet—are set

at liberty, and receive strength to run the ways of God with delight. Lepers are cleansed, in that filthy lusts are cured, and foul souls are sanctified. And so of the rest. Now, though the former miracles cease, yet this, which is the greatest, still accompanying the word, affords such a demonstration of its divinity, as reason itself cannot oppose. Is it not beyond the skill and strength of the mightiest angel to make the least pile of grass in the field? Much more the new creature in the heart, the noblest of God's works.

That therefore which doth thus new-mould the heart, and make the creature as unlike to his former self as the lamb is to the wolf, and the ox to the lion—the one meek and harmless, the other fierce and ravenous—that must needs be from God. And such changes are the daily product of 'the word.' How many have you known—once under the power of their lusts, throwing like madmen their firebrands about, possessed with so many devils as sins, and hurried hither and thither by these furies—yet at the hearing of one gospel sermon, have you not seen them quite metamorphosed, and, with him in the gospel, out of whom the devil was cast, sitting at Jesus' feet in their right mind, bitterly bewailing their former course, and hating their once beloved lusts, more than ever they were fond of them? I hope some of you that read these lines can say thus much concerning yourselves, as the apostle doth of himself and others of his brethren: 'We ourselves were also sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,' &c. 'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration,' &c., Titus 3:3, 4. And can you, who are the very epistle of Christ, writ not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, in the fleshly tables of your hearts, stand yet in doubt whether that word came from God, which is thus able to bring you home to God? How long might a man sit at the foot of a philosopher, before he should find such a commanding power go forth with his lectures of morality, [as] to take away his old heart, full of lusts as the sea is of creeping things innumerable, and put a new and holy one in the room of it? Some indeed in their school have been a little refined from the dregs of sensuality, as Polemo, who went a drunkard to hear Plato, and returned a temperate man from his lecture; and no wonder, if we

consider what violence such broad and beastly sins offer to the very light of a natural conscience—that lesser light appointed by God to rule the night of the heathen world. But take the best philosopher of them all, and you shall find sins that are of a little finer spinning—such as spiritual wickednesses and heart-sins are—that are acted behind the curtain in the retiring room of the inner man. These were so far from being the spoils of their victorious arms, that they could never come to the sight of them. But 'the word' treads on these 'high places' of spiritual wickednesses, and leaves not any stronghold of them untaken. It pursues sin and Satan to their bogs and fastnesses; it digs the sinner's lusts like vermin out of their holes and burrows, where they earth themselves. The heart itself is no safe sanctuary for sin to sit in. The word will take it thence—as Joab from the horns of the altar—to slay it. Those corruptions that escaped the sword of the moralist and honest heathen, even these fall by the edge of the word.

I cannot give a better instance of the converting power of the word, than by presenting you with the miraculous victories obtained by it over the hearts of men, when the apostles were sent out first to preach, the grace of Christ, and, as it were, to begin the combination of the gospel ministry. Wherever they came, they found the world up in arms against them, and the black prince of it, the devil, at the head of their troops, to make their utmost resistance against them; yet what unheard-of victories were got by them? Was it not strange that without drawing any other sword than 'the everlasting gospel,' they should turn the world upside down, as their enemies themselves confessed?—sighting the devil's works, casting down his holds wherever they came, and overcoming those barbarous heathens whom the devil had held in his peaceable possession so many thousand years! To [make them] renounce their idolatries in which they had been bred and trained up all their days; receive a new Lord, and him a crucified Jesus; and this at the report of a few silly men, loaden with the vilest reproaches that the wit of man could invent, or malice rake together, to besmear their persons, and render their doctrine they preached odious to the world, this, I say, is such an unheard-of conquest, as could not be obtained by any less than the arm of the Almighty—especially if we cast in two or three circumstances

to give a further accent to the heightening of this consideration. As,

First Circumstance. The meanness of the persons employed to preach this doctrine. They were mean in their condition and rank, being of the floor and lowest of the people, and many of them as mean in their intellectual accomplishments as external port and garb in the world, having no help from human learning to raise their parts, and set a varnish upon their discourses. Men very unfit for such an enterprise, God knows, had the stress and success of their works depend on their own furniture. This put their very enemies to a stand, whence they had their wisdom, knowing well how low their parentage and unsuitable their breeding were to give them any advantage toward such a high undertaking, Acts 4:13. Surely these poor men could contribute no more, by anything that was their own, to that wonderful success which followed their labours, than the blowing of the rams' horns could to the laying of Jericho's walls flat with the ground, or the sounding of Jehoshaphat's musical instruments to the routing of so formidable an army of his enemies; so that we must attribute it to the breath of God, by which they sounded the trumpet of the gospel, and his sweet Spirit charming the hearts of his hearers, that such mighty works were done by them.

Second Circumstance. If we consider the nature of the doctrine they held forth and commended to the world, which was not only strange and new—enough to make the hearers shy of it—but so contrary to the humour of man's corrupt nature, that it hath not one thought in the sinner's heart to befriend it. No wonder indeed, that Mahomet's spiced cup went down so glib, it being so luscious and pleasing to man's carnal palate. We are soon wooed to espouse that for truth which gratifies the flesh, and easily persuaded to deliver up ourselves into the hands of such opinions as offer fair quarter to our lusts, yea, promise them satisfaction. Indeed, we cannot much wonder to see Christianity itself generally and readily embraced, when it is presented in Rome's whorish dress, with its purity adulterated, and its power emasculated. But, take the doctrine of the gospel in its own native excellency, before its falls into these hucksters' hands, and it is such as a carnal heart cannot like, because it lays the axe to the root of every sin, and bids defiance

to all that take part with it. It will suffer no religion to set her threshold by its. This may make us step aside—as Moses once to behold the bush—to see this great wonder—a doctrine believed and embraced that is pure nonsense to carnal reason, teaching us to be saved by another's righteousness, wise with another's wisdom, to trust in him as a God that was himself a child, to rely on him to deliver us from the power of sin and Satan that fell himself under the wrath of men. O how great a gulf of objections which reason brings against this doctrine, must be shot before a man come to close with it! And yet this doctrine to find such welcome, that never any prince at the beat of his drum had his subjects flock more in throngs to list themselves in his muster-roll, than the apostles had multitudes of believers offering themselves to come under baptism—the military oath given by them to their converts. Add but one more.

Third Circumstance. Consider how little worldly encouragement this word they preached gave to its disciples; and you will say, 'God was in it of a truth.' Had it been the way to thrive in the world to turn Christian, or had it won the favour of kings and princes to have been their disciple, and taught them how to climb the hill of honour, we could not have wondered to have seen so many to worship the rising sun. But, alas! the gospel which they preached comes not with these bribes in its hand. No golden apples thrown in the way to entice them on. Christ bids his disciples stoop not to take up crowns for their heads, but a cross for their backs; 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,' Luke 9:23. They must not dream of getting the world's treasure, which they have not, but prepare to part with what they have. To be sure, when the apostles preached it, the way it led to was not to princes' palaces with their preferments, but have aimed at their own honour, and pleased themselves with the renown that they should win by their sufferings, and that their names should be writ and read in the leaves of fame when they were dead and gone, some Roman spirit, haply, might have been found to have endured as much. Or, if it had taught them that they should have ascended in their fiery chariot of martyrdom, to receive heaven's glory as the purchase of their patience and prowess, this might have hardened some popish shaveling against the fear of those bloody

deaths they met with. But the doctrine they preached allows neither, but teaches them when they have done their best, and suffered the worst that their enemies' wrath can inflict for the cause of God, then to renounce the honour of all, and write themselves

unprofitable servants. All these considerations twisted together, make a strong cord to draw any that have staggered in this particular to a firm belief of the divine parentage of the Scriptures.

DIRECTION X.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[WHY THE WORD OF GOD IS CALLED THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.]

'The sword of the Spirit' (Eph. 6:17).

Having despatched the first part, which presented us with the weapon itself, commended to the Christian's use—i.e. 'the word of God'—the second part of the text now comes under our consideration, and that is the notion under which this weapon is commended, or the metaphor in which it is sheathed—'the sword of the Spirit.' And here a double inquiry would be made. **FIRST.** Why the word of God is compared to a 'sword.' **SECOND.** Why this sword is attributed to the Spirit, and bears his name, 'the sword of the Spirit.'

[TWO INQUIRIES as to the expression,
'the sword of the Spirit.']

FIRST INQUIRY. Why is the word of God compared to a 'sword?' For this inquiry let this suffice. The sword, being both of general and constant use among soldiers, and also that weapon with which they not only defend themselves, but do the greatest execution upon their enemies, it most fitly sets forth the necessity and excellent use of the word of God, by which the Christian both defends himself, and offends, yea cuts down before him all his enemies.

SECOND INQUIRY. Why is the sword attributed to 'the Spirit?' Some take the abstract here to be put for the concrete, πνεῦμα for πνευματικὸς, sword of the Spirit for the spiritual sword, as if it were no more but 'take the spiritual sword, which is the word of God,' according to that of the apostle, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty'—that is, spiritual, II Cor. 10:4. Indeed, Satan bring a spirit, must be fought with spiritual arms. And such is the word, a spiritual sword. But this, though true, reacheth not the full sense of the place, where πνεῦμα is taken personaliter—personally, for the person of the Holy Spirit. And in these three respects the written word is the sword of the Spirit.

First. He is the Author of it. A weapon it is

which his hand alone formed and fashioned; it came not out of any creature's forge, 'holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' II Peter 1:21.

Second. The Spirit is the only true interpreter of the word. Hence that known passage of Bernard: quo spiritu factæ sunt Scripturæ, eo spiritu legi desiderant, ipso etiam intelligendæ sunt—the Scriptures must be read, and can be understood, by that Spirit alone by whom they were made. He that made the lock can alone help us to a key that will fit its wards and open its fence. 'No prophecy of the scripture is of private interpretation,' II Peter 1:20. And why not? It follows—because it came not from any private spirit at first. 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man,' &c., ver. 21. And who knows the mind of the Spirit so well as himself?

Third. It is only the Spirit of God can give the word its efficacy and power in the soul. It is his office, as I said, sigillare animum caractere rerum creditarum—to seal the soul with the impress of things believed. Except he lays his weight on the truths we read and hear, to apply them close, and as it were cut the very image in our minds and hearts, they leave no more impression than a seal set upon a stone or rock would do;—still the mind fluctuates, and the heart is unsatisfied, notwithstanding our own

and others' utmost endeavours to the contrary. It was not the disciples' rowing, but Christ's coming, that could lay the storm or bring them to shore. Not all our study and inquiry can fix the mind, or pacify the heart in the belief of the word, till the Spirit of God comes. 'Do you now believe?' saith Christ to his disciples, John 16:31. How oft, alas! had the same things sounded in their ears, and knocked at their door for entertainment, but never could be received, till now that the Spirit put in his finger to lift up the latch! B. Davenant on Colossians tells us a story out of Gerson, concerning a holy man whom himself knew to be sadly beaten and buffeted with frequent doubts and scruples, even so as to call into question an article of faith, but afterward was brought into so clear a light and full evidence of its truth, that he doubted no more of it than of his own being alive. And this certainty, saith Gerson, did not arise *ex nova aliqua ratione et demonstratione, sed ex humiliatione, et captivitate intellectûs, atque admirabili quadam Dei illuminatione à montibus æternis*—did not come from any new argument he had found out to demonstrate the truth of it, but from the Spirit of God humbling and captivating his proud understanding, and admirably irradiating the same. The words thus opened present us with this important doctrinal conclusion.

[THE WRITTEN WORD is the sword by which the Christians overcome.]

DOCTRINE. That the written word, or if you will, the Scripture, is the sword by which the Spirit of God enables his saints to overcome all their enemies. The Spirit will do nothing for them without the word, and they can do nothing to purpose without him. The word is the sword, and the Spirit of Christ the arm which wields it in for the saints. All the great conquests which Christ and his saints achieve in the world are got with this sword. When Christ comes forth against his enemies, this sword is girded on his thigh, 'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty,' Ps. 45:3. His victory over them too is ascribed to it, ver. 4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth,'—that is, the word of truth. We find, Rev. 1:6, Christ holding 'seven stars in his right hand,' intimating the choice care he hath over his people,

particularly the ministers, who are more shot at than any other. And how doth he protect them, but by this 'sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth?' This is the great privilege which the poorest believer in the church hath by the covenant of grace—such a one as Adam had not in the first covenant. He, when fallen, had a flaming sword to keep him out of paradise, but had no such sword, when innocent, to keep him from sinning, and so from being turned out of that happy place and state. No, he was left to stand upon his own defence, and by his own vigilancy to be a lifeguard to himself. But now the word of God stands between the saints and all danger. This will the better appear if we single out the chief enemies with whom the saint's war is waged, and show how they all fall before the word, and receive their fatal blow from this one sword, as Abimelech slew the threescore sons of Jerubbaal 'upon one stone,' Judges 9:5. First. The bloody persecutor who breathes slaughter against the saints, and pursues them with fire and faggot. Second. The seducer and heretic. Third. Our own lusts. Fourth. An army of afflictions, both outward and inward.

[PERSECUTORS are overcome by 'the word of God.']

First Enemy. The bloody persecutor, who breathes slaughter against the saints, and pursues them with fire and faggot. Such a race of giants there ever was, and will be as long as the devil hath any kindred alive in the world, who, when it lies in their power, to maintain their father's kingdom of darkness, will not fear to trample under their feet those stars of heaven whose light acquaints the world with their horrid impieties, and so hazards the weakening of the devil's interest in the minds of men. Hence those bloody wars raised, cruel fires of martyrdom kindled, and massacres practised on the saints—with many devilishly witty inventions of torments, that these innocent souls might linger in their pains, and stay the longer in the jaws of death, thereby to 'feel themselves to die,' as one of them barbarously and inhumanly said! Well, what ladders doth God use to scale these mountains of pride? Where are the weapons with which the people of God resist and overcome these monsters of men that thus defy the Lord and his hosts? Wouldst thou know where? Truly,

they are to be seen in the tower of David, builded for an armoury—the word of God, I mean. Here hang the shields and bucklers, the swords and darts, by which the worthies of God have in all ages defended themselves stoutly against the rage of persecutors, and also triumphed gloriously over their greatest force and power. Out of this ‘brook’ they take those ‘smooth stones’ by which they prostrate these Goliaths. This sort of the church’s enemies are overcome two ways:—either by their conversion or destruction. Now, the word of God is the sword that effects both. It hath two edges, Heb. 4:12, and so cuts both sides.

1. Way. The sword of the Spirit hath application to the elect, who, for a time, through ignorance and prejudice, are joined with the saints’ enemies, as busy sticklers and bloody persecutors as the worst of the pack. The word of God is a sacrificing knife, to rip open their hearts, and let out the hot putrefied blood of their sins, which made them so mad against the church of God, yea, and to prepare them also, by converting grace, as an offering acceptable unto God, as the apostle excellently showeth, Rom. 15:16. Thus the murderers of our blessed Lord, we find them by one sermon of Peter so strongly wrought upon that they presently vomit up his blood, as sick of it as ever they were for it, and, at one prick that the point of this sword gave them, crying for quarter at God’s hands, yea throwing down their persecuting arms, and most freely entering their names into his muster-roll, whose life but a few days before they had so cruelly taken away, about three thousand of them at one clip being baptized in his name, Acts 2:41. Yea, Paul himself, whom I may call, as Erasmus doth Augustine, before his conversion, ‘the great whale,’ that did so much mischief to the church of Christ, what hook did he use to strike him with but the word? Never had Christ a more furious enemy in the world than this man. His heart was so inflamed with a rage against the saints, that the fiery steam thereof came out of his lips, as from the mouth of a hot furnace, breathing slaughter against them wherever he went, Acts 9:1. Now what force of arms, besides the word preached, did Christ send to take in the castle of this bloody man’s heart? First. Christ himself took him immediately to task, preaching such a thundering sermon from his heavenly pulpit, as dismounted this proud rider, and sent him bound in the fetters of his own

troubled soul, prisoner even to that place where he thought to have clapped up others, and then left his Spirit to carry on the work of his conversion, by applying and keeping the plaster of the word close to his heart. How powerfully this wrought on him he himself tells us, ‘When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,’ Rom. 7:9. That is, when the law came by the convictions of the Spirit to rake in his soul, and pierce his conscience, then sin revived those lusts which like a sleepy lion slumbered in him. Now, however, in his awakened conscience they roared so dreadfully that he was as it were struck dead with the terror of them as a poor damned creature; and would have undoubtedly gone away in that swoon of horror and despair, had not the joyful news of gospel grace been by the same word and Spirit applied seasonably, to bring him to the life of hope and comfort again. Thus was this boisterous furious enemy of the saints chained and tamed by the terrors of the law, changed and renewed by the gentleness and mercy of the gospel, and he became no more like himself than a ravening wolf is to the innocent lamb, more ready to lay down his own life now for the defence of the gospel, than before conversion to take away their lives that professed it.

2. Way. The sword of the Spirit hath application to the saints’ persecuting enemies, when ruined and destroyed. Indeed, if they continue impenitent, and harden themselves against the truths and servants of God, that is the end they must all look to come to. They are like ravenous beasts—‘made to be taken and destroyed,’ II Peter 2:12, and they may know beforehand, as the certainty of their ruin, so what shall procure it, and that is the word of God. ‘And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed,’ Rev. 11:5. It is spoken of those that shall dare to oppose and persecute the faithful preachers of the gospel—that fire comes out of their mouths to destroy them. Though they have their will on the bodies of the saints, butchering and burning them, yet the word they preach will be their destruction. That lives and stays behind, to pay the saints’ debts and avenge them on their enemies. God is resolved they must and shall in this manner be killed, the word must give them the fatal stroke. Julian confessed as much,

when bleeding under his deadly wound, though the arrow came out of a Persian bow, yet the wretch knew it was sent by a higher than a Persian hand, vicisti Galileæ—O Galilean, thou hast overcome and been too hard for me. His conscience told him that his spite against the truth of Christ was his death; and many more besides him have acknowledged as much when under the hand of justice. The face of the word of God which they have opposed, hath appeared to them as engraven upon their judgments.

O this sword of the word, it hath a long reach; it is at the breast of every enemy God and his saints hath in the world, and though at present they cannot see whence their danger should come (they are so great and powerful, so safe and secure, as they think), yet the word of God having set down their doom already, God will sooner or later open one door or other to let in their destruction upon them. When the prophet would express the indubitable ruin of the Philistines impending, mark what prognostics he gives, 'Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast,... the word of the Lord is against you,' Zeph. 2:5. As if he had said, You are a lost undone people; the whole world cannot save you; for 'the word of the Lord is against you.' The threatening of the word, like lightning or mildew, blasts wherever it goes, and its curse burns to the very root. Hence all the seven nations of Canaan fell into the mouth of the Israelites like ripe fruit into the mouth of him that shakes the tree. The word of the Lord cursing them, had gone before them to make their conquest certain and easy. This Balak knew, and therefore would have given so much for a few words out of Balaam's mouth to have cursed Israel in God's name. The truth is, though we look upon the monarchs of the world, and their armies, as those which have the sway of the affairs of the world, yet these are no more than the fly on the wheel. It is the word of God that hath the great stroke in all that is done on the world's stage. 'I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down,...to build, and to plant,' Jer. 1:10. Indeed, the whole earth is God's ground; and who hath power to build on his ground, or pull down, but himself? And in his word he hath given his mind what he will have done to his enemies, and for his saints, and therefore all the mercies they have, they receive and acknowledge them as gracious performances of the

promise, so all the judgments executed on all their enemies as accomplishments of the threatenings of the word, called therefore 'the judgment written,' Ps. 149:9.

[HERETICS are overcome by the 'word of God.']

Second Enemy. The seducer is another enemy the Christian hath to cope with, and no less dangerous than the other: nay, in this respect, far more formidable—the persecutor can kill only the body, but the seducer comes to poison the soul. Better to be slain outright by his sword, than to be 'taken alive,' as the apostle phraseth it, 'in this snare of the devil,' which these whom he sends forth abirding for souls privily lay, even where they are oft least suspected. When Paul fell into the mouth of the persecutor, he could yet glory, and rejoice that he had escaped the latter: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,' II Tim. 4:7, 8. See how this holy man triumphs and flourisheth his colours, as if the field were fought and the day won; whereas, good man, he was now going to lay his head on the block under the hand of bloody Nero's headsman, as you may perceive, 'I am now ready to be offered up,' ver. 6, alluding to the kind of death, it is like, he was shortly to undergo. But you will possibly say, What great cause had he then to cry victoria—victory, when his affairs were in such a desperate and deplored condition? Yes, this made him triumph, he had 'kept the faith;' and that was a thousand times more joy and comfort to him than the laying down his life was trouble. If he had left the faith by cowardice, or chopped it away for any false doctrine, he had lost his soul by losing of that; but having kept the faith, he knew that he did but part with his life to receive a better at God's hands than was taken from him by man's. The locusts mentioned, Rev. 9—which Mr. Mede takes to be the Saracens, who were so great a scourge and plague to the Roman world, newly Christianized—we find 'they had tails like unto scorpions, and their were stings in their tails,' ver. 10: which the learned writer forenamed interprets to be the cursed Mahometan doctrine with which they poisoned the souls of the people wherever their conquering sword came.

It seems, though the sword of war in the hand of a barbarous bloody enemy be a heavy judgment to a people, yet the propagation of cursed errors is a greater. This is the 'sting in the tail' of that judgment. I do not doubt but many that were godly might fall by the sword of that enemy in such a general calamity, but only those that were not among God's sealed ones felt the sting in their tail by being poisoned with their cursed imposture; and therefore they alone are said to be 'hurt' by them, ver. 4. We may be cut off by an enemy's sword and not be hurt; but we cannot drink in their false doctrine, and say so. Now, the word of God is the sword whereby the Spirit enables the saints to defend themselves against this enemy; yea, to rout and ruin this subtle band of Satan. We read of Apollos, Acts 18:28, that 'he mightily convinced the Jews.' He did, as it were, knock them down with the weight of his reasoning. And out of what armoury fetched he the sword with which he so prevailed? See ver. 28. 'Showing by the Scriptures'—not their cabala—'that Jesus was Christ;' and therefore he is said to be 'mighty in the Scriptures,' ver. 24, a mighty man of valour, and so expert, through his excellent knowledge in them, that the erroneous Jews could no more stand before him holding this sword in his hand, than a child with a wooden dagger can against a giant formidably armed with killing weapons.

When Paul warns Timothy to stand upon his defence carefully against seducers, which snapped so many everywhere, he can devise no better counsel how he might keep out of their hands, than by sending him to the Scriptures, and bidding him shut himself up within these, as in a town of war. 'But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned,' II Tim. 3:14; and in the next verse he opens himself, and shows what lesson he means that he had learned, by telling him, that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation; and by consequence, wiser than all his enemies, if he stuck close to them. Other arms we may load ourselves with, by tumbling over many authors; but he that hath this sword, and hath been but taught of the Spirit the use of this weapon, is provided well enough to meet the stoutest champions for error the devil hath on his side, in an encounter. With this, poor women have been able to disarm great doctors of their studied arguments, ruffling all their art and

logic with one plain place of Scripture, as she who brained Abimelech, that great commander, by tumbling a piece of millstone on his head. Out of this armoury came those weapons Paul tells us are so 'mighty through God, casting down imaginations,' or reasonings, λογισμοὺς καθαιρούντες, by which an ancient will have the Greek Philosophers' syllogisms to be meant. Indeed, he that hath the word on his side, and a holy skill to use it, hath as much advantage of his adversary that comes with other armour—let him be never so good a fencer—as a man with a good sword hath over him that comes forth only with a bulrush in his hand.

All error dreads the light of the word, and fears more to be examined by that, than a thief does to be tried before a strict judge. Hereticorum sententias prodidisse est superasse—to have expounded the doctrines of heretics is to have overcome them, saith Hieron. Unfold them, or bring them and the word face to face, and, like Cain, they hang down their head; they are put to shame. This is the only certain ordeal to try suspected opinions at. If they can walk upon this fiery law unhurt, unreprieved, they may safely pass for truths, and none else. Paul tell us of some that 'will not endure sound doctrine,' II Tim. 4:3. Alas! how should they, when their minds are not sound? It is too searching for them. Gouty feet cannot go but on soft way that gently yields to them. Such must have doctrine that will comply with their humour, which the word will not do, but rather judge them, and this they think it will do too soon at the great day; therefore now they shun it so much, lest it should torment them before their time. Thus the Quakers, they have their skulking hole to which they run from the Scripture, at whose bar they know their opinions would be cast undoubtedly, and therefore [they] appeal to another where they may have a more favourable hearing—the light within them, or, in plain English, their natural conscience; a judge which is known too well to be corrupt and easily bribed to speak what the lusts of men will oft have him do. Ah, poor creatures, what a sad change they have made!—to leave the word that is κανὼν τῆς πίστεως ἀκλιῆς, an inflexible rule of faith, and can no more lie or deceive them than God himself can do—to trust the guidance of themselves to themselves, a more ignorant, sottish, unfaithful guide than which

the devil could not have chosen for them. ‘He that is his own teacher,’ saith Bernard, ‘is sure to have a fool for his master.’ And Solomon, yea a greater then Solomon, God himself by Solomon, saith, ‘The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise,’ Prov. 12:15. But he is most wise that makes the word of God the man of his counsel. The Papist he hath his thicket and wood also—antiquity and traditions—to which he flees before the face of the Scripture for sanctuary, as Adam did to a bush when God came walking to him. As if any antiquity were so authentic as God’s own oracles; and any traditions of men to be laid in the balance with the Scripture.

To name no more, the Socinian, he folds up himself in his own proud reason, and takes such state on him, that the Scripture must come to that to be sensed, and not that stoop to it. He must have a religion and Scripture that fits the model his own reason draws, or [he] will have neither. This forms the root of many prodigious errors and heretics; like those of whom Tertullian speaks, *qui Platonicum et Aristotelicum Christianismum procuderunt*—who went to the philosopher’s forge to shape a Christianity. What is this but to carry gold to be weighed at the chandler’s scales, and to look for the sun by the light of the moon. A modern divine saith, ‘Most heresies have sprung either *ex Samo Satani fastu, vel ex Ætiii ignorantia, vel ex Arrii dialectia*—from pride, Aetian ignorance, or the Arian sophistry of reason’—the last of which seems to be the shelf on which Paul himself observes some to have split, ‘and to have erred concerning the faith,’ I Tim. 6:21; and therefore so affectionately exhorts Timothy to keep off this dangerous shore, and steer his course by the word, ‘O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust,’ &c., ver. 20. For this which is here committed to him, I take for no other than ‘the form of sound words’ he exhorts him to hold fast in II Tim. 1:13.

Objection. But we see heretics quote Scripture for their most prodigious errors, and draw this sword for their defence, as well as the orthodox; how then is it such a powerful instrument and engine against error?

Answer. What will not men of subtle heads, corrupt hearts, and bold faces, dare to do for the carrying on their wicked party, when once they have espoused

an error or any sinful way? Korah and his ungodly company dare give out that ‘the Lord is among them,’ and they have as much to do with the priesthood as Aaron himself, on whom the holy oil was poured, Num. 16:3. And Zedekiah, that arch-flatterer, fears not to father his lie on the God of truth himself. He ‘made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them,’ I Kings 22:11; whereas God never spake such a word. It is no marvel then, to see any lay their bastard brats at God’s door, and cry they have Scripture on their side. By this impudence they may abuse credulous souls into a belief of what they say, as a cheater may pick the purses of ignorant people by showing them something like the king’s broad seal, which was indeed his own forgery. Yea, God may suffer them to seduce others of more raised parts and understanding, as a just judgment on them for rebelling against the light of their own consciences. As Pharaoh, by the false miracles of the magicians, was set off further from any compliance with Moses. And those of the antichristian faction, who ‘because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,’ II Thes. 2:10, 11. But sincere souls that search humbly for the truth, and have no other designs in their inquiry after it but that they may know the will of God and obey it, shall find on their faithful prayers to God, a light most clear shining from the Scripture, to guide them safe from those pitfalls of damning errors into which others fall, towards whom the dark side of this cloud stands. ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: Ps. 111:10. The fox, they say, when hard put to it, will fall in subtly with the dogs and hunt with them as one of their company, but even then his strong scent, which he cannot leave behind him, bewrays him.

Thus heretics, for to shelter their errors, will crowd in among Scripture truths, and by their fair colours and false glosses, make them seem to be of their company, but they cannot so perfume their rotten opinions but their rank scent and savour will be smelt and discerned by those who have their senses exercised. Never any heretic got by appealing to the Scriptures. What Christ saith in another case, ‘All

they that take the sword shall perish with the sword,' Matt. 26:52, is most true of all heretics. They are confounded and confuted by that very sword of the word which they lift up to defend them withal.

[CORRUPTIONS AND LUSTS are overcome by the 'word of God.']

Third Enemy. Our own lusts make the next adversary we have to grapple with. Thus the further we go the worse the enemy we meet. These are more formidable than both the former, partly because they are within us—men of our own house, lusts of our own bosom that rise up against us, and partly because they hold correspondence with a foreign foe also—the devil himself—who, as he did beat man at first with his own rib, so he continues to do us the worst mischief with our own flesh. The fire of lust is ours, but the flame commonly is his, because his temptations are the bellows that blow it up. And when such a fire meets with such a strong wind to spread and carry it on its wings, whither will it fly? O how hard to slake and quench it! A whole legion of devils are as soon cast out of the body, as one lust out of the soul; yea, sooner. Satan likes his lodging better in the heart than in the house, and is loather out. He came more willing out of the man into the swine, Matt. 8:31, because by coming out of his body, and contenting himself a while with a meaner house—the swine I mean—he hoped for a fairer way thereby to get fuller possession of their souls; which indeed he obtained, Christ leaving them most justly to his rule that were so soon weary of his sweet company. Now the word is the only weapon. Like Goliath's sword, none to this for the hewing down and cutting off this stubborn enemy. The word of God can master our lusts when they are in their ruff² and pride. If ever lust rageth more than other, it is when youthful blood boils in our veins. Youth is heady, and lust then hot and impetuous. Our sun is climbing higher still, and we think it a great while to night; so that it must be a strong arm that brings a young man off his lusts, who hath his palate at best advantage to taste sensual pleasures with; the vigour of his strength to take in

2. Ruff, dignity, elevation; as e.g. 'princes in the ruff of all their glory.' — ED.

more of the delights of the flesh than crippled age can do, and further from fear of death's gunshot (as he thinks) than old men, who are upon the very marches of the grave, and carry the scent of the earth about them into which they are sure suddenly to be resolved. Well, let the sword of God meet this young gallant in all his bravery, with his feast of sensual delights before him, and but whisper a few syllables in his ear, give his conscience but a prick with the point of its sword, and it shall make him flee in as great haste from them all, as Absalom's brethren did from their feast, when they saw their brother Amnon murdered at the table.

When David would give the young man a receipt to cure him of his lusts—not one, but all—how he may cleanse his whole course and way, he bids him only wash in this Jordan, Ps. 119:9. By what means or 'wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word?' It is called 'the rod of his strength,' Ps 110:2. God, we know, wrought those great miracles, whereby he plagued the Egyptians and saved the Israelites, with the rod in Moses' hand. By that he tamed proud Pharaoh, making him and his people at last to let go their hold of the Israelites, yea, in a manner, to thrust them out from them, and be as glad of their room as before they were of their company. By that he divided the sea for Israel's passage, and covered the Egyptians in its waves. By that he smote the rock. And by this rod of his word he doth as great wonders in the souls of men as these. By this he smites their consciences, cleaves the rocks of their hard hearts, divides the waves of their lusts, and brings poor sinners from under the power of sin and Satan.

Never could Austin get a jail-delivery from his lusts till he heard that voice, tolle lege, tolle lege—take, read; upon which, as himself tells us (Lib. Confess. 8), he presently took up the Bible, and that one place, Rom. 13, to which his eye was directed, once read, like a mighty earthquake did so shake all the powers of his soul that the prison doors of his heart immediately flew open, and those chains of lusts which, with all his skill and strength, he could never file off, did now on a sudden fall off, and he became so strangely metamorphosed, that quas amittere metus erat, jam dimittere gaudium fuit—those lusts, to lose which was one all his fear, now to pack them

away was his joy. Never man, by his own confession, was more slave to his lusts, and tied with a stronger chain of delight to them, than himself was. He did, as he saith, *volutare in cæno tanquam cinamonis et unguentis pretiosis*—he tumbled in the puddle of his filthy lusts with as much delight as if he had been rolling in a bed of spices, and anointing himself with the most precious ointments; yet this one word came with such a commanding power to him, that it tore them out of his very heart, and turned his love into a cordial hatred of them, who before would have let his heart sooner been plucked out of his bosom than these taken out of his heart. And as the word is the weapon by which he, with a strong hand, brings poor sinners out of the power of Satan and sin into a state of freedom, so he useth it to defend his saints from all after-storms of temptations, by which Satan, now thrown out of his kingdom, endeavours to recover the same. Those kingdoms indeed that are got by the sword must be kept by the sword. David will tell us how he stood upon his guard, and made good his ground, against this enemy. ‘Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer,’ Ps. 17:4. As if he had said, ‘Would you know how it comes to pass that I escape those ungodly works and practices which men ordinarily take liberty to do? I must ascribe it to the good word of God. It is this I consult with, and by am kept from those foul ways whereinto others, that make no use of the word for their defence, are carried by Satan, the destroyer of mankind.’

Can we go against sin and Satan with a better weapon than Christ used to vanquish the tempter with? And certainly Christ did it *per modum exempli*—by way of example, to set us an example how we should come armed into the field against them; for Christ could with one beam shot from his Deity (if he had pleased to exert it), have as easily laid the bold fiend prostrate at his foot, as afterwards he did them that came to attack him; but he chose rather to conceal the majesty of his divinity, and let Satan come up closer to him, that so he might confound him with the word, and thereby give a proof of that sword to his saints which he was to leave with them for their defence against the same enemy. The devil is set out by the ‘leviathan,’ Isa. 27:1, him God threatens to punish with his ‘strong sword;’ alluding to that great fish, the

whale, which fears no fish like the sword-fish, [and] by whom this great devourer of all other fish is oft killed; for, receiving one prick from his sword, he hasteth to the shore, and beats himself against it till he dies. Thus the devil, the great devourer of souls, who sports himself in the sea of this world, even as the leviathan in the waters, and swallows the greatest part of mankind without any power to make resistance against him, is himself vanquished by the word. When he hath to do with a saint armed with this sword, and instructed how to use this weapon, he then, and not till then, meets his match.

[AFFLICTIONS, outward and inward, are overcome by the ‘word of God.’]

Fourth Enemy. A fourth enemy that meets the Christian, is an army made up of many bands of afflictions, both outward and inward, sometimes one, sometimes another, yea, of a whole body of them pouring their shot together upon them. This was Paul’s case, ‘without were fightings, within were fears,’ II Cor. 7:5. He endured a great fight of external afflictions and buffetings within his own bosom at once. And that is sad indeed, when a city is on fire within at the same time that an enemy is battering its walls from without. Yet this is oft the condition of the best saints, to have both the rod on their backs, and rebukes from God in their spirits, at once. ‘When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth,’ Ps. 39:11.

God sometimes corrects with outward crosses, but smiles with inward manifestations; and then he whips them, as I may so say, with a rosemary rod. The one sweetens and alleviates the other. At another time he sends a cross, and inclineth a frown in it. He whips with outward affliction, and, as an angry father, every lash he gives his child, tells him, ‘this is for that fault, and that for this,’ which exceedingly adds to the smart of the correction, and is the very knot on the whip, to see his father so much displeased with him. And when the poor Christian lies thus under the hand of an afflicting God, or under the rebukes of a frowning God, Satan will not be long from the Christian, or wanting to throw his salt and vinegar into the wounds that God hath made in his

flesh or spirit, thereby to increase his dolour, and so lead him further into temptation one way or other, if he can have his will. Indeed, God often sends so many troops of various afflictions to quarter upon some one Christian, that it puts him hard to it to bid them all welcome, and entertain them with patience; yea, it would pose any one—that knows not what service the word of God doth the Christian, and the supplies it brings him in—to conceive how his spirit should be kept, and his faith from being eaten up, and swallowed into despair by them. But the word of God, this bears all the charge he is at. This is his counsellor and comforter. David tells us plainly his heart had died within him but for it: ‘Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction,’ Ps. 119:92. The word was his spiritual Abishag, from which his soul got all its warmth. All the world’s enjoyments heaped on him would have left him cold at heart if this had not lain in his bosom to bring him a kindly heat of inward peace and comfort: ‘This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me,’ ver. 50. Not the crown in hope—for some think it was not, when this psalm was penned, on his head—but the word in his heart, to which he was beholden for his comfort. A word of promise is more necessary at such a time to a poor soul, than warm clothes are to the body in cold weather.

When Adam was thrust naked out of paradise into the cold blasts of a miserable world—where, from his own guilty conscience within, and crosses without, he was sure to meet with trouble enough—then God gave him a word of promise, as you may observe, to fence his soul, before he taught him to make coats to clothe his body, Gen. 3:15, compared with ver. 21. The Lord knew full well how indispensably necessary a word of promise was to keep him from being made a prey the second time to the devil, and from being swallowed up with the dismal sight of those miseries and sorrows in which he had thrown himself and posterity; and therefore, he would not suffer him to lie open to the shock of their assaults one day, but presently puts the sword of a promise into his hand, that with it he might defend and comfort his sorrowful heart in the midst of all his troubles. It was the speech of a holy man, after God had made that sweet place: ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour

and are heavy laden,’ &c., Matt. 11:28, the messenger to open his dungeon of soul-trouble, and bring him into the light of inward joy—‘that he had better be without meat, drink, light, air, earth, life, and all, than without this one comfortable scripture.’ If one single promise, like an ear of corn rubbed in the hand of faith, and applied by the Spirit of Christ, can afford such a full satisfying meal of joy to a hunger-bitten, pining soul, O what price can we set on the whole field of the Scripture, which stands so thick with promises, every way as cordial as this!

Love is witty, and sets the head on work to devise names for the person we love dearly—such names as may at once express how highly we prize them, and also yet more endear them to us by carrying on them the superscription of that sweetness which we conceive to be in them. Thus many holy persons have commended the promises to us with their appreciating names—the saints’ legacies—the breasts of God full of milk of grace and comfort—the saints’ plank to swim upon to heaven. Indeed, we might rob the world of all her jewels, and justly hang them on the ear of the promise; apply all the excellencies she boasts of unto the promises. There is more riches and treasure to be had in one promise than all the gold and silver of the Indies are worth; ‘exceeding great and precious promises,’ II Peter 1:4; by them a poor believer may lay claim to heaven and earth at once; for godliness hath the promise of this life and the other also. But that which in this place I would commend their excellency from, is the admirable service they do, and succour they afford a poor soul in the day of his greatest distress. They are the granary of spiritual provision, whereby our Joseph, our dear Lord Jesus, nourisheth and preserveth alive his brethren in a time of famine. They are the ‘hive of sweetness,’ where the believing soul in the winter of affliction—when nothing is to be gathered abroad from the creature—both lies warmly, and lives plentifully on the stock of comfort there laid up. They are, in a word, ‘the fair havens’ and safe road into which the tempted soul puts his weather-beaten ship, where it lies secure till the heavens clear, and the storm is over, which the world, sin, and Satan raise upon him. Yea, when death itself approacheth, and the devil hath but one cast more for the game, one skirmish more to get or lose the victory for ever,

then faith on the promise carries the Christian's soul out of the garrison of his body—where he hath endured so hard a siege—with colours flying, and joy triumphing to heaven, leaving only his flesh behind in the hands of death, and that also with an assured hope of having it redeemed out of its power ere it be long, at the day of resurrection and restitution of all things.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Cruelty and presumption of the Church of Rome, in disarming the people of this spiritual sword.]

Use First. Is the word the sword of the Spirit whereby the Christian vanquisheth his enemies? Then we may justly charge the Church of Rome of cruelty to the souls of people, in disarming them of that weapon with which they alone can defend themselves against their enemies, that seek their eternal ruin. It is true, they have some fig-leaves with which they would fain hide this their shameful practice, making the world believe they do it in mercy to the people, lest they should cut their fingers and wound themselves with this weapon. 'We see,' say they, 'how many errors and heresies the world swarms with, by the mistakes of the vulgar.' Yea, Peter himself they dare subpœna as a witness on their side, who saith that there 'are some things hard to be understood' in Paul's epistles, 'which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction,' II Peter 3:16. And therefore the Scripture, which is so dangerous for ordinary people to meddle with, they judge it safest to lay out of their reach, as we do a sword or edge-tool from children, though they cry never so much for it. See what a fair glove they draw over so foul a hand. But did Peter, because some unlearned and unstable souls wrested the Scripture, forbid them, or any other, how weak soever, to read the Scripture? This had carried some weight with it indeed. But we find just the contrary. For in the following verses, the counsel he gives Christians, that they may not be led away with the error of the wicked, is to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' ver. 18. *Lumen est vehiculum influentiæ*—light is the

chariot that conveys the influences of the sun. So the knowledge of Christ brings with it the influences of his grace into the heart. And how did Peter mean they should grow in the knowledge of Christ, if he would not have them read the Scriptures, which is the only book where it is to be learned? But the Papists would have their people learn their knowledge of Christ from their preaching of him, and not from the Scriptures, which they cannot so safely converse with. But,

1. How shall they be assured that what they preach is true, except they have the Scripture, to which, as unto the true touch-stone, they may bring their doctrine to be tried? Thus did the Bereans by Paul's sermon, Acts 17:11—a preacher as good, I trow, as any of theirs. And,

2. Suppose they preach the truth, can they warrant that their words shall not be perverted and mistaken by their hearers? And if they cannot, why then are they suffered to preach in a vulgar tongue, when the word of God, for the same reason, is forbidden to be read by the people in a known tongue? Truly, I am of that learned man's mind, who saith, 'that, if God himself may not speak in a vulgar tongue, I see far less reason that a friar should, and so the people should know nothing at all of Christ' (Mede on Jer. 10:11). No, the true reason why they forbid the Scripture to be read, is not to keep them from errors and heresies, but to keep them from discovering those which they themselves impose upon them. Such trash as they trade in would never go off their hand roundly, did they not keep their shop thus dark; which made one of their shavelings so bitterly complain of that unlucky Luther for spoiling their market, saying, 'But for him they might have persuaded the people of Germany to have ate hay.' Anything indeed will go down a blind man's throat. I do not wonder that their people thus nustled³ in ignorance, do so readily embrace their fopperies, and believe all their forgeries so confidently. The blind man must either sit still, or go whither he pleaseth that leads him. We read of a whole army, when once smitten with blindness, carried out of their way by one single man that had his eyes in his head, II Kings 6. But this we may

3. Nusled or nustled, fondled, cherished. — ED.

well wonder at, that men who know the Scriptures—as many of their leaders do—and acknowledge their divinity, dare to be so impudent and audacious [as] to intercept this letter sent from the great God to the sons of men, and not suffer them—except a few whom they think fit—to look on it, though it be superscribed and directed by God himself not to any party or sort of men, but to every man where it comes, Rom. 1:17, II Cor. 1:1. This is such a piece of impudence as cannot be paralleled. Wherefore are laws made, but to be promulgated?—Scripture written, but to be read and known of all men? I am sure the apostle by the same authority with which he wrote his epistles, commands them to be read in the church, Col. 4:16. And did the ministers of those churches pocket them up, and conceal them from the people's notice, lest they should, by perverting them, be made heretics?

It is too true some 'wrest' the Scriptures 'to their own destruction.' And so do some, for want in care of eating, choke themselves with their bread. Must all therefore starve for fear of being choked? Some hurt themselves and friends with their weapons; must therefore the whole army be disarmed, and only a few chief officers be allowed to wear a sword by their sides? Truly, if this be argument enough to seal up the Bible from being read, we must not only deny it to the meaner and ore unlearned sort, but also to the great rabbis and doctors of the chair, for the grossest heresies have bred in the finest wits. Prodigious errors have been as much beholden to Arrius as the ignorance of Ætius: so that the upshot of all will be this—the unlearned must not read the Scripture, because they may pervert them through ignorance; nor the learned, because they may wrest them by their subtlety. Thus we see, when proud men will be wiser than God, their foolish minds will darken, till they lose the reason and understanding of men.

[Reproof of the Church of Rome for the insufficiency it imputes to the Scriptures].

Use Second. This falls heavy upon them that charge the holy Scriptures with insufficiency, as not containing all things necessary to salvation. What a horrid blasphemy is this, and reproach to the great God, that he should send his people into the field,

and put such a wooden sword into their hand as is not sufficient to defend them and cut their way through their enemies' powers to heaven, whither he orders them to march. Would any gracious prince, that loves the lives of his subjects, give them arms that are not fit to oppose such an enemy as comes out against them, if he knows how to furnish them with better? Nay, would he give them such weak and insufficient weapons for their defence, and then charge them to use no other? This were unworthily to send them as sheep to the shambles, and could signify nothing but that he had a mind either their throats should be all cut by their enemies. And doth not God himself highly commend this sword of the Scripture to his people, when he tells Timothy it is 'able to make thee,' as a Christian, 'wise unto salvation,' II Tim. 3:15, and as a 'man of God,' or minister of the gospel, 'perfect,' and 'thoroughly furnished unto all good works?' ver. 17. Yea, doth he not also forbid us the use of any other weapon but what the Scripture furnisheth us withal? 'To the law and to the testimony' he sends us, Isa. 8:20, and makes it a renouncing our allegiance to him to go anywhere else for counsel or protection than to his written word: 'Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?' Then follows, 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' ver. 19, 20. It seems then God doth not count we seek to him, except we inquire for him at 'the law and the testimony,' and bring all we hear to their test and touch.

Surely, that which is intended by God to be to his people what the standard and town-bushel are to the market, a rule to measure all doctrines by, is itself exact and sufficient. But the world, by this time, knows where the insufficiency of the Scriptures lies. Sufficient they are enough for God's ends, but not for the pope's ends. They are able to furnish every true Christian in the world with wisdom enough how he should save his soul. But the pope finds himself grieved, that they are not so useful to help him to save the triple crown on his head, and do not furnish him with grounds from which he may defend the lordly power and godlike infallibility he claims, with the other doctrines held forth by him. And this is the only defect he can charge the Scriptures with, to supply which, the rabble-rout of traditions is brought into

the church; all taught to speak the pope's sense before they see the light. And, that reputation may be gained to these unknown witnesses, this way with the devil's help—who owes the Scripture an old spite ever since the first promise rescued Adam, his prisoner out of his hand—have taken, that the Scriptures be declared insufficient and uncertain;—*minima particula veritatis revelatæ*—the least particle of revealed truth, as one of them impudently writes, and so needs the patchery of these to make it perfect. Just as Andronicus served the emperor Alexius, who gave out he was weak and insufficient to govern alone, and so first got a joint power with him, and at last an absolute power over him to unthroned him. And whether their traditions have dealt better by the Scripture, the world may judge. When traditions go up, the written word is sure to go down. Ye have made, saith Christ to the Pharisees, the commandment of none effect by your tradition, *Matt. 15:6, ἠκυρωσατε*—you have unlorded it, and supplanted its authority in the minds of men, who leave the word to hearken to your traditions.

[Wickedness of those who uplift the sword of the Spirit in defence of any sin.]

Use Third. This condemns those of prodigious wickedness, that, instead of using this sword to defend them against sin and Satan, lift it up audaciously for their defence in their wicked and abominable practices. Thus the heretic, he takes up the word to justify his corrupt tenets, forcing it, in favour of his way, to bear witness against itself. And many wretches we meet with, who, to ward off a reproof, will dare to seek protection for their ungodly courses from the word, which they have at their tongue's end, and interpose to break the blow that is made at them. Tell the sensualist of his voluptuous, brutish life, and you shall have him sometimes reply, Solomon was not so precise and scrupulous, who saith, 'A man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry,' *Ecc. 8:15*. As if Solomon, yea God himself that directed his pen, meant to fill the drunkard's quaffing-cup for him, and were a friend of gluttons and wine-bibbers! Whereas, 'to eat and drink, and be merry' in Solomon's mouth there, amounts to more than to serve God with gladness in

the abundance of those good things which God gives us to enjoy, in the mouth of Moses, *Deut. 28:47*.

Such is the desperate wickedness of man's heart, that the sweetest and comfortablest portions of Scripture are most wrested by many to serve their lusts. The declarations of God's free-grace, made on purpose to melt sinners' hearts, and draw them from their lusts to Christ, how oft are they abused to wedge and harden them in their sins, and keep them from him! Examples of holy men's falls, recorded merely to make them fear that stand, and to preserve hope of mercy alive in those that have fallen, whereby they are in danger of being swallowed up with despair, how are they perverted by many, who lie like beasts wallowing in their own dung, and think all is well because such eminent saints fell so foully, and yet came off so fairly at last, with their sins pardoned and souls saved! The good success that late repentance hath now and then had in a few, yea very few Scripture-instances, it is strange to think what use and advantage Satan makes of them, to beg time of the sinner, and make him linger still in the Sodom of his sins. 'The eleventh hour,' saith he, 'is not yet come; why will you repent so long before you need?' Why should he set out in the morning, who may despatch his journey well enough an hour before night? The penitent thief, that, as one saith, stole to heaven from the cross, hath, I fear, been an occasion—though on God's part an innocent one—to bring many a sinner to the gallows; yea, well, if not to a place of a longer execution in another world! O, take heed of this, sinners, as you love your souls! Is it not enough to have your lusts, but you must also fetch your encouragement from the word, and forge God's hand to bear you out? The devil indeed thus abuseth Scripture, *Matt. 4:4*, thinking thereby to make Christ more readily hearken to his accursed motion; and wilt thou tread in his steps? By this thou makest one sin two, and the last the worst. to be drunk was a fearful sin in Belshazzar; but to quaff in the bowels of the sanctuary was far worse. No sin is little, but the least sin amounts to blasphemy when thou committest it on a Scripture pretence. The devil cannot easily desire a greater occasion of glorying over God, than thus to wound his name with his own sword. When Julian the Apostate saw the Gentile philosophers confuted by the human learning of some Christians, he said *τοῖς αὐτῶν*

περὸς ἑαυτοὺς—*we are taken by our own wings; looking upon it as a great disgrace for them to be beaten and worsted at that which they counted their own weapon. The word is the Holy Spirit's sword. O, for shame, let not Satan make his boast over thy God, Christian, by thy means, which he will, if he can persuade thee to wound his name with this his own weapon. He that fetcheth an argument from the holy Scriptures to countenance any corrupt opinion or practice, what doth he but go about to make God fight against himself? He shoots at him with an arrow out of his won quiver. He sins, and then doth as it were say, God bids him do it. If there be a man on the face of the earth that God will single out as a mark for his utmost wrath, this is he who shelters his wickedness under the wing of the holy Scriptures, and so makes God patron of his sin.*

[Twofold exhortation in regard
to the word of God.]

Use Forth. Let us be exhorted to thankfulness to God for the word, and incited also to the study of it. 1. Let us bless God for furnishing us with this sword for our defence. 2. Let us study the word, so that we may make use of this weapon to defend ourselves against the many potent enemies that are in the field against us.

[Exhortation to thankfulness for the word.]

1. Exhortation. Let us be excited and provoked to bless God for this sword, with which he hath furnished us so graciously, whereby we may stand on our defence against all our bloody enemies. If a man had a kingdom in his possession, but no sword to keep the crown on his head, he could not expect to enjoy it long. This is a world that there is no living or holding anything we have in safety, without the help of arms. Least of all, could our souls be safe if naked and unarmed, which are here in the mouth of danger, and can no way pass to the place of bliss and happiness in heaven prepared for them, but through their enemies' quarters. When Israel took their march out of Egypt towards the promised land, few or none would trust them to travel through their country, but all rose up in arms against them. The Christian will find his

march much more troublesome and dangerous to heaven. Satan is not grown tamer than he used to be, nor the wicked world better affected than it was wont to the people of God. O what a mercy is it, that we have this sword by our side, which puts us out of danger from any of them all! This is thy hand, Christian, as the rod was in Moses'. What though an army of devils be behind thee, and a sea of sins before thee roaring upon thee, with this sword, by faith wielding it, thou mayest cut thy way through the waves of the one, and set thyself out of the reach of the other. Truly, the Scripture is a mercy incomparably greater than the sun in the heavens. That might be better spared out of its orb, than this out of the church. If that were gone, we should be but knocked off our worldly business, and be only in danger to lose our bodily life, by missing our way, and stumbling on this pit and tumbling into that pond. But, if deprived of the word, salvation work would be laid aside, or gone about to little purpose, and our souls must needs miss the right way to happiness, and stumble inevitably upon hell, while we think we are going to heaven, unless a miracle should interpose to prevent the same. But more particularly, bless God for these three mercies in reference to the Scriptures.

(1.) For their translation into vulgar tongues.

(2.) For the ministry of the word.

(3.) For the efficacy of the word and its ministry hath had upon thy heart.

(1.) Bless God for the translation of the Scriptures. The word is our sword. By being translated, this sword is drawn out of its scabbard. What use, alas! could a poor Christian, that hath but one tongue in his head—that understands but one language, I mean, which his mother taught him—make of this sword when presented to him as it is sheathed in Greek and Hebrew? Truly, he might even fall a weeping with John at the sight of the sealed book, because he could not read it, Rev. 5:4. O bless God that hath sent not angels, but men, furnished by the blessing of God on their indefatigable labours and studies, with ability to roll away the stone from the mouth of this fountain! And were it not sad to see the water of life brought to you with the expense of their spirits and strength (wasted in the work), to be spilled on the ground, and basely undervalued by you, so as hardly to be put into the catalogue of mercies

which you praise God for? O God forbid! It cannot be, if ever you had but the sweetness of any one promise in it milked out unto you, or the power of one of its divine truths impressed on your hearts. Melchior Ad. tells us that Bugenhagenius—whom Luther used, with others, for his help in translating the Bible—when the work was brought to a happy period, he was so affected with the incomparable mercy therein to the churches of Christ in Germany, that every year he invited his friends to a solemn feast that day whereon the work was finished, which they called, ‘The feast of the translation of the Bible.’

When Queen Elizabeth, our English Deborah, opened the prisons at her coming to the crown—as at such times is {it} usual to scatter acts of grace—one as piously as ingeniously told her, that there were yet some good men left in prison undelivered, and desired they might also partake of her princely favour, meaning the four evangelists, and Paul, who had been denied to walk abroad in the English tongue when her sister swayed the scepter. To this she answered, ‘They should be asked, whether they are willing to have their liberty;’ which soon after appearing, they had their jail-delivery, and have ever since had their liberty to speak to you in your own tongue at the assemblies of your public worship; yea, to visit you in your own private houses also. Now is that happy day come, and long hath been, which holy Mr. Tyndal told a popish doctor of, when a poor ploughman should be able to read the Scriptures, and allowed to as freely converse with them, as any doctor of them all! A blessed day indeed it is to the souls of men!

Now, Christian, when thou art prisoner to God’s providence, and kept by his afflicting hand at home, thou hast the word of God to bear thee company in thy solitude; and so, though thou canst not sit up with thy brethren and sisters at thy Father’s table in the public ordinances, yet thou dost not wholly go without thy meal. Thou canst not, it is like, carve so well for thyself as the minister useth to do for thee, yet it is an incomparable mercy thou hast liberty to pick up out of the word for thy present counsel and comfort, as thou art enabled by the Spirit of God upon thy humble prayer for his assistance. Admirable hath been the support the saints have found from this holy book in their confinements. God hath graciously ordered it, that the most useful and necessary truths for

afflicted saints hang, as I may so say, on the lower boughs of this tree of life, within the reach of a poor Christian who is of but an ordinary stature in knowledge. O think, and think again, of those sad times when the bloody sword of persecutors was drawn to keep off the people of God from coming near this tree, and then you will the better conceive of your present privilege. Yea, look back unto those times of popish ignorance, when this cellar of cordial waters was locked up in the original tongues, and not one in a whole town could be found that had a key, by whom poor souls in their fainting fits and agonies of spirit could have it opened, so as to come by any of their sweet consolations to restore their swooning souls; and then you will surely bless God, who hath given you so free an access unto them, when others cannot have access to you to communicate their help unto you.

(2.) Bless God for the ministry of the word, which is the public school he opens to his people, that in it they may learn the use of this their weapon. It is a sad fruit that grows upon the little smattering knowledge that some have got from the word, to puff them up with a conceit of their own abilities, so as to despise the ministry of the word as a needless work. The Corinthians were sick of this disease, which the apostle labours to cure by a sharp reproof: ‘Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us,’ 1 Cor. 4:8. Paul, it seems, was nobody now with these high proficient. The time was, when Paul came to town he was a welcome man. The sucking child was not more glad to see his mother come home, nor could cry more earnestly to be laid to the breast, than they did to partake of his ministry; but now, like the child when it hath sucked its bellyful, they bite the very teat they so greedily awhile before took into their mouths, as if they should never want another meal. So high did their waxen wings of pride carry them above all thoughts of needing his ministry any more. And hath not the pride of many in our days carried them as far into a contempt of the ministry of the word, though their knowledge comes far short of the Corinthians’ knowledge? Well, take heed of this sin. Miriam’s plague, yea a worse, a spiritual scab and leprosy, apparently cleaves to those, as close as a girdle to the loins, who come once to scorn and despise their ordinance, that they make all afraid

to come near their tents. What prodigious errors are they left unto, whereby God brands them! Yea, what sensual lusts hath the once forward profession of many among them been quite swallowed up with! If once a man thinks he needs no longer go to the Spirit's school, he shall find, whoever he is, that he takes the ready way to deprive himself of the Spirit's teaching at home. 'Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings,' 1 Thes. 5:19, 20. They are coupled together. He that despiseth one loseth both. If the scholar be too proud to learn of the usher, he is unworthy to be taught by the master.

But I turn to you humble souls, who yet sit at the feet of Jesus in your right minds. Speak the truth and lie not; are you not well paid for your pains? Dare you say of your waiting on the ministry of the word, what a wretch—though a learned one, Politianus by name—said of his reading the Scripture, 'That he never spent time to less purpose!' Do you count it among your lost time and misplaced hours that are bestowed in hearing the word? I trow not. Thou keepest thy acquaintance with the word at home if thou beest a Christian, and eatest many a sweet bit in a corner while thou art secretly meditating thereon. But does this content thee, or make thee think the word preached a superfluous meal? I am sure David knew how to improve his solitary hours as well as another, yet in his banishment, O how he was pinched and hunger-bitten for want of the public ordinance! And sure we cannot think he forgot to carry his Bible with him into the wilderness, loving the word so dearly as he did. 'My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is,' Ps. 63:1. Why, David? what is the matter thou thus complainest? Hast thou not the word to read in secret? Canst thou not let down thy bucket, and by meditation draw what thou wilt out of the well of the word? Why then dost thou say thou art in a 'thirsty land where no water is?' He means, therefore, comparatively. The sweetest refreshings he enjoyed in his private converse with the word, were not comparable to what he had met in public. And can you blame a sick child for desiring to sit up with his brethren at his father's table, though he is not forgot in his chamber where he is prisoner, but hath something sent him up? It was the sanctuary—there to 'see God, his power and glory, as of old'

—that David's heart longed for, and could not well live without.

God threatens to bring 'a famine of hearing the words of the Lord,' Amos 8:11. Mark, not a famine of reading the word, but of hearing the word. If the word be not preached, though we have the Bible to read in at home, yet it is a famine; and so we ought to judge it. 'And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision,' 1 Sam. 3:1. The strongest Christians would find a want of this ordinance in time. We see in a town besieged, though it be well laid in with corn, yet when put to grind with private hand-mills all they spend, what straits they are soon put to. And so will the best grown saints, when they come to have no more from the word for their souls to live on, than what they grind with their own private meditation and labour, then they will miss the minister, and see it was a mercy indeed to have one whose office it was to grind all the week for him. And if the stronger Christian cannot spare this office, because yet not perfect; what shift shall the weaker sort make, who need the minister to divide the word, as much as little children their nurse's help to mince their meat and cut their bread for them? To leave them to their own improving the word, is to set a whole loaf among a company of little babes, and bid them help themselves. Alas! they will sooner cut their fingers with the knife than fill their bellies with the bread.

(3.) Bless God for the efficacy of the word upon thy soul. Did ever its point prick thy heart? its edge fetch blood of thy lusts, and cut off any rotten member of the body of sin? Bless God for it. You would do as much for a surgeon for lancing a sore, and severing a putrefied part from thy body, though he put thee to exquisite torture in the doing of it. And I hope thou thinkest God hath done thee a greater kindness than so. Solomon tells us, 'faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful,' Prov. 27:6. The wounds that God thus gives are the faithful wounds of a friend; and the kisses sin gives come from an enemy. God's wounds cure, sin's kisses kill. The Italians say that, 'play, wine, and women consume a man laughing.' It is true of all pleasurable sins; and as sin kills the sinner laughing, so God saves poor souls weeping and bleeding under the wounds his word gives them. Happy soul, thou

that hast made such an exchange to get out of the enchanting arms of thy lusts that would have kissed thee to death, and to fall into the hands of a faithful God, that means thee no more hurt by all the blood he draws from thee than the saving of thy soul's life! How far mightst thou have gone, and not met with such a friend and such a favour! There is not another sword like this in all the world that can cure with cutting; not another arm could use this sword to have done thus much with it, besides the Spirit of God. The axe does nothing till the hand of the workman lifts it up; neither can every one—may be none else—do with his tools what himself can. None could do such feats with Scanderberg's sword as himself. To be sure, none can pierce the conscience, wound the spirit, and hew down the lusts that there lie skulking in their fastness, but God himself. And this he doth not for every one that reads and hears it, which still greatens thy mercy. There were many widows in Israel when God sent his prophet to her of Sarepta. And why to her? Was there never a drunkard, swearer, or unbeliever, beside thee in the congregation at the same time that God armed his word to smite thee down, and graciously prick thy heart? O cry out in admiration of this distinguishing mercy, 'Lord, how is it thou wilt manifest thyself to me and not unto the world!'

[Exhortation to the study of the word.]

2. Exhortation. Let this provoke you to the study of the word, that you may thereby have a familiar acquaintance with it. For this the Bereans obtained a mark of honour as a nobler sort of people than others, because they 'searched the Scriptures,' Acts 17:11. Shall God leave but one book to his church's care and study, and shall it not be read? Shall we be told there is so rich a treasure laid up in this mine, and we continue so beggarly in our knowledge rather than take a little pains by digging in it to come by it? The canker and rust of our gold and silver, which is got with harder labour than here is required, will rise up in judgment against many, and say, 'You could drudge and trudge for us that are now turned to rust and dust, but could walk over the field of the world, where an incorruptible treasure lay, and would lose it rather than your sloth!' O where is to

be found—in what breast doth the ancient zeal of former saints to the word lodge! Have they not counted it above rubies and precious stones? Have they not trudged over sea and land to get the sight of it?—given the money out of their purse, the coat off their backs, to purchase a few leaves of it, and parted with their blood out of their veins rather than forego the treasure which they had found in it? And is the market now fallen so low that thou desirest not acquaintance with it when it is offered at a far lower rate! Either they must be charged for very fools to buy the knowledge of it so dear, or you that refuse it who may have it so cheap. But, lest you should think I set you upon a needless work, you are to understand there is an indispensable necessity of Scripture knowledge; and that is double: *necessitas præcepti et necessitas medii*—a necessity of command and a necessity of means.

(1.) There is a necessity of command: 'Search the Scriptures,' John 5:39. Indeed, were there not such an express word for this duty, yet the very penning of them, with the end for which they are written considered, would impose the duty upon us. When a law is enacted by a prince or state, for their subjects to obey, the very promulgation of it is enough to oblige the people to take notice of it. Neither will it serve a subject's turn that breaks this law, to say he was ignorant of any such law being in force: the publication of it bound him to inquire after it. What other end have lawgivers in divulging their acts, but that their people might know their duty? Christ fastens condemnation on the ignorance of men where means for knowledge is afforded: 'This is the condemnation, and men loved darkness,' John 3:19. They will not know the rule, because they have no mind to walk by it. Now if ignorance of the word be condemned where its light shines, then sure he commands us to open our eyes, whereby we may let in the knowledge it sheds forth; for a law must be transgressed before a condemning sentence be pronounced. It is the heathen that shall be judged without the written word; but thou that livest within its sound shalt be judged by it; whether thou wilt know it or not, II Thes. 1:8. And if thou shalt be judged by it, then surely thou art bound to be instructed by it. The Jews once had the word deposited in their hands, 'unto them were committed the oracles of God,' and do you think they had

well discharged their trust by locking them up safely in the ark, and never looking into them? Surely, you cannot but think God intended another chest, even that in their own breasts, where he would principally have them bestowed. They were committed to them, and now to us, as a dying father doth his will and testament to his son whom he makes his executor, not to throw it aside among his waste papers, but carefully and curiously to read and observe it, that thereby nothing therein contained might be left unperformed. It is called ‘the faith once delivered unto the saints,’ Jude 3, that is, delivered to their study and care. If any of us had lived when Christ was here in the flesh, and he—when taking his farewell of the world—should have left to us some one thing in special charge to be done for his sake after he was gone to heaven, would we not religiously have performed the will of our dying Saviour, as did St. John, to whom he left the care of his mother, who therefore took her home to his own house? Behold here a greater charge deposited in his saints’ hands—‘the faith which was once delivered to them,’ that is, ‘once’ for all, to be by them kept and transmitted from one generation to another while this world lasts. So that, if thou takest thyself to be one of the saints’ number, thou art concerned with the rest to take it home with thee, and see that it dwells in the richly, as becomes such a guest bequeathed by so dear a friend.

(2.) There is a necessity of means. The word contains the whole counsel of God for the bringing of poor sinners to eternal life, and none besides this—only as they borrow their notions out of it. If you will not search the Scripture, and sit here at the feet of the Spirit—who fits his scholars for heaven by this one book—where wilt thou meet another master? In whose works else wilt thou find the words of eternal life? Of Apollos, who was a man ‘mighty in the Scriptures,’ it is said, that Aquila and Priscilla ‘expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly,’ Acts 18:26. An exposition presupposeth a ‘text.’ The meaning is, they opened the Scripture more perfectly to him. This is ‘the way of God’ to lead us to God; yea, the only way. In other journeys we may miss the right way, and yet come at last to the place we intended, though not so soon; but no way will bring us to God but this of the word; neither can we walk in this way of God, if we be ignorant of it. A man may in his

other journeys be in his right way, and, though he knows not he is right, may yet come safe home. But we can have no benefit from this way of God if wholly ignorant of it, because we can do nothing in faith. O labour therefore to study this book, though thou beest a dunce in all besides! What is it thou wouldst learn? Is it the true knowledge of God? Thou mayest tumble over all the philosophers that ever wrote, and, when thou hast done, not be able to frame a right notion of him. The best of them all were but brutish in their highest knowledge of God. Indeed, God left the wise world to run into a thousand follies and vanities, while they were by their own wisdom shaping a religion to themselves, that, having proved them dunces, he might send them and the whole world to learn this lesson in another school, and that is the ministry of the gospel, which is naught else but the explication and application of the word. ‘After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,’ I Cor. 1:21.

Wouldst thou come to the true knowledge of sin? This also is a notion to be found nowhere else. The Scripture alone dissects the whole body of sin, and reads to us a perfect anatomy lecture upon its most minute and secret parts. This discovers the ulcers of our wicked hearts, which thousands die of, and through ignorance of the Scriptures can never come to know what their disease is. If lust comes not out in spots and sores, to be seen in the outward conversation, the philosopher pronounceth him a clear man. The plague of the heart, though an old disease and epidemical, yet never was found out, or treated of, but by this sacred book, and this doth it fully, yea, acquaints us where and from whom we got this infection: even from Adam, by whom the whole world was tainted and turned into a pesthouse⁴. Which of the wise ones of the world ever dreamed of this genealogy? Poor man, till the Scripture informs him of this, he lies in the pit of sin, and knows not who threw him in!

In a word, wouldst thou be helped out? Thou must then be beholden to the Scripture to do this

4. Pesthouse, [Archaic]; a shelter or hospital for those infected with a pestilential or contagious disease. — SDB.

kind office for thee. Thy own cordage is too short to reach, and too weak to draw thee thence. If thou takest not hold of this cord of love which God lets down unto thee in his word, thy case is desperate. And now, having set life and death before thee, I leave thee to thy choice. If yet thou beest resolved to reject the knowledge of the Almighty, and put thy soul in launch into eternity without this chart to direct thee, not caring whether thou sinkest or swimst, at what port thou arrivest at in another world, heaven or hell; then prepare to take up thy lodgings among the damned, and harden thy stout heart, if thou canst, against those endless flames which are kindled for all those 'that know not God, and that obey not his gospel,' II Thes. 1:8. And to thy terror know that, in spite of thy now wilful ignorance, thou shalt one day understand the Scriptures to the increase of thy torment. Here thou shuttest out their light, but then it will shine full on thy face, when it would give thee some ease if thou couldst forget that ever thou didst hear of such a book as the Bible is, but then against thy will thou shalt carry the remembrance thereof to hell with thee, that thy scornful neglect of it on earth may be continually pouring new horror—as so much fire and brimstone—into thy guilty conscience. How must it needs then fill thee with amazement to think of thy folly and madness, to sell thy soul for a little ease and sloth? Hell from beneath would be moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming thither. It will stir up the dead for thee; and the poor heathens, whom thou shalt find prisoners there, will come flocking about thee, and with their taunts reproaching thee, saying, 'Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thou perish for thy ignorance, who hadst the key of knowledge at thy girdle, and at so easy a rate might have been instructed in the way of life! We, poor heathens, cannot bring an action against God for false imprisonment, though we never heard of such a thing as the gospel, for we did not walk up to our little light; and might have known more of God had we not darkened our own foolish minds by rebelling against the light we had; but never were we at such cost to damn our souls as you, who have rejected the word of God, and broke through all the threatenings and promises thereof, to come hither!'

[Carnal objections to the study of the word removed.]

Objection First. But you will say, 'If we had so much time to spare as others, we would not be so unacquainted with the Scriptures. But alas! we have so much business to do, and our hands so full with our worldly callings, that we hope God will excuse us, though we have not so much knowledge of his word as others.'

Answer. Is this thy plea that thou indeed meanest to use when thou comest to the bar, and art called to give thy answer to Christ thy judge upon this matter? Does not thy heart quake within thy breast to think how he will knit his brow, and throw this thy apology with disdain and wrath upon thy face? Did so much anger sit on the countenance of meek Jesus when on earth, and such a dreadful doom proceed from his sweet lips against those that made their farms and oxen as a mannerly excuse for not coming to his supper, sentencing them never to taste thereof? O what then will glorious Christ say—when, mounted on his tribunal, not to invite, but to judge sinners—to such an excuse as this? Could God find heart and time to pen and send this love-letter to thee, and thou find none to read and peruse it? The sick man no time to look on his physician's bill! The condemned malefactor to look on his prince's letter of grace, wherein a pardon is tendered to him! Poor wretch! must the world have all thy time, and swallow thee up quick? A curse not less than that of Corah! Art thou such a slave to thy pelf as to tie thy soul to thy purse-strings, and take no more time for the saving of thy soul than this cruel master will afford thee? Thou and thy money perish with thee! His soul is in an ill ease which hath an allowance from so base a lust. This is so far from mending the matter, that thou dost but cover one sin with another. Who gave thee leave thus to overlade thyself with the encumbrance of the world? Is not God the Lord of thy time? Is it not given by him to be laid out for him? He allows thee indeed a fair portion thereof for the lower employments of this life; but did he ever intend to turn himself out of all? This is as if the mariners, who are allowed by the merchant some small adventure for themselves, should fill the ship, and leave no stowage for his goods that pays the freight. Will it suffice for him to say, 'There is no room left for his

commodities?’ Or, as if a servant, when his master asks why he neglected such a business committed to his care for despatch, should answer, ‘He was drunk, and therefore could not do it.’ Why did you not read my word and meditate thereon? will Christ say at that day. Darest thou then to be so impudent as to say, ‘Lord, I was overcharged with the cares, and drunk with the love, of the world, and therefore I could not?’ Well, if this be the thief that robs thee of thy time, get out of his hands as soon as thou canst, lest it also rob thee of thy soul. The devil can desire no greater advantage against thee. He hath thee sure enough in his trap. He may better boast over thee than Pharaoh could over Israel. ‘He is entangled, in the wilderness of the world, and shall not escape my hands.’

If a friend should tell you that you kept so many servants and retainers as would beggar you, would you not listen to his counsel, and rather turn them out of doors, than keep them still to eat you out of them? And wilt thou not be as careful of thy soul? Wilt thou keep such a rout of worldly occasions, as will eat up all thoughts of God and heaven? Certainly thou must either discharge thyself of these, or else fairly dismiss thy hope of salvation. But why should I speak so much to these? This ordinarily is but a cover to men’s sloth. If they had hearts, they would find time to converse with the word in the greatest throng of their worldly occasions. These can find time to eat and sleep, to sport and recreate themselves, but no time for God and his word. Would they but allow their souls those broken ends of time to search the Scripture, which they spend in pastimes, idle visits, reading of empty pamphlets, it would not be long but they might give a happy account of their proficiency in their spiritual knowledge. What calling more encumbering than a soldier’s? And of all soldiers the general’s, to whom all resort? Such a one was Joshua, yet a strict command to study the Scripture: ‘This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,’ Joshua 1:8. Must Joshua, in the midst of drums and trumpets, and distractions of war, find time to meditate on the law of God? And shall thy shop or plough, a few trivial occasions in thy private calling, discharge thee from the same duty? Dost thou think that the closet is such an enemy to thy shop, and the

time spent with God a thief to thy temporal estate? God, I am sure, intends his people better; as appears in the former place, ‘Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.’

Objection Second. But I cannot read; how can I search the Scriptures?

Answer. It is sad, I confess, that parents, who are God’s trustees, to whom the nurture of their children is committed, should take no more care for their souls than the ostrich doth of her eggs, not caring what becomes of them. What do these but throw them into the devil’s mouth, by sending them out into a sinful world without the knowledge of God and his word, to become a prey to every lust that meets them? To hell they must needs swim, if God show no more pity to them than their bloody parents have done! But shall thy parents negligence be a plea for thy ignorance? Wilt not thou be merciful to thyself because they were cruel? In the fear of God be persuaded to supply their defect by thy diligence. I hope thou dost not think it a shame to learn that, now thou art old, which thou shouldst have been taught when thou wert young. Had not thy parents learned thee a trade to get thy temporal living with, wouldst thou therefore have lived thee a beggar, rather than have applied thyself, though late, to some calling? There are many, for thy encouragement, who have begun late, and, by God’s blessing on their diligence, have conquered the difficulty of the work. If thou wert in prison, thou hadst rather learn to read thy neck-verse, than lose thy life for want thereof. Now, though ability to read the word be not of absolute necessity for the salvation of thy soul, yet knowledge of its saving truths is, and few better private means to obtain this than reading. But if thou beest not capable of this, thou hast not by it an excuse for thy ignorance so long as thou hast an ear to receive instruction from others. As God sometimes recompenses the defect of one sense with the quickness of another, so may be thou shalt find thy inability to read supplied with a tenacious memory, to hold what thou hearest read or preached unto thee. Some martyrs we find mighty in the Scriptures, able to defend the truth against learned doctors, and yet not book-learned. One amongst the rest who could not read, ‘yet carried always some part of the Scripture about with him, and when he met any Christian that could, he would get

him to read some portion or other thereof to him,' whereby he attained to such a measure of knowledge and faith, as made him wiser than his enemies, and a stout champion for the truth, even to resist to blood.

Objection Third. 'O but,' saith a third, 'though I can read, yet I am of so weak an understanding that I fear I shall make no work with such deep mysteries as are there contained.'

Answer. Take heed this objection comes not from thy sluggish heart, which gets this fair pretence to ease thee of a duty thou fearest will be troublesome unto thee. Didst thou ever make a trial, and set about the work, conscientiously using all means that might conduce towards thy instructing in the mind of god? If not, lay not the blame on thy weak head, but wicked heart. When thou wentest first to be an apprentice, what skill hadst thou in thy trade? Didst thou therefore despair and run away? No, but by thy diligence didst learn the mystery of it in a few years, so as to maintain thyself comfortably upon it; and will not thy industry to learn that, condemn thy sloth in not studying the word, which is able to bring in a better livelihood to thy soul than thy trade can do for thy body?

But, poor soul, if what thou sayest indeed ariseth from the deep sense thou hast of thy own weakness, then ponder upon this TWOFOLD ENCOURAGEMENT.

1. Encouragement. God is able to interpret his own word unto thee. Indeed none can enter into the knowledge thereof, but he must be beholden unto his Spirit to unlock the door. If thou hadst a riper head and higher parts than thou canst now pretend to, thou wouldst, without his help, be but like the blind Sodomites about Lot's house, groping, but not able to find the way into the true saving knowledge thereof. He that hath not the right key is as far from entering the house as he that hath none, yea in some sense further off. For he that hath none will call to him that is within, while the other, trusting to his false key, stands pottering without to little purpose. The Pharisees, who were so conversant in the Scriptures, and obtained the name for the admired doctors of the chair, called, 'the princes of the world,' 1 Cor. 2:8,—because so renowned and adored among the people, yet even these missed the truth which lay before them almost in every leaf of Moses and the prophets, whom

they were, in their every-day's study, tumbling over—I mean that grand truth concerning Christ, of whom both Moses and the prophets speak. And at the same time the people whom they counted so base, yea accursed, as those that understood not the law, could see him whom they missed. None so knowing that God cannot blind and infatuate; none so blind and ignorant whose eyes his spirit cannot open. He who, by his incubation upon the waters at the creation, hatched that rude mass into the beautiful form we now see, and out of that dark chaos made the glorious heavens, and garnished them with so many orient stars, can move upon thy dark soul, and enlighten it, though now it be as void of knowledge as the evening of the world's first day was of light. The school-master sometimes sends home and bids the father put him to another trade, because not able, with all his art, to make a scholar of him. But if the Spirit of God be the master, thou shalt learn, though a very dunce: 'The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple,' Ps. 119:130. No sooner is a soul entered into the Spirit's school, but he becomes a proficient. Thence we are commanded to encourage those that discourage themselves: 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees,' Isa. 35:3. Why? what good news shall we tell them? 'The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped,' ver. 5. 'An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein,' ver. 8.

2. Encouragement. The deeper sense thou hast of thy own weakness, the more fit thou art for the Spirit's teaching. A proud scholar and a humble master will never agree; Christ is 'meek, and lowly,' and so 'resisteth the proud,' but 'giveth grace unto the humble.' Though he cannot brook him that is proud, yet he can bear with thee that art weak and dull, if humble and diligent; as we see in the disciples, whom our Saviour did not disdain to teach the same lesson over and over again, till at last they say, 'Lo, now speakest thou plainly,' John 16:29. The eunuch was no great clerk when in his chariot he was reading Isaiah's prophecy; yet because he did it with an honest heart, Philip is despatched to instruct him.

DIRECTION X.—THIRD GENERAL PART.

[HOW TO USE THE SWORD OF THE WORD.]

‘And the sword of the Spirit,’ &c. (Eph. 6:17).

But haply some may say, ‘You have said enough to let us know how necessary a weapon this sword is to defend our souls, and of what admirable use in all the conflicts the Christian hath with any of his enemies. But we hope you will not leave us thus. It is a word of counsel we now listen to hear from you, how we poor Christians may wield and use this sword for our own defence, and the vanquishing of the several enemies whose approach you have alarmed us to expect; some whereof we already, to our great terror, see in the field against us, and how soon the other may appear we know not. What will a sword by our side, a Bible in our hand, yea mouth, do us good, if we be not instructed how we may ward off their blows, and make them feel the impression of ours therewith?’

Your request is reasonable, and for your better satisfaction I shall sort the directions into several branches, suited to the several kinds of enemies you have to grapple with; for their assaults being of a different nature, do require a resistance suitable to their way of fight. **FIRST.** How we are to use the spiritual sword against the persecutor. **SECOND.** Against the heretic. **THIRD.** Against the army of lusts lodged within our own bosoms. **FOURTH.** Against the bands of afflictions which from without invade, from within distress, him.

BRANCH FIRST.

[DIRECTIONS how to use the sword
of the word AGAINST PERSECUTORS.]

We shall begin with the persecutor. Now, wouldst thou, Christian, stand the shock of his furious assault, when he hangs out his bloody flag, breathing slaughter to the church and flock of Christ, if they will not let him trample upon all their glory, by defiling their consciences, and renouncing their faith at the lust of his imperious command. Then, **FIRST.** Let it be thy care to get clear Scripture ground for those principles and practices of thine which stir up the persecutor’s rage against thee. **SECOND.** Improve those scriptures which teach us to dread God more and fear man less. **THIRD.** Be sure thou givest up thy lusts to the sword of the Spirit, before thy life is in any danger from the sword of the persecutor. **FOURTH.** Fortify thy faith on those promises which have an especial respect to persecution.

DIRECTION FIRST. Let it be thy first care to get clear Scripture grounds for those principles and practices of thine which stir up the persecutor’s rage against thee. A man had need be well assured of that

which brings life and dear enjoyments—that go all away with it—into hazard. It is enough to weaken the courage of a valiant man to fight in a mist, when he cannot well discern his foes from his friends; and to be a damp upon the Christian’s spirit in a suffering hour, if he be not clear in his judgement, and fixed in his principles that he is to suffer for. Look, therefore, to put that out of question in thy own thoughts for which the persecutor calls thee into question. And the rather because it ever was, and still will be the policy of persecutors to disfigure what they can the beautiful face of those truths and practices for which the servants of Christ suffer, that they may put a colour of justice upon their bloody cruelties, and make the world believe they suffer as evil-doers. Now thou wilt never be able to bear up under the weight of this their heavy charge except thou beest fully persuaded in thy own conscience that thou sufferest for righteousness’ sake. But if thou standest clear in thy own thoughts concerning thy cause, thou wilt easily wipe off the dirt they throw upon thee, and sweetly entertain thyself with the comfort which thy own conscience will bring to thee through the reproaches of thy enemies. *Nemo est miser sensu alieno*, saith Salvia—what others say or think of us makes not

miserable. One reproof from a man's own thoughts wounds ore than the reproaches do of all the world besides. When the Thessalonians were once satisfied of the certain truth of Paul's doctrine—for the gospel, it is said, came to them 'in much assurance,' I Thes. 1:5—then they could open their door 'with joy' to receive it, though afflictions and persecutions came along with it, ver. 6.

DIRECTION SECOND. Improve those scriptures which teach us to dread God more and fear man less. Every man is most loath to fall into his hands whom he fears most. So that, if God hath once gained the supremacy of thy fear, thou wilt rather skip into the hottest fire the persecutor can make, than make God thy enemy. 'Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word,' Ps. 119:161. David had put, it seems, man's wrath and that which God threatens in his word into the scales, and finding God's hand to be without compare the heavier, trembles at that, and ventures the worst that the other can do against him. Hence it is the Scripture is so much in depressing the power of man, that we may not be scared at his big looks or threats; in depressing the power of man, and representing his utmost rage to be so contemptible and inconsiderable a thing, as none that knows who God is needs fear the worst he can do. 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?' Isa. 2:22. 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,' Matt. 10:28. *Pueri timent larvas, sed non timent ignem*—children are afraid of bugbears that cannot hurt them, but can play with fire that will burn them. And no less childish is it to be frighted into a sin at the frowns of a sorry man, who comes forth with a vizard of seeming dread and terror, but hath no power to hurt us more than our own fear gives him, and to play with hell-fire, into which God is able to cast us for ever. Truly this is to be scared with painted fire in the picture, and not in the furnace where it really burns. What was John Huss the worse for his fool's cap that his enemies put on his head, so long as under it he had a helmet of hope which they could not take off? Or how much the nearer hell was the same blessed martyr for their committing his soul to the devil? No nearer than some of their own wicked crew

are to heaven for being sainted in the pope's calendar. Melancthon said some are *anathema secundum dici*—to be doubly cursed, as Luther and other faithful servants of Christ whom the pope cursed. But what saith David? 'Let them curse, but bless thou,' Ps. 109:28. He that hath God's good needs not fear the world's bad. The dog's barking doth not make the moon change her colour. Nor needs the saint change his countenance for the rage of his persecutors.

DIRECTION THIRD. Be sure thou givest up thy lusts to the sword of the Spirit before thy life is in any danger from the sword of the persecutor. He is not likely to be free of his flesh for Christ, when called to suffer at man's hand, that is dainty of his lusts, and cannot bear the edge of the Spirit's sword, when he comes to mortify them. Canst thou be willing to lay down thy life for Christ, and yet keep an enemy in thy bosom out of the hand of justice, that seeks to take away the life of Christ? Persecutors tempt as well as torture, Heb. 11. They promise the honours of the court as well as threaten the hardship of the prison and cruelty of the devouring fire. Now, if thy love to the world be not mortified, it is easy to tell what choice thou wilt make, even the same that Demas did, thou wilt embrace the 'present world,' and leave Christ in the plain field. Or if thou shouldst through a natural stoutness bear up under sufferings, even to give thy body to be burned, rather than renounce the true religion thou professest, yet if any lust should at last be found to have been fostered by thee, thou shalt have no more thanks at Christ's hands than he who in the law offered up an unclean beast to God. It is possible for one to die in the cause of Christ and not be his martyr. Thy heart must be holy thou sufferest with as well as the cause holy thou sufferest for. Thy behaviour must be gracious in suffering, as well as the cause just that brings thee to suffer. He alone is Christ's martyr that suffers for Christ as Christ himself suffered. For he hath not only left us his truth to maintain to blood when called thereunto, but his example to follow also in our sufferings. 'If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps;...who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not,' I Peter 2:20, 21, 23.

This is hard work indeed, in the very fire to keep the spirit cool, and clear of wrath and revenge towards those that throw him so unmercifully into the devouring flames! But it makes him that by grace from above can do it, a glorious conqueror. Flesh and blood would bid a man call for fire from heaven, rather than mercy to fall upon them that so cruelly handle them. He that can forgive his enemy is too hard for him, and hath the better of him: because his enemy's blows do but bruise his flesh, but the wounds that love gives pierce the soul and conscience. Saul was forced to confess that David, persecuted so furiously by him, was the better man, 'Thou art more righteous than I,' 1 Sam. 24:17. And the people went from the execution of Christ, whom they were so mad to have crucified, sick of what they had done, shaking their heads as if all were not right {what} they had done against so good a man, Luke 23. Now, when two contraries are in a contest, that overcomes which preserves its own nature, and turns the other into some likeness unto itself; as we see fire transfuseth its own heat into the water, forcing it to assimilate and yield to it. Thus a holy charitable spirit, by forgiving an enemy, if it doth not prevail to turn an enemy's heart to him in love, yet then it turns an enemy's conscience against himself, and forceth him to condemn himself, and justify him whom he persecutes wrongfully.

DIRECTION FOURTH. Fortify thy faith on those promises which have an especial respect to such a condition as persecution. This is the saints' victory over the world, even their faith. Thus David, when Saul seemed to have him under his foot, and had driven him from living in a court to earth himself for his safety in a cave of the wilderness, yet by faith triumphed over his proud enemy, and sung as pleasantly in his grot and earth-hole as the merriest bird in the wood, 'My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise,' Ps. 57:7. Saul had his body higher fed, but not his heart fixed as David's was, and therefore could not sing David's tune. A thousand thoughts and fears distracted his head and heart, while David lives without fear and care, even when his enemies are in the field a hunting for his life. Faith on the promise will, like the widow's oil, not only set thee out of debt to all thy worldly fears and cares which by thy troubles thou mayest contract,

but afford thee enough to live comfortably besides, yea, with joy unspeakable and glorious. There are two sorts of sorrows that do usually distress gracious souls most in their sufferings for Christ. First. They are prone to be troubled for their own persons and private affairs. Second. For the cause of Christ which they bear testimony unto, lest that should miscarry. Now there is abundant provision laid up in the promises to ease the Christian's heart of both these burdens.

[Provision in the promises for the two sorts of sorrows to which believers are prone.]

First. Believers are at times prone to be troubled for their own persons and private affairs. To meet this there is in the promises an ample provision. Acquaint thyself with those promises that concern thyself as a sufferer for Christ, and see where any crevice is left unstopped, if thou canst, that may let in the least air of suspicion in thy mind to disturb thy peace and discompose thy joy. The promises are so many, and fitted so exactly to every particular query of which the soul can desire satisfaction, that it will require thy study and diligence to gather them. God having chosen rather to scatter his promises here and there promiscuously than to sort them and set every kind in a distinct knot by themselves, we may think on purpose that we might be drawn into an acquaintance with the whole Scripture, and not leave any one corner unsearched, but curiously observe it from one end to the other. And let not the present peace of the church cause thee to think it needless work. The apothecary gathers his simples in the summer which haply he may not use [i.e. until] winter. And how soon persecution may arise thou knowest not. The church ever hath had, and shall have, its vicissitudes of summer and winter. Yea, sometimes winter strikes in before it is looked for; and then who is the man most likely to be offended? Surely he that received the word with joy in the prosperous estate of the church, but laid not in for foul weather. Well, what is thy fear? whence comes thy discouragement? Art thou scared with the noisomeness of the prison? or doth the terror of the fire, and torture of the rack, affright thee? Know for thy comfort, if thy strength be too weak to carry thee through them, thou shalt

never be called to such hot service and hard work. The promise assures thee as much, he 'will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able,' I Cor. 10:13.

God who gives the husbandman his discretion with what instrument to thrash his corn, as it is harder or softer, will not let the persecutor's wheel come upon thee that art not able to bear it. God gives us this very account why he led his people the further way about—at their first coming out of Egypt—rather than by the land of the Philistines—the far shorter cut of the two—'for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt,' Ex. 13:17. See here God considers their weakness. They cannot yet bear war, and therefore they shall not be tried with it until more hardened for it. But if thou beest called into the field to encounter with these bloody fiery trials, the promise takes the whole care and charge of the war off thy hands: 'When they deliver you up, take no thought'—that is, disquieting, distrustful—'how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak,' Matt. 10:19; and, it is 'the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you,' ver. 20. There is no mouth that God cannot make eloquent; no back so weak which he cannot make strong. And he hath promised to be with thee wherever thy enemies carry thee; fire and water shall not part thee from his sweet company. These promises make so soft a pillow for the saints' heads that they have professed, many of them, never to have lain at more ease than when most cruelly handled by their merciless enemies. One dates his letter 'from the delectable orchard his prison;' another subscribes herself, 'Your loving friend, as merry as one bound for heaven.' They have been so far from pitying themselves in their sufferings, that their chief sorrow hath been, that they could be no more thankful for them. And whence had they their strength? Where drew they their joy? Had they not both from the same Spirit applying the promises to them?

Second. Believers are at times prone to be troubled for the cause of Christ which they bear testimony unto, lest that should miscarry. As for this trouble, though God takes the good-will to his cause and church very kindly, from which those thy fears arise, yet there is no need of tormenting thyself, believer, with that which is sure never to come to pass.

The ark may shake, but it cannot fall; the ship of the church may be tossed, but it cannot sink, for Christ is in it, and will awake time enough to prevent its wreck. There is therefore no cause for us, when the storm beateth hard upon it, to disturb him, as once the disciples did, with the shrieks and outcries of our unbelief, as if all were lost. Our faith is more in danger of sinking at such a time than the cause and church of Christ are. They are both by the promise set out of the reach of men and devils. The gospel is an 'everlasting gospel,' Rev. 14:6. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one iota of this shall perish, Matt. 5:18. 'The word of the Lord endureth for ever,' I Peter 1:25, and shall be alive to walk over all its enemies' graves, yea, to see the funeral of the whole world, when, at the great day of the Lord, it must be everlastingly buried in its own ruins. And for the church, that is built upon a rock, impregnable. 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it,' Matt. 16:18. It hath been oft in the sea, but never drowned; seldom out of the fire, but never consumed; sometimes swallowed up to reason, but, like Jonah in the whale's belly, cast up again, as too heavy a charge for the strongest stomach that ever persecutor had to digest. The faith of this hath carried the blessed martyrs to the grave, when they swam to it in their own blood with joy, because they knew the church should have the day at last, and that they left others behind in pursuit of the victory on earth, while themselves were taken out of the field to triumph in heaven. Yea some, by prophetic spirit have foretold the very time when the persecuted truths, that were then buried with so much ignominy and scorn, should have a happy resurrection and victory over their proud enemies. Thus John Huss cited his enemies to answer him a hundred years after, comforting himself, that though they then 'burned the goose'—alluding to his own name—a 'swan' would come in his stead, that should fill the air with his sweet singing, which was fulfilled in Luther, whose doctrine went far and near, and charmed the hearts of multitudes everywhere. And Hiltenius, another German divine, alleviated the miseries he endured in his stinking prison—where he died for rubbing the monks sores too hard—with this, that another, naming the very time, 1516, should arise after him, that would ruin the monks' kingdom—whose abuses he had but gently reprov'd—and that they should not

be able to resist his power, nor so much as fasten a chain upon him; which came to pass in Luther; for, to a miracle, he was kept out of the hands of his bloody enemies, though never man's blood more thirsted for.

BRANCH SECOND.

[DIRECTIONS how to use the sword
of the word AGAINST HERETICS.]

Now the second enemy that comes forth against the Christian is the heretic or seducer, who is so much more to be feared than the former by how much it is worse to part with God's truth than our own life; to be corrupted in our minds than to be tortured in our members; in a word, to have our souls damned by God than our bodies killed by man. If the martyrs had feared death more than heresy, they would not have leaped into the persecutors' flames rather than consent to their doctrine. Now, that thou mayest be able to lift up this sword of the Spirit—the only weapon to defend thee—with victory against this dangerous enemy, apply thyself in the use of the best means with thy utmost care to find out the true sense and meaning of the Spirit in his word. This sword in another's hand will defend thee not. No, it must be in thy own, or else thou canst not have the benefit of it. The phrase and outward expression are but the shell, the sense and meaning is the pearl, which thou, like a wise merchant, shouldst seek for. To tumble over a chapter and not reach the mind of God therein held forth, and to tumble over a prayer in an unknown tongue, are both alike, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; Rev. 2:7. We are to listen what the Spirit saith in the word as we hear or read it. And he that hath an ear for the Spirit will not have an ear for the seducer.

Now to help thee in thy search for the sense and meaning of the word, these directions, I hope, may stand thee in some stead. **FIRST.** Take heed thou comest not to the Scriptures with an unholy heart. **SECOND.** Make not thy own reason the rule by which thou measurest Scripture truths. **THIRD.** Take heed thou comest not with a judgment preengaged to any party or opinion. **FOURTH.** Go to God by prayer for a key to unlock the mysteries of his word. **FIFTH.**

Compare scripture with scripture. **SIXTH.** Consult with thy faithful guides which God hath set over thee in his church.

DIRECTION FIRST. Take heed thou comest not to the Scriptures with an unholy heart. If ever you know the mind of God in his word, the Spirit must impart it to you. And will he that is so holy take thee by thy foul hand, thinkest thou, to lead thee into truth? No, thy doom is set: 'None of the wicked shall understand,' Dan. 12:10. The angel who took Lot's daughters into the house smote the Sodomites with blindness, that they might grope for the door and not find it. And so are those like to be served that come with unclean hearts to the word. 'Without are dogs:' not only without heaven at last, but without the true knowledge of God on earth. The wicked have the word of God, but the holy soul hath 'the mind of Christ,' I Cor. 2:16. Therefore the same apostle exhorts us that we 'be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God,' Rom. 12:2. And what amounts this to, but if we will have truth for our guest, and be acquainted with the mind and will of God, we must prepare a holy heart for its lodging? They commonly are taken captive by seducers who were before prisoners of their lusts, 'and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,' II Tim. 3:6, 7. When David would beg understanding in the word, he makes his purpose for a holy life the argument with which he urgeth God: 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart,' Ps. 119:33, 34.

DIRECTION SECOND. Make not thy own reason the rule by which thou measurest Scripture truths. Is that fit to try the revelations of the word by, which is dunced and posed with so many secrets in nature? Doth not the word reveal such things to us as are not only above sense, for eye hath not seen them, nor ear heard them; but also above the ken of reason? being such as never 'entered into the heart of man,' I Cor. 2:9. Indeed the whole system of gospel truths speaks in a foreign and outlandish tongue to reason; it can make no sense of them, except faith be the interpreter. The Scriptures are like the Red Sea, through which the Israelites by faith passed safely, but the

Egyptians attempting to do it, for want of that guide were drowned. A humble believer passeth through the deep mysteries of the word safely, without plunging into any dangerous mistakes; whereas those sons of pride, who leave faith and take reason for their guide, we see how they are drowned in many damnable errors, Arianism, Pelagianism, Socinianism, and what not. The most dangerous errors fathered upon the Scriptures have sprung from this womb. This was the Sadducees' ground on which they went for their denying the resurrection of the dead. They owned the book of Moses for the word of God, and yet denied the resurrection asserted therein; because it seemed so impossible a thing to their reason that our bodies, after so many alterations into slime and dust, should stand up in life. This their reason laughed at; for so our Saviour's answer plainly shows, 'Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God,' Matt. 22:29.

DIRECTION THIRD. When thou consultest with the word, take heed thou comest not with a judgment pre-engaged to any party and opinion. He is not like to hold the scales even whose judgment is bribed beforehand. A distempered eye sees the object of that colour with which itself is affected; and a mind pre-possessed will be ready to impose its own sense upon the word, and so loseth the truth by an overweening conceit of his own opinion. Too many, alas! read the Scriptures not so much to be informed by them, as confirmed in what already they have taken up! They choose opinions, as Samson his wife, because they please them, and then come to gain the Scriptures' consent. Thus the Jews first made up the match with their idols, and then ask counsel of God what they should do, Eze. 14:4. It is a just judgment of God, that such should not see the truth when it lies fair before them, but be given up to an injudicious heart, to believe the word favours their fancies, and chimes as they think. 'I the Lord will answer him...according to the multitude of his idols: that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart,' Eze. 14:4, 5. And when is a man taken in his own heart, if not when ensnared in the fancies and follies which his erroneous mind hath weaved?

DIRECTION FOURTH. Go to God by prayer for a key to unlock the mysteries of his word. It is not the plodding but the praying soul that will get this

treasure of Scripture-knowledge. St. John got the sealed book opened by weeping, Rev. 5:5. God oft brings a truth to the Christian's hand as a return of prayer, which he had long hunted for in vain with much labour and study; there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, Dan. 2:22. And where doth he reveal the secrets of his word but at the throne of grace? 'From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words,' i.e. for thy prayer, Dan. 10:12. And what was this heavenly messenger's errand to Daniel but to open more fully the Scripture to him? as appears by ver. 14, compared with ver. 21. This holy man had got some knowledge by his study in the word, and this sets him a praying, and prayer fetched an angel from heaven to give him more light. If ever we know the mind of God, we must be beholden to the Spirit of God for it. 'When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth,' John 16:13. And the Spirit is the fruit of Christ's intercession: 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter,' &c. Now there must be a concurrence of our prayers with his intercession. While our High-priest is offering incense within the vail, we are to be praying without for the same thing that he is interceding within. Now to quicken thee up to pray with more fervent importunity for this manuduction of the Holy Spirit to lead thee into truth,

[MEANS to quicken us to pray with more fervour for the leading of the Holy Spirit.]

First Means. Let the dread of those scriptures which set forth the danger of errors and false doctrines fall upon thee, that thou mayest not think thou goest upon a slighty errand, when praying to be preserved from them, as if the odds were not great, whether thou hast thy request or hast it not. It is one of the devil's master-policies, by sinking the price of errors in the thoughts of men, to make them thereby the more vendible. Many think they shall not pay so dear for an error in judgment as for a sin in practice. Yea, some have such a latitude, that they fancy a man may be saved in any religion—a principle that must needs tend to make them that hold it careless and incurious in their choice. That sin shall not want cus-

tomers which men think they shall pay little or nothing for. Some can be content to be drunk on free cost, that would not, were they assured their own purse should pay soundly for the reckoning. How comes fornication to abound so much among the Romish clergy, but because it is counted so petty a sin by them? And I wish that error and heresy—which are the fornication of the mind—were not by many among ourselves sized as low. But woe to those clerks of the devil’s market, that tempt and toll men on to sin by setting cheaper rates on their head than the word of God hath done. If once the dread of a sin be word off the conscience, no wonder then if we see men as boldly leap upon it, as the frogs in the fable on the log, that lay so still and tame at the bottom of the river. Fear makes the body more apt to take infection, but it preserveth the soul from the infection of sin.

Now that thou mayest the more stand in fear of drinking in the poison of any corrupt and unsound doctrine, let thy mind ponder on a few scriptures, which show both their detestable, and also damning nature of them. Gal. 5:19, there heresy is called ‘a work of the flesh,’ and reckoned among those sins which shut the doors of them out of heaven; ‘they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God,’ ver. 21. They are called ‘doctrines of devils,’ 1 Tim. 4:1. And if they come from the devil, whither must they lead but to hell? Such as are against the fundamental principles of the gospel are inconsistent with the love and favour of God. He that ‘abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God,’ II John 9. And who, think you, shall have him that hath not God? Were there no other scripture against this kind of sin, but that one, II Peter 2:1, it were enough to strike the heretic through his loins, and make the knees of every seducer, like Belshazzar’s at the sight of the ‘handwriting on the wall,’ to knock one against the other. ‘But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.’ So that if a man hath a mind to get the start of other sinners, and desires to be in hell before them, he need do no more than open his sails to the wind of heretical doctrine, and he is like to make a short voyage to hell of it; for

these bring upon their maintainers ‘swift destruction.’ Nay, the Spirit of God, the more to aggravate their deplored state brings in three most dreadful instances of divine vengeance that ever was executed upon any sinners, viz. the detrusion of the apostate angels from heaven to hell, the drowning of the old world, and the conflagration of Sodom and Gomorrah by raining hell, as it were, out of heaven upon them. I say, he brings these as patterns and pledges of that vengeance which shall certainly befall this kind of sinners. And by this time I hope thou wilt be warm in thy prayer against this dangerous enemy. But,

Second Means. When thou hast thus possessed thy heart with the dread of being led into any corrupt opinion, then strengthen then thy faith from those comfortable scriptures which assure thee that no sincere saint shall be left to fall finally into any soul-damning error. Christ is as able for, and faithful in, his prophetic and kingly offices, as his priestly. Surely he will not have the least care of his people’s understanding, which is guide to their whole man, and is that faculty which he first practiseth upon in the work of conversion. Thou hast therefore as strong ground to believe he will preserve thee from damnable principles as damnable practices. It would be little advantage to be kept from one enemy, and left open to the will and power of another. Christ’s hedge comes round about his people. Solomon tells us, ‘The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein,’ Prov. 22:14. And so is the mouth of the seducer, who comes with strange doctrines—whorish opinions. Now who is this pit digged for? Indeed, if we look at Satan’s design, it is a trap chiefly laid to catch the saint; he would, if possible, ‘deceive the very elect.’ His greatest ambition is to spread his banners in this temple of God, and defile them whom God hath washed. But if we eye God’s intention, it is a pit he suffers to be made for hypocrites and false gospellers—such who would never heartily close with Christ and his truth. These are they whom God abhors, and therefore they are left by him to become a prey to those that go a birding for souls with their corrupt doctrines. ‘Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not

the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,' II Thes. 2:10-12. These, like the outseting deer, are shot, while they within the pale are safe; or, like the suburbs, taken by the enemy, but those within the city escape their fury. It is the outward court that is left to be trampled underfoot, Rev. 11:2. And in the fore-quoted place in the epistle to the Thessalonians—though he gives up hypocrites to be deceived by false teachers, as once Ahab by those knights of the post his false prophets—yet, ver. 13 he speaks comfortably to the elect, and shows that the same decree which appointed them to salvation provided also for their embracing the truth, as the necessary means leading thereunto. 'But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' And if God had got possession of the head by his truth, and of the heart by his sanctifying grace, he will keep them out of Satan's clutches.

Go, therefore, and plead the promise for thy preservation. The promise improved by faith at the throne of grace will be thy best antidote in these times of general infection. Never fear speeding when the promise bids thee 'go and prosper.' The mercy is granted before thou askest it; only God will have thee by prayer lay claim to it, before thou beest possessed of it. And for thy help I have set down some sweet promises of this nature, with which, if thou acquaintest thyself, thou mayest be furnished both with grounds for thy faith, and arguments for thy prayer in this case, Matt. 24:24; John 7:12; 10:5, 29; I Cor. 11:19; Php. 3:15; I John 2:19, 20.

DIRECTION FIFTH. Compare scripture with scripture. False doctrines, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves. Their name may be called 'Legion, for they are many.' But truth is one; it is homogeneal. One scripture sweetly harmonizeth with another. Hence it is, though there were many penmen of sacred writ, and those of several ages, one after another, yet they all are said to have but one mouth; 'As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began,' Luke 1:70. All had one mouth, because they accord so perfectly together. The best way, therefore, to know the mind of God in one text is to lay it to another. The lapidary useth one diamond to cut another. So should

we one place of Scripture to interpret another. Scriptures compared, like glasses set one against another, cast a light each to the other. 'They (i.e. the Levites) read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading,' Neh. 8:8. Et exponendo sensum dabant intelligentiam per Scripturam ipsam—so Tremelius reads the words—they gave them the meaning of what they read, by the Scripture itself.

Now, in comparing scripture with scripture, be careful thou interpretest obscure places by the more plain and clear, and not the clear by the dark. Error creeps into the most shady obscure places, and there takes sanctuary. 'Some things hard to be understood, which they that are unstable wrest.' No wonder they should stumble in those dark and difficult places, when they turn their back on that light which plainer scriptures afford to lead them safely through. 'He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not,' I John 5:18. This is a dark place, which some run away with, and from it conclude there is a perfect state free from all sin attainable in this life; whereas a multitude of plain scriptures testify against such a conclusion, I Kings 8:38; Prov. 20:9; Ecc. 7:20; Job 9:20; Php. 3:12; I John 1:8-10, with many more. So that it must be in a limited and qualified sense that he 'that is born of God sinneth not.' He sins not finally or comparatively, not as the carnal wretch doth. 'And the wicked one toucheth him not,' i.e. non tactá qualitativo, as Cajetan saith—not so as to transfuse his own nature and disposition into him; as the fire toucheth the iron or wood it comes near, assimilating them to its own nature. This rule of using plain scriptures to be a key for to unlock obscure, will hold in all other instances. And blessed be God, though to tame our pride he hath inserted some knotty passages, yet the necessary saving truths are of easy access even to the weakest understanding. Salubritèr Spiritus Sanctus ita, modificavit, ut locis apertioribus fami occurreret, obscurioribus fastidia detergeret (Aug. de Doc. Ch. lib. ii. c. 6)—there is enough in the plain places of Scripture to keep the weak from starving, and in the obscure to lift them above contempt of the strongest.

DIRECTION SIXTH. Consult with thy faithful guides which God hath set over thee in his church. Though people are not to pin their faith on the min-

ister's sleeve, yet they are to 'seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts,' Mal. 2:7. Christ directs his kids for their safety, that they turn not aside into by-paths of error, and fall not into the hands of false teachers—those cheating companions—that they go 'go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed...beside the shepherds' tents,' Song 1:8. The devil knows too well—'send away the shepherd and he may soon catch the sheep.' And these times prove sadly that he is not mistaken. When were people's affections more withdrawn from their ministers? And when were their judgments more poisoned with error? Of what sort, I pray, are those that have been trappan⁵ into dangerous errors in our late unhappy times? Have they not most this brand upon them? Are they not such who would sooner hearken to a stranger—may be a Jesuit in a buff-coat or with a blue apron before him?—seek to any mountebank that comes they know not whence, is here to-day and gone tomorrow, than to their own ministers, who from God have the rule over them, and watch for their souls as they that must give account to God for them; yea, who from many years' experience in life and doctrine they have found able and faithful? In the fear of God consider this. They are not your ministers—I speak as to the most—in their pulpits and public ministry, but these hucksters and quack-salvers in corners practicing upon you, that privily have brought in damnable doctrines, and leavened so great a lump of people in the nation with sour and unsound doctrine. If thou wouldst therefore be preserved from error, make use, as of the sword of the word in thy own hand, so of the holy skill that God hath given thy faithful minister for thy defence. Wait on his public ministry, praying for divine assistance to be poured down on him, and a divine blessing from his labours to fall on thyself. If at any time thou art in the dark concerning his message, resort to him, and I dare promise thee—if he answers his name, and be a faithful minister of the gospel—an easy access and hearty welcome to him. Only come to learn, not cavil; to have thy conscience satisfied, not any itch of vain curiosity rubbed. Our Saviour,

5. Trapan, to ensnare, to catch by stratagem. — Imp. Dict.

who was so willing to satisfy his disciples concerning the doctrine he publicly preached, that in private he opened it to them more fully, yet when they came with nice and curious questions, did rather choose to repel that humour by a reproof than cherish it by a satisfying answer. 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons;' and at another time, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.' He takes Peter off from a profitable question to mind a necessary duty.

BRANCH THIRD.

[DIRECTIONS how to use the sword of the word AGAINST LUSTS.]

The third enemy we are to fight is made up of an army of lusts lodged within our own bosoms, which have Satan to head and lead them forth against us. And who that believes he hath a soul to lose or save can be unwilling to engage against this cursed combination of lusts and devils? The Romans were said, when in war with other nations, to fight for honour and glory; but against the Carthaginians for their very life and being. In this war against sin and Satan both lie at stake. This, this is the most noble war of all other.

It is noble, because just. It is too true, I fear, what one saith of the wars which the great monarchs of this world wage one against another, 'that the cause is very seldom so clear for which they take arms but there is some ground of scruple left in the conscience of the undertaker.' But here we are put out of all doubt. This, without abusing the name, may be called, 'the holy war.' For it is against the only enemy that the holy God hath in the world, who hath himself taken the field, and set up his royal standard in defiance of it; to which he calls all mankind, some by the voice of a natural conscience, and others by the loud sound of his word, to repair, and upon our allegiance to him, our sovereign Lord and Creator, to help him 'against the mighty;' not because he needs our help, but [because he] expects our duty, and had rather reward our loyalty than punish our rebellion. Some have been found who for shame have killed themselves, that their prince through their cowardice had lost the victory. O what confusion then will one day

fill our faces if we, by our faintness or treachery, do what lies in us [to] help Satan and sin to triumph over God himself!

But again, it is a noble war, because hard and difficult. This is an enemy stout and stubborn, such as will try both our skill and strength to the uttermost. Never did coward overcome in this war. What sin loseth is by inches, and what it gains hardly lets go. They who follow this war closest will find a life's work at least of it. O you that love brave exploits, and hunt for enterprises that only a few generous spirits dare undertake, here is that you look for. Fighting with men and storming of castles is but children's play to this encounter, where devils and lusts are to be repelled. 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city,' Prov. 16:32. 'Better,' because he overcomes a worse enemy, infinitely more potent and puissant. Few, alas! of the world's swordsmen, so famed for their conquests, but have lived and died slaves to sin!—cowardly submitting the neck of their souls to draw the iron chariot of a base lust, while they have proudly sat to be drawn in triumph by those whom they have taken prisoners in war. Thus as Hannibal was beaten at home in his own country, who was a victor in his foreign expeditions; so too, many that do great feats in arms abroad, which makes them famous in this world, are miserably beaten and shamefully trampled upon by their own corruptions at home, that will make them much more infamous in the other world.

But be not you, O ye saints, dismayed at the report of your enemies' strength and number. The greater will be your victory, and the more your captives to draw your triumph and chariot. Neither let your hearts faint to see the conquering Cæsars despoiled of their ensigns of honour by this enemy, which themselves had won from others, and to die in chains slaves to their lusts, that had lived conquerors over men. Remember, for your comfort, it is but the unbelieving world—such as are without spiritual arms, and so abandoned of God—that are left thus to become a prey to sin and Satan. But you have a God on your side, who gives you the consecrated sword of his word for your defence—a weapon whose edge Satan hath already felt, and therefore trembles whenever faith draws it forth. He that made this levi-

athan, as is said of the other, Job 40:19, can make this his sword to approach to him, and the heart of all thy lusts also. But I forbear; my task in this place being not to excite you to, but direct you in, the management of your fight with this your enemy, and that also only by teaching you the use of this one weapon, the word of God, in order to repelling motions to sin from within, or temptations to it from Satan without. **FIRST**, therefore, Take some pains to collect out of the word the several lineaments with which the Spirit of God doth paint out the deformity of sin, that so thou mayest make it the more odious and hateful to thy thoughts. **SECOND**. Provide thyself with Scripture answers to Satan's false reasonings. **THIRD**. Hide the word in thy heart. **FOURTH**. Plead the promise against sin at the throne of grace.

[We are to collect out of the word the several lineaments of sin's deformity.]

DIRECTION FIRST. Take some pains to collect out of the word the several lineaments with which the Spirit of God doth paint out the deformity of sin, that so thou mayest make it the more odious and hateful to thy thoughts, when, by laying them together, thou shalt see in its true picture and portraiture—drawn by so skilful and faithful a hand—the fair face of this goodly lady, whose beauty Satan doth so highly commend to thy wanton embraces. Poor man sins upon Satan's credit, and receives it into his bosom, as Jacob did his wife into his bed—before he sees its face, or knows well what it is—and therefore, as he in the morning found her to be, not that beautiful Rachel as was promised, but a blear-eyed Leah; so the sinner, too late—when his conscience awakes—sees himself miserably cheated, and disappointed of what he looked for, and finds a purgatory where he expected a paradise. Now, that thou mayest, Christian, the better see the ugly shape of this monster sin, observe from the word of God these four particulars concerning it. **First**. The birth and extraction of it. **Second**. The names given it. **Third**. Its nature. **And**, **Fourth**. Its properties.

[Four particulars concerning sin, taken from the word of God.]

First Particular. The birth and extraction of sin. Who is its father, and from whom is it descended? The holy God disowns it. The sun can as soon beget darkness, as God, who is 'the Father of lights,' be the author of sin. From him comes 'every good and perfect gift,' James 1:17. But, O sin, whence art thou? Thou art not his creature; he neither made thee, nor ever moved any to thy production. Certainly if it were from him he would like and love it. Every one loves his own child, though never so black. Much more doth God like what is his. We find him looking back upon every day's work of the creation, and upon all at last, pleased with what he had done, all 'was very good,' Gen. 1:31. But of sin what he thinks, see Deut. 7:25, 26; Prov. 6:16; Rev. 2:6, 15, where he expresseth his detestation and hatred of it, from which hatred proceed all those direful plagues and judgments thundered from the fiery mouth of his most holy law against it. Nay, not only the work, but the worker also, of iniquity, becomes the object of his hatred, Ps. 5:5. So that if God were the author of sin, he would be a hater of himself. Well, at whose door then doth God lay this brat to find a father? Surely at the devil's: 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do,' John 8:44. And again in the same place, 'When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.' Sin is a brat which calls the devil both father and mother. For of himself, even of his own free will—the womb wherein it was conceived—did he beget it; and having begot it, put it out to nurse to man. And is not man, who was made to serve and enjoy the great God his Maker, highly set up, to suckle and carry this his infernal child about in his arms? Ah, poor man, whence art thou fallen? It is strange that the very remembering whose offspring thyself wert doth not strike thee into a horror, to see thy precious soul debased unto such servitude as to fulfil the lusts of that cursed spirit. Never let us spit at the witch for suffering the devil's imps to suck on her body, while we can prostitute our souls to any of his lusts.

Second Particular. The names and titles with which the word stigmatizeth sin. And God, to be sure, miscalls none. If a thing be sweet, he will not say it is bitter; if good, he will not call it evil. For he claps a woe upon his head that doth so, Isa. 5:20. Never think to find honey in the pot when God writes

poison on its cover. We may say of every sin in this respect what Abigail of her husband—as is its name in Scripture, so is it. If God call it folly, then there is no wisdom to be found in it. The devil indeed teacheth sinners to cover foul practices with fair names. Superstition must be styled devotion; covetousness, thrift; pride in apparel, handsomeness; looseness, liberty; and madness, mirth. And truly there is great need for sinners to do thus, to make this fulsome dish go down with less regret. There are some have made a hearty meal of horseflesh, or the like carrion, under a better name, whose stomachs would have risen against it if they had known what it was. Therefore as persecutors of old wrapped the Christians in the skins of those beasts which would render them the most desirable prey to those they were cast; so Satan and our false hearts present sins to us under those names that will sharpen our appetites to them, or at least take away the abhorrence our consciences else would show against them.

But canst thou be content, poor soul, to be so easily cheated? Will the fire burn thee the less, into which thou art emboldened to put thy finger, because a knave that owes thee and ill turn tells thee that it will not hurt thee? Hear rather what the God of truth saith of sin, and by what names he calls it, and you shall find that whatever is dreaded by us, or hated, feared, or loathed, in all the world, they are borrowed, and applied to sin—the vomit of dogs; the venom of serpents; the stench of rotten sepulchres; dunghills and jakes; the deadliest diseases and sores, gangrenes, leprosies, and plague, attributed to it, II Peter 2:22; Luke 3:7; Rom. 3:13; II Tim. 2:17; I Kings 8:38; yea, hell is raked for an expression to set it out—it being compared to the very fire of hell itself, James 3:6. And because of their penury and straitness of these appellations—therefore it is called by its own name, as the worst that God himself can say thereof, 'sinful' sin, Rom. 7:13. Now what shall be done to the thing that the great God thus loathes, and loads with such names of dishonour, thereby to signify his abhorrence of it? What? Every gracious heart will soon resolve, that he should pursue it with fire and sword, till we have executed upon it the judgment written in its utter ruin and destruction.

Third Particular. The nature of sin, as the word defines it. See its description, 'sin is the transgres-

sion of the law,' 1 John 3:4—a few words, but of weight enough to press the soul that commits it to hell, yea to press sin itself to death in the heart of a saint, if laid on with these considerations—

1. Whose law it is by sinning we break. It is not that of some petty prince—and yet such conceive their honour so deeply concerned in their laws, that they take vengeance on the violators of them—but of the great God, whose glorious name is in every attribute assaulted and reproached by the sinner, yea the very life and being of God is endeavoured to be destroyed. *Peccatum est deicidium*—sin is deicide. For he that would rob God of his honour is an enemy to his very being; because God's being is so wrapped up in his glory, that he cannot outlive the loss of it. These, it is true, are above the reach of the sinner's short arm, but that is no thanks to him, because his sin aims at these, though it cannot carry its shot so far as to hurt him.

2. What law it is; not cruel, written with the blood of his creatures, as the laws of some tyrant princes are, who consult their own lust, and not their people's good, in their edicts. But this law is equal and good; in {the} keeping of which is life. So that no provocation is given by any rigour of unnecessary taxes imposed upon us to rise up against it. 'What iniquity,' saith God, 'have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?' Jer. 2:5. He that put away his wife was to give her a bill of divorce, declaring the cause of his leaving her. Thus God condescends to expostulate with sinners, and asks what evil they can charge upon him or his government that they forsake him. But, alas! no more cause can be given than why a beast, in a fat sweet pasture, should break the hedge to get into a barren heath or a dirty lane, where nothing but starving is to be had.

3. At whose notion the poor creature transgresseth the good law of God, and that is of a cursed spirit the devil, no less our enemy than God's enemy. Now for a child at the solicitation of his father's greatest enemy, and his own also, to take up rebellious arms against a dear loving parent, adds to the monstrosity and unnaturalness of the fact. This thou dost, Christian, when by sin thou transgressest the law of God. And now, by this time, methinks I see thy blood to rise and boil with anger in thee, while thy God points to thy sin and tells thee, 'This, O my child, is the

enemy that would take away my glory and life too by thy means—who by debt both of nature and grace owest thy whole self to live and die for the maintaining of my honour!' Art thou not as ready to fall upon thy sin, and drag it to execution, as the servants of Ahasuerus were to lay hold of Haman, and cover his face as a son of death, when their prince did but vent his wrath conceived against him? Est. 7:8. Certainly, were but the love of God well kindled in our bosoms, we should even spit fire on the face of any that durst tempt us to sin against him.

Fourth Particular. The properties of sin discovered by the word of God. I shall content myself with three. It hath, 1. A defiling property. 2. A disturbing property. 3. A damning property.

1. Sin hath a defiling property, called 'filthiness of flesh and spirit,' 11 Cor. 7:1. It besmeares both. 'The whole world' is said to, 'lie in wickedness,' as a beast in his dung and ordure, or as a rotten carcass, in its slime and putrefaction, 1 John 5:19. It is that leprosy which infects man, and the very house he lives in also. Wherefore did God send the flood in Noah's time, but to wash away that filthy generation as dung from the face of the earth? But, because this pest-house of the world is not cleared sufficiently, it is reserved for a more thorough purgation by fire at the last day. Do but think, Christian, what a beauty man was till he was pock-broken—if I may say so—by sin, and what a glory shined upon the whole creation before sin, by its poisonous breath, had dimmed and blasted it; and then guess what a filthy thing it is—what a strong poison it is that not only diffused its malignity through the soul and body of man, but had such direful effects upon the whole compages and frame of the visible creation, that it will never come to its first beauty, till, like a battered, cankered piece of plate, it be melted and refined by a universal conflagration. And is not your soul yet loathed with the thoughts of sin? Some beasts, they say, the ermine for one, will die before she will be got in the dirt to defile her beautiful skin. And wilt thou, Christian—and that after it hath cost Christ his blood to purchase his Spirit for thy cleansing—bedabble thyself in sin's puddle? God forbid! Did Ezekiel so abhor to eat man's dung imposed on him by God that he cries out, 'Ah Lord God! behold, my soul hath not been polluted?' &c., Eze. 4:14. And is any unclean lust, which

God himself compares to no better thing, so dainty a bit as to be desired by thee, Christian, who has sat at Christ's table, and knowest what entertainment there is to be had? Methinks thou shouldst rather cry out with the prophet, 'Ah, Lord God! my soul hath not been (or at least let it not be) polluted with this abominable thing.'

2. Sin hath a disturbing property. Sin, it breaks the peace of the soul, yea of the whole world. It brings confusion with it, and makes the place a seat of war wherever it comes. An army of evils are at its heels to set down where it is lodged: 'If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door,' Gen. 4:7. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,' Isa. 57:21. Here is God's hand, we see, to the warrant sentencing the sinner to the rack of a self-torturing conscience. Who is able to express the anguish which an accusing conscience feels, and those dreadful fits of convulsion with which it rends and tears itself? One you hear roaring and crying out, 'There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither...any rest in my bones because of my sin,' Ps. 38:3. Another, 'while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted,' Ps. 88:15. A third, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear,' Gen. 4:13. And a fourth, so unable to stand under the clamour of his guilt, that he runs to the halter and hangs himself to get out of the din and dolour it makes in his ears, Matt. 27:5. And is not he like to be well cured of his torment that throws himself into hell-fire to find ease? And as sin disturbs the inward peace of the soul, so the outward peace of the world. What else but sin hath put the world in an uproar, and set all the creatures together by the ears? 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?' James 4:1. This sets nearest relations at bitter feud, firing the house over their heads, so that husband and wife, parents and children, cannot abide together under one roof. Delilah, she betrays her husband into his bloody enemies' hands. And Absalom riseth up to take away the life of his dear father. This is the whisperer that 'separates chief friends,' and makes those that have drunk of our cup to lift up the heel upon us; and with whom we have 'taken sweet counsel together,' to plot our ruin, and give counsel against our very life. In a word, such a kindle-fire sin is, that the flames it kindles fly not only from one

neighbour's house to the other, but from one nation to another. All the water in the sea that runs between kingdom and kingdom, cannot quench the wars it raiseth; but it makes men that live at one end of the world thirst for the blood and treasure of those that live at the other. So that the earth is but as a cockpit, where there is little else but fighting and killing one another. And is this the guest thou canst find in thy heart to bid welcome within thy bosom?

3. Sin hath a damning property. If all the mischief sin did us was in this world, it were bad enough; but considering our short stay here, it would give some ease to our thoughts, that we should have done with it and this life together. But to be worried here by it, and damned for it also to eternal torments in another world, this is intolerable! Methinks that place, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,' Matt. 25:41, should make us sit down and consider, whether any sin be so pleasurable or desirable, as should make it worth lying in endless torments to obtain and enjoy it a few fleeting days and months, that are at an end almost as soon as their beginning commenceth. Thou knowest, sinner, already the best of thy sinful pleasure, but not the worst of thy punishment, which is so great as loseth its chief emphasis by translating into our language, and clothing it with expressions borrowed even from those things that most dread us in this life. Alas! what is the fire and brimstone we see and fear so much here, to that which burns in the infernal lake? Truly, little more than painted fire in the wall is to that which burns on our hearth. This in our chimney was made for our use and comfort chiefly, but the fire in hell—whether material or not is not material to know—is for no other end than to torment sinners in. This in our kitchen is kindled by a little puff of wind, and quenched by a little water; but 'the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle that,' Isa. 30:33. And where shall we find buckets to quench that which God kindles? They say smelling of the earth is healthful for the body, and taking in the scent of this sulfurous pit by frequent meditation cannot but be as wholesome for the soul. If many had descended thus into hell while on earth, their souls had not, it is like, dropped into hell when their bodies fell into the grave. O Christian! be sometimes walking in the company of those places of Scripture which set out

the state of the damned in hell, and their exquisite torments there. This is the true 'house of mourning,' and the going into it by serious meditation is a sovereign means to make 'the living lay it to heart,' and, laying it to heart, there is the less fear that thou wilt throw thyself by thy impenitency into this so uncomfortable a place, who art offered so fairly a mansion in heaven's blissful palace, upon thy faith and repentance.

[We are to provide ourselves with Scripture answers to Satan's false reasonings.]

DIRECTION SECOND. Provide thyself with Scripture answers to Satan's false reasonings with which he puts a fair colour on his foul motions, the better to gain thy consent. He is wily. Thou hadst need be wary. He doth not only propound the sinful object, but also sets a fair gloss upon it, and urges the soul with arguments to embrace his offer. And when sin comes thus forth Goliath-like, it is not Saul's armour, but the 'smooth stones of the brook,' not thy own resolution, but the divinity of Scripture-arguments, that can preserve thee, or prostrate thy enemy. Now, thou wilt find in the word an answer put into thy mouth to refel⁶ all Satan's sophistry. And this indeed is to be an Apollos, 'mighty in the Scripture,' when we can stop the devil's mouth, and choke his bullets with a word seasonably interposed betwixt us and the temptation. It will not therefore be amiss to give a few **INSTANCES** whereby this direction maybe made more easily practicable in the hand of weaker Christians. **First.** Sometimes Satan insinuates himself into a soul by endeavouring to make one sin appear of no account. **Second.** By giving an opportunity of committing a sin in secret. **Third.** By the example of others.

[Satan tempts to sin by making one sin of no account.]

First Instance. Sometimes Satan thus insinuates himself into a soul—'what, man, will one sin, if yielded to, so much hurt thee? One mole doth not mar the beauty of the face, nor can one sin spoil the beauty of thy soul; and it is no more than I am a suitor for. If I bade thee wallow in every puddle, thou

mightst well abhor the motion; but why art thou so afraid of one spot being seen on thy garment? The best jewel hath its flaw, and the holiest saint his failing.' Now to refel this motion, when so mannerly and modestly proposed

1. Answer. The word will tell thee that no sin is single. It is impossible to embrace or allow one sin, and be free of others. For,

(1.) He that yields to one sin casts contempt upon the authority that made the whole law, and upon this account, breaks it all. 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all,' James 2:10. And he gives the reason in the next words, 'for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.' Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill thou art a transgressor of the law. Not that he is guilty of all distributively, but collectively, as Estius well notes. For the law is one copulative. One commandment cannot be wronged, but all are interested in the same; as the whole body suffers by a wound given to one part: 'God spake all these words,' Ex. 20. They are ten words, but one law.

(2.) By allowing one sin we disarm and deprive ourselves of having a conscientious argument to defend ourselves against any other sin. He that can go against his conscience in one, cannot plead conscience against any other. For, if the authority of God awes him from one, it will from all. 'How can I do this,...and sin against God?' said Joseph. I doubt not but his answer would have been the same if his mistress had bid him lie for her, as now when she enticed him to lie with her. The ninth commandment would have bound him as well as the seventh. Hence the apostle exhorts not to 'give place to the devil, Eph. 4:27—implying, that by yielding to one we lose our ground, and what we lose he gains; and let him alone to improve advantages. The little wimble once entered, the workman can then drive a great nail. One sin will widen thy swallow a little, that thou wilt not so much strain at the next.

(3.) Allow one sin and God will give you over to other sins. 'Wherefore God also gave them up unto uncleanness,' Rom. 1:24. The Gentiles gave themselves to idolatry, and God gave them up unto other beastly lusts, ver. 22. When Judas began to play the thief, I question whether he meant to turn traitor. No, his treason was a punishment for his thievery.

6. Refel, reject, repulse. — WEBSTER'S

— SDB

He allowed himself in a secret sin, and God gave him up to one more open and horrid. But,

2. Answer. Suppose thou couldst—which is impossible—take one sin into thy bosom, and shut all the rest out, yet the word will tell thee that thou art a servant to that one sin, and that thou canst not be so and a servant to God at the same time.

(1.) That thou wouldst be a servant to that one sin. 'His servants ye are to whom ye obey,' Rom. 6:16; and consequently the devil's servants, whose kingdom you endeavour to hold up by defending though this one castle, against God your Maker. Neither will it excuse thee to say thou intendest not so. Haply, covetousness is thy sin, and it is thy profit thou aimest at, not siding with the devil against God. Though this is not thy express end who sinnest, yet it is the end of the sin which thou committest, and of Satan that puts thee upon the work, and so will be charged upon thee at last. The common soldier ordinarily looks no higher than his pay. This is it draws him into the field. Yet they make themselves traitors by assisting him that leads them on against their prince; and it will not serve the turn for them to say they fought for their pay, and not to dethrone him. Ahab sold himself 'to work evil in the sight of the Lord,' I Kings 21:20. And yet we read not that he made any express covenant with the devil. But the meaning is, he did that which in effect amounted to no less. He knew that if he sinned he should pay his soul for it, and he would have his lust, notwithstanding he was acquainted with its price; and therefore, interpretatively, he sold his soul that he might enjoy his sin.

(2.) Thou mayest learn from the word that thou canst not be a servant to any one sin and to God at the same time. 'No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon,' Matt. 6:24. By mammon is meant one particular lust, covetousness. One body may as well have two souls, as one soul two masters. One soul hath but one love, and two cannot have the supremacy of it. I have heard, indeed, of a wretch that said, 'He had one soul for God, and another for the devil also.' But, if he hath one soul in hell, I am afraid he will not find another for heaven. And one sin will certainly send thee thither as a thousand. 'Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters,' &c., 'shall inherit the kingdom of God.' He doth not only exclude him that is all these, but any of

these. It is certain that all men shall die, but all do not die of the same disease. And as certain all impenitent sinners shall be damned, but one is damned for one sin, and a second for another. But all meet at last in the same hell.

[Satan tempts to sin by opportunity given for committing it in secret.]

Second Instance. May be thou art tempted to sin by an opportunity of committing it in secret—where thou shalt not pay the loss of thy credit for the purchase of thy pleasure. This was the snare the simple young man's foot was taken in, Prov. 7:19. His strumpet tells him, 'the good man was from home;' the coast was clear. They might drink their stolen waters without fear of being indicted for the theft. Too many, alas! whom the shame of the world keeps from knocking at the fore-door, are easily persuaded to sin if they may slip in at the postern. Saul himself, though ashamed to go to a witch in his princely robe, because he had possessed the world with an opinion of his hatred of that sin by putting such to death, yet is not afraid to go incognito to one. Therefore, as it added much to the weight of the temptations with which the devil assaulted Christ, that he came to him in the wilderness and solicited him but to a private, yea secret, acknowledging of him, where none could tell tales what passed between them; so it doth to the glory of that complete victory which Christ got over Satan in them all. And how got Christ it, but by the sword of the word? Take thou, Christian, therefore the same weapon up to defend thyself against the same enemy.

1. The word will tell thee that God is privy to thy most secret sins. 'Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance,' Ps. 90:8. They are as plainly seen by him as anything can be by us at noonday. Nay, he doth not only see and know them, but he sets them before him as a mark to shoot his arrows of vengeance at. So, Prov. 15:3, 'the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' As he sees when thou shuttest thy closet to pray in secret, and will reward thy sincerity; so he seeth when thou dost it to sin in secret, and will reward thy hypocrisy. Now, if a king sitting on his throne 'scattereth away all evil with his

eyes,' Prov. 20:8, how much more powerfully would the eye of God, if seen looking on us, chase away the most secret motion that stirreth in our heart to sin! Better all the world to see thee, than God, who hath the wrong done him by the sin, and therefore concerned in justice to do himself right upon thee. He cannot let any sin go unpunished, because a righteous judge. But there are some sins which require a more immediate hand of divine vengeance than other, and therefore called 'crying sins.' And they are such which, either by the place and power of the offender, man dares not punish, or else so secretly committed, that man cannot take cognizance of the fact: as Cain's bloody murder of his brother—'Thy brother's blood crieth,' Gen. 4:10.

2. The word will inform thee of an informer that thou hast in thy own bosom—thy conscience, I mean, which goes along with thee, and is witness to all thy fine-laid plots, and what it sees it writes down, for it is a court of record. Thou canst not sin so fast but it can write after thee. And the pen with which conscience writes down our sins hath a sharp nib; it cuts deep into the very heart and soul of the sinner. The heathens, their thoughts are said to accuse them, Rom 2:15. And no torment in the world comparable to an accusing conscience. 'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. 18:14. Who? Not men, not angels. *Nullus oculus molestior cuique suo: non est aspectus quem tenebrosa conscientia suffugere magis velit, minus possit* (Bern.)—no eye affrights a sinner more than his own; it is that which he most desires to run from, but least can. Such a poor wretch is like Regulus in his barrel stuck with nails, which way soever he turns himself, in *vulnus inclinat*, he is pricked and wounded. O read those sad instances of Cain, Saul, and Judas, with others upon Scripture record, who have been on this rack, and thou wilt be afraid to sin where conscience stands by.

3. Consult 'the word,' and thou wilt find that God usually hath put them to shame in this world, that have promised themselves most secrecy in their sinning. It is one of God's names to be a 'revealer of secrets,' Dan. 2:47. And among other secrets, he forgets not to 'bring to light' these 'hidden things of darkness, I Cor. 4:5—those sins that are forged in a darker shop than others—and that often in this

world. In these men speak what base thoughts they have of God, as if he were a God of the day and not of the night; therefore to vindicate this attribute, and to strike an inward fear thereof into the hearts of men, he doth dig these foxes out of their holes wherein they earth themselves, and expose their sins to the view of the world, which they thought none should have known besides themselves and their partners in the sin. Such an effect had the discovery of Ananias and Sapphira's secret sin. 'And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things,' Acts 5:11, 13.

See therefore how God hath befooled men when they have arted it most in packing their sins, to hide them from the world's eye. No art was wanting in the patriarchs to conceal their unnatural sin against their brother. What a fair probable tale do they tell the old man their father, who believed all, and inquired no further! How true were they among themselves, though so many in the plot; that none of them should blab it out, at one time or another, was strange. How long did this sleep before discovered? And what a strange providence to bring their wickedness to light! So Gehazi played his part cunningly enough, one would think, which made him so bold to come before his master, and impudently lie to his head, not dream the least that he was privy to his sin. Yet this man is found out, and for the garments he got of Naaman by a lie, he had another given of the Lord, which he was to wear as a livery of his sin—for he was clothed with a leprosy—a garment not as others, to hide his shame, but to discover it to all the world—a garment more lasting than the two change of suits he had from the Syrian; for this lasted him all his life; neither was it then worn out, but to be put on by his children after him, II Kings 5:27. In a word, be he never such a saint, yet if he goes about to save himself from the shame of a sin by any secret plot of wickedness, he takes the direct way to bring that upon him which he contrives to keep off. Uriah's blood was shed only as a sinful expedient to save David's credit, that would have suffered if his folly with Bathsheba should become a town-talk. And how sped he with this his plot? Ah, poor man! all comes out to his greater shame. David shall know that God will be as tender of his own honour, as he is of his credit; 'for thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before

the sun,' II Sam. 12:12. Yea, David himself at last is sick of his own plot, and was not at first more studious to hide his sin, than he was afterwards willing to acknowledge it; and therefore we find him, Ps. 51, standing as it were in a white sheet, and doing voluntary penance for his sin in all the churches of God so long as the Scriptures shall be read in their assemblies to the end of the world.

[Satan tempts to sin, by the example of others.]

Third Instance. May be thou art tempted to sin, by the example of others. Indeed, though example be an inartificial argument, yet it is of great force with many, especially if the persons quoted in favour of a sin be either the most, or thought to be the best. When most, they carry presently with them those that are false-hearted or weak-headed—as dead fishes and light straws swim with the stream; for which such, shame strikes the greatest stroke, and a multitude to bear one company in a sin, takes away the shame of it. Where all go naked, few will blush. They rather are exposed to shame that will be singular, and not do as the rest; as Micaiah, who was made a scorn because he would not tune his pipe to Ahab's ear, nor join with the whole college of his flattering chaplains in their judgment. Or, if they be such who have the reputation for wisdom and piety, then it oft proves a snare to them that are none of the worst; which should make all of high place or eminent grace very circumspect what opinion or practice they espouse. The devil is very brag when we can get such to set their hand to his testimonial. The country will soon ring of this, and their example be shown everywhere to draw in others. Why, such a one is of this opinion, he holds this and doth that, and I hope he is one you reverence and honour. Now, in this case, consult with the word, and it will bring thee off this temptation.

1. The word commands, that we bring the examples of men—be they who they will—to the test of the word. Is it their opinion that is quoted? 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isa. 8:20. It is the light which a man carries in his lantern for which we follow him. That gone we leave him. Now, we see by this scripture, he hath no light

that hath not the word to vouch his opinion. So that, neither knows he whither himself goes, nor we whither such a one will lead us. Again, is it the practice of another that is laid before thee for thy copy to write after? What saith the word? 'Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil,' Ex. 23:2. Examples are not our warrant, but precepts. Neither will it procure a man a discharge, because he had a precedent in his sin. Adam, indeed, said the woman gave him the apple; but it did not excuse him from paying the reckoning with her. She was indeed the first in the transgression, yet both met in the punishment. Wouldst thou eat poison because another dares be so bold to be thy taster? Surely his example cannot make the poison less deadly to thee that dost pledge him.

2. The word will tell thee that the best of saints do not always foot it right; but too oft are found to tread awry. 'In many things we offend all,' James 3:2. And that is himself subject to step awry, may also lead thee aside. Therefore Paul, as holy a man as lived, when he calls others after him, would have them follow him with their eyes open, to see whether he followed Christ. 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,' I Cor. 11:1. The holiest life of the best saint on earth is but an imperfect translation of the perfect rule of holiness in the word, and therefore must be tried by it. Hence it is the character of sincerity to look to the way rather than the company. 'The highway of the upright is to depart from evil,' Prov. 16:17. He consults with the word, whether the way be good or evil. If he finds it evil, he will not go into it to bear another company, no, though he be a saint. Indeed, God suffers some to step awry, for the proof of others. Thus heresies come, 'that they who are approved may be made manifest,' I Cor. 11:19; Deut. 13:1. 'Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet,...for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord you God with all your heart.' Thus I have given a few instances by which you may see how this sword of the word—as that in the cherubim's hand—may preserve the Christian from venturing to sin upon any pretence whatever it be.

[We are to hide the word in our heart, for our defence against the temptations to sin.]

DIRECTION THIRD. Hide the word in thy heart. This was David's preservative. 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee,' Ps. 119:11. It was not the Bible in his hand to read it; not the word on his tongue to speak of it; nor in his head to get a notional knowledge of it; but the hiding it in his heart, that he found effectual against sin. It is not meat in the dish, but [in the] stomach, that nourisheth; not physic in the glass, but taken into the body, that purgeth. Now 'heart' in Scripture, though it be used for all the faculties of the soul, yet, principally, it is put for the conscience, and the affections.

First. Heart in Scripture, is often put for the conscience. 'For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things,' 1 John 3:20. That is, if our conscience condemn us justly, to be sure our case is sad, because God knows by us more than we by ourselves, and can charge us with many sins that conscience is not privy to.

Now thus, Christian, labour to hide the word in thy heart—that is, in thy conscience; let it there have a throne, and it will keep thee in a holy awe.

1. Look upon the word as stamped with divine authority, the law which the great God gives thee his poor creature to walk by. This impressed on thy conscience would make tremble at the thought of a sin, which is the traitor's dagger that strikes at God himself, by the contempt it casts upon his law. And if some assassins, intending to stab a prince, have been so overawed by a few beams of majesty shot from his mortal brow, that their hearts would not serve them to make the horrid attempt, how much more must the dread of the great God's majesty, darted from his word into the creature's conscience, deter him from practicing any treason against his Maker? 'Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word,' Ps. 119:161. As if he had said, I had rather incur their wrath for my holiness, than make thy word my enemy by my sin.

2. Look upon the word of God as that law by which thou art to be judged at the great day. 'God shall judge the secrets of men...according to my gospel,' Rom. 2:16. Then the book of thy conscience shall be opened and compared with this, and accordingly will sentence of life or death be pronounced by Christ thy Judge. Thou mayest know beforehand how it will go with thee at that day. If now thou canst not stand

before the word as opened by a poor minister, and applied to thy own conscience, what will you do when it is opened by Christ? Now thy conscience from the word condemns thee, but not finally; for by thy timely repentance and faith, the sentence of this private court may be reversed, and the word which even now bound thee over to death, will acquit and justify thee. But at that great day of assize there will be a final decision of thy cause. If then the judgment goes against thee, thou art a lost man for ever. No reversing the sentence, not so much as a reprieve to stay the execution. But as the word goeth out of the Judge's mouth, the sinner's face is covered to be immediately delivered into the tormentor's hands. And darest now thou, O man, bid any lust welcome, while thou seest the gibbet set up, and the everlasting chains prepared, in which the word of God dooms every sinner to hang? Canst thou read thy sentence, and yet like thy sin that brings it inevitably upon thy head?

Second. Heart, in Scripture, is most frequently taken for the will and affections. 'My son, give me thine heart, Prov. 23:26, that is, thy love. So, Deut. 10:12, 'to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' And thus, Christian, to hide the word in thy heart would be a rare antidote against the poison of sin. The chains of love are stronger than the chains of fear. Herod's love of Herodias was too hard for his fear of John. He had some hold of his conscience that awed him, and bound his hands awhile. But his minion had his affections, and the heart can unbind the hands. His love to her made him shake off his respect to him, and at last embroil his hands in his blood. He that is only prisoner to the command, and bound to his good behaviour by the chains of terror which the threatening claps upon his conscience, may have these knocked off, and then he will shake off his obedience also. But he that loves the word, and the purity of its precepts, cannot turn traitor. When such a one sins, he makes as deep a wound in his own heart as in the law, and therefore trembles at displeasing God. 'I love thy testimonies; my flesh trembleth for fear of thee,' Ps. 119:119, 120. O that is the blessed fear which is the daughter of love. Now, to inflame thy heart with love to the word, consider that it is the faithfullest monitor and the sweetest comforter thou hast in all the world.

1. It is thy faithfulest monitor. It tells thee plainly of all thy faults, and will not suffer sin to lie upon thee, but points to the enemy that hunts for the precious soul's life; it discovers all the designs and plots Satan and thy beloved lusts have against thee. This made David love it so dearly, 'Moreover by them is thy servant warned,' Ps. 19:11. Besides all its other good offices it doth for thee, it warns thee of every danger, and shows thee how to escape it. O how should this endear it to thee! Did Ahasuerus heap such abundant honour upon Mordecai, who had but once been a means to save his life by discovering a treason plotted against his person? How much more shouldst thou honour and love the good word of God, which hath so oft saved thy soul out of thy spiritual enemies' hands, and doth daily give thee warning how to escape the snares of sin, without which it were impossible for thee to find them out or avoid them. Was David so affected with the wisdom and love of Abigail in the advice she gave him, whereby he was kept from shedding blood in his fury, that he took her into his bosom to be his wife, as a reward of her kindness to him? And shall not the counsel the word hath given thee make thee in love much more with it?

2. The word is thy sweetest comforter. When the poor soul is distressed with guilt, and conflicteth with the terrors of divine wrath for his sins, O what miserable comforters then are this world's pleasures and treasures! How little can any creature contribute to the ease of such a one! No more than he who, standing upon the shore, and sees his friend drowning in the sea, but knows not how to reach any help to him. It is the word alone that can walk upon those waves, and come to the soul's relief. This is able to restore the soul, and buoy it up from the bottom of the sea of despair. Though the soul be, with those mariners, 'at its wits' end,' and knows not what to do, yet then the word stands up—as Paul before them—and, as it were, thus speaks to him, 'Poor soul, thou shouldst have hearkened to my voice, and not have loosed from thy harbour by sinning against God, to come to this harm and loss. But, be of good cheer; do thus and thus; repent of thy folly, and speedily turn to thy God in Christ Jesus, and there shall be no loss of thy life.' There is forgiveness with the Lord, therefore he may be feared. And so, in all other troubles, this sends in the saint's comfort. When the

world gives him gall, this brings wine; when it meets with nothing but crosses and vexations from that, this sweetly recreates and cheers his spirits. Here the Christian hath those cooling waters with which he quengeth and allays all his sorrows. And you know what a treasure a spring or fountain is accounted in dry or hot countries. Surely, Christian, when thou considerest how many a sweet draught thou hast had from the wells of salvation, thou wilt cry out with David, 'I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me,' Ps. 119:93. I do not wonder to see thy enemy endeavour to stop thy well at which thou shouldst draw thy comfort, but that he should be able to persuade thee to do it thyself is strange.

[We are to plead the promise against sin at the throne of grace.]

DIRECTION FOURTH. Plead the promise against sin at the throne of grace. He that hath law on his side, we say, may sue the king; and he that hath a promise on his side may, with a humble boldness, commence his suit with God. As the veins in the body have arteries to attend them with spirits, so precepts in the word have promises to inspirit the Christian, and empower him with strength for his duty. Is there a command to pray? There is also a promise to enable for prayer, Zech. 12:10; Rom. 8:26. Doth God require us to give him our heart? 'My son, give me thine heart,' Prov. 23:26. The promise saith, 'A new heart also will I give you,' Eze. 36:26. Doth he command us to mortify our corruptions? And doth he not promise, 'Sin shall not have dominion over us?' Rom. 6:14. Now, to obtain this promise, thou must plead and press it believingly at the throne of grace. *Quod lex imperat, fides impetrat*—what the precept commands, the prayer of faith begs and receives. Look, therefore, thou takest God in thy way. First besiege heaven, and then fear not overcoming sin and hell, when thou hast conquered heaven. Now thou warrest at God's cost, and not thy own. He that sets thee on will bring thee off. David was a man at arms, and could handle his weapon against this enemy as well as another, yet dares not promise himself success till he hath made God his second. 'Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me,' Ps. 119:133. But if thou thinkest to steal a victory

by the strength of thy own resolution, expect an overthrow. And it will be a mercy thou shouldst be so served; for a foil will learn thee humility for the future, but a victory would increase thy pride. And that is a sad victory, when one sin carries away the spoils which thou hast taken from another. Jehoshaphat took the right course to speed, who, though he had almost a million men he could draw into the field—and that without draining his garrisons—yet bespeaks God’s help, as if he had not a man to fight for him: ‘We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee,’ II Chr. 20:12. If an Alexander, or a Cæsar, had been at the head of such an army, I warrant you they would not have known what to have done, and not doubted all before them. But Jehoshaphat, a holy humble man, was better instructed. He knew a host signifieth nothing which hath not the Lord of hosts with them; and that the most valiant can find neither heart nor hand in the day of battle without his leave who made both. Nor wilt thou, Christian, be able to use thy grace in an hour of temptation, without new grace from God to excite and enforce what thou hast already received from him. And if thou expectest this from him, he expects to hear from thee. Neither speaks it God unwilling to give what he hath promised, because he pays not the debt of the promise until it be sued for at the throne of grace. No, God takes this method, only to secure his own glory in the giving, and also to greaten our comfort by receiving it in this way of prayer, which is a fit expedient to attain both.

BRANCH FOURTH.

[DIRECTIONS how to use the sword of the word
AGAINST AFFLICTIONS, outward or inward.]

I come now to give some little help, by way of direction, how the Christian may use this sword of the word for his defence against the fourth enemy and the last, but not the least—an army made up of many bands of afflictions, which from without invade, and from within distress, him. The Christian in this world stands not as you may see some houses, so fenced and shadowed with hills or woods that the

wind beats but upon one side of them. No, he lies open to storms and tempests from all quarters of the heaven. We read of a strange kind of wind that at once ‘smote the four corners of the house’ in which Job’s children were. Truly, thus the Christian’s afflictions beset him round: no corner left unassaulted. And very often he is smitten on all sides at once; crossed in his estate, feeble in his body, and afflicted in his spirit all at once. And when so many seas of sorrows meet, it is no easy work for the poor Christian’s heart to stand unbroken amidst the concurrent violence of their waves. Though this is most certain, that those dejections and perturbations with which the minds of the best saints are so discomposed and ruffled, yea sometimes dismayed and distressed, cannot be charged upon any deficiency of the gospel’s principles for their support and comfort; but rather on their own impotence and unskillfulness to apply them in their several exigencies. My present task is to drop a few words of counsel to the weak Christian—how he may use and wield this sword of the word for his defence and comfort in any affliction without, or distress of spirit from within, that may assault him. And here I must not descend to particular cases—that were a voluminous work, and not so proper for this place—but only content myself with some general rules, that may be applicable to all. Now the cordial and restorative part of the word—that, I mean, which principally prepared and provided for the soul’s comfort in all its discomforts and distresses—is contained in the promises. These well studied and improved, can alone make thee a comfortable Christian. Now, if thou wouldst improve the promises, so as not to be run down and trampled upon by Satan in any day of distress that comes upon thee, but comfortably lift up thy head in hope and confidence above the waves of thy present sorrows, then hearken to what follows in a few general rules or DIRECTIONS, prepared for thy help. **FIRST.** Let it be thy first and chief care to get thy interest in and right to the promises cleared up. **SECOND.** Take some pains to sort the promises and reduce them to their proper heads. **THIRD.** Observe the latitude of the promises. **FOURTH.** Be much in meditation on the promises. **FIFTH.** Plead the promises at the throne of grace. **SIXTH.** When thou hast sued the promise, act thy faith on the power and truth of God for the

performance of it.

[We must see to have our interest
in the promises made clear to us.]

DIRECTION FIRST. Let it be thy first and chief care to get thy interest in and right to the promises cleared up. For this is the hinge on which the great dispute betwixt between thee and Satan will move in the day of trouble, except the case can be resolved before that overtakes thee. O, it is sad for a poor Christian to stand at the door of the promise in the dark night of affliction afraid to draw the latch! Whereas, he should then come as boldly for shelter as a child into his father's house. 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast,' Isa. 26:20. He that hath his title to the promise proved from the word to his own conscience, will not be wrangled easily out of his comfort. Naboth would not part with his inheritance for the pleasure or displeasure of a king; but stands up in the defence of his right to death. And so resolves Job: 'Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me,' Job 27:5. This was his evidence for heaven. And therefore Satan used his best wits to make him throw it up, but never could effect it. His title was clear, and he will not be disputed out of it by Satan; no, nor afraid to vouch it before God himself, when God in his providence seemed most to disown him, and to handle him as an enemy: 'Thou knowest that I am not wicked!' Job 10:7. He saith not that he hath no sin, but in a humble appeal to God defends his state, that he is 'not wicked.' And this kept the chariot of his hope on its wheels all along his sad sufferings; that it was never quite overthrown, though sometimes it seemed to totter and shake.

[How our interest in the promises
may be made clear to us.]

Question. But how shall I know whether I have a right to the promises?

Answer First. Inquire whether thou art united to Christ by faith or no. The promises are not a common for swine to root in; but Christ's sheep-walk, for his flock to feed in. 'And if ye be Christ's, then are ye

Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,' Gal. 3:29. The promise is the jointure, and cannot be had but by taking the person of Christ in marriage. And faith is the grace by which the soul gives his consent to take Christ as he is offered in the gospel. It is called, therefore, a receiving of Christ, John 1:12. There is no doubt but thou hast often been wooed in the ministry of the word by Christ's spokesmen, and that question hath been put to thee for Christ, which was once to Rebekah, concerning her taking Isaac to husband, 'Wilt thou go with this man?' They have from the word set him forth in his glories before thee, who he is, and what he brings. Thou hast heard the articles upon which he is most willing to proceed to marriage, and take thee as his beloved into his bed and bosom. As,

1. That thou send away all other lovers which have had any pretensions to thee. For he will endure no competitor or partner with him in thy affections. The names of Baalim must be taken out of Israel's mouth, and then God marries himself to her, Hosea 2:17, 18.

2. That thou like his law as well as his love. Christ will not be husband where he may not be master also.

3. That thou take him for better and for worse, with his cross as well as with his crown—to suffer for him as well as to reign with him. Now, what entertainment hath this motion found with thee? Dost thou, upon the discovery made of Christ, take liking in his person? Is he transcendently amiable in thy eye, and precious to thy soul, so as to inflame thee with an insatiable desire of him? Canst thou freely pack away thy once darling lusts to gain him? and leap out of the arms of all thy carnal delights and sinful pleasures, to be taken into his embraces? Art thou as willing he should be thy Lord, as thy love? and as content to bow to his sceptre as lie in his bosom? In a word, art thou so enamoured with him, that thou now canst not live without him, nor enjoy thyself except thou mayest enjoy him? Thy heart is wounded with the darts which his love and loveliness have shot into it, and he himself carries the balm about him which alone can heal it. Let him now require what he will at thy hands, nothing he commands shall be denied. If he bids thee leave father and father's house, thou wilt go after him, though it

be to the other end of the world. If he tells thee though must be base and poor in the world for his sake, thou art resolved to beg with him rather than reign without him, yea die for him than live without him. Come forth, thou blessed of the Lord, and put on the bracelets of the promises; they are the love-tokens which I am from Christ's hand to deliver, and in his name to promise marriage to thee. Thou art the happy soul, if there be one on earth, that Christ betroths to himself. Languish no longer in thy unbelieving fears. For thy comfort know it is not Christ's custom to entangle soul's affections, and when he hath got their love, then to deny his to them, and cast them off.

Answer Second. Inquire what effect the promises have on thy soul. All who have right to the promises are transformed by the promise. As Satan shed his venomous seed into the heart of Eve by a promise, 'Ye shall not surely die,' Gen. 3:4—whereupon she presently conceived with sin, and was assimilated into the likeness of his diabolical nature, wicked as was the devil himself—so God useth the promises of the gospel—called therefore the 'incorruptible seed'—to beget his own image and likeness in the hearts of his elect. 'Exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature,' II Peter 1:4, that is, be partakers of such heavenly holy qualities and dispositions as will make you like God himself. The promises of the gospel have in them a fitness, and, when by the Spirit of God applied, a virtue to purify the heart, as well as to pacify the conscience. 'Now ye are clean,' saith Christ to his disciples, 'through the word which I have spoken unto you,' John 15:3. Lay, therefore, thy hand upon thy heart, and speak freely, poor soul. Have the promises had a sanctifying transforming virtue upon thee? What of God dost thou find in thy heart more since thy acquaintance with the promises than before? Some use promises as a protection for sin rather than an argument against it. As sin takes occasion by the commandment to work in the carnal heart all manner of concupiscence, so many are from the promise emboldened to sin more freely—like mountebanks that drink poison in confidence of their antidote. Now which way works the promise upon thy heart? If the seal of the promise leaves not the impress of God's image on thee, it ratifies no good to thee. If it pro-

duceth no holiness in thee, it brings no joy to thee. In a word, if the promise be not to thee a seed of grace, it is no evidence for glory. But if thou canst find it leaves the superscription of God upon thee, then it assures the love and favour of God to thee.

Answer Third. Inquire in what posture thy heart stands to the word of command. The promise, may be, is sweet to thy palate. This thou rollest like a lump of sugar under thy tongue, but are not thy teeth set against the command as if it were gall and wormwood? Thou smilest on the promise, but when put in mind of thy duty to the command, then haply thy countenance is changed, and a frown sits on thy brow, as if God were some austere master that breaks his servants' backs with heavy burdens. And thou couldst wish, with all thy heart, that a dispensation might be procured for thee to break now and then a command without forfeiting thy claim to the promise; but, because that is not to be hopes for, thou art so kind to thyself, as to give thyself leave to bow down to some idol of pleasure or profit that thou hast set up in thy heart, and hopest God will be merciful to thee, because it is only in this or that one way thou makest bold with him in. If this shoe fit thy foot—this be the true character of thy heart—which God forbid! thou hast no one lot belongs to thee in the lap of the promise. We have a comfortable promise, Ps. 50:15 but a guard is set about it, that no disobedient wretch should gather its sweet fruit: 'But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do,...that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee,' ver. 16, 17. On the other hand, if thou canst in truth say that it is not the holy command thou art offended with, but with thyself, because thou canst obey it no more perfectly—that it is not grievous to thee to keep, but break the laws of God; and, though thy foot too often slips, yet thy heart cleaves to them, and will not let thee lie where thou fallest, but up thou gettest to mend thy pace, and mind thy steps better—for thy comfort know, poor soul, this sincere respect thou hast to the commandment is a most comfortable evidence for thy true title to the promise. When David was able to vouch his love to the command he did not question his title to the promise; Ps. 119:113, there he asserts his sincere affection to the precepts: 'I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.' Mark, he doth

not say he is free from vain thoughts, but he hates them. He likes their company no better than one would a pack of thieves that break into his house. Neither saith he that he fully kept the law; but he loved the law, even when he failed exact obedience to it. Now from this testimony his conscience brought in for his love to the law, his faith acts clearly and strongly on the promise in the next words, 'thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word,' Ps. 119:114.

Answer Fourth. If thou questionest thy right to one promise, inquire whether thou canst not discern thy interest in a second, which, if thou canst, thou mayest conclude thou hast a right to that other thou didst doubt of, yea and to all the rest. For, as there is a concatenation of graces—he that finds one hath all—so of promises, he that is heir to one hath right to all. May be, when thou readest that promise, 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,' Matt. 5:8, the remainders of corruption, not yet fully mortified in thy heart, scare thee from applying it to thyself as thy portion. But, for its next-neighbour promise, 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled,' ver. 6, haply thou feelest such a pinching sense of thy guilt, and want of holiness, as will enforce thee to acknowledge, that if ever man in a burning fever thirsted for drink, or one half-starved desired food, then dost thou crave and cry for the righteousness of Christ to justify thy person, and grace from Christ to sanctify thy nature,—so that thou canst not but see this promise spoken to thee. And if this belongs to thee, then the former, and all the other with it. For they are branches in the same covenant, which God doth not dismember, but gives it entire with all the branches growing on it to be the believer's portion. Hence it is they are called 'heirs of promise,' Heb. 6:17. Not heirs of this promise or that, but 'of promise'—that is, of the covenant, which comprehends all the promises of the gospel. So that, as he hath hold of the man's whole body that hath fast hold of his hand—though it be but one member of it—because it is knit to the rest, and by it he may draw the rest to him; so, if thou hast hold of any one promise thou hast hold of all other, and mayest infer thy right from this to them. And as one may draw out the wine of a whole hogshead at one tap, so may a poor soul derive the comfort of the whole cov-

enant to himself through one promise which he is able to own and apply. 'We know,' saith Saint John, 'that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,' 1 John 3:14. Eternal life is the cream and top of all covenant-blessings. Now, a poor Christian may, upon the inward feeling of this one grace of love in his heart—being the condition annexed to this promise—know that he is in a state of life and happiness. And why? Because wherever this grace is in truth there are all other saving graces. Christ is not divided in these, and consequently he that can apply this promise hath a right to all.

[We must sort the promises under their proper heads.]

DIRECTION SECOND. Take some pains to sort the promises, as thou readest the Scriptures, and reduce them to their proper heads. There is great multiplicity of trials and temptations which God is pleased to exercise his saints with: 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous,' Ps. 34:19. And there is variety of promises provided to administer suitable comfort to their several sorrows. The Scriptures are a spiritual physic-garden, where grows an herb for the cure of every malady. Now it were of admirable use to the Christian if he would gather some of every sort, such especially as he hath found most to affect his heart, of which he can say with Origen, 'hæc est scriptura mea,'—this portion of Scripture is mine, and then to write such down, as the physician doth his receipts for this and that disease, by themselves. May it not shame the Christian to see a scholar know every book in his great library, and what it treats on, so that he can presently go to any one of them all, and make use of their notions as he hath occasion; and that the Christian, who hath but one book to advise with, and that none of the greatest bulk, but sufficient as to make him wise unto salvation, so to make him comfortable in every condition that can befall him, should not be acquainted, if not with all, yet with some choice promises of every sort, to which he maybe able to resort for counsel and comfort in the day of his distress? Now the best time for this work is when thou art yet at ease, in the lap of health and prosperity. The apothecary gathers his simples in the spring which he useth in winter. The mariner provides his tackling in the harbour before he puts forth

to sea. And the wise Christian will store himself with promises in health for sickness, and in peace for future perils. It is too late for a man to think of running home for his cloak when on his way he is caught in a storm. 'A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished,' *Prov. 22:3*.

[We must observe the comprehensiveness of the promises.]

DIRECTION THIRD. Observe the full latitude of the promises. The covenant of grace comprehends the weak Christian as well as the strong, 'if children, then heirs,' *Rom. 8:17*. Not if children grown to this age, or that stature, but 'if children.' Christ hath in his family children of all sizes, some little, and others tall Christians. If thou beest a child, though in the cradle, the promise is thy portion. 'All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen,' *II Cor. 1:20*. 'There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,' *Rom. 8:1*. See here, it is the state and relation the creature stands in, that gives him his title to the promise. Some saints have more grace from Christ than others, and so have more skill to improve these promises than their weaker brethren, whereby their present profits and incomes from the promise are greater. But they have no more interest in Christ than the other, and consequently the title of the weak Christian is as true to the promise as [that] of the strong. Shall the foot say, 'Because I am the lowest member of the body, therefore the tongue will not speak for me, or the head take care of me?' We will grant thee to be of the least and lowest rank of Christians; yet thou art in Christ, as the foot is in the body. And Christ hath made provision in the promise for all that are in him. We disfigure the promises when we make them look asquint, with an eye upon one saint and not on another, whereas they belong to all: 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,' *John 3:36*. Who now is there meant? Only he that believes above doubting? I trow not. He that bids us receive the 'weak in faith,' will not himself reject them.

[We must be much in meditation of the promises.]

DIRECTION FOURTH. Be much in meditation of the promises. Whence is it that the poor Christian is so distressed with the present affliction that lies upon him, but because he museth more on his trouble than on the promise? There is that in the promise which would recreate his spirit, if he could but fix his thoughts upon it. When the crying child once fastens on the teat, and begins to draw down the milk, then it leaves wrangling, and falls asleep at the breast. Thus the Christian ceaseth complaining of his affliction when he gets hold on the promise, and hath the relish of its sweetness upon his heart. 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul,' *Ps. 94:19*. When a swarm of bees dislodge themselves they are all in a confusion, flying here and there without any order, till at last they are hived again. Then the uproar is at an end and they fall to work peaceably as before. Truly, even so the Christian will find it in his own heart. God, in the promise, is the soul's hive. Let the Christian dislodge his thoughts thence, and presently they run riot, and fly up and down as in an affright at the apprehension of the present affliction or temptation lies upon him, till he can recollect himself, and settle his heart again upon the promise, and then he recovers his former peace and composure. Hence the Spirit of God sounds a retreat to the troubled thoughts of afflicted saints, and calls them off from poring on that which roils them, into God, where alone they can be quiet and at ease. 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him,' *Ps. 37:7*. And David, finding his soul, like the dove while flying over the waters, without all repose, calls it back into the meditation of God and his promise, as the only ark where it could find rest. 'Return unto thy rest, O my soul,' *Ps. 116:7*. The Christian's heart is of that colour which his most abiding constant thoughts dye into. Transient flitting thoughts, be they comfortable or sad, do not much work upon the soul, or alter its temper into joy or sorrow. Neither poison kills, nor food nourisheth, that doth not stay in the body. No, then the affliction soaks into the heart, and embitters the Christian's spirit into perplexing fears and disconsolate dejections, when his thoughts lie steeping in his sorrows from day to day—when, like her in the gospel, he is 'bowed down with a spirit of infirmity,' that he cannot raise his heart from the thought of his cross and trial to medi-

tate on any promise that should refresh him. Such there are, God knows, whom Satan and their own pensive hearts keep such close prisoners, that no comfortable meditation is suffered to speak or stay with them.

And again, on the other hand then the promise works effectually, when it is bound upon the Christian's heart, when he wakes with it and walks with it. No pain he feels, no danger he fears, can pluck him from his breast; but, as Samson went on his way eating of the honeycomb, so he feeding on the sweetness of the promise. Here is a Christian that will sing when another sighs, will be able to spend that time of his affliction in praising God, which others—whose thoughts are scattered and split upon what they suffer—too commonly bestow on fruitless complaints of their misery, and discontented speeches which reflect dishonourably upon God himself. Let it be thy care therefore, Christian, to practice this duty of meditation. Do not only exchange a few words with the promise, as one does with a friend passing by at his door. But invite the promise, as Abraham did the angels, Gen. 18, not to pass away till thou hast more fully enjoyed it. Yea, constrain it as the disciples did Christ, to stay with thee all the night of thy affliction. This is to 'acquaint' ourselves indeed with God, the ready way to be at peace. This is the way the saints have taken to raise their faith to such a pitch, as to triumph over the most formidable calamities. 'My beloved,' saith the spouse, 'shall lie all night between my breasts.' That is, when benighted with any sorrowful afflicting providence, she shall pass away the night comfortably in the meditation of his love and loveliness, his beauty and sweetness. Never will the Christian come to any kindly heat of comfort in his spirit, till he takes this Abishag of the promise into his bosom to cherish him. And this will do it indeed. A soul that hath learned this heavenly art of meditation will feel no more the extremity of any affliction, than you do the sharpness of the cold weather when you are sitting by a good fire, or lying in a warm bed. It was a notable speech of Julius Palmer, an English martyr: 'To them,' saith he, 'that have their mind fettered to the body as a thief's foot is to a pair of stocks, it is hard to die. But if any be able to separate his soul from his body, then by the help of God's Spirit, it is no more mastery for such a one

than to drink this cup.' He meant, if the creature be able to elevate his mind and thoughts above his sufferings by heavenly meditation on the 'great and precious promises,' then it were nothing to suffer. Such a one, his soul is in heaven; and a soul in heaven feels little what the flesh meets with on earth. Here, O ye Christians, is the most glorious prospect to be seen on this side heaven!

When the soul stands upon this Pisgah of meditation, looking by an eye of faith through the perspective of the promise upon all the great and precious things laid up by a faithful God for him, it is easy to despise the world's love and wrath. But alas! it is hard for us to get up thither, who are so short-breathed and soon tired with a few steps up this mount of God. O let us all cry out, as once David, 'Lead me to the rock that is higher than I!' And with him in another place, 'Who will bring me into the strong city?...wilt no thou, O God?' So, who will lift us up to this high, holy hill of meditation, higher than all the surging waves that dash upon us from beneath, where we may see all our creature-enjoyments drowned, yet ourselves not wetshod? Wilt not thou, O God? Yes, our God would do this for us, would we but shake off our sloth, and show, by parting with our mandrakes to purchase his company, that we highly prize the same. My meaning is—would we but frequently retire from the world, and bestow some of that time in secret waiting upon God which we lavish out upon inferior pleasures and entertainments of the creature, we should invite God's Holy Spirit to us. Let a wicked man set up a lust for his thoughts to dally with, and the devil will soon be at his elbow to assist him. And shall we not believe the Holy Spirit as ready to lend his helping hand to a holy meditation? Doubtless he is. Spread thou thy sails and the Spirit will fill them with his heavenly breath. Be but thou the priest to lay the wood and sacrifice in order, and fire from heaven will come down upon it. Be thou but careful to provide fuel—gather from the promises matter for meditation, and set thy thoughts awork upon it—and the Spirit of God will kindle thy affections. 'While I was musing,' saith David, 'the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue,' Ps. 39:3. Isaac met his bride in the fields; and the gracious soul her beloved, when she steps aside, to walk with the promise in her solitary thoughts.

[We must plead the promises at the throne of grace.]

DIRECTION FIFTH. Plead the promises at the throne of grace. This must not be disjointed at the former. Indeed, as the ingredients of an excellent receipt do not work the cure severally, but as tempered together; so these directions, being social means, must not be severed, but jointly observed. And this direction I am now speaking to, besides a universal influence it hath upon all the other, is linked by an especial affinity to the former. In vain do we charge the gun, if we intend not to let it off. Meditation filleth the heart with heavenly matter, but prayer gives the discharge and pours it forth upon God, whereby he is overcome to give the Christian his desired relief and succour. The promise is a bill or bond, wherein God makes himself a debtor to the creature. Now, though it is some comfort to a poor man that hath no money at present to buy bread with, when he reads his bills and bonds, to see that he hath a great sum owing him, yet this will not supply his present wants and buy him bread. No, it is the putting his bond in suit must do this. By meditating on the promise thou comest to see there is support in, and deliverance out of, affliction engaged for. But none will come till thou commencest thy suit, and by the prayer of faith callest in the debt. 'Your heart shall live that seek God,' Ps. 69:32. 'They looked unto him, and were lightened,' Ps. 34:5. God expects to hear from you, before you can expect to hear from him. If thou restrainest prayer, it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation, it is like the lawyer's studying the case in order to his pleading it at the bar. When, therefore, thou hast viewed the promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then ply thee to the throne of grace, and spread it before the Lord. Thus David, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope,' Ps. 119:49.

[We must act our faith on the power and truth of God for the performance of the promises.]

DIRECTION SIXTH. When thou hast sued the promise, act thy faith on the power and truth of God for the performance of it; and that against sense and reason, which rise up to discourage thee. For, as thy

faith is feeble or strong on these, so wilt thou draw little or much sweetness from the promises. The saints' safety lies in the strength and faithfulness of God who is the promiser; but the present comfort and repose of an afflicted soul is fetched in by faith relying on God as such. Hence it is, though all believers are out of danger when in the saddest condition that can befall them, yet too many, alas! of them are under fears and dejections of spirit, because their faith acts weakly on a mighty God, timorously and suspiciously on a faithful God. 'Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?' Matt. 8:26. You see the leak at which the water came in to sink their spirits; they had 'little faith.' It is not what God is in himself, but what our apprehensions at present are of God, that pacifies and comforts a soul in great straits. If a man fear the house will fall on his head in a storm, though it be as unmovable as a rock, yet that will not ease his mind till he thinks it so. Were a man under the protection of never so faithful a friend, yet so long as his head is full of fears and jealousies to the contrary, that he will at last leave and cast him off, this man must needs have an uncomfortable life, though without cause. You see then of what importance it is to keep up the vigour and vivacity of thy faith on the power and truth of the promises. And if thou meanest to do this, banish sense and reason from being thy counsellors. How came Abraham not to stagger in his faith, though the promise was so strange? The apostle resolves us: 'He considered not his own body now dead,' Rom. 4:19. And what made Zacharias reel? He made sense his counsellor, and thought he was too old for such news to be true. This is the bane of faith, and consequently of comfort in affliction. We are too prone to carry our faith, with Thomas, at our fingers' ends; and to trust God no further than our hand of sense can reach. It is not far that sense can reach; and but little further that reason's purblind eye can see. God is oft on his way to perform a promise and bring joyful news to his afflicted servants, when sense and reason conclude their case is desperate.

These three, sense, reason, and faith, are distinct, and must not be confounded. Some things we know by sense which we do not understand the reason of, as the sympathy of the lodestone with iron—why it draws that the baser metal, and not gold; and why the mariner's needle espouses the north

point rather than any other. Some things we apprehend by reason that are not discerned by sense—as the magnitude of the sun’s body to exceed the circumference of the earth, which, the eye being judge, may be almost covered with one’s hat; and other things clear to faith, that dunce and pose both sense and reason. Paul knew by faith, in that dismal sea-storm where all of being saved was taken away—that is, sense and reason being judges—not a man should lose his life. ‘Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me,’ Acts 27:25. When the angel smote Peter on the side, and bade him ‘arise up quickly...and follow me,’ he did not allow sense and reason to reply and cavil at the impossibility of the thing. How can I walk that am in fetters? Or to what purpose when an iron gate withstands us? But he riseth, and his chains fall off—he follows, and the iron gate officiously opens itself to them.

Say not, poor Christian, ‘It is impossible to bear this affliction, or pass that temptation.’ Let faith follow the promise, and God will loose these knots that sense and reason tie. Luther bids, *crucifige illud verbum, quare?*—crucify that word, wherefore? Obey the command, and ask not a reason why God enjoins it. It is necessary to bid the Christian, in great afflictions and temptations, to crucify the word *quomodo?*—how shall I go through this trouble—hold out in that assault? Away with this ‘how shall I?’ Hath not the great God who is faithful given thee promises enough to ease thy heart of these needless fears and cares, in that he tells thee, ‘He will never leave thee or forsake thee, his grace shall be sufficient for thee?’ Nothing ‘shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ And a hundred more comfortable assurances from the lip of truth to stand betwixt thee and all harm. Why then dost thou trouble thyself about this improbability and that mountainous difficulty that sense and carnal reason heave up and interpose to eclipse thy comfort from thy approaching deliverance? ‘Shut the windows, and the house will be light,’ as the Jewish proverb saith. Judge not by sense, but by faith on an omnipotent God; and these bugbears will not scare thee. *Credere improbabilia vigoris est intellectus, sicut amare damnosa et ignominiosa vigoris est affectus.* (Parisiensis, De Fide)—it is the highest act of our under-

standing to believe those things which seem most improbable; as it is the highest act of love, for Christ’s sake to take pleasure in those things that bring pain and shame with them. For as in the latter we deny ourselves the satisfaction of our carnal desires, which goes near to flesh and blood; so, in the former, we deny our carnal reasonings, that would be disputing against God’s power and strength.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[EXHORTATION TO MINISTERS, to whom this sword is specially committed.]

To the ministers—into your hand this sword of the word is given in an especial manner. Unto you the ministry of it is committed. God hath not left it at random to all; that who will may publicly preach the gospel. That which is everybody’s work is nobody’s. He hath therefore set up a standing office with officers in his church, on whom he hath laid this burden, and from whom he expects an account. He ‘hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation,’ II Cor. 5:19—as a prince commissionates this or that man to be his ambassador—‘O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust,’ I Tim. 6:20. See here, and tremble at the charge which is deposited in your hands. You are ambassadors from the great God to treat with poor sinners concerning their eternal peace upon those articles which are contained in the gospel. You are his under-workmen, to rear up his temple in the hearts of men, and to lay every stone by the line and rule of this word. His stewards, to give his family their portions in due season, and all your provision to be taken out of this store-house. In a word, you are his shepherds, to lead and feed his flock, and that in no other than these ‘green pastures.’ Now, if the peace be not concluded, the ambassador is sure to be called to an account where the fault lies. If the house be not built, or go to decay, woe to the negligent workman. If the family starve, what reckoning will the steward make? If the sheep wander, or die of the rot through thy neglect, who shall pay for the loss but the idle shepherd? Now, in order to the discharge of this your public trust, I shall only point at two duties incumbent on you both, with a reference to this word

left in your hands—one to be performed in your study, the other in your pulpit.

First Duty. In your study acquaint yourselves with the word of God. That which may pass for diligence in a private Christian's reading and search into the Scripture, may be charged as negligence upon the minister. The study of the Scriptures is not only a part of our general calling in common with him, but of our particular also, in which we are to be exercised from one end of the week to the other. The husbandman doth not more constantly go forth with his spade and mattock, to perform his day labour in the field, than the minister is to go and dig in this mine of the Scripture. He is not to read a chapter now and then as his worldly occasions will permit; or steal a little time from his other scholarly studies to look into the Bible in transitu—in passing, and bid it farewell. But it must be his standing exercise—his plodding work. All other must stoop to this. Suppose thou shouldst know what Plato, Aristotle, with the rest of the princes of worldly learning, have written, and hadst encircled all the arts within thy circumference, but art unskilful in the word of righteousness, thou wouldst be Paul's unlearned person—as unfit to be a minister as he that hath read all the body of the law is to be a physician if ignorant of this art. I do not here intend to nourish the vain conceit of those sons of ignorance who think human learning unnecessary for a minister's furniture. Truly, without this, we should soon come to our old mumpsimus, and run into the barbarism of former times. I have read of one Beda, that dissuaded Francis I., a French king—and that when learned Budæus was present—from his princely resolution of setting up professors of languages in his university, saying, 'The Greek tongue was the fountain of all heresies;' but the man was found to understand not a word of Greek himself. Indeed, few or none will speak against learning but those that have not so much of it as to make them understand its use. I dare not bid our ministers, as some fanatics have done, burn all their books but the Bible. No; but I would exhort them to prefer it above all their other books, and to direct all their other studies to furnish them with Scripture knowledge. As the bee that flies over the whole garden, and brings all the honey she gets from every flower therein into her hive; so should the minister run over all his other books, and reduce

their notions for his help in this. As the Israelites offered up the jewels and ear-rings borrowed of the Egyptians to the service of the tabernacle, *benedicta philosophorum sunt peculia Christianorum*—the good saying of philosophers are the property of Christians. And certainly there are such jewels to be borrowed even from them, as may become the ear of the Christian, so they be refined and gossellized. Thus the captive virgin, Deut. 21, when her head was shaved, her nails pared, and her garment changed, might be taken into an Israelite's bosom. Religion and learning revived together. The light which Erasmus brought into the schools helped Luther's labours in the church.

But, to return to the exhortation in hand. O, let us that are ministers of the gospel give up ourselves to the study of the word. We are, as one well calls us, but 'younger brethren' to the apostle. Ministerial gifts were left them by Christ, as the inheritance by the father to his eldest son and heir. But we must work for our living. They had their knowledge of the word, as Jacob his venison, brought to their hand without hunting; but if we will know the mind of God, we must trace it out by our diligence; but ever taking prayer in our company. This I am sure was Paul's charge to Timothy, 'Give attendance to reading,' 1 Tim. 4:13. Follow thy book close, O Timothy, and 'Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them,' ver. 15. Ἐν τούτοις ἰσθι, in his totus sis—be wholly taken up therewith. And mark why: 'That thy profiting may appear to all;' that is, that thou mayest appear to be a growing preacher to those that hear thee. O how shall the people grow if the minister doth not? And how shall he grow, if he doth not daily drink in more than he pours out? That minister must needs spend upon the stock that hath no comings in from a constant trade in his study. If the nurse doth not feed, and that more than another, she may soon bring herself and child into a consumption. As we would not therefore see the souls that hang on our breasts languish for want of milk, or ourselves faint in our work, let us endeavour our recruits be suitable to our expense. Study and pray: pray and study again. Think not your work is done for all the week when the Sabbath is past. Take a little breath, and return to thy labour; as the seedsman sits down at the land's end to rest himself

a while, and then rises up to go before the plough again. We have reason to be more choice of our time than others, because it is less our own. There is none in thy parish but have a share in it. We are thieves to our people's souls when we do not husband it to their best advantage. 'All...are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas;' yours for the service of your faith. Is the parent bound to husband his estate and time for the provision of his children? And should not the spiritual father have as natural affection to his people? How great a labour this must needs be both to mind and body, did they understand, they would both more pity, and encourage, his minister in his work. God move your hearts to it whom he hath blessed with faithful labourers. Help them in their study for you, by easing them of their worldly cares for themselves. Some people may thank themselves that their provision is so mean, by being accessory to the minister's distractions in his work and diversion from his calling. For, by their oppression or purloining his livelihood, they force him in a manner to turn worldling; and the time which he should spend in providing bread for their souls is laid out to get bread for his family's bodies.

Second Duty. In the pulpit use no other sword but this, and handle it faithfully. Remember whose errand thou bringest, and deliver it, 1. Purely. 2. Freely.

1. Use the sword of the word purely. And that in a threefold respect: (1.) Pure from error. (2.) Pure from passion. (3.) Pure from levity and vanity.

(1.) Pure from error. Think it not enough your text is Scripture, but let your whole sermon be also such—I mean agreeable to it. Thou art an ambassador, and as such bound up in thy instructions. Take heed of venting thy own dreams and fancies in God's name. 'He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully,' Jer. 23:28—that is, purely, without embasing or mingling it with his own dreams. So he expounds himself, 'What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.' All is chaff besides the pure word of God; and what hath it to do to be blended with it? Such a one may fear lest God from heaven should give him the lie while he is in the pulpit. O stamp not God's image on thine own coin. We live in high-flown times. Many people are not content with truths that lie plain in the Scripture. And some, to please

their wanton palates, have sublimated their notions so high, till they have flown out of the sight of the Scripture, and unawares run themselves with others into dangerous errors. Be well assured it is a truth, before thou acquaintest thy people with it. If thou wilt play the mountebank, choose not the pulpit for thy stage. Make not experiments upon the souls of thy people, by delivering what is doubtful and hath not abode the trial of the furnace. Better feed thy people with sound doctrine, though plain meal; than that thou shouldst, with an outlandish dish, light on a wild gourd that brings death into their pot.

(2.) Pure from passion. The pulpit is an unseemly place to vent our discontent and passions in. Beware of this strange fire. The man of God must be gentle and meek, and his words with meekness of wisdom. The oil makes the nail drive without splitting the board. The word never enters the heart more kindly, than when it falls most gently. 'Ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness,' Ps. 45:4. Be as rough to thy people's sins as thou canst, so thou beest gentle to their souls. Dost thou take the rod of reproof into thine hand? Let them see that love, not wrath, give the blow. Nurses are careful that they do not heat their milk, knowing that it will breed ill blood in the child that sucks it. The word preached comes indeed best from a warm heart, but if there goes a feverish heat withal, it breeds ill blood in the hearers' thoughts, and prejudice to the person makes him puke up the milk. God knows I speak not against the minister's zeal, so it be from above, 'pure' and 'peaceable.' Save all thy heat for God, spend it not in thine own cause, and it was enough God heard it. But when a sin was committed immediately against God, this meek man can be all of a flame: 'Who is on God's side? who?' He may take most liberty in reprovng his people's sins against God, that takes least liberty in his own cause, and who hath a grave ready to bury injuries done to himself in.

(3.) Pure from levity and vanity. The word of God is too sacred a thing, and preaching too solemn a work, to be toyed and played with, as is the usage of some, who make a sermon nothing but a matter of wit, and to flaunt it forth in a garish discourse. What is this to the business of preaching? Their sermon is too like a child's baby, from which if you take the dressing, the rest is worth nothing. Unpin this story,

take off that gaudy phrase, and nothing is left in the discourse. If we mean to do good, we must come not only in word, but with power. Satan budes not for a thousand such squibs and witcracks. Draw thou therefore this sword out of thine own fine scabbard, and strike with its naked edge. This you will find the only way to pierce your people's consciences, and fetch blood of their sins. I do not here speak against the use of those parts which God hath given unto a ny; nor against the fitting and laying our discourse so as it may most insinuate into our people's affections, and steal into their hearts, by the gratefulness it finds with their ear. This is our duty. 'Because the preacher was wise,...he sought to find out acceptable words,' Ecc. 12:9. Not rude, loose, and indigested stuff, in a slovenly manner brought forth, lest the sluttery of the cook should turn the stomachs of the guests. The apothecary mixeth his potion so as his patient may take it down with less regret, if not with some delight; but still he hath a care that he weakens not its purging operation by making it over-pleasant to the palate. As they were 'acceptable words,' so upright, 'words of truth,' ver. 10.

2. Use the sword of the word, as purely, so freely. O take heed of enslaving the word of God to thy own lust or another's will, though the greatest in thy parish. In a steward it is required that he be 'faithful,' I Cor. 4:2. Now the preacher's faithfulness stands in relation to him that intrusts him. It is very unlikely that a steward, in giving out provision, should please all the servants in the house. Such officers have least thanks when they do their work best! He that thinks to please men, goes about an endless and needless work. Man's words will not break thy bones. A wise physician seeks to cure, not please, his patient. He that chides when he is sick for the bitterness of the potion, will con thee thanks for it when he is recovered. The apostle passeth by the thoughts of men as a thing inconsiderable, not worthy the interrupting him in his work. 'With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you,' ver. 3 of the fore-quoted place. As if he had said, 'It shall be known at the great audit, when my Master comes to reckon with me, whether I have been faithful; and it is time enough to have my name righted when he will vindicate his own.' No doubt it was a great temptation to Micaiah, when Ahab's messenger, by colleague-

ing with him, endeavoured to bring him in his message over unto the king's sense; but mark his noble answer—'As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith, that will I speak.'

Some think that Micaiah was that disguised prophet that denounced judgment against Ahab for Benhadad's dismissal, and that now he was fetched out of prison; for the king bids, 'carry him back unto Ammon the governor,' I Kings 22:26. If so, then Micaiah had the advantage by one flattering sermon to have gotten his liberty and the king's favour to boot. Yet to the dungeon he will go again, rather than prostitute the word to Ahab's lust. Blessed Paul was of the same mind: 'Wherein,' speaking of the gospel, 'I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound,' II Tim. 2:9. As if he had said, 'They shall never make me enslave that neither in prison nor at the block.' No doubt Paul might have been free, could he have been content the word should have been bound. But he was too faithful to procure his liberty with imprisonment of the truth by a sinful silence. If ever it was a time of temptations to ministers—and there were need to stir them up in it to keep the word of God's patience—it is in these last dreggy days of the world, of which it is prophesied, 'men shall not endure sound doctrine.' Now therefore, to bear witness to the truth, and to make full proof of their ministry in such a perverse and froward generation, needs more greatness of spirit than flesh and blood can help them to. It is no trial for a minister to speak truth freely among its friends, but among those that despise it, and are enraged with the messenger for delivering his errand. This made the confession of our Lord so glorious, I Tim. 6:13. It was before Pontius Pilate, a bloody enemy against him and the truth he witnessed to. Therefore our people may well bear with us when we speak freely in God's name; yea, though we come upon their ground, and our message rifles their consciences. We have it in our commission: 'I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way,' Jer. 6:27. If a warrant lies but in a constable's hand to search your house, you cannot be angry with him for doing his office, because you dare not stand betwixt him and the displeasure of his prince, should he neglect it.