

DIRECTION FIFTH.

THE SEVERAL PIECES OF THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD

First Piece—The Christian's Spiritual Girdle.

'Having your loins girt about with truth' (Eph. 6:14).

The apostle having ordered the Ephesians, and in them every Christian, the posture which they are to observe in fight with their enemy; he comes now to instance in the several pieces of that armour, which before he had commended to them only in the general. The first of which is THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH—'having your loins girt about with truth.' A twofold inquiry is here requisite. FIRST, What he means by truth. SECOND, What by loins, and their being girt with truth.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE WORDS.

FIRST INQUIRY. What is truth here? Some by truth understand Christ, who indeed elsewhere is called 'the truth.' Yet in this place I conceive it is not properly so understood, because the apostle instanceth in here several pieces and parts of armour, one distinct from another, and Christ cannot so well be said to be a single piece to defend this or that part, as the whole in whom we are complete, compared therefore, Rom. 13:14, to the whole suit of armour, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus;' that is, be clothed and harnessed with Christ as a soldier with his armour cap-à-pie. Some by truth mean truth of doctrine; others will have it truth of heart, sincerity. Those I think right that comprise both; and so I shall handle it. Both indeed are required to make the girdle complete. One will not do without the other. It is possible to find good meanings and a kind of sincerity without, yea against the truth. Many follow an error as they Absalom in the simplicity of their hearts. Such do ill while they mean well. Good intentions do not more make a good action, than a fair mark makes a good shot by an unskilful archer. God did not like Saul's zeal when he persecuted the Christian church, though he thought, no question, he did him good service therein. Neither is it enough to have the truth on our side, if we have not truth in our hearts. Jehu was a great stickler against idolatry, but kicked down all again by his hypocrisy. Both then are necessary; sincerity to propound a right end, and knowledge of the word of truth to direct us in the right way to that end.

SECOND INQUIRY. What is meant here by loins that are to be girt with this girdle of truth? The loins must be like the girdle. This is spiritual, and therefore they must be so. Peter will help to interpret Paul; 'Gird up the loins of your mind,' 1 Peter 1:13. They are our spirits and minds which must wear this girdle, and very fitly may our spirits and minds be compared to the loins. The loins are the chief seat of bodily strength. Of behemoth it is said, 'His strength is in his loins,' Job 40:16. The loins are to the body as carina navi—the keel to the ship. The whole ship is knit to that, and sustained by it. And the body is knit to the loins; if the loins fail, the whole body sinks, hence to 'smite through the loins' is a phrase to express destruction and ruin, Deut. 33:11; weak loins and a weak man. If we be but a little weary, nature directs us to lay our hands on our loins to sustain them, as our chief strength. Thus as the actings of our minds and spirits are in their faculties and powers, so we are weak or strong Christians. If the understanding be clear in its apprehensions of truth, and the will sincere, vigorous, and fixed in its purposes for that which is holy and good, then he is a strong

Christian; but if the understanding be dark or uncertain in its notions, as a distempered eye that cannot well discern its object—not able to bring its thoughts to an issue, which to close with, and the will be wavering and unsteady, like a needle that trembles between two lodestones—here the man is weak, and all he doth will be so. Feeble spirits cause an intermitting false pulse; so want of strength in the mind to know truth and want of resolution in the will to pursue that which he knows to be holy and good, causeth a man to falter in his course.

The use therefore of these two, **FIRST**. Truth of doctrine for the mind, and **SECOND**. Truth of heart or sincerity for the will, is to unite and establish both these facilities. This they do when they are clasped and girt about the soul, as the girdle about the loins of the body. Though the loins be the strength of the body, yet they need an auxiliary to their strength from the girdle to keep those parts close, and unite their force; without which, men, when they would strain themselves, and put forth their strength in any work, find a trembling and looseness in their loins. Hence the ‘shaking of the loins,’ is a phrase to express weakness, Ps. 69:23. Thus our minds and spirits need this girdle to strengthen them in every work we do, or else we shall act nothing vigorously.

DIRECTION V.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[TRUTH OF DOCTRINE AS A GIRDLE FOR THE MIND.]

We shall begin with truth of doctrine, or truth of the word, called ‘the word of truth,’ Eph. 1:13, because it is the word of God, who is God of truth. It behoves every Christian to be well girt with this truth. ‘Resist the devil,’ saith Peter, ‘steadfast in the faith,’ 1 Peter 5:9; that is, in the truth—faith being there put for the object of our faith, which is the truth of God, declared in the doctrine of the gospel. This is ‘the faith which was once delivered to the saints,’ Jude 3; that is, the truth delivered to them to be believed and held fast. And of what importance it is to be thus steadfast in the faith, the apostle Peter, in the following verse of the fore-mentioned place, shows, by his vehement and earnest praying for them, that God would ‘stablish, strengthen, and settle them.’ The heaping of words to the same purpose, implies the great danger they were in of being unsettled by Satan and his instruments, and the necessity of their standing firm and unshaken in the faith. Nothing is more frequently inculcated than this in the Epistles; and the more, because in those blustering times it was impossible to have kept the faith from being blown from them, without this girdle to hold it fast. Now, as there is a double design Satan hath to rob Christians of truth, so there is a **TWOFOLD GIRDING ABOUT** with this truth necessary. **FIRST**, Satan comes as a serpent in the persons of false teachers, and by them labours to put a cheat on us, and cozen¹ us with error for truth. To defend us against this design, it is necessary we be girt with truth in our understanding—that we have an established judgment in the truths of Christ. **SECOND**, Satan comes sometimes as a lion in the persons of bloody persecutors, and labours to scare Christians from the truth with fire and faggot. Now to defend us against this, we need to have truth girt about us, so that with a holy resolution we may maintain our profession in the face of death and danger. to begin with the first.

1. Cozen — cheat, deceive.

FIRST GIRDING ABOUT.

[It is the Christian's duty to labour for an ESTABLISHED JUDGMENT in the truth.]

Since Satan comes as a serpent in the persons of false teachers, and by them labours to put a cheat on us and cozen us with error for truth; to defend us against this design, it is necessary that we be girt with truth in our understanding—that we have an established judgment in the truths of Christ. It should be the care of every Christian to get an established judgment in the truth. The Bereans are highly commended for the inquiry they made into the Scripture, to satisfy their judgments concerning the doctrine Paul preached. They did not believe hand over head, but their faith was the result of a judgment, upon diligent search, convinced by the scripture evidence, Acts 17:11. It is said there that 'they searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so.' They carried the preacher's doctrine to the written word, and compared it with that; and mark, 'therefore many of them believed,' ver. 12. As they did not believe before, so they durst not but believe now. I remember Tertullian, speaking of some heretics as to their manner of preaching, saith *persuadendo docent, non docendo persuadent*—they teach by persuading, and do not by teaching persuade, that is, they woo and entice the affections of their hearers, without convincing their judgment about what they preach. Indeed, it were a hard work for the adulterer to convince her he would prostitute, that the fact is lawful; no, he goes another way to work. First by some amorous insinuations he inveigles her affections, and they, once bewitched, the other is not much questioned—it being easy for the affections to make the judgment of their party. Well, though error, like a thief, comes thus in at the window; yet truth, like the true owner of the house, delights to enter at the right door of the understanding, from thence into the conscience, and so passeth into the will and affections. Indeed, he that hits upon truth, and takes up the profession of it, before he is brought into the acquaintance of its excellency and heavenly beauty by his understanding, cannot entertain it becoming to its heavenly birth and descent. It is as a prince that travels in a disguise, not known, therefore not honoured. Truth is loved and prized

only of those that know it. And not to desire to know it, is to despise it, as much as knowing it, to reject it. It were not hard, sure, to cheat that man of truth, who knows not what he hath. Truth and error are all one to the ignorant man, so it hath but the name of truth. Leah and Rachel were both alike to Jacob in the dark. Indeed it is said, 'In the morning behold it was Leah,' Gen. 29:25. So in the morning, when it is day in the understanding, then the deceived person will see he hath had a false bride in his bosom; will cry out, Behold, it is an error which I took for a truth. You have, may be, heard of the covetous man, that hugged himself in the many bags of gold he had, but never opened them or used them. When the thief took away his gold, and left him his bags full of pebbles in the room, he was as happy as when he had his gold, for he looked not on the one or other. And verily an ignorant person is in a manner no better with truth than error on his side. Both are alike to him, day and night all one to a blind man. But to proceed, and give some more particular account.

[WHY the Christian should labour for AN ESTABLISHED JUDGMENT in the truth.]

I shall content myself with three reasons. The first taken from the damning nature of false doctrine; the second from the subtlety of seducers to draw into false doctrine; and the third from the universal influence that an established judgment hath on the whole man, and whole course of a Christian.

Reason First. From the damning nature of false doctrines. They hunt for the precious life of souls, as well as any other sin. An imposthume in the head proves oft as deadly as one in the stomach. A corrupt judgment in foundation-truths kills as sure as a rotten heart. Indeed, it proceeds thence. Jezebel's children are threatened to be to be 'killed with death,' Rev. 2:23. And who are her children, but her disciples, that drink of her cup of fornication and embrace her corrupt doctrines? But sure this is not believed by some, who, though very strict in their lives, and seem as tender in matter of morality as Lot was of his guests, yet are very loose in their principles and judgments, exposing them, as he his daughters, to be defiled with any corrupt doctrine that comes to their door. They would make us think, that here men played but at

small game, and their souls were not at stake, as in other sins. As if there were not such a question to be asked at the great day—what opinions we held? and whether we were sound in the faith?—in a word, as if false doctrines were but an innocent thing, not like the wild gourd which brought death into the prophets' pot, II Kings 4:39, 40—turning wholesome food, with which it was mingled, into baneful poison—but rather like herb-john in the pot, that does neither much good nor hurt. Yea, there be some that speak out, and tell us a man may be saved in any religion, so he doth but follow his light. And are not these charitable men? Because they would have the company as few as may be that are damned, [they] make as many roads to heaven as the Scripture tells us are ways to hell? This is contrary to the teaching of Christ, who tells us of no other way but by him to life. 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,' John 14:6. It is point blank against St. John, who tells us of but one doctrine, and that the doctrine of Christ, and that he that holds not this to be marked out for a lost man. 'Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God,' II John 9, 10. And how far, I pray, is that man off hell that hath not God? Him that hath not God before he dies, the devil shall have when he dies. Well, sirs, the time is coming, yea it hastens—what favour and kindness soever corrupt doctrines find here at man's hand—wherein the obstinate heretic shall receive the same law at Christ's hands with the impenitent drunkard. You may see them both under the same condemnation, as they stand pinioned together for hell, Gal. 5:20, 21, 'I tell you now,' saith the apostle, 'as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' And see, I pray, if you cannot find the heretic's name amongst them? Ignorance in fundamentals is damning surely then error in fundamentals much more. If a pound weighs down the scale, there is no doubt then but a stone-weight will do it. If the less sin presseth down to hell, how can we rationally think that the greater should escape it? Error stands at a farther distance from, yea at a fuller contrariety to, truth than ignorance. Error is ignorance with a die on it. He that eats little or nothing must needs die, much more he that eats rank poison. The apostle doth not only tell us of 'pernicious ways,' and 'damnable heresies,' but he tells us they 'bring

swift destruction' upon those that hold them, II Peter 2:1, 2. I pray observe what an accent he lays on the destruction that comes by these corrupt doctrines, he calls it 'swift destruction.' All rivers find their way at last to the sea from whence they sprang, but some return with a swifter stream, and get sooner to it, than others. Would any make it a shorter voyage to hell than ordinary, let him throw himself but into this stream of corrupt doctrine, and he is not like to be long in going.

Reason Second. Because impostors are so subtle, it therefore behoves the Christian to establish and strengthen his judgment in the truths of Christ. They are a generation of men skilful to destroy the faith of others. There is an erudita nequitia in the world, as one calls it, a learned kind of wickedness, that some have to corrupt the minds of men. The Spirit of God sets them out to life, sometimes comparing them to merchants, who can set a gloss upon their false ware with fine words; they are said, II Peter 2:3, 'with feigned words' to 'make merchandise' of souls—sometimes to hucksters, that blend and dash their wine with water, II Cor. 2:17—sometimes to cheating gamesters, that have a sleight of hand to cog the die, Eph. 4:14—yea, to witches themselves: 'Who hath bewitched you?' saith the apostle, Gal. 3:1. Strange things have been done in our days on those that God has suffered them to practice their sorcery upon; and what counter-charm better than an established judgment? It is observable that in II Tim. 3:8, where the apostle compares the seducers of that present age to those sorcerers Jannes and Jambres, that resisted Moses, and shows what kind of persons they were that fell into their snare—such as though 'ever learning,' yet never came 'to the knowledge of the truth,' ver. 7, he then tums to Timothy [with the words], 'But thou hast fully known my doctrine,' ver. 10. As if he had said, I am out of fear for thee;—thou art better grounded in the doctrine of the gospel, than to be thus cheated of it. Indeed, those whom seducers lie in wait for, are chiefly weak unsettled ones; for as Solomon saith, 'In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird,' Prov. 1:17. The devil chose rather to assault Eve than Adam, as the more likely of the two to be caught; and ever since he takes the same course. He labours to creep over where the hedge is lowest, and the resistance likely to be weakest.

Three characters you may observe among those who are most commonly seduced. 1. They are called ‘simple’ ones²—‘By good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple,’ Rom. 16:18, such who mean well, but want wisdom to discern those who mean ill—in cautious ones, that dare pledge everybody, and drink of any one’s cup, and never suspect poisoning. 2. They are called ‘children’—‘Be no more children, tossed to and fro, with every wind of doctrine,’ Eph. 4:14. Now children are very credulous, prone to believe every one that gives them a parcel of fair words. They think anything is good, if it be sweet. It is not hard to make them eat poison for sugar. They are not swayed by principles of their own, but by those of others. The child reads, construes, and parses his lesson as his master saith, and thinks it therefore right. Thus as poor creatures that have little knowledge of the word themselves, they are easily persuaded this or that way, even as those of whom they have a good opinion please to lead them. Let the doctrine be but sweet, and it goes down glib. They, like Isaac, bless their opinions by feeling, not by sight. Hence many poor creatures applaud themselves so much of the joy they have found since they were of this judgment and that way. Not being able to try the comfort and sweetness they feel by the truth of their way from the word, they are fain to believe the truth of it by their feeling, and so, poor creatures, they bless error for truth. 3. They are such as are ‘unstable’—‘beguiling unstable souls,’ II Peter 2:14, such as are not well grounded and principled. The truth they profess hath no anchor-hold in their understanding, and so they are at the mercy of the wind, soon set adrift, and carried down the stream of those opinions which are the favourites of the present time, and are most cried up—even as the dead fish with the current of the tide.

Reason Third. We are to endeavour after an established judgment in the truth, because of the universal influence it hath upon the whole man.

1. Upon the memory, which is helped much by the understanding. The more weight is laid on the seal, the deeper impression is made on the wax. The memory is that faculty which carries the images of

things. It holds fast what we receive, and is that treasury where we lay up what we desire afterward to use and converse with. Now, the more clear and certain our knowledge of anything is, the deeper it sinks, and the surer it is held by the memory.

2. Upon the affections. Truth is as light, the more steady and fixed the glass of the understanding is, through which its beams are darted upon the affections, the sooner they take fire—‘Did not our hearts,’ saith the disciples, ‘burn within us, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’ Luke 24:32. They had heard Christ, no doubt, preach much of what he said then, before his passion; but never were they so satisfied and confirmed as now, when Scriptures and understanding were opened together, and this made their hearts ‘burn.’ The sun in the firmament sends his influence where he doth not shed his beams, I mean into the bowels of the earth, but the Sun of righteousness imparts his influence only where his light comes. He spreads the beams of truth into the understanding, to enlighten that; and while the creature sits under these wings, a kindly heart-quickenning heat is begotten in its bosom. Hence we find that even when the Spirit is promised as a comforter, he comes as a convincer, John 16:13—he comforts by teaching. And certainly, the reason why many poor trembling souls have so little heat of heavenly joy in their hearts, is because they have so little light to understand the nature and tenure of the gospel-covenant. The farther a soul stands from the light of truth, the farther he must needs be from the heat of comfort.

3. An established judgment hath a powerful influence upon the life and conversation. The eye directs the foot. He walks very unsafely that sees not his way, and he uncomfortably that is not resolved whether right or wrong. That which moves must rest on something that doth not move. A man could not walk if the earth turned under his feet. Now the principles we have in our understanding are, as it were, the ground we go upon in all our actions; if they stagger and reel, much more will our life and practice. It is as impossible for a shaking hand to write a straight line, as for an unfixed judgment to have an even conversation. The apostle joins steadfastness and unmovableness with ‘abounding in the work of the Lord,’ I Cor. 15:58. And if I mistake not, he means chiefly in that place, a steadfastness of judgment in

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the truth of the resurrection, which some had been shaking. It is not the many notions we have, but the establishment we have in the truth, that makes us strong Christians; as he is a strong man whose joints are well set together and knit—not he who is spun out at length, but not thickened suitable to his height. One saith well, ‘Men are what they see and judge; though some do not fill up their light, yet none go beyond it.’ A truth under dispute in the understanding is, as I may so say, stopped in the head; it cannot commence in the heart, or become practicable in the life. But when it passeth clearly there, and upon its commendation is embraced in the will and affections, then it is held fast, and hath powerful effects in the conversation. The gospel, it is said, came to the Thessalonians ‘in much assurance,’ i.e. evidence of its truth, 1 Thes. 1:5. And you see how prevalent and operative it was: ‘Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost,’ ver. 6. They were assured that the doctrine was of God, and this carried them merrily through the saddest afflictions which attended the same.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. They were emboldened to reprove those that, instead of endeavouring to establish their judgments in the truth, make it their great study how to strengthen themselves in their errors. I am persuaded some men take more pains to furnish themselves with arguments to defend some one error they have taken up, than they do for the most saving truths in the Bible; yea, they could sooner die at a stake to defend one error they hold, than for all the truths they profess. Austin saith of himself when he was a Manichean, *Non tu eras, sed error meus erat Deus meus*—‘thou, O Lord, wast not, but my error was, my God.’ O it is hard to reduce a person deeply engaged in the defence of an error! How oft had the Pharisees their mouths stopped by our Saviour? yet few or none reclaimed. Their spirits were too proud to recant. What! they lay down the bucklers, come down from Moses’ chair, and confess [that] what they have taught the people for an oracle is now false! they will rather go on, and brave it out as well as they can, than come back with shame, though the shame was not to

be ashamed of their error, but ashamed to confess it. The cynic answered smartly, who, coming out of a brothel-house, was asked, whether he was not ashamed to be seen coming out of such a naughty house: No, he said, the shame was to go in, but honesty to come out. O sirs, it is bad enough to fall into an error, but worse to persist. The first shows thee a weak man—*humanum est errare*, to err is human; but the other makes thee too like the devil, who is to this day of the same mind he was at his first fall.

Use Second. It reproveth those who labour to unsettle the judgments of others—to ungird this belt about the Christian loins. They come with the devil’s question in their mouths, ‘Yea, hath God said?’ are you sure this is a truth? do not your ministers deceive you? labouring slyly to breed suspicions and jealousies in the hearts of Christians towards the truths they have received. Such were they that troubled the Galatians, whom Paul wished ‘cut off’ for their pains, Gal. 5:12. They laboured to puzzle them, by starting scruples in their minds concerning the doctrine of the gospel. This is a cunning way at last to draw them from the faith, and therefore they are called ‘subverters of the faith of others,’ II Tim 2:14; Titus 1:11. The house must needs be in danger when the ground-sels³ are loosened. Can you think he means honestly that undermines the foundation of your house? This they do that would call in question the grand truths of the gospel. But this is a small fault in our loose age, or else so many seducers—whom I may call spiritual rogues and vagrants—would not be suffered to wander like gipsies up and down, bewitching poor simple souls to their perdition. O, it is sad that he who steals the worth of two or three shillings should hold up his hand at the bar for his life, yea, sometimes hang for it; and that those who rob poor souls of the treasure of saving truths, and subvert the faith of whole families, should be let to lift up their heads with impudence, glorying in their impunity. It is sad that blasphemy against God should not bear an action, where blasphemy against the king is indicted for treason. It is well that God loves his truth better than

3. Groundsel or groundsill, the timber of a building which lies next to the ground, commonly called a sill.—Imperial Dictionary.

men, or else these would escape in both worlds. But God hath declared himself against them. There is a day when they who rob souls of truth shall be found, and condemned as greater felons than they who rob houses of gold and silver. See how God lays their indictment, 'Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour,' Jer. 23:30. He means the false prophets that enticed the people from those truths which the faithful servants of God had delivered to them. There will be none on the bench to plead the blasphemer's and seducer's cause when God shall sit as judge.

Use Third. This might well chastise the strange fickleness and unsettledness of judgment which many labour with in this unconstant age. Truths in many professors' minds are not as stars fixed in the heaven, but like meteors that dance in the air. They are not as characters engraven in marble, but writ in the dust, which every wind and idle breath of seducers deface. Many entertain opinions as some entertain suitors—not that they mean to marry them, but cast them off as soon as new ones come. Never was there a more giddy age than ours. What is said of fashion-mongers—that some men, should they see their pictures in that habit which they wore a few years past, would hardly know themselves in their present garb—is most true in regard of their opinions. Should many that have been great professors take a few of their religious principles a dozen years ago, and compare them with their present, they would be found not the same men. They have so chopped and changed that they seem to have altered their whole creed. And it is no wonder that so many are for a new baptism when they have forsaken their old faith. Not that the old which they renounce was false, or [that] the new which they espouse is true, but because they were either ignorant of the truth they first professed, or were insincere in their profession of it. And it is no wonder that the one should upon easy terms part with that which he first took up upon as weak grounds as now he leaves it; or that the other, who did not love or improve the truth he professed, should be given up of God to change it for an error. If the heathen—who did not glorify God with the light of nature they had—were righteously given up to a reprobate injudicious mind to do that which was inconvenient and morally absurd, then they who dis-

honoured God with the revealed light of Scripture truth, much more deserve that they should be given up to that which is spiritually wicked, even to believe errors and lies for truth. A heavy curse, did we rightly judge of it, to wander and wilder⁴ in a maze of error, and yet think they are walking in the way of truth.

Question. But some may say, How is it possible that ordinary professors should attain to this established judgment in the truth, when we see many of great parts and eminency much unsettled in their judgments?

Answer First. We must distinguish between persons. Of persons, there are many eminent for parts, whose parts want piety to establish them, and no wonder to see wanton wits unfixed in the truths of God. None sooner topple over into error than such as have not an honest heart to a nimble head. The richest soil without culture is most tainted with such weeds. They have been men of unsanctified parts that have been the leaders in the way of error, though the more simple and weak that are led by them. They are knowing men, which first disgorge and vomit error from their corrupt hearts, and ignorant ones that lick it up. And therefore despair not of an established judgment, so long as thou desirest to have an honest upright heart, and conscientiously use the means. The promise is on thy side: 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,' and 'a good understanding have they that do his commandments,' Ps. 111:10.

Answer Second. We must distinguish between truths. Some are fundamental, others are superstructure. Now, though many eminent for piety as well as parts, are in the dark concerning some of the superstructure and more circumstantial—because mysteriously laid down in the word—yet there is a sweet harmony among the godly in fundamentals; and in those, poor souls, thou mayest come by a faithful use of means to be established. As for our bodies, God hath so provided, that things necessary to preserve their life are more common, and to be had at a cheaper rate, than things for delicacy and state. So also for our souls. If bread were as hard to come by as sweetmeats, or if water were as scarce as wine, the greatest

4. Wilder, to lose, or cause to lose the way or track.

part of men must needs famish. So if truths necessary to salvation were as hard to be understood and cleared from the Scriptures as some others, many poor weak-parted Christians would certainly perish without a miracle to help them. But the saving truths of the gospel lie plain, and run clear to all, but those who roil⁵ the stream with their own corrupt minds.

[DIRECTIONS for establishing the judgment
in the truth.]

But what counsel can you give me towards the establishing of my judgment in the truth of Christ?

First Direction. Let thy aim be sincere in embracing truths. A false naughty heart and unsound judgment, like ice and water, are produced mutually by one another. The reason of the fickleness of some men's judgments proceeds from the guile of their hearts. A stable mind and a double heart seldom meet. That place speaks full to this, 1 Tim. 1:5, 'The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.' Now mark what follows, ver. 6—'from which some have swerved'—or as it is in the original, not aiming at—'having turned aside unto vain jangling.' They never aimed at the power of holiness in receiving truth, that by it they might advance in their love, faith, and other graces. And taking a wrong end and aim, no wonder they turn out of the right way. A naughty heart can easily bribe the judgment to vote on its side. This shall be truth now, and no truth a month hence if it please. That is truth with many which serves their interest. They tie their judgments to their purse-strings, or preferments, &c., and such men are ready—with that weather-cock in Queen Mary's days—to sing a new song upon any change in their carnal concerns. When love receives a truth it is held fast, but if lust after any worldly interest be the cause, then it may be packed away again when the turn is served. Amnon was soon as sick of Tamar as ever he was for her. And have we not in our days seen some truths and ordinances kicked away with as much scorn and contempt as he

did her, and by those that have been sufficiently fond of them a few years past, but who, it is to be feared, were never truly in love with them?

Second Direction. Attend on the ministry of the word. One great end of its appointment is to establish us in the truth: 'He gave some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints,' Eph. 4:11, 12; and mark, 'that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro,' &c., ver. 14. He that runs from his guide will soon be out of his way. It is no small testimony that God hath given to his faithful ministers in this present age, viz. that few leave them but the leprosy of error appears soon on their forehead. And in thy waiting on the ministry of the word, be sure thou attendest to the doctrinal part of the sermon, as well as to the application. The former is necessary to make thee a solid Christian, as the other to make thee a warm Christian. Indeed, hot affections without solid knowledge, are but like fire in the pan, when the piece is not charged. The Levites, we find, 'gave the sense of the law, and caused the people to understand the reading,' Neh. 8:7, 8. Planting goes before watering, and so should teaching before exhorting. And the same method people should learn in, that we are to preach in.

Third Direction. Enslave not thy judgment to any person or party. There is a spiritual suretiship which hath undone many in their judgments and principles. Be not bound to, or for the judgment of any. Weigh truth, and tell gold thou mayest, after thy father; but thou must live by thy own faith, not another's. Labour to see truth with thine own eyes. That building stands weak which is held up by a shore, or some neighbour house it leans on, rather than on a foundation of its own. When these go, that will fall to the ground also. Let not authority from man, but evidence from the word, conclude thy judgment; that is but a shore, this is a foundation. Quote the Scripture rather than men for thy judgment. Not, so saith a learned man; but thus saith the holy Scripture. Yet, take heed of bending this direction too far the other way; which is done when we condemn the judgment of such whose piety and learning might command reverence. There is sure a mean to be found betwixt defying men, and deifying them. It is the admiring of persons that forms the traitor to truth, and makes many cry 'Hosanna' to error, and

5. To roil, render turbid by stirring up the dregs or sediment. — Ed.

‘Crucify’ to truth. Eusebius, out of Josephus, tells us of Herod’s—that Herod whom we read of, Acts 12:23, as being eaten up of worms—coming upon the theatre gorgeously clad, and that while he was making an eloquent oration to the people, his silver robe, which he then wore, did, by the reflex of the sunbeams shining on it, so glisten, as dazzled the eyes of the spectators; and this, saith he, occasioned some flatterers to cry out, ‘The voice of God, and not of man.’ And truly the glistening varnish which some men’s parts and rhetoric put upon their discourses, does oft so blind the judgments of their admirers, that they are too prone to think all divine they speak, especially if they be such as God hath formerly used as instruments for any good to their souls. O it is hard then, as he said, *amare hominem humaniter*—to love and esteem man as a man, to reverence him such so, as not to be in danger of loving their errors also. Augustine had been a means to convert Alypius from one error, and he confesseth this was an occasion why he was so easily by him led into another error—no less than Manicheism. Alypius thought he could not pervert him here that had converted him. Call therefore none father on earth; despise none, adore none.

Fourth Direction. Beware of curiosity. He is half gone into error that vainly covets novelties, and listens after every new-fangled opinion. We read of ‘itching ears,’ II Tim. 4:3. This itch commonly ends in a scab of error. Tamar lost her chastity by gadding. *Castitas mentis est fides incorrupta*—the chastity of the mind is its soundness in the faith. And this they are in danger to lose who will go into all companies, and lend an ear to all doctrines that are preached. First be a hearer, and then a disciple of them. Many indulge themselves so far in this curiosity of conversing with every sect and opinion, that at last they turn skeptics, and can settle upon nothing as truth. Augustine confesseth of himself, that he had gone through so many errors and delusions of the Manicheans—that at last he was afraid of truth itself, which heard Ambrose preach. *Ut malum medicum expertus, etiam bono timeat se committere*—as, saith he, one that hath had experience of an unskilful physician, is at last afraid to put himself in the hands of him that is skilful. O take heed that you, who will not hear anything, come not in the end that you will believe nothing.

Fifth Direction. Humbly beg an established judgment of God. No travellers lose their way sooner than they who think they know it so well that they need not ask it. And no professors are in danger of being drawn from the truth, as much as they who lean to their own understandings, and acknowledge not God in their way, by consulting with him daily. Mark pride—however it may seem to soar aloft in profession at present—and you shall find it at last laid in the ditch of error or profaneness. This is the bed God hath made for it, and it must lie there where God hath appointed its lodging. It is very necessary that such men should be left to be bewildered, and so put to shame, that, when their understanding returns to them—if God hath such a mercy in store for them—they may, with Nebuchadnezzar, ‘bless the Most High,’ and acknowledge him, at their return, whom they neglected so unworthily at their setting forth. O take heed therefore of pride, which will soon make thee a stranger at the throne of grace. Pride takes little delight in begging. It turns humble praying for truth into a busy stickling and ambitious disputing about truth (there is honour to be got here): and thus many, to get victory, have lost truth in the heat of the battle. Lay this deep in thy heart, that God, which gives an eye to see truth, must give a hand to hold it fast when we have it. *Quæ habemus ab eo, tenere non possumus sine eo* (Bern.)—what we have from God, we cannot keep without God. Keep therefore thy acquaintance with God, or else truth will not keep her acquaintance long with thee. God is light, thou art going into the dark, as soon as thou turnest thy back upon him. We stand at better advantage to find truth, and keep it also, when devoutly praying for it, than when fiercely wrangling and contending about it. Disputes roil the soul, and raise the dust of passion. Prayer sweetly composeth the mind, and lays the passions which disputes draw forth. And I am sure a man may see farther in a still clear day, than in a windy and cloudy one. When a person talks much, and rests little, we have great cause to fear his brain will not long hold; and truly, when a person shall be much in talking and disputing about truth without a humble spirit in prayer to be led into it, God may justly punish that man’s pride with a spiritual frenzy in his mind, that he shall not know error from truth.

Sixth Direction. Look thou takest not offense at

the difference of judgments and opinions that are found amongst the professors of religion. It is a stone which the Papists throw, in these divided times especially, before our feet. How know you, saith he, which is truth, when there are so many judgments and ways amongst you? Some have so stumbled at this, that they have quit the truth they once professed, and, by the storms of dissensions in matters of religion, have been, if not thrown upon the rock of atheism, yet driven to and fro in a fluctuation of mind, not willing to cast anchor anywhere in their judgment till they see this tempest over, and those that are scattered from one another by diversity of judgment, met together in a unity and joint consent of persuasions in matters of religion—a resolution, as one saith very well, as foolish and pernicious to the soul, if not more, than it would be to the body if a man should vow he would not eat till all the clocks in the city should strike twelve just together. The latter might sooner be expected than the former.

Seventh Direction. Rest not till thou feelest the efficacy of every truth thou holdest in thy judgment, upon thy heart. One faculty helps another. The more clear truth is in the understanding, the more abiding in the memory. And the more operative truth is on the will, the more fixed in the judgment. Let a thing be never so excellent, yet, if a man can make little or no use thereof, it is little worth to him, and may easily be got from him. Thus may rare libraries have been parted with, by rude soldiers, into whose hands they have fallen, for little more than their covers were worth, which by some, that could have improved them, would [have] been kept as the richest prize. And verily, it fares with truth according as they are into whose hands it falls. If it lights upon one that falls to work with it, and draws out the strength and sweetness of it, this man holds it so much the faster in his judgment, by how much more operative it is on his heart; but if it meets with one that finds no divine efficacy it hath, to humble, comfort, sanctify him, it may soon be turned out of doors, and put to seek for a new host. Such may, for a time, dance about that light which, a while after, themselves will blow out. When I hear of a man that once held original sin and the universal pollution of man's nature to be a truth, but now denies it, I cannot but fear, he did never lay it so close [to] his heart, as to abase and

humble himself kindly for it; or that he grew weary of the work, and, by sloth and negligence, lost the efficacy of that truth in his heart, before he lost the truth itself in his judgment. I might instance in many other particulars, wherein professors in these rowling⁶ times have slidden from their old principles. Singing of psalms hath been a duty owned and practised by many, who now have laid it down; and it were a question worth the asking them, Whether formerly they never enjoyed sweet communion with God in that duty as well as in others? whether their hearts did never dance and leap up to God with heavenly affections, while they sang with their lips? and verily I should think it strange to hear a godly person deny this. Well, if ever thou didst, Christian, meet with God at this door of the tabernacle—for I cannot yet think it other—let me ask thee again, whether the heart did not grow common, cold, and formal in thy duty before thou durst cast it off? And if so—which I am ready to believe—I desire such in the fear of God to consider these four questions, I John 2:23, 24.

1. Question. Whether they may not fear that they are in an error, and that this darkness is befallen their judgments as a punishment for their negligence and slightness of spirit in performing the duty when they did not question the lawfulness of it?

2. Question. Whether it were not better they should labour to recover the first liveliness of their affections in the duty—which would soon bring them again acquainted with that sweetness and joy they found of old in it—than to cast it off, upon so weak evidence as they who can say most, bring in against it?

3. Question. Whether such as neglect one duty, are likely to thrive by any other, and keep up the savour of them fresh in their souls?

4. Question. Whether, if God should suffer them to decline in their affections to any other ordinance—which [may] he forbid, if it be his will—it were not as easy for Satan to gather together arguments enough to make them scruple, and in time cast off that also as well as this? And that there is reason for such a question, these times will tell us; wherein every ordinance hath had its turn to be questioned, yea, dis-

6. Rowling, i.e. unsettles, changeful. — ED.

owned, some by one, some by another. One will not sing; another will not have his child baptized; a third will not have any water baptism, nor supper neither; a fourth bungs up his ear too from all hearing of the word, and would have us expect an immediate teaching. Thus when once ordinances and truths become dead to us through our miscarriage under them, we can be willing—how beautiful soever they were once in our eye—yea call, to have them buried out of our sight. These things sadly laid to heart, will give you reason to think, though this direction be placed last in order of my discourse, yet it should not find neither the last nor least place among all the other named, in your Christian care and practice.

SECOND GIRDING ABOUT.

[It is the Christian's duty to make a FREE AND BOLD PROFESSION of the truth.]

Since Satan comes sometimes as a lion in the persons of bloody persecutors, and labours to scare Christians from the truth with fire and faggot; to defend us against this design, we need to have truth girt about us, so that with a holy resolution we may maintain our profession in the face of death and danger. The second way that truth is assaulted is by force and violence, the devil pierceth the fox's skin of seducers with the lion's skin of persecutors. The bloodiest tragedies in the world have been acted on the stage of the church; and the most inhuman massacres and butcheries committed on the harmless sheep of Christ. The first man that was slain in the world was a saint, and he for religion. And as Luther said, Cain will kill Abel unto the end of the world. The fire of persecution can never go out quite, so long as there remains a spark of hatred in the wicked's bosom on earth, or the devil in hell to blow it up. Therefore there is a second way of having truth girt about the Christian's loins, as necessary as the other, and that is in the profession of it. Many that could never be beaten from the truth by dint of argument, have been forced from it by the fire of persecution. It is not an orthodox judgment will enable a man to suffer for the truth at the stake. Then that poor Smith, in our English Martyrology, would not have

sent such a dastardlike answer to his friend—ready to suffer for that truth which he himself had been a means to instruct him in—that indeed it was the truth, but he could not burn. Truth in the head, without holy courage, makes a man like the swordfish, which Plutarch saith hath⁷ a sword in the head, but no heart to use it. Then a person becomes unconquerable, when from heaven he is endued with a holy boldness to draw forth the sword of the Spirit, and own the naked truth, by a free profession of it in the face of death and danger. This, this is to have our 'loins girt about with truth.' So that the note from this second kind of girding with truth is,

DOCTRINE. That it is the saint's duty, and should be their care, not only to get an established judgment of the truth, but also to maintain a steadfast profession of the truth. This the apostle presseth: 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,' Heb. 10:23. He speaks it in opposition to those who in those hazardous times declined the assemblies of the saints for fear of persecution; he calls it a 'wavering,' and he that staggers is next door to apostasy. We must not spread our sails of profession in a calm, and furl them up when the wind riseth. Pergamos is commended, Rev. 2:13, for her bold profession: 'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.' It was a place where Satan sat in the magistrate's seat, where it was grande satis picaculum mortem mereri, Christianum esse—matter enough to deserve death to be a Christian; yea, some blood was now shed before their eyes, and even in those days they denied not the truth. This God took kindly. It is a strict charge Paul gives Timothy, 'But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness,' &c., I Tim. 6:11. While others are proling⁸ for the world, lay about thee for spiritual riches, pursue this with as hot a chase as they do the temporal. But what if this trade cannot be peaceably driven; must shop windows be then shut up, profession be laid aside, and he stay to be relig-

7. μαχαίραν ἀλλ' ὄυ καρδίαν.

8. Proling, i.e. searching about, prowling. — ED.

ious till more favourable times come about? No such matter. He bids him ver. 12, 'fight the good fight of faith.' Do not base ly quit thy profession, but lay life and all to stake to keep this; and that he might engage him beyond a retreat, see ver. 13, 'I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things; and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keepest this commandment.' As if he had said, 'If ever you will see the face of Christ with comfort at the resurrection—who chose to lose his life, rather than deny or dissemble the truth—stand to it, and flinch not from your colours.' Augustine in his *Confess.*, lib. 8. ch.2., hath a notable story of one Victorinus, famous in Rome for rhetoric, which he taught the senators. This man in his old age was converted to Christianity, and came to Simplicianus, one eminent at that time for his piety, whispering in his ears softly these words, *Ego sum Christianus—I am a Christian; but this holy man answered, non credo, nec deputabo te inter Christianos, nisi in ecclesia Christi te videro—I will not believe it or count thee so, till I see thee among the Christians in the church. At this he laughed, saying, ergone parietes faciunt Christianum?—do then those walls make a Christian? cannot I be except I openly profess it, and let the world know the same? This he said for fear, being yet a young convert though an old man; but a while after, when he was more confirmed in the faith, and seriously considered that if he should continue thus ashamed of Christ, he would be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and the holy angels, he changed his note, and came to Simplicianus, saying, *eamus in ecclesiam, Christianus volo fieri—let us go to the church, I will now in earnest be a Christian. And there though a private profession of his faith might have been accepted, he chose to do it openly, saying, that he had openly professed rhetoric, which was not a matter of salvation, and should he be afraid to own the word of God in the congregation of the faithful? God requires both the religion of the heart and mouth. 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,' Rom. 10:10. Confession of the mouth without faith in the heart is gross hypocrisy. To pretend faith without profession of the mouth, is both hypocrisy and cowardice.**

Reason. I shall give but one reason of the point,

and that is taken from the great trust which God puts in his saints concerning his truth. This is the great depositum—treasure, which God delivers to his saints, with a strict and solemn charge to keep against all that undermine or oppose it. Some things we trust God with, some things God trusts us with. The great thing which we put into God's hand to be kept for us is our soul. 'He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,' II Tim. 1:12. That which God trusts us chiefly with is his truth. It is therefore said to be 'delivered' to them, as a charge of money to a friend whom we confide in. 'Contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints,' Jude 3. 'Unto them,' saith the apostle, speaking of the Jews, 'were committed the oracles of God,' Rom. 3:2. They were concredited with that heavenly treasure. So Paul Exhorts Timothy to 'hold fast the form of sound words,' II Tim. 1:13, and this, he calls the 'good thing which was committed to him,' ver. 14. If he that is intrusted with the keeping of a king's crown and jewels, ought to look carefully to his charge that none be lost or stolen, much more the Christian that hath in his charge God's crown and treasure. Rob God of his truth, and what hath he left? The word of truth is that testimony which the great God gives of himself to man, Ps 19:7; Isa.20; Heb. 12:1; Rev. 11:3. The saints are his chosen witnesses above others, whom he calls forth to vouch his truth, by a free and holy profession thereof before men—called therefore the witnesses of God. He that maintains any error from the word, bears false witness against God. He that for fear or shame deserts the truth, or dissembles his profession, denies God his testimony; and who can express what a bloody sin this is, and what a high contempt of God it amounts? It were a horrid crime though but in a man's case. As when one is falsely accused in a court, [it would be that one able] to speak something that might clear the innocency of the man, should yet suffer him to be condemned, rather than hazard himself a little by speaking the truth in open court. O, what then is his sin, that when God himself in his truth stands at sorry man's bar, dares not speak for God when called in to declare himself, but lets truth suffer by an unjust sentence, that himself may not, at man's hands, for bearing witness to it!

Objection. But this may seem too heavy a burden to lay on the Christian's back. Must we lay all at

stake, and hazard all that is dear to us, rather than deny or dissemble our profession of the truth? Sure Christ will have but few followers if he holds his servants to such hard terms.

Answer. Indeed it is hard to flesh and blood—one of the highest stiles to be gone over in our way to heaven—a carnal heart cannot hear it but he is offended presently, *Matt. 13:21*. Therefore such as are loath to lose heaven, and yet unwilling to venture thus much for it, have set their wits at work to find an easier way thither. Hence those heretics of old—Priscillianists⁹ and others, whose chief religion was to save their own skin—made little of outward profession. They thought they might say and unsay, swear and forswear—according to their wretched principle, *juro, perjuro, mentem injuratum gero*—I swear and forswear, I bear a mind that is not bound by any oath—so in their heart they did but cleave to the truth. O what fools were the prophets, apostles, and other holy martyrs, that have sealed the truth with their blood, if their might have been such a fairway of escaping the storm of persecution. [Those must be] bold men, that to save a little trouble from man for truth's sake, durst invent such detestable blasphemies against the truth; yea, deface those characters which nature itself engraves upon the conscience. The same window that lets in the light of a deity, would, with it, let in this also, that we should walk in the name of this God. The every heathen know this: 'All people will walk every one in the name of his god,' *Micah 4:5*. Socrates, to blood, held [that] there was but one God; and in his apology for his life said, 'If they would give him his life on condition to keep this truth to himself, and not teach it to others, he would not accept it.' Behold here the powerful workings of a natural conscience! Have not they then improved the knowledge of the Scripture well in the meantime, that are so far outshot from nature's weak bow? Religion would soon vanish into an empty nothing, if, for fear of every one we meet, we must, like runaway soldiers, pluck off our colours and put our profession as it were in our pockets, lest it should be known to whom

we belong. What doth God require by a free profession of his truth, more than a master doth of his servant, when he bids him take his livery and follow him in the streets? Or, than a prince, [when he] calls his subjects into the field, to declare their loyalty by owning his quarrel against an invading enemy? And is it reasonable, what man requires of these—and only hard, when it comes from God's hands? Nay, it is not more, nor so much as we desire of God for ourselves. Who would not have God make profession of his love to us, and bear witness for us against Satan and our own sins, at that great day when men and angels shall be spectators? And shall we expect that from God which he owes us by no law, but of his own free promise, and deny him that which we are under so many bonds to pay? If it be but in some affliction, while we are here, how disconsolate are we if God's face be a little overcast, and he doth not own us in our distress? And is there no kindness to be shown to that God that knows your soul in adversity? When his truth is in an agony, may not Christ look that all his friends should sit up and watch with it? O it were shame with a witness that any such effeminate delicacy should be found among Christ's servants, that they cannot break a little of their worldly rest and enjoyments, to attend on him and his truth.

[Use or Application.]

Let this stir us up to get the girdle of truth closely girt to us, that we may be able to hold fast the profession of it, even in the face of death and danger, and not be offended when persecution ariseth. Blessed be God it is not yet come to that. We have the truth at a cheaper rate, but how soon the market may rise we know not. Truth is not always to be had at the same price. Buy it we must at any, but sell it upon no terms. And let me tell you, there hath [been], is, and will be, a spirit of persecution in the hearts of the wicked to the end of the world; and as Satan was considering Job before he laid his foul hands on him, so now, persecution is working in the spirits of the ungodly. There are engines of death continually preparing in the thoughts and desires of Satan and his instruments against the sincere professors of the truth. It is already resolved upon what they would do, might power and opportunity be given

9. Priscillianism—This was a heresy that revived Sabellianism, which taught 'modalism', among other things. — SDB

to put their malice in execution. Yea, we are half-way already towards a persecution. Satan comes first with a spirit of error and then of persecution. He first corrupts men's minds with error, and then enrageth their hearts with wrath against the professors of truth. It is impossible that error, being a brat of hell, should be peaceable. It would not then be like its father. That which is from beneath can neither be pure nor peaceable. And how far God hath suffered this sulphurous spirit of error to prevail, is so notorious, that no apology is broad enough to cover the nakedness of these unhappy times. It is therefore high time to have our girdle of truth on, yea, close girt about us in the profession of it. Not every one that now applauds truth, will follow it when once it comes to show them the way to prison. Not every one that preacheth for it, or disputes for it, will suffer for it. Arguments are harmless things—blunt weapons—they fetch no blood; but when we suffer, then we are called to try it with truth's enemies at sharps. This requires something more than a nimble tongue, a sharp wit, and a logical head. Where then will be the wise, the disputer, the men of parts and gifts? alas, they will, like cowardly soldiers, be wanting in the fight, though they could be as forward as the best at a muster or training, when no enemy was in the field—when to appear for truth was rather a matter of gain or applause than loss and hazard. No, God hath chosen the foolish to confound the wise in this piece of service—the humble Christian, by his faith, patience, and love to the truth, to shame men of high parts and no grace.

[Directions for the girding of truth close to us, in the profession of it.]

But how may a soul get to be thus girt with truth in the profession of it? I answer, First. Labour to get a heart inflamed with a sincere love to the truth. Second. To a heart inflamed with the love of truth, labour to add a heart with the fear of that wrath which God hath in store for all that apostatize from the truth.

DIRECTION FIRST. Labour to get an heart inflamed with a sincere love to the truth. This only is able to match the enemies of truth. The worst they can do is bonds or death; and 'love is stronger than

death.' It kills the very heart of death itself. It makes all easy. Commandments are grievous to love, nor doth it complain of sufferings. With what a light heart did Jacob, for the love of Rachel, endure the heat of the day and cold of the night! It is venturous. Jonathan threw a kingdom at his heels, and conflicted with the anger of an enraged father, for David's sake. Love never thinks itself a loser so long as it keeps its beloved; yea, it is ambitious of any hazardous enterprise, whereby it may sacrifice itself in the service of its beloved, as we see in David, who put his life in his hands for Michal. How much more so when our love is pitched upon so transcendent an object as Christ and his truth! Alas, they are but faint spirits which are breathed from a creature! weak beams that are shot from such sorry beauties! If these lay their loves under such a law that they cannot but obey, though with the greatest peril and hazard; what constraint then must a soul ravished with the love of Christ be under! This has made the saints leap out of their estates, relations, yea out of their bodies with joy, counting it not their loss to part with them, but to keep them with the least prejudice to the truth, Rev. 12:11. It is said there, 'they loved not their lives unto the death.' Mark, not to the loss of some of the comforts of their lives, but 'unto the death.' Life itself they counted an enemy when it would part them and truth. As a man doth not love his arm, or leg, when it hazards the rest, but bids cut it off; 'cannot we live,' say these noble spirits, 'but to the clouding of truth, and calling our love to it and Christ into question?—welcome then the worst of deaths.' This kept up David's courage when his life was laid for: 'The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies,' Ps. 119:95. A carnal heart would have considered his estate, wife, and children, or at least his life, now in danger. But David's heart was on a better subject; he considered the testimonies of God, and so much sweetness pours in upon his soul while he is rowling them in his meditation, that he cannot hold. 'O how I love thy law!' ver. 97. This made him set light by all the troubles he met with for his cleaving to the truth. It is a great mystery to the world, that men for an opinion, as they call it, should run such desperate hazard. Therefore Paul was thought by his judge to be out of his wits. And that question which Pilate asked Christ, seems rather to be

slightly, rather than seriously spoken, John 18. Our Saviour had told him, ver. 37, that the end why he was born, and came into the world, was, that he should 'bear witness to the truth.' Then Pilate, ver. 38, asks Christ, 'What is truth?' and presently flings away, as if he had said, Is this now a time to think of truth, when thy life is in danger? What is truth, that thou shouldst venture so much for it? But a gracious soul may better ask in a holy scorn, What are riches and honours, what the fading pleasures of this cheating world, yea, what is life itself, that any or all these should be set in opposition to truth? O sirs, look what has your love that will command purse, credit, life and all. *Amor meus pondus meum*—every man goes where his love carries him. If the world has your love, on it you will spend your lives; if truth has your hearts, you will catch the blow that is made at it in your own breasts, rather than let it fall on it. Only be careful that your love to truth be sincere, or else it will leave you at the prison door, and make you part with truth when you should most appear for it. There are three sorts of pretenders to truth, whose love is not like to endure the fiery trial.

[Three sorts of pretenders to truth.]

First Sort. Such as embrace truth for carnal advantage. Sometimes truth pays well for her board in the world's own coin, and so long everyone will invite her to his house. These do not love truth, but the jewel in her ear. Many are observed in Henry the Eighth's time to be very zealous against the abbeyes, that loved their lands more than they hated their idolatry. Truth finds few that loves her gratis. And those few only will suffer with truth and for it; as for the other, when the worldly dowry that truth brought be once spent, you will find they are weary of their match. This kitchen-fire burns no longer than such gross fuel of profit, credit, and the like, does feed it. If you cannot love naked truth, you will not endure to be disgraced for truth; and what usage truth finds, that her followers must expect.

Second Sort. Such as commend truth, and cry it up highly, but who, if you mark them, do but compliment with it all this while. They keep at a distance, and do not suffer truth to come within them, so as to give law unto them; like one that entertains a suitor,

speaks well of him, holds discourse with him, but will not hear of marrying him. It is one thing φιλεῖν—really to love, another καταφιλεῖν—merely to kiss or caress. Bucholcerus would oft say, multi osculantur Christum, pauci vero amant—many kiss Christ, but few love him. True love to Christ is conjugal. When a soul delivers up itself, from an inward liking it hath to Christ as to her husband, to be ruled by his Spirit, and ordered by his word of truth, here is a soul that loves Christ and his truth. But where truth has no command, and bears no rule, there dwells no love to truth in that heart. She that is not obedient cannot be a loving wife, because love would constrain her to be so; and so would love in the soul enforce obedience to the truth it loves. Nay, he that doth not obey truth, is so far from loving it, that he is afraid of truth; will sooner prove a persecutor of truth, than a sufferer for truth. So true is that of Hierome, quem metuit, quis odit; quem odit, perisse cupit—whom we fear, we hate; whom we hate, we wish they were destroyed. Saul feared David, and that made him more industriously seek his ruin. Herod feared John, and that cost him his life. Slavish fear makes the naughty heart imprison truth in his conscience, because, if that had its liberty and authority in the soul, it would imprison, yea, execute every lust that rules the roost¹⁰; and he that imprisons truth in his own bosom, will hardly lie in prison himself as a witness for truth.

Third Sort. Such as have no zeal against truth's enemies. Love goes over armed with zeal; this is the dagger she draws against all the opposers of truth. *Qui non zelat, non amat*—he that is not zealous doth not love. Now right zeal acts like fire, ad ultimum sui posse—to its utmost power, yet ever keeping its place and sphere. If it be confined to the breast of a private Christian, whence it may not flame forth in punishing truth's enemies, then it burns inwardly the more for being pent up, and preys, like a fire in his bones, upon the Christian's own spirits, consuming them, yea, eating him up for grief to see truth trodden under foot of error or profaneness, and he not able to help it up. It is no joy to a zealous lover to outlive his be-

10. Roost—The original text has roast; which seems to me an obvious typo. — SDB

loved. Such there have been who could have chose rather to have leaped into their friends' grave, and lain down with them in the dust, than to pass here a disconsolate life without them. 'Let us go and die with him,' said Thomas, when Christ told them Lazarus was dead. And I am sure zealous lovers of truth count it as melancholy living in evil times, when that is fallen in the streets. The news of the ark's taking, frightened good Eli's soul out of his body, and this may charitably be thought to have given life to Elijah's wish, yea, solemn prayer for death, 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life,' 1 Kings 19:4. The holy man saw how things went among the great ones of those wicked times. Idolaters, they were courted, and the faithful servants of God carted, as I may so say, yea, killed; and now this zealous prophet thinks it a good time to leave the world in, rather than live in torment any longer, to see the name, truth, and servants of God trampled on by those who should have shown most kindness to them. But if zeal hath any power put into her hands, wherein she may vindicate truth's cause, as when she is exalted into the magistrate's seat, then truth's enemies shall know and feel that she 'bears not the sword in vain.' The zealous magistrate as he will have an arm to relieve and defend truth—the Israelite, so a hand to smite blasphemy, error, and profaneness—the Egyptian—when any of them assault her. O how Moses laid about him—that meek man, who stood so mute in his own cause, Num. 12—when the people had committed idolatry! His heart was so infired within him, that, as well as he loved them, he could neither open his mouth in a prayer for them to God, nor his ear to receive any petition from them, till he had given vent to his zeal in an act of justice upon the offenders. Now such, and such only, are the persons that are likely to suffer for the truth when so called upon, who will not let it suffer if they can help it. But as for neutral Gallio-like spirits, that can see truth and error scuffling, and not do their utmost to relieve truth—by interposing their power and authority, if a magistrate—by preaching the one up and the other down, if a minister—and by a free testimony to, fervent prayer for, and affectionate sympathizing with truth, as it fares ill or well, if a private Christian—I say, as for such—who stand in this case, as some spectators about two wrestlers, not caring much who hath the fall—these

are not the men that can be expected to expose themselves to much suffering for truth. That magistrate who hath not zeal enough to stop the mouths of truth's enemies when he may, will he open his mouth in a free profession of it when death and danger face him? That minister who hath neither love nor courage enough to apologize for truth in the pulpit, can it be thought that he would stand to her defence at the stake? In a word, that private Christian whose heart is not wounded through truth's sides so as to sympathize with it, will he interpose himself betwixt truth and the blow that bloody persecutors make at it, and choose to receive it into his own body, though to death, rather than it should light on truth? If the fire of love within be out, or so little that it will not melt the man into sorrow for the wrongs done to truth by men of corrupt minds; where will the flame be found, that should enable him to burn to ashes, under the hand of bloody men? He will never endure the fire in his body, that hath no more care to keep that sacred fire burning in his soul. If he cannot shed tears, much less will he bleed for truth.

Question. If any now should ask, how they may get their hearts inflamed with this heavenly fire of love to truth? I answer,

1. Answer. Labour for an inward conformity of thy heart to truth. Likeness is the ground of love. A carnal heart cannot like truth, because it is not like to truth. Such a one may love truth as one did Alexander, regem non Alexandrum—the king, not the person that was king. Truth in its honour and dignity, when it can prefer him, but not naked truth itself. How is it possible an earthly soul should love truth that is heavenly?—an unholy heart, truth that is pure? O it is sad indeed, when men's tenets and principles in their understandings, do clash and fight with the principles of their hearts and affections—when men have orthodox judgments, and heterodox hearts! There must needs be little love to truth, because the judgment and will are so unequally yoked. Truth in the conscience reproving and threatening lust in the heart! and that again controlling truth in the conscience! Thus like a scolding couple, they may a while dwell together, but taking no content in one another, the wretch is easily persuaded to give truth a bill of divorce at last, and send her away, as Ahasuerus did Vashti, that he may espouse other

principles, which will suit better with his corrupt heart, and not cross him in the way he is in. This, this I am persuaded hath parted many and truth in these licentious days. They could not sin peaceably while they kept their judgments sound. Truth ever and anon would be chiding them, and therefore to match their judgements with their hearts, they have taken up principles suitable to their lusts. But soul, if truth hath had such a power upon thee to transform thee, by the renewing of thy mind, into its own likeness, that as the scion turns the stock into its own nature, so truth hath assimilated thee, and made thee bear fruit like itself, thou art the person that will never part with truth. Before thou canst do this, thou must part with that new nature, which, by it, the Spirit of God hath begot in thee. There is now such a near union betwixt thee and truth, or rather thee and Christ, as can never be broken. We see what a mighty power there goes along with God's ordinance of marriage—that two persons, who possibly a month before never knew one another, yet—their affections once knit by love, and their persons made one by marriage—they can now leave friends and parents for to enjoy each other. Such a mighty power, and much greater, goes along with this mystical marriage between the soul and Christ, the soul and truth;—that the same person who, before conversion, would not have ventured the loss of a penny for Christ or his truth, yet now, knit to Christ and his truth by a secret work of the Spirit, new-forming him into the likeness thereof, can bid adieu to the world, life, and all, for these. As that martyr told him that asked whether he did not love his wife and children, and was not loath to part with them, 'Yes,' saith he, 'I love them so dearly, that I would not part with any of them for all that the Duke of Brunswick—whose subject he was—is worth; but for Christ's sake and his truth, farewell to them all.'

2. Answer. Labour to get thy heart more and more infired with the love of God, and this will work in thee a dear love to his truth. Love observes what is precious and dear to its beloved, and loves it for his sake. David's love to Jonathan made him inquire for some of his race, that he might show kindness to, for his sake. Love to God will make the soul inquisitive to find out what is near and dear to God—that by showing kindness to it, he may express his love to

him. Now upon a little search, we shall find that the great God sets a very high price upon the head of truth. 'For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name,' Ps. 138:2. That is God's name, by which he is known. Every creature hath God's name upon it—by it God is known—even to the least pile of grass. But to his word, and truth therein written, he hath given pre-eminence above all other things that bear his name. Take a few considerations whereby we may a little conceive of the high value God sets of truth.

(1.) God, when he vouchsafeth his word and truth to a people, makes account that he gives them one of the greatest mercies they can receive or he give; he calls them 'the great things' of his 'law,' Hosea 8:12. A people that enjoy his truth, are by Christ's own judgment 'lift up to heaven.' Whatever a people have at God's hands, without this, bears no more comparison with it than Hagar's loaf of bread and bottle—which was Ishmael's portion—would with Isaac's inheritance. God, that knows how to prize and rate his own gifts, saith of his word which he showeth to Jacob, and testimonies he gives to Israel, that 'he hath not dealt so with any nation,' Ps. 147:20; that is, not so richly and graciously. (2.) Consider God's especial care to preserve his truth. Whatever is lost, God looks to his truth. In shipwrecks at sea, and scare-fires at land, when men can save but little, they use to choose not lumber, and things of no worth, but what they esteem most precious. In all the great revolutions, changes, and overturning of kingdoms, and churches also, God hath still preserved his truth. Thousands of saints' lives have been taken away, but that which the devil spites more than all the saints, yea, which alone he spites them for, is his truth. This lives and shall, to triumph over his malice. And sure, if truth were not very dear to God, he would not be at this cost to keep it with the blood of his saints; yea, which is more, the blood of his Son, whose errand into the world was by life and death 'to bear witness to the truth,' John 18:37. In a word, in that great and dismal conflagration of heaven and earth, when the elements shall melt for heat, and the world come to its fatal period, then truth shall not suffer the least loss, but 'the word of the Lord endureth for ever,' I Peter 1:24. (3.) Consider the severity of God to the enemies of truth. A dreadful curse is denounced against those that shall take away from it, or add to the least of it—that embase or

clip this heavenly coin, Rev. 22:18. The one pulls upon him all the plagues that are written in the word of truth; from the other shall be taken away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things—that is, the good things of the promises—which are written in this book. All these speak at what a high rate God values truth; and no wonder, if we consider what truth is—that truth which shines forth from the written word. It is the extract of God’s thoughts and counsels which from everlasting he took up, and had in his heart to effect. Nothing comes to pass but as an accomplishment of this his word. It is the most full and perfect representation that God himself could give of his own being and nature to the sons of men, that, by it, we might know him and love him. Great princes used to send their pictures by their ambassadors to those whom they woo for marriage. God is such an infinite perfection, that no hand can draw him forth to life but his own, and this he hath done exactly in his word; from which all his saints have come to be enamoured with him. He that abandons the truth of God, renounceth the God of truth. Though men cannot come to pull God out of his throne, yet they come as near this as it is possible, when they let out their wrath against the truth. In this they do, as it were, execute God in effigy. There is reason we see why God should so highly prize his truth, and that we that love him should cleave to it.

3. Answer. Be much in the meditation of the transcendent excellency of truth. ‘The eye affects the heart;’ this is the window at which love enters. Never any that had a spiritual eye to see truth in her native beauty, but had a heart to love her. This was the way that David’s heart was ravished with the love of the word of truth: ‘O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day,’ Psalms 119:97. While his thoughts were on it, his love was drawn to it. David found a great difference betwixt meditating on the truth’s of God’s word, and other excellences which the world cries up so highly. When he goes to entertain himself with the thoughts of some perfection in the creature, he finds it but a jejune¹¹, dry subject compared with this. He soon tumbles over the book of the world’s

excellences, and can find no notion that deserves any long stay upon it; ‘I have seen’ saith he, ‘an end of all perfections;’ he is at the world’s end presently, and in a few thoughts can see to the bottom of all the world’s glory; but when he takes up the truths of God into his thoughts, now he meets with work enough for his admiration and sweet meditation—‘Thy commandment is exceeding broad.’ Great ships cannot sail in narrow rivers and shallow waters, neither can minds truly great with the knowledge of God and heaven, find room enough in the creature to turn and expatiate¹² themselves in. A gracious soul is soon aground and at a stand when upon these flats; but let it launch out into the meditation of God, his word, the mysterious truths of the gospel, and he finds a place of broad waters, sea-room enough to lose himself in. I might here show you the excellency of divine truths from many heads. As from the source and spring-head whence they flow, the God of truth; or from their opposite, that misshapen monster, error, &c. But I shall only direct your meditation to a few enamouring properties which you shall find in these truths. You may meet a heap of them together in Psalm 19:7, and so on.

Truth is ‘pure;’ this made David love it, Ps. 119:140. It is not only pure, but makes the soul pure and holy that embraceth it. ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,’ John 17:17. It is the pure water that God washeth foul souls clean with. ‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness...will I cleanse you,’ Eze. 36:25. Foul puddle-water will as soon make the face, as error make the soul, clean.

Truth is ‘sure,’ and hath a firm bottom, Ps. 19:7. We may lay the whole weight of our souls upon it and yet it will not crack under us. Cleave to truth and it will stick to thee. It will go with thee to prison, banishment, yea, stake itself and bear thy charges wherever thou goest upon her errand. ‘Not one thing,’ saith Joshua, ‘hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof,’ Joshua 23:14. Whatever you find there prom-

11. Jejune — Lacking nutritive value; interest, or significance. — SDB

12. Expatiate — To wander about freely or at will. 2. To speak or write at length or in detail. — SDB.

ised count it money in your purse. 'Fourscore years,' said Polycarp, 'I have served God, and found him to be a good master.' But when men think by forsaking the truth to provide well for themselves, they are sure to meet with disappointments. Many have been flattered from truth with goodly promises, and then served no better than Judas was by the Jews, after he had betrayed his Master into their bloody hands, 'look thou to that.' Though persecutors love the treason, yet they hate the traitor. Yea, oft—to show their devilish malice—they, when some have got to wound their consciences by denying the truth, have most cruelly butchered them, and gloried in it, as a full revenge to destroy the soul and body together. Again,

Truth is 'free,' and makes the soul 'free' that cleaves to it. 'The truth shall make you free,' John 8:32. Christ tells the Jews of a bondage they were in, which that brag people never dreamed on. 'Ye are of your father the devil, and his lusts you will do,' ver. 44. Such slaves are all sinners. They must do what the devil will have them, and dare no more displease him, than a child his father with a rod in his hand. Some witches have confessed that they have been forced to send out their imps to do mischief to others that they might have ease themselves; for till they did send them abroad upon such an errand they were themselves tormented by them. And he who hath a lust sucking on him, finds as little rest if he be not always serving of it, and making provision for it. Can the world, think you, show such another slave as this poor wretch is? Well, though all the bolts that the devil hath—lusts I mean—were locked upon one sinner, and he shut up in the closet dungeon of all his prison, yet let but this poor slave begin to be acquainted with the truth of Christ, so as to open his heart to it, and close with it, and you shall soon hear that the foundations of the prison are shaken, its doors thrown open, and the chains fallen off the poor creature's legs. Truth cannot itself be bound, nor will it dwell in a soul that lies bound in sin's prison; and therefore when once truth and the soul are agreed, or rather Christ and the soul, who are brought together by 'truth,' then the poor creature may lift up his head with joy, for his redemption and jail-delivery from this spiritual bondage draws nigh; yea, the day is come, the key is in the lock already to let him out. It

is impossible we should be acquainted with 'truth as it is in Jesus' and be mere strangers to this liberty that attends it, Eph. 4:19-21.

In a word, truth is victorious. It is great, and shall prevail at last. It is the great counsel of God, and though many fine plots and devices are found in the hearts of men—which show what they would do—yet the counsel of the Lord shall stand. All their eggs are addled when they have set longest on them. Alas! they want power to hatch what their malice sits brooding on. Sometimes, I confess, the enemies to 'truth' get the militia of this lower world into their hands, and then truth seems to go to the ground, and those that witness to it are even slain; yet then it is more than their persecutors can do to get them laid underground in their grave, Rev. 11:9. Some that were never thought on, shall strike in on truth's side, and forbid the burial. Persecutors need not be at cost for marble to write the memorial of their victories in, dust will serve well enough, for they are not like to last so long. 'Three days and a half' the witnesses may lie dead in the streets, and truth sit disconsolate by them; but within a while they are walking, and truth triumphing again. If persecutors could kill their successors, then their work might be thought to stand strong, needing not to fear another to pull down what they set up, and yet then their work would lie as open to heaven, and might be as easily hindered, as theirs at Babel. Who loves not to be on the winning side? Choose truth for thy side, and thou hast it. News may come that truth is sick, but never that it is dead. No, it is error is short lived. 'A lying tongue is but for a moment;' but truth's age runs parallel with God's eternity. It shall live to see their heads laid in the dust, and to walk over their graves, that were so busy to make one for her. Live, did I say? yea, reign in peace with those who now are willing to suffer with and for it. And wouldst thou not, Christian, be one among that goodly train of victors, who shall attend on Christ's triumphant chariot into the heavenly city, there to take the crown, and sit down in thy throne with those that have kept the field, when Christ and his truth were militant here on earth? Thus, wouldst thou but in thy thoughts wipe away the tears and blood which now cover the face of suffering truth, and present it to thy eye as it shall look in glory, thou couldst not but cleave to it with a love 'stronger than

death.'

DIRECTION SECOND. If yet there remains any qualm of fear on thy heart, from the wrath of bloody men threatening thee for thy profession of the truth, then to a heart inflamed with the love of truth, labour to add a heart filled with the fear of that wrath which God hath in store for all that apostatize from the truth. When you chance to burn your finger, you hold it to the fire, which being a greater fire draws out the other. Thus when thy thoughts are scorched and thy heart seared with the fire of man's wrath, hold them awhile to hell-fire, which God hath prepared for the fearful, *Rev.* 21:8, and all that run away from truth's colours, *Heb.* 10:39, and thou wilt lose the sense of the one for fear of the other. Ignosce imperator, said the holy man, in carcerem Deus gehennam minatur—pardon me, O emperor, if I obey not thy com-

mand; thou threatenest a prison, but God a hell. Observable is that of David, 'Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word,' *Ps.* 119:161. He had no cause to fear them that had no cause to persecute him. One threatening out of the word—that sets the point of God's wrath to his heart—scares him more than the worst that the greatest on earth can do to him. Man's wrath, alas, when hottest, is but a temperate climate to the wrath of the living God. They who have felt both have testified as much. Man's wrath cannot hinder the access of God's love to the creature, which hath made the saints sing in the fire in spite of their enemies' teeth. But the creature under God's wrath, is like one shut up in a close oven—no crevice open to let any of the heat out, or any refreshing in to him.

DIRECTION V.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[TRUTH OF HEART OR SINCERITY AS A GIRDLE FOR THE WILL.]

'Having your loins girt about with truth.'

We come now to the second kind of truth—commended to the Christian under the notion of the soldier's girdle—and that is, truth of heart. Where it would be known, **FIRST.** What I mean by truth of heart. **SECOND.** Why truth of heart is compared to a girdle.

FIRST. What I mean by truth of heart. By truth of heart, I understand sincerity, so taken in Scripture, 'Let us draw near with a true heart,' that is, with a sincere heart, *Heb.* 10:22. We have them oft conjoined, the one explaining the other: 'Fear the Lord, and serve him with sincerity and truth,' *Joshua* 24:14. We read of 'the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,' *I Cor.* 5:8. Hypocrisy is a lie with a fair cover over it. An insincere heart is a half heart. The inward frame and motion of the heart comports not with the profession and behaviour of the outward man, like a clock, whose wheels within go not as the hand points without.

SECOND. Why truth of heart is compared to a girdle. Sincerity, or truth of heart, may fitly be compared to a girdle, in regard of the twofold use and end

for which a girdle, especially a soldier's belt, is worn.

First. The girdle is used as an ornament put on uppermost, to cover the joints of the armour, which would, if seen, cause some uncomeliness. Here—at the loins I mean—those pieces of armour for the defence of the lower parts of the body are fastened to the upper. Now because they cannot be so closely knit and clasped, but there will be some little gaping betwixt piece and piece, therefore they used to put over those parts a broad girdle, that covered all that uncomeliness. Now, sincerity doth the same for the Christian, that the girdle doth for the soldier. The saint's graces are not so close, nor his life so exact, but in the best there are found infirmities and defects, which are as so many gapings and clefts in his armour, but sincerity covers all, that he is neither put to

shame for them, nor exposed to danger by them.

Second. The girdle was used for strength. By this his loins were staid, and united, and the soldier to fight or march. As a garment, the closer it sits, the warmer it is; so the belt, the closer it is girt, the more strength the loins feel. Hence God, threatening to enfeeble and weaken a person or people, saith 'their loins shall be loosened.' 'I will loose the loins of kings,' Isa. 45:1; and, 'he weakeneth the strength of the mighty,' Job 12:21—Heb. 'he looseth the girdle of the strong.' Now sincerity may well be compared in this respect to the soldier's girdle. It is a grace that doth gird the soul with strength, and makes it mighty to do or suffer. Indeed it is the very strength of every grace.

So much hypocrisy as is found cleaving to our graces, so much weakness. It is sincere faith, that is the strong faith; sincere love, that is the mighty love. Hypocrisy is to grace as the worm is to the oak—the rust to the iron—it weakens them, because it corrupts them. The metaphor thus opened affords these two doctrinal conclusions, in handling of which I shall comprise what I have to say further of this piece of armour. **FIRST.** That sincerity or truth of heart in all our ways covers all the Christian's uncomeliness. **SECOND.** That truth of heart or sincerity is of excellent use to strengthen the Christian in his whole course.

DIVISION FIRST.—SINCERITY COVERS THE CHRISTIAN'S UNCOMELINESS.

'Girt about with truth.'

Sincerity or truth of heart in all our ways covers all the Christian's uncomeliness. In handling this point, this is our method: **FIRST.** We shall inquire, which is the truth and sincerity that covers the Christian's uncomeliness. **SECOND.** We shall inquire, what uncomelinesses they are that sincerity covers. **THIRD.** How sincerity covers them. **FOURTH.** Why sincerity doth this; or some account given for all this.

[What is the truth which covers the Christian's uncomeliness.]

FIRST INQUIRY. Which is that truth and sincerity that covers all uncomelinesses and deficiencies in the Christian. Here we must distinguish of a twofold sincerity, one moral, another evangelical.

[Moral truth and uprightness.]

First kind of sincerity. There is a moral truth, and uprightness, which we may call a field flower, because it may be found growing in the wild and waste of nature. It cannot be denied, but one that hath not a dram of sanctifying saving grace, may show some kind of uprightness and truth in his actions. God himself comes in as a witness for Abimelech, that what he did in taking Sarah, was in the upright-

ness of his heart: 'I know,' saith God, 'that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart,' Gen. 20:6, that is, thou didst mean honestly as to this particular business, and didst not intend any wrong to Abraham, whose wife she was unknown to thee. Joab, though a bloody man, yet dealt very uprightly and squarely with David concerning the rendition of Rabbah, when he had a fair advantage of stealing away the honour from his prince to himself. Many such instances may be given of men that have been great strangers to a work of grace on their hearts; but this is not the uprightness that we mean in the point laid down. It doth indeed render a person very lovely and amiable before men to be thus upright and honest in his dealings; but methinks I hear the Lord saying concerning such, as once he did to Samuel of Eliab, 'Look not on their countenance,' so as to think [that] these are they which he accepts. No, he hath refused them; 'for the Lord seeth not as man seeth,' God's eye looks deeper than man's, 1 Sam. 16:7. There are two great defects in this uprightness which God rejects it for.

1. Defect. It grow, not from a good root—a renewed heart. This is a hair on the moral man's pen, which blurs and blots his copy, when he writes fairest. It is like the leprosy to Naaman; that same 'but he was a leper,' took away the honour of his greatness at

court, and [of his] prowess in the field. So here it stains the fairest actions of a mere moral man—'But he is a Christless, graceless person.' The uprightness of such does others more good in this world than themselves in another. They are by this moral honesty profitable to those that have civil commerce with them; but it doth not render themselves acceptable to God. Indeed, had not God left some authority in conscience to awe and keep men, that have no grace, within some bounds of honesty, this world would have been no more habitable for the saints, than the forest of wild beasts is now for man. And such is the uprightness of men void of sanctifying grace. They are rather rid by an overpowering light of conscience that scares them, than sweetly led by an inward principle inclining them to take complacency in that which is good. Abimelech himself—for whom, as we heard, God so apologized—is yet let to know that his honesty in that matter came rather from God's restraint upon him, than any real goodness in him. I also withheld thee from sinning against me; therefore suffered I thee not to touch her, Gen. 20:6.

2. Defect. This moral uprightness falls short of the chief end indispensably necessary to make a person upright indeed. This is 'the glory of God,' 1 Cor. 10:31. 'Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' The archer may lose his game by shooting short, as well as by shooting wide. The gross hypocrite shoots wide, the uprightest moralist shoots short. He may, and oft doth, take his aim right as to the particular and immediate end of his action, but ever fails in regard of the ultimate end. Thus, a servant may be faithful to his master, scorn to wrong him of a farthing, yea, cordially seek his master's profit; and yet God may not be looked at or thought of in all this, and so all is worth nothing, because God, who is principally to be regarded, is left out of the story. Servants are commanded to do their 'service as to the Lord and not to men,' that is, not only, not chiefly to man, Eph. 6:7. It is true, the master is to be looked at in the servant's duty, but in this way, only as it leads to the glory of God. He must not, when he hath desired to please his earthly master, sit down as at his journey's end, but pass on—as the eye doth through the air and clouds to the sun where it is terminated—to God, as the chief end why he is dutiful and faithful to man. Now no principle can lead the soul

so high as to aim at God, but that which comes from God. See both these excellently couched together. 'That ye may be sincere,...being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God,' Php. 1:10, 11. Where you may observe: (1.) That the sincerity of the right stamp, is that which brings forth fruits of righteousness to the praise of God, that is, where the glory of God is the end of all our actions. (2.) That such fruit cannot be borne, but 'by Christ.' The soul must be planted into Christ, before it can be thus sincere, to bear fruits of righteousness to the praise of God. Hence these fruits of righteousness are said to be 'by Jesus Christ.' What men do by themselves, they do for themselves. They eat their own fruit, devour the praise of what they do. The Christian only that doth all by Christ, doth all for Christ. He hath his sap from Christ, into whom he is grafted, that makes him fruitful; and therefore he reserves all the fruit he bears for him. Thus we see how this mortal¹³ uprightness is itself fundamentally defective, and therefore cannot be that girdle which hides and covers our other defects. Yet before I pass on to the other, I would leave a twofold caution for improvement of what hath been said concerning this uprightness. The one is to the sincere Christian, the other is to such as have no more than a moral uprightness.

[A twofold caution.]

1. Caution. To the sincere Christian. May there be found a kind of uprightness among men that are carnal and destitute of God's sanctifying grace? O then look you to it, in whose hearts dwells the Spirit of grace, that you be not put to shame by those that are graceless, which you must needs be when you are taken tardy in those things that they cannot be charged for. Many among them there are, that scorn to lie. Shall a saint be taken in an untruth? Their moral principles bind them over to the peace, and will not suffer them to wrong their neighbour; and can cheating, over-reaching oppression follow a

13. Could Rev. Gurnall mean 'moral' here? I would think so as every other occurrence of this phrase has been moral uprightness, and not mortal. Although it seems to me that, with the direction he seems to be going, and what he is saying generally, the sense would not be impugned by the use of the word mortal. — SDB

saint's hand? Except your righteousness exceeds their best, you are not Christians. And can you let them exceed you in those things, which, when they are done, leave them short of Christ and heaven? It is time for the scholar to throw off his gown, and disclaim the name of an academic, when every school-boy is able to dunce and pose him; and for him also to lay aside his profession, and let the world know what he is, yea, what he never was, who can let a mere civil man, with his weak bow only backed with moral principles, outshoot him that pretends to Christ and his grace. I confess it sometimes so falls out, that a saint under a temptation may be outstripped by one that is carnal in a particular case; as a lackey, that is an excellent footman, may, from some prick or present lameness in his foot, be left behind by one that at another time should not be able to come near him. We have too many sorrowful examples of moral men's outstripping even a saint at a time, when under a temptation. A notable passage we meet with concerning Abimelech's speech to Sarah, after her dissembling and equivocating speech, that Abraham was her brother. 'And unto Sarah he said'—that is, Abimelech said to her—'Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other,' Gen. 20:16. Now mark the words which follow. 'Thus she was reproofed.' How? where lies the reproof. Here are none but good words, and money to boot also. He promiseth protection to her and Abraham—none should wrong him in wronging her—and tells her what he had freely given Abraham. Well, for all this, we shall find sharp reproof, though lapped up in these sweet words, and silvered over with his thousand pieces. First. She was reproofed by the uprightness of Abimelech in that business wherein she had sinfully dissembled. That he who was a stranger to the true God and his worship, should be so square and honest, as to deliver her up untouched, when once he knew her to be another man's wife, and not only so, but instead of falling into a passion of anger, and taking up thoughts of revenge against them, for putting this cheat upon him—which, having them under his power, had not been strange for a prince, to have done—for him to forget all this, and rather show such kindness and high bounty to them, this must needs send a sharp reproof home to Sarah's

heart. Especially it must, considering that he a heathen did all this; and she—one called to the knowledge of God, in covenant with God, and the wife of a prophet—was so poor-spirited, as, for fear of a danger which only her husband, and that without any great ground, surmised, to commit two sins at one clap—dissemble, and also hazard the loss of her chastity. The less of the two was worse than the thing they were so afraid of. These things, I say, laid together, amounted to such a reproof, as no doubt made her, and Abraham too, heartily ashamed before God and man. Again, Abimelech in calling Abraham her 'brother,' not her husband, did give her a smart rebuke, putting her in mind how with that word he had been deceived by them. Thus godly Sarah was reproofed by a profane king. O Christians, take heed of putting words into the mouths of wicked men to reprove you withal! They cannot reprove you, but they reproach God. Christ is put to shame with you and by you. For the good name's sake of Christ—which cannot but be dearer to you, if saints, than your lives—look to your walking, and especially to your civil converse with the men of the world. They know not what you do in your closet, care not what you are in the congregation, they judge you by what you are when they have to do with you. As they find you in your shop, bargains, promises, and such like, so they think of you and your profession. Labour therefore for this uprightness to man; by this you may win some, and judge others. Better vex the wicked world with strict walking, as Lot did the Sodomites, than set them on work to mock, and reproach thee and thy profession by any scandal, as David did by his sad fall. They that will not follow the light of thy holiness, will soon spy the thief in thy candle, and point at it.

2. Caution. The second word of caution is to those that are morally upright and no more. Take heed this uprightness proves not a snare to thee, and keeps thee from getting evangelical uprightness. I am sure it was so to the young man in the gospel. In all likelihood he might have been better, had he not been so good. His honesty and moral uprightness were his undoing, or rather his conceit of them, to castle himself in them. Better he had been a publican, driven to Christ in the sense of his sin, than a Pharisee kept from him with an opinion of his integrity. These,

these are the weeds, with which, many, thinking to save themselves by them, keep themselves under water to their perdition. 'There is more hope of a fool,' Solomon tells us, 'than of one wise in his own conceit;' and of the greatest sinner, than of one conceited of his righteousness. If once the disease take the brain, the cure must needs be the more difficult. No offering Christ to one in this frenzy. Art thou one kept from these unrighteous ways wherein others walk? May be thou art honest and upright in thy course, and scornest to be found false in any of thy dealings. Bless God for it; but take heed of blessing thyself in it. There is the danger. This is one way of being 'righteous overmuch'—a dangerous pit, of which Solomon warns all that travel in heaven road, Ecc. 7:16. There is undoing in this overdoing, as well as in any underdoing. For so it follows in the same verse, 'why shouldst thou destroy thyself?' Thou art not, proud man, so fair for heaven as thou flatterest thyself. A man upon the top of one hill may seem very nigh to the top of another, and yet can never come there, except he comes down from that where he is. The mount of thy civil righteousness and moral uprightness, on which thou standest so confidently, seems perhaps level in thy proud eye to God's holy hill in heaven; yea, so nigh that thou thinkest to step over from one to the other with ease. But let me tell thee, it is too great a stride for thee to take. Thy safer way and nearer, were to come down from thy mountain of self-confidence—where Satan hath set thee on a design to break thy neck—and to go thy ordinary road, in which all that ever got heaven went. And that way is just by labouring to get an interest in Christ and his righteousness—which is provided on purpose for the creature to wrap up his naked soul in, and to place his faith on; and thus thy uprightness, which before was but of the same form with the heathen's moral honesty, may commence, or rather be baptized Christian, and become evangelical grace. But let me tell thee this before I dismiss thee, that thou canst not lay hold of Christ's righteousness till thou hast let fall the lie—thy own righteousness—which hitherto thou hast held so fast in thy right hand. When Christ called the 'blind man' to him, it is said that 'He, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus,' Mark 10:50. Do thou so, and then come and welcome.

[Evangelical truth and uprightness.]

Second kind of sincerity. We proceed to the second kind of truth of heart or uprightness, which I called an evangelical uprightness. This is a plant found growing only in Christ's garden, or the inclosure of a gracious soul. It is by way of distinction from that I called moral, known by the name of a 'godly sincerity,' or the sincerity of God. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, II Cor. 1:12. Now in two respects this evangelical sincerity may be called godly sincerity. 1. Because it is of God. 2. Because it aims at God, and ends in God.

1. Because it is of God. It is his creature—begotten in the heart by his Spirit alone. Paul, in the place forementioned, II Cor. 1:12, doth excellently derive its pedigree for us. What he calls walking in 'godly sincerity' in the first part of the verse, he calls 'having our conversation by the grace of God' in the latter part; yea, opposeth it to 'walking with fleshly wisdom in the world'—the great wheel in the moral man's clock. And what doth all this amount to, but to show that this sincerity is a babe of grace, and calls none on earth father? But this is not all. This 'godly sincerity' is not only of divine extraction—for so are common gifts that are supernatural—the hypocrite's boon as well as the saint's—but it is part of the new creature, which his sanctifying Spirit forms and works in the elect, and none besides. It is a covenant-grace. 'I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you,' Eze. 11:19. That 'one heart,' by which the hypocrite is so often descried in the word.

2. Because it aims at God, and ends in God. The highest project and ultimate end that a soul thus sincere is big with, is how it may please God. The disappointment such a godly sincere person meets with from any other, troubles him no more than it would a merchant who speeds in the main end of his voyage to the Indies, and returns richly laden with the prize of gold and silver he went for, but only loseth his garter or shoe-string in the voyage. As the master's eye directs the servant's hand—if he can do his business to his master's mind, he hath his wish, though strangers who come into the shop like it not—thus 'godly sincerity' acquiesceth in the Lord's

judgment of him. Such a one shoots not at small nor great, studies not to accommodate himself to any, to hit the humour of rich or poor; but singles out God in his thoughts from all others, as the chief object of his love, fear, faith, joy, &c.; he directs all his endeavours like a wise archer at this white, and when he can most approve himself to God, he counts he shoots best. Hear holy Paul speaking, not only his own private thoughts, but the common sense of all sincere believers: 'We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him,' II Cor. 5:9. The world's true man is he that will not wrong man. Though many go thus far, who can make bold with God, for all their demure carriage to man; some that would not steal the worth of a penny from their neighbour, yet play notorious thieves with God in greater matters than all the money their neighbour hath is worth. They can steal that time from God—the Sabbath-day I mean—to gratify their own occasions, which he hath inclosed for himself, and lays peculiar claim to, by such a title as will upon trial be found stronger, I trow, than we can show for the rest of the week to be ours. Others will not lie to man possibly in their dealing with him—and it were better living in the world, if there were more of this truth among us—but these very men, many of them, yea, all that are not more than morally upright, make nothing of lying to God, which they do in every prayer they make, promising to do what they never bestow a serious thought how they may perform. They say they will sanctify God's name, and yet throw dirt on the face of every attribute in it; they pray that the will of God may be done, and yet, while they know their sanctification is his will, they content themselves with their unholy hearts and natures, and think it enough to beautify the front of their lives—that part which faceth man, and stands to the street, as I may so say—with a few flourishes of civility and justness in their worldly dealings, though their inward man lies all in woeful ruins at the same time. But he is God's true man that desires to give unto God the things that are God's, as well as unto man the things that are man's—yea, who is first true to God and then to man for his sake. Good Joseph—when his brethren feared as strangers to him (for yet they knew no other) [that] they should receive some hard measure at his hands—mark what course he takes to free their troubled thoughts from

all suspicion of any unrighteous dealing from him. 'This do,' saith he, 'and live; for I fear God.' Gen. 42:18—as if he had said, 'Expect nothing from me but what is square and upright, for I fear God. You possibly think because I am a great man, and you poor strangers where you have no friends to intercede for you, that my might should bear down your right; but you may save yourselves the trouble of such jealous thoughts concerning me, for I see one infinitely more above me, than I seem to be above you, and him I fear—which I could not do if I should be false to you.' The word, II Cor. 1:12, for sincerity is emphatical, εἰλικρίνεια—a metaphor from things tried by the light of the sun, as when you are buying cloth, or such like ware, you will carry it out of the dark shop and hold it up to the light, by which the least hole in it is discovered; or, as the eagle, say some, holds up her young against the sun, and judgeth them her own if able to look up wishly against it, or spurious if not able. Truly that is the godly sincere soul, which looks up to heaven and desires to be determined in his thoughts, judgment, affections, and practices, as they can stand before the light which shines from thence through the word—the great luminary into which God hath gathered all light for guiding souls, as the sun in the firmament is for directing our bodies in their walking to and fro in the world. If these suit with the word, and can look on it without being put to shame by it, then on the sincere soul goes in his enterprise with courage; nothing shall stop him. But if any of these be found to shun the light of the word—as Adam would, if he could, the seeing of God—not being able to stand by its trial, then he is at his journey's end, and can be drawn forth by no arguments from the flesh; for it goes not on the flesh's errand but on God's, and he that sends him shall only stay him. Things are true or right as they agree with their first principles. When the counterpane agrees with the original writing, then it is true. Now the will of God is standard to all our wills, and he is the sincere man that labours to take the rule and measure of all his affections and actions from that. Hence David is called 'a man after God's own heart,' which is but a periphrasis of his sincerity, and is as much as if the Spirit of God had said he was an upright man—he carries on his heart the sculpture and image of God's heart, as it is engraved on the seal of the word. But

enough for the present. This may serve to show what is evangelical uprightness.

[What uncomeliness sincerity covers.]

SECOND INQUIRY. What uncomeliness doth sincerity cover? I answer, all, especially what is sinful.

First kind of uncomeliness. There are several external temporal privileges, in which if any fall short—such excellency does this vain world put in them, more than their intrinsical worth calls for—they are exposed to some dishonour, if not contempt, in the thoughts of others. Now where sincere grace is, it affords a fair cover to them all, yea, puts more abundant honour on the person, in sight of God, angels, and men also if wise, than the other can occasion contempt.

1. Beauty. This is the great idol, which the whole world wonders after, as they after the beast, Rev. 13, which, if God denies, and confines the souls of some to a more uncomely house—body I mean—than others, this their mean bodily presence prejudiceth them in the esteem of others. Now grace, if it be but graced with sincerity, shines through the cloud that nature hath darkened the countenance withal. A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, Ecc. 8:1. Who, that hath the use of his reason, would not prize and choose the vessel in the cellar full of generous wine, before a gilt tun that hangs up empty at the door for a sign? If sincere grace fills not the heart within, the beauty with which nature hath gilt the face without, makes the person but little worth. A beautiful person without true grace, is but a fair stinking weed—you know the best of such a one, if you look on him furthest off; whereas a sincere heart, without this outward beauty to commend it, is like some sweet flower not painted with such fine colours on the leaves—better in the hand than eye, to smell on than look on. The nearer you come to the sincere soul, the better you find him. Outward uncomeliness to true grace, is but as some old mean buildings you sometimes see stand before a goodly, stately house, which hide its glory only from the traveller that passeth by at some distance, but he that comes in sees its beauty, and admires it. Again,

2. A mean parentage and inglorious descent is much despised in the world. Well, how base soever

the stock and ignoble the birth be, when grace unfeigned comes, it brings arms with it—it clarifies the blood, and makes the house illustrious. 'Since thou wast precious in my eye, thou hast been honourable,' Isa. 43:4. Sincerity sets a mark of honour; if you see this star shining, though over a mean cottage, it tells thee a great prince dwells there, an heir of heaven. Sincerity brings the creature into alliance with a high family—no less than that of the high God; by which new alliance his own inglorious name is blotted out, and a new name given him. He bears the name of God, to whom he is joined by a faith unfeigned; and who dares say that the God of heaven's child, or Christ's bride, are of an ignoble birth? Again,

3. A low purse, as well as a low parentage, exposeth to contempt, yea more. Some, by their purse, redeem themselves in time, as they think, from the scorn of their mean stock. The little spring from whence the water came, by the time it hath run some miles, and swelled into a broad river, is out of sight and not inquired much after. But poverty, that itself sounds reproach in the ears of this proud world. Well, though a man were poor, even to a proverb, yet if a vein of true godliness, sincere grace, be but to be found running in his heart, here is a rich mine, that will lift him up above all the world's contempt. Such a one may possibly say he hath no money in his house, but he cannot say that he hath no treasure—that he is not rich—and speak true. He sure is rich, that hath a key to God's treasury. The sincere soul is rich in God; what God hath is his, 'all is yours, for ye are Christ's.' Again,

4. In a word, to name no more, parts and endowments of the mind, these are applauded above all the former by some. And indeed these carry in them an excellency, that stands more level to man's noblest faculty—reason—than the other. These others are so far beneath its spiritual nature, that—as Gideon's soldier's, some of them, could not drink the water till they bowed down on their knees—so neither could man take any relish in these, did he not first debase himself far beneath the lofty stature of his reasonable soul. But knowledge, parts, and abilities of the mind, these seem to lift up man's head, and make him that he loseth none of his height; and therefore none so contemptible by the wise world, as those that are of weak parts and mean intellectual abilities. Well,

now, let us see what cover sincerity hath for this nakedness of the mind, which seems the most shameful of all the rest. Where art thou, Christian, that I may tell thee—who sits lamenting, and bemoaning thy weak parts, and shallow understanding—what a happy man thou art, with thy honest sincere heart, beyond all compare with these, whose sparkling parts do so dazzle thine eyes, that thou canst not see thy own privilege above them? Their pearl is but in the head, and they may be toads for all that; but thine is in the heart. And it is the pearl of grace that is ‘the pearl of great price.’ Thy sincere heart sets thee higher in God’s heart, than thy weak parts do lay thee low in their deceived opinion. And thou, without the abilities of mind that they have, shalt find the way to heaven; but they, for all their strong parts, shall be tumbled down to hell, because they have not thy sincerity. Thy mean gifts do not make thee incapable of heaven’s glory, but their unsanctified gifts and endowments are sure to make them capable of more of hell’s shame and misery. In a word, though here thy head be weak and parts low, yet, for thy comfort know, thou shalt have a better head given thee to thy sincere heart, when thou comest to heaven, but their knowing heads shall not meet with better hearts in hell, but be yoked eternally to their own wicked ones in torment. But enough of this.

Second kind of uncomeliness. I come to the second kind of uncomeliness which sincerity covers, and that is sinful. Now this sinful uncomeliness must needs be the worst, because it lights on the most beautiful part—the soul. If dirt thrown on the face be more uncomely than on another member—because the face is the fairest—then, no uncomeliness like that which crocks¹⁴ and blacks the soul and spirit, because this is intended by God to be the prime seat of man’s beauty. Now that which most stains and deforms the soul, must be that which most opposeth its chief perfection, which, in its primitive creation, was, and can still be, no other than the beauty of holiness drawn on it by the Holy Spirit’s curious pencil. And what can that be but the soul-monster which is called sin? This hath marred man’s sweet counten-

ance, that he is no more like the beauty God created, than dead Sarah’s face was like that beauty which was a bait for the greatest princes, and made her husband go in fear of his life wherever he went. Nay, it is no more like the beauty God created, than the foul fiend, now a cursed devil in hell, is like to the holy angel he was in heaven. This wound which is given by sin to man’s nature, Christ hath undertaken to cure by his grace in his elect. The cure is begun here, but not so perfected, that no scar and blemish remains; and this is the great uncomeliness which sincerity lays its finger on and covers. But here the question may be as follows.

[How sincerity covers the saint’s uncomeliness.]

THIRD INQUIRY. How doth sincerity cover the saint’s sinful uncomeliness? I shall answer to this—First. Negatively, and show how it doth not. Second. Affirmatively—how it doth.

First. Negatively—how sincerity doth not cover them, and that in several particulars.

1. Sincerity doth not so cover the saint’s failings, as to take away their sinful nature. Wandering thoughts are sin in a saint, as well as in another. A weed will be a weed wherever it grows, though in a garden among choicest flowers. They mistake then, who, because the saint’s sins are covered, deny them to be sins.

2. It doth not cover them so, as to give us the least ground to think that God doth allow the Christian to commit the least sin more than others. Indeed, it is inconsistent with God’s holiness to give, and with a saint’s sincerity to pretend such a dispensation to be given them. A father may, out of his love and indulgence and love to his child, pass by a failing in his waiting on him, as if he spills the wine, or breaks the glass he is bringing to him, but sure he will not allow him to throw it down carelessly or willingly. Though a man may be easily entreated to forgive his friend, that wounded him unawares, when he meant him no hurt, yet he will not beforehand give him leave to do it.

3. It doth not cover them so, as that God should not see them, which is not only derogatory to his omniscience, but to his mercy also, for he cannot pardon what he doth not first see to be sin. God doth not

14. To crock, i.e. to blacken with soot, or any matter produced by combustion. — ED.

only see the sins of his children, but their failings are more distasteful to him than others', because the persons in which they are found are so dear, and stand so near to him. A dunghill in a prince's chamber would be more offensive to him, than one far off from his court. The Christian's bosom is God's court, throne, temple; there he hath taken up his rest forever. Sin there must needs be very unsavoury to his nostrils.

4. It doth not so cover them, as that the saints need not confess them—be humbled under them, or sue out a pardon for them. A penny is as due debt as a pound, and therefore to be acknowledged. Indeed, that which is a sin of infirmity in the committing, becomes a sin of presumption by hiding of it, and hardening in it. Job held fast his integrity throughout his sad conflict, yet those failings which escaped him in the paroxysm of his afflictions brought him upon his knees: 'I abhor myself,' saith he, 'and repent in dust and ashes,' Job 42:6.

5. It doth not so cover them, as if our sincerity did the least merit and deserve that God should for it cover our other failings and infirmities. Were there such a thing as obedience absolutely complete, it could not merit pardon for past sins; much less can an imperfect obedience, as sincerity is in a strict sense, deserve it for present failings. Obedience legally perfect is no more than, as creatures, we owe to the law of God; and how could that pay the debt of sin, which of itself was due debt, before any sin was committed? Much less can evangelical obedience—which is sincerity—do it; that falls short by far of that obedience we do owe. If he that owes twenty pounds merits nothing when he pays the whole sum, then surely he doth not, that of the twenty pounds he owes pays but twenty pence. Indeed, creditors may take what they please, and if they will say half satisfies them, it is discharge enough to the debtor. But where did ever God say he would thus compound with his creature? God stands as strictly upon it in the gospel-covenant to have the whole debt paid, as he did in the first of works. There was required a full righteousness in keeping, or a full curse for breaking of the law. So there is in the evangelical; only here the wards of the lock are changed. God required this at the creature's hand in the first covenant to be personally performed or endured; but in the gospel-covenant he is content

to take both at the hands of Christ our surety, and impute these to the sincere soul that unfeignedly believes on him, and gives up himself to him.

Second. Positively—how sincerity doth cover the saint's uncomelinesses.

1. Sincerity is that property to which pardoning mercy is annexed. True, indeed, it is Christ that covers all our sins and failings, but it is only the sincere soul over which he will cast his skirt. 'Blessed is he...whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,' Ps. 32:2. None will doubt this; but which is the man? the next words tell us his name—'and in whose spirit there is no guile.' Christ's righteousness is the garment that covers the nakedness and shame of our unrighteousness, faith the grace that puts this garment on. But what faith? none but the 'faith unfeigned,' as Paul calls it, II Tim. 1:5. 'Here is water,' saith the eunuch, 'what doth hinder me to be baptized?' Acts 8:36. Now mark Philip's answer, ver. 37, 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest;' as if he had said, Nothing but a hypocritical heart can hinder thee. It is the false heart only that finds the door of mercy shut. He that promiseth to cover the sincere soul's failings, threatens to uncover the hypocrite's impiety. 'He that perverteth his ways shall be known,' that is, to his shame, Prov. 10:9.

2. Where sincerity is, God approves of that soul, as a holy righteous person, notwithstanding that mixture of sin which is found in him. As God doth not like the saint's sin, for his sincerity, so he doth not unsaint him for that. God will set his hand to Lot's testimonial that he is a righteous man. Though many sins are recorded in the Scripture which he fell into—and foul ones too—yet Job is regarded perfect, because the frame of his heart was sincere, the tenure of his life holy; and he was rather surprised by his sins as temptations, than they entertained by him upon choice. Though sincerity doth not blind God's eye that he should no see the saint's sin, yet it makes him see it with a pitiful eye, and not a wrathful; as a husband knowing his wife faithful to him in the main, pities her in other weaknesses, and for all them accounts her a good wife. 'In all this,' saith God, 'Job sinned not.' And at the very close of his combat, God brings him out of the field with his honourable testimony to his friends that had taken so much pains to

bring his godliness in question; that his servant Job had 'spoken right of him.' Truly God said more of Job than he durst of himself. He freely confesseth his unadvised froward speeches, and cries out, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' God saw Job's sins attended with sincerity, and therefore judged him perfect and righteous. Job saw his sincerity dashed with many sad failings, and this made him, in the close of all, rather confess his sins with shame, than glory in his grace.

God's mercy is larger to his children, than their charity is many times to themselves and their brethren. (1.) To themselves. Do you think the prodigal—the emblem of a convert—durst have asked the robe, or desired his father to at such cost for his entertainment, as his father freely bestowed on him? No sure, a room in the kitchen, we see, was as high as he durst ask. To be among the meanest servants of the house—poor soul! he could not conceive he should have such a meeting with his father at first sight. A robe! he might rather look for a rope, at least a rod. A feast at his father's table! O, unlooked for welcome! I doubt not but if any had met him on his way, and told him that his father was resolved as soon as he came home, not to let him see his face, but presently pack him to bridewell, there to whipped and fed with bread and water for many months, and then perhaps he would at last look on him and take him home—I doubt not but, in his starving condition, this would have been good news to him. But as God hath strange punishments for the wicked, so he hath strange expressions of love and mercy for sincere souls. He loves to outdo their highest expectations, kiss, robe, feast, all in one day, and that the first day of his return, when the memory of his outrageous wickednesses were fresh, and the stinkingscent of the swill and swine from which he was but newly come hardly gone! What a great favourite is sincerity with the God of heaven! (2.) Again, God's mercy is larger to his children, than their charity is towards one another. Those whom we are ready to unsaint for their failings that appear in their lives, God owns for his perfect ones, because of their sincerity. We find Asa's failings expressed, and his perfection vouched by God together, as I may say, in a breath, II Chr. 15:17. It was well that God cleared that good man, for had but the naked story of his life, as it stands in the

Scripture, been recorded, without any express testimony, of God's approving him, his godliness would have hazarded a coming under dispute in the opinion of good men; yea, many more with him—concerning whom we are now put out of doubt, because we find them canonized for saints by God himself—would have been cast, if a jury of men, and those holy men too, had gone upon them. Elijah himself, because he saw none have such zeal for God and his worship, as to wear their colours openly in a free profession, and hang out a flag of defiance against the idolatry of the times, by a stout opposing it as he did—which might be their sin—makes a sad moan to God, as if the apostasy had been so general, that the whole species of the godly had been preserved in his single person. But God brings the holy man better news, 'I have left seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed down to Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him,' I Kings 19:18. As if God had said, 'Comfort thyself, Elijah. Though my number be not great, yet neither is there such a dearth of saints as thou fearest in this ungodly age. It is true their faith is weak, they dare not justle with the sins of the age as thou dost, for which thou shalt not lose thy reward; yet those night-disciples, that for fear carry their light in a dark lantern—having some sincerity, which keeps them from polluting themselves with these idolatries—must not, shall not be disowned by me.' Yea, God who bids us be most tender of his lambs, is much more tender of them himself. Observable is that place, I John 2:12-14. There are three ranks of saints, 'fathers,' 'young men,' 'little children.' and the Spirit of God chiefly shows his tender care of them; as by mentioning them first, ver. 12, so by leaving the sweet promise of pardoning mercy in their lap and bosom, rather than in either of the other. 'I write unto you, little children, for your sins are forgiven you for my name's sake.' But are not the fathers' sins, and young men's also forgiven? Yes, who doubts it? But he doth not so particularly apply it to them, as to these; because these, from the sense of their own failings—out of which the other were more grown—were more prone to dispute against this promise in their own bosoms. Yea, he doth not only in plain terms tell them their sins are forgiven, but meets with the secret objection which comes forth from trembling hearts in opposition to this good news, taken from

their own vileness and unworthiness, and stoops its mouth with this, “forgiven for my name’s sake”—a greater name than the name of their biggest sin, which discourageth them from believing.

3. Sincerity keeps up the soul’s credit at the throne of grace, so that no sinful infirmity can hinder its welcome with God. It is the regarding of iniquity in the heart, not the having of it, [that] stops God’s ear from hearing our prayer. This is a temptation not a few have found some work to get over—whether such as they who see so many sinful failings in themselves, may take the boldness to pray, or, without presuming to expect audience, when they have prayed; and it sometimes prevails so far, that because they cannot pray as they would, therefore they forbear what they should—much like some poor people that keep from the congregation because they have not such clothes to come in as they desire. To meet with such as are turning away from duty upon this fear, the promises—which are our only ground for prayer, and chief plea in prayer—are accommodated, and fitted to the lowest degree of grace; so that, as a picture well drawn faceth all in the room alike that look on it, so the promises of the gospel-covenant smile upon all that sincerely look to God in Christ. It is not said, ‘If you have faith like a cedar,’ but ‘if you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove,’ Matt. 17:20. Neither is justifying faith beneath miraculous faith in its own sphere of activity. The least faith on Christ, if sincere, as truly removes the mountainous guilt of sin from the soul, as the strongest. Hence all the saints are said to have ‘like precious faith,’ II Peter 1:1. Sarah’s faith, which in Genesis we can hardly see—as the story presents her—wherein it appeared, obtains an honourable mention, Heb. 11:11, where God owns her for a believer as well as Abraham with his stronger faith. What love is it the promise entails the favours of God upon? Is it not, “grace be with them that love our Lord Jesus” {not} with a seraphim’s love, but with a sincere love, Eph 6:24. It is not ‘Blessed they who are holy to such a measure;’—this would have fitted but some saints. The greatest part would have gone away and said, ‘There is nothing for me, I am not so holy.’ But that no saint might lose his portion, it is, ‘Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness;’ and this

takes in all the children of God, even to the least babe that is newly born this day to Christ. The new convert hungers after holiness and that sincerely. And wherefore all this care so to lay the promises, but to show that when we go to make use of any promise at the throne of grace, we should not question our welcome, for any of our infirmities, if so be, this stamp of sincerity is upon our hearts? Indeed, if sincerity did not thus much for the saint, there could not be a prayer accepted of God, at the hands of any saint that ever was or shall be on earth to the end of the world, because there never was nor shall be such a saint dwelling in flesh here below, in whom eminent failings may not be found. The apostle would have us know that Elijah, who did as great wonders in heaven and earth too by prayer, as who greatest? yet this man—God could soon have picked a hole in his coat. Indeed, lest we attribute the prevalency of his prayers to the dignity of his person, and some eminency which he had by himself in grace above others, the Spirit of God tells us, he was of the same make with his poor brethren. ‘Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed,’ &c., James 5:17, 18. A weak hand with a sincere heart is able to turn the key in prayer.

[Why sincerity covers the saint’s uncomelinesses.]

FOURTH INQUIRY. Now follows the fourth query. Whence is it that sincerity thus covers the saint’s uncomelinesses.

Reason First. It flows from the grace of the gospel-covenant, that relaxeth the rigour of the law, which called for complete obedience; by resolving all that into this of sincerity and truth of heart. Thus God, when entering into covenant with Abraham, expresseth himself, ‘I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect’ or sincere, Gen. 17:1. As if God had said to him, ‘Abraham, see here what I expect at thy hands,’ and what thou mayest expect at mine. I look that thou shouldst ‘set me before thee,’ whom in thy whole course and walking thou wilt sincerely endeavour to please and approve thyself to, and at my hands thou mayest promise thyself what an ‘Almighty God can do,’ both in protecting thee in thy obedience, and pardoning of thee, where thou fallest short of perfect obedience.’ Walk but in the truth of

thy heart before me, and in Christ I will accept thee and thy sincere endeavour, as kindly as I would have done Adam, if he had kept his place in innocency, and never sinned. Indeed, a sincere heart by virtue of this covenant might—I mean the covenant would bear him out and defend him in it, relying on Christ—converse with God, and walk before him with as much freedom, and more familiarity, by reason of a nearer relation it hath, than ever Adam did, when god and he were best friends. ‘If our heart condemn us not, then,’ saith the apostle, ‘we have confidence towards God,’ I John 3:21; παρρησίαν ἔχομεν—we have a boldness of face. And it is not the presence of sin in us, as the covenant now stands, that conscience can, or, if rightly informed concerning the tenure of it, will condemn us for. Paul’s conscience cleared him, yea, afforded matter of rejoicing, and holy glorying, at the same time he found sin stirring in him. No, conscience is set by God to judge for him in the private court of our own bosoms, and it is bound up by a law, what sentence to give for, or against, and that is the same, by which Christ himself will acquit or condemn the world at the last day. Now when we go upon the trial for our lives, before Christ’s bar, the great inquest will be, whether we have been sincere or not; and as Christ will not then condemn the sincere soul, though a thousand sins could be objected against it, so neither can our hearts condemn us.

But here it may be asked, how comes God so favourable in the covenant of the gospel, to accept an obedience so imperfect at his saints’ hands, who was so strict with Adam in the first, that the least failing, though but once escaping him, was to be accounted unpardonable? The resolution of this question takes in these two particulars.

1. In the covenant God made with mankind in Adam, there was no sponsor or surety to stand bound to God for man’s performance of his part in the covenant, which was perfect obedience, and therefore God could do no other but stand strictly with him; because he had none else from whom he might recover his glory, and thereby pay himself for the wrong man’s default might do him; but in the gospel-covenant there is a surety—Christ the righteous—who stands responsible to God for all the defaults and failings which occur in the Christian’s course. The Lord Jesus doth not only take upon him to dis-

charge the vast sums of those sins, which he finds them charged with before conversion; but for all those dribbling debts, which afterward, through their infirmity, they contract. ‘If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins,’ I John 2:1, 2, so that God may without impeachment to his justice cross the saints’ debts, which he is paid for by their surety. It is mercy indeed to the saints, but justice to Christ, that he should. O happy conjunction where mercy and justice thus conspire and kiss each other!

2. God did, and well might, require full and perfect obedience of man in the first covenant, because he was in a perfect state, of full power and ability to perform it, so that God looked to reap no more than he had planted. But in the gospel-covenant God doth not at first infuse into the believer full grace, but true grace; and accordingly he expects not full obedience, but sincere. He considers our frame, and every believer is, if I may so say, rated in God’s books as the stock of grace is, which God gives to set up withal at first.

Reason Second. The second reason may be taken from the great love he bears, and liking he takes, to this disposition of heart; upon which follows this act of grace, to cover their failings where he spies it. It is the nature of love to cover infirmities, even to a multitude. Esther transgressed the law, by coming into Ahasuerus’ presence before she was sent for; but love soon erected a pardon-office in the king’s breast, to forgive her that fault; and truly she did not find so much favour in the eyes of that great monarch, as the sincere soul doth in the eyes of the great God. He did not more delight in Esther’s beauty, than God doth in this; ‘such as are upright in their way are his delight,’ Prov. 11:20. His soul closeth with that man as one that suits with the disposition of his own holy nature—one whose heart is right with his heart. And so, with infinite content to see a ray of his own excellency sparkle in his creature, he delights in him, and takes him by the hand, to lift him up into the bosom of his love, a better chariot, I trow, than that which Jehu preferred Jehonadab to, for his faithfulness to him. You seldom find any spoken of as upright in the Scripture, that are passed over with a plain naked inscription of their uprightness; but some circumstance there is, which, like the costly work and curious

engraving about some tombs, tell the passenger, they are no ordinary men that lie there. God, speaking of Job's uprightness, represents him as a nonesuch in his age. 'None like him in the earth, a perfect man, and upright.' Mention was before made of his vast estate, and in that also he was a nonesuch. But when God comes to glory over Satan, by telling what a servant he had to wait on him, he doth not count this worth the telling the devil of. He sayeth not, 'Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none so rich?' but, 'none so upright,' Job 1:8.

When God speaks to Caleb's uprightness, see to what a height he exalts him. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land, &c, Num. 14:24. As if God had said, Here is a man I do not count myself disparaged to own him for my servant and special favourite; he is one that carries more worth in him than the whole multitude of murmuring Israelites besides. He had 'another spirit'—that is, for excellency and nobleness, far above the rest. And wherein did this appear? The next words resolve us, 'He hath followed me fully.' Now that which gained him this great honour from God's own mouth, we shall find to be his sincerity, and especially in that business when he went to search the land of Canaan. Joshua 14:7, compare with ver. 9. He had great temptations to tell another tale. The Israelites were so sick of their enterprise, that he would be the welcomest messenger that brought the worst news, from which they might have some colour for their murmuring against Moses, who had brought them into such straits; and of twelve that were sent, there were ten that suited their answer to this discontented humour of the people; so that by making a contrary report to theirs, he did not only come under suspicion of a liar, but hazard his life among an enraged people. Yet such was the courage of this holy man, faithfulness to his trust, and trust in his God, that he saith himself, Joshua 14:7, he 'brought him'—that is, Moses, who had sent him—'word again, as it was in his heart,' that is, he did not for fear or favour accommodate himself, but what in his conscience he thought true, that he spake; and this, because it was an eminent proof of his sincerity, is called by Moses, ver. 9, following God fully; for which the Lord erects such a pillar of remembrance over his head, that shall stand as long as

Scripture itself.

To give but one instance more, and that is of Nathaniel, at first sight of whom, Christ cannot forbear, but lets all about him know how highly he was in his favour. 'Behold,' saith he of him, 'an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile,' John 1:47. Christ's heart, like the babe in Elizabeth's womb when Mary saluted her—seemed thus to leap at the coming of Nathaniel, yea, comes forth in this expression, not to flatter him into an over-weening conceit of himself—Christ knew what an humble soul he spake to—but to bear witness to his own grace in him, especially this of sincerity—that knowing what a high price and value heaven sets upon the head of this grace, they might, like wise merchants, store themselves with it more abundantly. His simplicity of heart made him 'an Israelite indeed.' Many goodly shows and pompous outsides were to be seen among the Pharisees, but they were a company of base projectors and designers. Even when some of them came to Christ, extolling him for his sincerity, 'Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth,' Matt. 22:16, then did they play the hypocrites, and had a plot to decoy him by his glozing¹⁵ speech into danger; as you may perceive, ver. 15—they came that 'they might entangle him.' But good Nathaniel had no plot in his head in his coming, but to find the Messiah he looked for, and eternal life by him, and therefore, though he was for the present wrapped up in that common error of the times, that no prophet could come out of Galilee, John 7:52—much less so a great one as the Messiah, out of such an obscure place in Galilee as Nazareth—yet Christ, seeing the honesty and uprightness of his heart, doth not suffer his ignorance and error to prejudice him in his thoughts of him.

[Two effects inseparable from sincerity.]

Now to give some account of why this grace of sincerity is so taking with and delightful to God, that it even captivates him in love to the soul where he finds it, there are two things which are the inseparable companions of sincerity, yea, effects flowing from

15. Glozing i.e. flattering, wheedling or fawning. — ED.

it, that are very taking to draw love both from God and man.

First. Effect. Sincerity makes the soul willing. When it is clogged with so many infirmities, as to disable it from the full performance of its duty, yet then the soul stands on tip-toe to be gone after it, as the hawk upon the hand, as soon as ever it sees her game, launcheth forth, and would be upon the wing after it, though possibly held by its sheath to the fist. Thus the sincere soul is inwardly pricked and provoked by a strong desire after its duty, though kept back by infirmities. A perfect heart and a willing mind are joined together. It is David's counsel to his son Solomon, to 'serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind,' I Chr. 28:9. A false heart is a shifting heart—puts off its work so long as it dares. And it is little thanks to set about work when the rod is taken down. Yet hypocrites are like tops that go no longer than they are whipped, but the sincere soul is ready and forward, it doth not want will to do a duty when it wants skill and strength how to do it. 'The Levites' are said to be 'more upright in heart to sanctify themselves, than the priests' were, II Chr. 29:34. How appeared that? In this, that they were more forward and willing to the work. No sooner did the word come out of the good king's mouth, concerning a reformation, ver. 10, than presently the Levites arose to 'sanctify themselves.' But some of the priests had not such a mind to the business, and therefore were not so soon ready, ver. 34, showing more policy than piety therein—as if they would stay, and see first how the times would prove before they would engage. Reformation work is but an icy path, which cowardly spirits love to have well beaten by others, before they dare come on it. But sincerity is of better metal. Like the true traveller, that no weather shall keep from going his journey when set, the upright man looks not at the clouds, stands not thinking this or that to discourage him, but takes his warrant from the word of God, and having that, nothing but a countermand from the same God that sets him a work shall turn him back. His heart is uniform to the will of God. If God saith, 'Seek my face,' it rebounds and echos back again, 'Thy face will I seek,' yea, Lord; as if David had said with a good will, Thy word is press money enough to carry me from this duty to that whither thou pleasest. May be when the sincere soul is about

a duty, he doth it weakly; yet this very willingness of the heart is wonderful pleasing to God. How doth it affect and take the father, when he bids his little child go and bring him such a thing, that may be as much as he can well lift, to see him not stand and shrug at the command as hard, but run to it, and put forth his whole strength about it; though at last may be he cannot do it, yet the willingness of the child pleaseth him, so that his weakness rather stirs up the father to pity and help him, than provokes him to chide him. Christ throws this covering over his disciples' infirmities—'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' O! this obedience that, like the dropping honey, comes without squeezing, though but little of it, tastes but sweetly on God's palate, and such is sincere obedience.

Second Effect. Sincerity makes the soul very open and free to God. Though the sincere soul hath many infirmities, yet it desires to cloak and hide none of this from God, no, if it could, it would not, and this is that which delights God exceedingly. To be sure he will cover what such a soul uncovers. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive, I John 1:9. It was a high piece of ingenuity and clemency in Augustus, that having promised by proclamation a great sum of money to any that should bring him the head of a famous pirate, did yet, when the pirate, who had heard of this, brought it himself to him and laid it at his foot, not only pardon him for his former offences against him, but rewarded him for his great confidence in his mercy. Truly thus doth God. Though his wrath be revealed against all sin and unrighteousness, yet when the soul itself comes freely and humbles itself before him, he cannot stretch forth his arm to strike that soul which gives such glory to his mercy; and this the sincere heart doth. Indeed, the hypocrite when he has sinned, hides it, as Achan his 'wedge of gold.' He sits brooding on his lust, as Rachel on her father's idols. It is as hard getting a hen off her nest, as such a one to come off his lusts, and disclose them freely to God. If God himself find him not out, he will not bewray himself. I cannot set out the different disposition of the sincere and false heart in this matter better, than by the like in a mercenary servant and a child.

When a servant—except it be one of a thousand—breaks a glass or spoils any of his master's goods,

all his care is to hide it from his master, and therefore he throws the pieces of it away into some dark hole or other, where he thinks they shall never be found, and now he is not troubled for the wrong he hath done his master, but glad he hath handled the matter so as not to be discovered. Thus the hypocrite would count himself a happy man, could he but lay his sin out of God's sight. It is not the treason he dislikes, but fears to be known that he is the traitor; and therefore, though it be as unfeasible to blind the eye of the Almighty, as with our hand to cover the face of the sun, that it should not shine, yet the hypocrite will attempt it. We find a woe pronounced against such, 'Woe unto them that dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord,' Isa. 29:15. This is a sort of sinners whose care is not to make their peace when they have offended, but to hold their peace, and stand demurely before God, as Gehazi before his master, as if they had been nowhere but where they should be. These are they whom God will put to shame to purpose. The Jews were far gone in this hypocrisy, when they justified themselves as a holy people, and put God so hard to it as to make him prove his charge, rather than confess what was too true and apparent. This God upbraids them for, 'How canst thou say, I am not polluted? I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done,' Jer. 2:23. Hast thou such a whorish forehead to justify thyself, and hypocritical heart to draw a fair cover over so foul practices? would you yet pass for saints, and be thought a people unpolluted? Now mark, it is not long but this hypocritical people that thus hid their sin hath shame enough, 'As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so,' saith the prophet, 'is the house of Israel ashamed,' ver. 26; that is, as the thief, who at first is so insolent as to deny the fact he is accused of, yet when upon the search the stolen goods are found about him, and he brought to justice for it, then he is put to double shame, for his theft, and impudence also in justifying himself. So it is with this people, and with all hypocrites; though while in peace and at ease they be brag and bold, yea, seem to scorn to be thought what they indeed are; yet there is a time coming—which is called 'their month wherein they shall be found,' ver. 2:24—when God's hue and cry will overtake them, his terrors ransack their consciences, and bring forth what they so stiffly denied, making it

appear to themselves, and others also, what juggling and deceit they have used to shift off their sin. It is easy to think what shame will cover their faces and weigh down their heads while this is doing. God loves to befool those who think they play their game so wisely; because, with Ahab, they fight against God in a disguise, and will not be known to be the men.

But the sincere soul takes another course, and speeds better. As a child when he hath committed a fault doth not stay till others go and tell his father what the matter is, nor till his father makes it appear by his frowning countenance that it is come to his ear; but freely, and of his own accord, goes presently to his father—being prompted by no other thing than the love he bears to his dear father, and the sorrow which his heart grows every moment he stays bigger and bigger withal for his offence—and easeth his aching heart by a free and full confession of his fault at his father's foot; and this with such plain-heartedness—giving his offence the weight of every aggravating circumstance—that if the devil himself should come after him to glean up what he hath left, he should hardly find wherewithal to make it appear blacker;—Thus doth the sincere soul confess to God, adding to his simplicity in confession of his sin such a flow of sorrow, that God, seeing his dear child in such danger of being carried down too far towards despair—if good news from him come not speedily to stay him—cannot but tune his voice rather into a strain of comforting him in his mourning than of chiding for his sin.

FIRST USE OR APPLICATION.

[The odious nature of hypocrisy
and its hatefulness to God.]

USE FIRST. Doth sincerity cover all defects? Then hypocrisy uncovers the soul, and strips it naked to its shame before God, when set forth with the richest embroidery of other excellencies. This is such a scab as frets into the choicest perfections, and alters the complexion of the soul; in God's eye, more than leprosy or pox can do the fairest face in ours. It is observable, the different character that is given of those two kings of Judah, Asa and Amaziah. Of the

first, 'But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days,' I Kings 15:14. He passeth current for a gracious person, and that with a non obstante—'nevertheless his heart was perfect.' Sincerity like true gold hath grains allowed for its lightness. His infirmities are not mentioned to stain his honour, and prejudice him in the opinion of any; but rather, as the wart or mole which the curious limner expresseth on purpose, the more to set forth the beauty of the other parts, so his failing are recorded to cast a greater lustre upon his sincerity; which could, notwithstanding these sins gain him such a testimony from God's own mouth. But of Amaziah, 'He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart,' II Chr. 25:2. The matter of his actions was good, but the scope and drift of his heart in them was naughty, and this but makes a foul blot upon all, and turns his right into wrong. Wherein his hypocrisy appeared is expressed, 'He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did,' II Kings 14:3. He did for a while what David did, as to the matter, but imitated Joash as to the manner, whose goodness was calculated to please man rather than God, as appeared upon the death of his good uncle Jehoiada. Him did Amaziah write after, and not after David in his uprightness. Thus we see that Asa's uprightness commends him in the midst of many failings, but hypocrisy condemns Amaziah doing that which was right. Sincerity! it is the life of all our graces, and puts life into all our duties, and, as life makes beautiful and keeps the body sweet, so sincerity the soul and all it doth. A prayer breathed from a sincere heart! it is heaven's delight. Take away sincerity, and God saith of prayer as Abraham of Sarah—whom living he loved dearly, and laid in his bosom—'Bury the dead out of my sight;' he hides his eyes, stops his nostril, as when some poisonous carrion is before us. 'Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me;...the calling of assemblies I cannot away with;...your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them,' Isa. 1:13,14. What stinking thing is this that God cries so out upon? it is nothing but hypocrisy. Surely, friends, that must needs be very loathsome, which makes God speak so coarsely of his own ordin-

ances, yea, make them a nehushtan—prayer no prayer, but a mere idol to be broken in pieces; faith no faith, but a fancy and a delusion; repentance no repentance, but a loud lie. 'They returned and enquired early after God,' Ps. 78:34; see how the Spirit of God glosseth upon this: 'Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him,' ver. 36,37. It smoked God out of his own house, and made him out of love with that place whereof he had said, it should be his 'resting-place for ever.' It brought the wrath of God upon that unhappy people to the uttermost. Mark how the commission runs which God gave the Assyrian, who was the bloody executioner of his wrath upon them. 'O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets,' Isa. 10:5,6; see Jer. 7:10-13. There needs not the coroner to be sent for, or a jury go upon this miserable people, to find out how they came to their dismal end; they were a 'hypocritical nation.' That was it they died of. God had rather see 'the abomination of desolation' standing in his temple making havoc of all, than the abomination of dissimulation mocking him to his face, while they worship him with their lips, and their lusts with their hearts. Of the two it is more tolerable in God's account to see a Belshazzar, that never had a name of being his servant, to quaff and carouse it to his gods profanely in the bowels of the sanctuary, than for a people that would pass for his servants to pollute them in his own worship by their cursed hypocrisy. If God be dishonoured, woe to that man of all that doth it under a show of honouring him. God singles out the hypocrite as that sort of sinner whom he would deal with hand to hand, and set himself even in this life to bear witness against in a more extraordinary manner than others. The thief, murderer, and other the like sinners, provision is made by God that the magistrate should meet with them, they come under his cognizance; but the hypocrite, he is one that sins more secretly, God alone is able to find him out, and he hath undertaken it, 'For every one of the house of Israel....which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, cometh to a

prophet to inquire of him concerning me,' Eze. 14:7. [This forms] an excellent description of a hypocrite; he is one that denies God his heart—reserving it for his idols, his lusts—yet is as forward as any to inquire after God in his ordinances. [He continues] 'I the Lord will answer him by myself.' And how will he answer him? 'And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord,' ver. 8; that is, my judgments shall be so remarkable on him, that he shall be a spectacle of my wrath for others to see and speak of. Thus God pays the hypocrite often in this life, as Ananias and Sapphira, who died by the hand of God with a lie sticking in their throats; and Judas, who purchased nothing by his hypocritical trade but a halter to hang himself withal. His playing the hypocrite with Christ ended in his playing the devil upon himself, when he became his own executioner. But if the hypocrite at any time steals out of the world before his vizard¹⁶ falls off, and the wrath of God falls on him, it will meet him sure enough in hell, and it will be poor comfort to him there to think how he hath cheated his neighbours in arriving at hell, whom they so confidently thought under sail for heaven. The good opinion which he hath left of himself in those that are on earth will cool no flames for him in hell, where lodgings are taken up, and bespoken for the hypocrite, as the chief guest expected in that infernal court. All other sinners seem but as younger brethren in damnation to the hypocrite, under whom, as the great heir, they receive every one their portion of wrath bequeathed to them by the justice of God. [In] Matt. 24:51, the evil servant is threatened by his master that he will 'cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.'

Question. But why should God be so angry with the hypocrite? He seems a tame creature to other sinners, that like wild beasts rage and raven, not fearing to open their mouth like so many wolves against heaven, as if they would tear God out of his throne by their blasphemies and horrid impieties.

The hypocrite is not thus woaded¹⁷ with impudency to sin at noon-day, and spread his tent with Absalom on the house-top. If he be naughty, it is in a corner. His maiden-blush modesty will not suffer him to declare his sin, and be seen in the company of it abroad. Nay, he denies himself of many sins which others maintain, and walks in the exercise of many duties which the atheistical spirits of the world deride and scorn. Why then should the hypocrite, that lives like a saint to others, be more distasteful to him?

Answer. Indeed, the hypocrite at first blush may be taken for a kind of saint by such as see only his outside, as he passeth by in his holiday dress, which he is beholden to for all the reputation he hath in the thoughts of others, and therefore is fitly by one called 'the stranger's saint,' but a devil to those that know him better. He is like some cunning cripple, that is fain to borrow help from art to hide the defects of nature, such as false hair to cover his baldness, an artificial eye to blind his blindness from others' sight, and the like for other parts. Here is much ado made to commend him for some beautiful person to others, but what a monster would he appear should one but see him through the key-hole as he is in his bed-chamber, where all these are laid aside? Truly such a one, and far more scareful, would the hypocrite be found, when out of his acting robes, which he makes use of only when he comes forth upon the stage to play the part of a saint before others. It were enough to affright us only to see the hypocrite uncased; what then will it be to himself, when he shall be laid open before men and angels! So odious this generation is to God, that it is not safe standing near them. Moses, that knew Korah, Dathan, and Abiram better than the people—who, taken with their seeming zeal, flocked after them in throngs—commands them to depart from the tents of those wicked men, except they had a mind to be consumed with them. Such horrid hypocrisy he expected vengeance would soon overtake. But that it may appear to be a sin 'exceeding sinful,' I shall give a few aggravations of it, in which so many reasons will be wrapped up why it is so odious to God.

16. Vizard:—A mask for disguise or protection. — SDB

17. Woaded: — Colored or dyed; stained. — SDB

[A few aggravations of hypocrisy.]

First Aggravation. Hypocrisy is a sin that offers violence to the very light of nature. That light which convinceth us there is a God, tells us he is to be served, and that in truth also, or all is to no purpose. A lie is a sin that would fly on the face of a heathen; and hypocrisy is the loudest lie, because it is given to God himself. So Peter told that dissembling wretch, 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God,' Acts 5:3, 4.

Second Aggravation. Hypocrisy cannot so properly be said to be one single sin, as the sinfulness of other sins. It is among sins, as sincerity among graces. Now that is not one grace but an ornament, that beautifies and graces all other graces. The preciousness of faith is, that it is 'unfeigned,' and of love to be 'without dissimulation.' Thus the odiousness of sins is, when they are committed in hypocrisy. David aggravates the sin of those jeering companions—who made their table talk, and could not taste their cheer except seasoned with some salt jest quibbled out at him—with this, that they were 'hypocritical mockers,' Ps. 35:16. They did it slyly, and wrapped up their scoffs, it is like, in such language as might make some who did not well observe them think that they applauded him. There is a way of commending which some have learned to use, when they mean to cast the greatest scorn upon those they hate bitterly; and these 'hypocritical mockers' deserve the chair to be given them from all others scorners. Fevers are counted malignant according to the degree of putrefaction that is in them. Hypocrisy is the very putrefaction and rottenness of the heart. The more of this putrid stuff there is in any sin, the more malignant it is. David speaks of 'the iniquity of his sin,' 'I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,' Ps. 32:5. This sin seems very probably to have been his adultery with Bathsheba, and murder of Uriah, by his long 'keeping silence,' ver. 3; by the pardon he had immediately given in upon confessing, ver. 5, which we know Nathan delivered to him; and by his further purpose to continue confessing of it, which appeared by the mournful Psalm 51, that followed upon his discourse

with Nathan. Now David, to make the pardoning mercy of God more illustrious, saith he did not only forgive his sin, but the iniquity of his sin. And what was that? Surely the worst that can be said of that his complicated sin is, that there was so much hypocrisy in it. He woefully juggled with God and man in it. This, I do not doubt to say, was 'the iniquity of his sin,' and put a colour deeper on it than the blood which he shed. And the rather I lay the accent there, because God himself, when he would set out the heinousness of this sin, seems to do it rather from the hypocrisy in the fact, than the fact itself, as appears by the testimony given this holy man: 'David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite,' 1 Kings 15:5. Were there not other wry steps that David took besides this? doth the Spirit of God, by excepting this, declare his approbation of all that else he ever did? No, sure. The Spirit of God records other sins that escaped this eminent servant of the Lord; but all those are drowned here, and this mentioned as the only stain of his life. But why? Surely because there appeared less sincerity, yea more hypocrisy, in this one sin than in all his other put together. Though David in them was wrong as to the matter of his actions, yet his heart was more right in the manner of committing them. But here his sincerity was sadly wounded, though not to the total destruction of the habit, yet to lay it in a long swoon, as to any actings thereof. And truly the wound went very deep when that grace was stabbed in which did run the life-blood of all the rest. We see then that God had reason—though his mercy prompted him, yea, his covenant obliged him, not to let his child die of this wound, I mean finally miscarry of this sin, either through want of repentance on the one hand, or pardoning mercy on the other—so to heal it that a scar might remain upon the place, a mark upon the sin, whereby others might know how odious hypocrisy is to God.

Third Aggravation. Those considerations which may seem at first to lessen and pare off something from the heinousness of the hypocrite's sin, viz. that he walks in a religious habit, hath a form of piety which others want, and performs duties that others neglect—these and the like are so far from taking

from, that they add a further weight of aggravation to it. Let us consider the hypocrite in a twofold respect, and this will appear, either in the things he trades about; or secondly, in the things he lays claim to; these are both high and sacred, and a sin in these can be no ordinary sin. The things he trades in are duties of God's worship. The things he lays claim to are relation to God, interest in Christ, consolations of the Spirit, and the like. These are things of high price—a miscarriage about these must be somewhat suitable to their high nature. As is the wool so is the thread and the cloth, coarse or fine. The profane person pretends not to these. He cannot spin so fine a thread, because the work he deals in is coarser. All his impieties will not have so high a price of wrath set upon them which he, being ignorant of God, and a stranger to the ways of God, hath committed, as the hypocrite's impieties will.

[The things the hypocrite trades in
and lays claim to.]

First. The hypocrite trades in the duties of God's worship. Judas sits down with the rest of the apostles at the passover, and bids himself welcome as confidently as if he were the best guest—the holiest of all the company. The proud Pharisee gets to the temple as soon as the broken-hearted publican. But what work doth the hypocrite make with these things that would be known indeed. Sad work, the Lord knows, or else God would not so abominate them as to think he hears a dog bark, or a wolf howl all the while they are praying. We think David had a curious hand at the harp that could pacify the evil raging spirit of melancholy Saul. But what a harsh unhappy stroke have they in the duties of God's worship, that are able to make the sweet meek Spirit of God angry, yea, break out into fury against them? And no wonder, if we consider but these two things.

1. The hypocrite does no less than mock God in all his duties. And of all things God can least bear that. God is not mocked. Christ preached this doctrine when he cursed the fig-tree, which did, by her green leaves, mock the passenger, making him come for fruit, and go ashamed without any. Had it wanted leaves as well as fruit, it had escaped that curse. Every lie is a mocking of him to whom it is told, be-

cause such a one goes to cheat him, and thereby puts the fool upon him. Why hast thou 'mocked me,' said Delilah to Samson, 'and told me lies?' Judges 16:10, as if she had said—as is usual upon the like with us—Do you make a fool of me? I leave it to the hypocrite to think seriously what he is going to make of God, when he puts up his hypocritical services. God's command was none should appear before him empty. This the hypocrite doth; and therefore mocks God. He comes indeed full-mouth, but empty-hearted. As to the formality of a duty, he oft exceeds the sincere Christian. He, if any, may truly be called a 'master of ceremonies,' because all that he entertains God with in duty, lies in the courtship of tongue and knee. How abhorrent this is to God may easily be judged by the disdain which even a wise man would express to be so served. Better to pretend no kindness, than, pretending, to intend none. It is the heart God looks at in duty. If the wine be good, he can drink it out of a wooden cup. But let the cup be never so gilded, and no wine in it, he makes account that man mocks him that would put it into his hand. It was Christ's charge against Sardis, 'I have not found thy works perfect before God,' Rev. 3:2. I have not found them full¹⁸ 'before God,' as the original hath it. Sincerity fills our duty and all our actions. And mark that phrase before God, which implies that this church retained such an outward form of devotion as might keep up her credit before men. She had 'a name to live,' but her works were not full before God. He pierced them deeper than man's probe could go, and judgeth her by what he found her within.

2. The hypocrite performs the duties of God's worship on some base design or other. This makes him but yet more abominable to God, who disdains to have his holy ordinances prostituted to serve the hypocrite's lust—used only as a stream to turn about his mill, and handsomely effect his carnal projects. When Absalom had formed his plot within his own unnatural bosom, and was as big with his treason as ever cockatrice was with her poisonous egg; to Hebron he goes in all haste, and that forsooth, to pay an old vow which in the time of his affliction he had made to the Lord, II Sam. 15:7,8. Who would not think

18. πεπληρωμένα.

the man was grown honest, when he begins to think of paying his old debts? But the wretch meant nothing less. His errand thither was to lay his treason under the warm wing of religion, that the reputation he should gain thereby might help the sooner to help to hatch it. And I wish, as Absalom died without a son to keep his name in remembrance, that so none had been left behind to inherit his cursed hypocrisy, that the world might have grown into a happy ignorance of so monstrous a sin. But alas, this is but a vain wish. *Vivit imo in templum venit*—this kind of hypocrisy yet lives, yea comes as boldly to out-face God in his worship as ever. Many make no better use of the exercise of it, than some do of their sedans, to carry them unseen to the enjoyment of their lust. And is it any wonder that God, who hath appointed his ordinances for such high and holy ends, should abhor the hypocrite, who thus debaseth them in the service of the devil? Did you invite some to a costly feast at your house, who instead of feeding on the dainties you have provided for them, should take and throw all to their dogs under the table; how would you like your guests? The hypocrite is he that casts God's holy things to the dogs. God invites us to his ordinances, as to a rich feast, where he is ready to entertain us in sweet communion with himself. What horrid impiety is it then that the hypocrite commits, who, when he is set at God's table, feeds not of these dainties himself, but throws all to his lusts—some to his pride, and some to his covetousness, propounding to himself no other end in coming to them than to make provision for these lusts. They act as Hamor, and Shechem his son, who, when they would persuade the people of their city to submit to circumcision, used this as a great argument to move them, that they should grow rich by the hand. 'If every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised, shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours?' *Gen. 34:22,23*. A goodly argument, was it not, in a business of such a high nature as coming under a solemn ordinance? They rather speak as if they were going to a horse-market or a cow-fair, than a religious duty. Truly, though most hypocrites have more wit than thus to print their thoughts, and let the world read what is writ in their hearts, yet as Queen Mary said of Callis—'If she were ripped up it would be found in her heart,'—so some low things, as vain-

glory, worldly profit, &c., would be found engraven in the breast of all hypocrites, as that which they most aim at in the duties of religion.

Second. Consider the hypocrite in the things he lays claim to; and they are no small privileges—relation to God and interest in Christ. Who more forward to saint himself, to pretend to the grace and comforts of the Spirit, than the hypocrite? We see this in the Pharisees, whose great design was to get a name, and that, not such as the great ones of the earth have for prowess—worldly majesty and the like—but for sanctity and holiness. And they had it, if it would do them any good. 'Verily,' saith Christ, 'they have their reward,' *Matt. 6:2*. They would be thought for great saints; and so they were by the multitude, who did so applaud them for their holiness which faced their outside, that they had a proverb, 'If but two could be saved, one of the two should be a Pharisee.' We read of some that profess they know God, but in works they deny him, *Titus 1:16*. They boldly brag of their acquaintance with God, and would be thought great favourites of his, though their lives are antipodes to heaven. So, *Rev. 3:9*, we meet with some that say they are Jews, and are not, but lie. They dwell sure by ill neighbours. None would say so much for them but themselves. The hypocrite is so ambitious to pass for a saint, that he commonly is a great censurer of the true graces of others, as too much hindering the prospect of his own; like Herod, who, as Eusebius writes, being troubled at the baseness of his own birth, burned the Jews' ancient genealogies, the better to defend his own pretended noble ascent. Who now is able to give a full accent to this high-climbing sin of the hypocrite? It is a sin that highly reproacheth God, to have such a vile wretch claim kindred with him. Christ indeed is not 'ashamed to call' the poorest saints 'brethren,' but he disdains to have his name seen upon a rotten-hearted hypocrite, as princes to have their effigies stamped on base metals. What scorn was put upon that mock-prince, Perkin Warbeck, who, having got some fragments of courtship and tutored how to act his part, was presented to the world as son to Edward the Fourth of this nation, but [who], when he had aped a while the state of a prince, was taken, and with his base ignoble pedigree, writ in great letters, pinned at his back, sent about, that wherever he came he might

carry his shame with him, till in the end he was sent to act the last part of his play at the gallows. But what is all this to the hypocrite's portion? who for abusing others here, with a seeming sanctity, as if indeed he was of heavenly extraction—a child of God—shall be brought at the great day, to be hissed and hooted at by men and angels, and after he had been put to this open shame to be thrown deepest into hell.

Of all sinners the hypocrite doth most mischief in this world, and therefore shall have most torment in the other. There is a double mischief which none stand at like advantage to do as the hypocrite by his seeming saintship. The one he doth while his credit holds, and he passeth for a child of God in the opinion of his neighbours; the other when his reputation is cracked, and he discovered to be what he is—a hypocrite. The mischief he doth when his mask is on, is as a deceiver. Machiavelli knew what he did in commending to princes a semblance of religion, though he forbade any more. It hath been found to be the most taking bait to decoy people into their snare, who come in apace when religion is the flag that is set up. Ehud could not have thought on a surer key to open all doors, and procure him admittance into king Eglon's presence, than to give out he had a message from the Lord to him. This raised such an expectation, and bred such confidence, that room is made for him. Presently all depart and he is left alone with the king. Yea, the king will rise to hear this message that comes from the Lord, and so gives him a greater advantage to run him into the bowels. Had some in our days pretended highly to saintship, I doubt not but they would have found the door shut, where now they have too much welcome, and find it easy to procure belief to their errors. Even the elect are in some danger, when one cried up for a saint is the messenger that brings the error to town, and that under the notion of a message from God.

I confess the hypocrite acts his part so handsomely, that he may do some good accidentally. His glistening profession, heavenly discourse, excellent gifts in prayer or preaching, may affect much the sincere soul, and be an occasion of real good to his soul. As the stage-player, though his tears be counterfeit, may stir up by his seeming passion real sorrow in his spectators, so as to make them weep in earnest; thus the hypocrite, acting his part with false affections,

may be a means to draw forth and excite the Christian's true graces. But then is such a Christian much more in danger to be ensnared by his error, because he will not be readily suspicious of anything that he brings, whom he hath found really helpful to his grace or comfort; and thus the good the hypocrite doth makes him but able to do the greater hurt in the end. Sisera had better have gone without Jael's butter and milk, than by them to be laid asleep against she came with her nail; and it had been far happier for many on our days not to have tasted of the gifts and seeming graces of some, than to have been so taken with this sweet wine, as to drink themselves drunk into an admiration of their persons, which hath laid them asleep, and thereby given them whom they have applauded so much, but advantage the more easily to fasten their nail to their heads—errors I mean, to their judgments. The other mischief the hypocrite doth is when discovered, and that is as he is a scandal to the ways of God, and the servants of God. It is said of Samson, 'The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life,' Judges 16:30. Truly the hypocrite doth more hurt when he is discovered—which is the death of his profession—than when he seemed to be alive. The wicked world that are not long seeking a staff to beat the saints with, have now one put into their hand by the hypocrite. O how they can run division upon this harsh note, and besmear the face of all professors with the dirt they see upon the false brother's coat, as if they could take the length of all their feet by the measure of one hypocrite. Hence comes such base language as this: 'They are all of a pack, not one better than another.' Indeed, this is very absurd reasoning. [It is] as if one should say that no coin were current and right silver, because now and then a brass shilling is found amongst the rest. But this language fits the mouth of the ungodly world. And woe be to the man that makes these arrows for them by his hypocrisy, which they shoot against saints; better he had been thrown with a millstone about his neck into the sea, than have lived to give such an occasion for the enemy to blaspheme.

SECOND USE OR APPLICATION

[Exhortation to all to see to it
WHETHER THEY BE SINCERE OR NOT.]

USE SECOND. Doth sincerity cover all a saint's infirmities? This shows how it behoves every one to try his ways and search narrowly his heart, whether he be sincere or hypocritical.

First Argument. It behoves thee to search thy heart so, because all depends on it—even all thou art worth in another world. It is thy making or marring for ever: 'Do good, O Lord....to them that are upright in their hearts; as for such as turn aside to crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity,' Ps. 125:4,5. That the end the hypocrite is sure to come to. He would indeed then fain pass for a saint, and crowd in among the godly, but God 'shall lead them forth with workers of iniquity'—company that better befits him. It is sincerity that shall carry it in that day. 'I will come,' saith Paul, 'to you shortly,...and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power; for the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love?' I Cor. 4:19. Oh friends! not Paul, but Christ, will shortly come unto us, and he will know, not the speech and soothing language of such as are puffed up with an empty name of profession, but will know the power, gauge the heart, and see what is in it. Now, will ye that he come with a rod, or in love, to judge you—as hypocrites, or to give you the euge¹⁹ of a faithful servant? Doth he not spend his time ill, that takes pains in his trade, and lays out all his stock upon such a commodity which, when he opens his stall, will be seized for false ware, and he clapped up for abusing the country? All that ever the hypocrite did, will in the great day of Christ be found counterfeit, and be sure to be laid by the heels in hell for going about to cheat God and man. Every man's works shall then be manifest, that day shall declare it. Even the sincere Christian where he hath tampered with hypocrisy shall lose that of his work; but the hypocrite, with his work, his soul also.

Second Argument. It behoves thee thus to try thy ways when you consider how hypocrisy lies close in the heart. If thou beest not very careful, thou mayest easily pass a false judgment on thyself. They who were sent to search the cellar under the parliament, at first saw nothing but coals and winter provision; but, upon a review, when they came to throw away that stuff they found all [to be] but provision for the devil's kitchen; then the mystery of iniquity was uncased, and the barrels of powder appeared. How many are there, that from some duties of piety they perform, some seeming zeal they express in profession, presently cry omnia benè—all things are well, and are so kind to themselves as to vote themselves good Christians, who, did they but take the pains to throw these aside, might find a foul hypocrite at the bottom of them all. Hypocrisy often takes up her lodging next door to sincerity, and so she passes un-found—the soul not suspecting hell can be so near heaven. And as hypocrisy, so sincerity, is hard to be discovered. This grace often lies low in the heart, hid with infirmities, like the sweet violet in some valley, or near some brook, hid with thorns and nettles, so that there requires both care and wisdom, that we neither let the weed of hypocrisy stand nor pluck up the herb of grace in its stead.

Third Argument. It behoves thee to search thy heart thus, because the exercise is feasible. I do not set you about an endless work. The heart of man I confess is as a ruffled skein of silk not easily un-snarled; yet with a faithful use of the means, it may be disentangled, and wound up on the right bottom of sincerity or hypocrisy. Job, when Satan and his cruel friends laboured to royle his spirit most, and muddy the stream of his former course and condition, by throwing their objections as so many stones into it; yet he could see this precious gem at the bottom sparkling most brightly. Yea, Hezekiah, in the very brim of the grave, recreates his spirit with it. Indeed, friends, this is a soul's encouragement, that it shall not want God's help in this search, if it goes about it with honest desires. A justice will not only give his warrant to search a suspicious house, but, if need be, will command others to be aiding to him in the business. Now word, ministers, Spirit, all thou shalt have for thy assistance in this work; only have a care thou dost not mock God in the business. That soul de-

19. Euge, Well done! — Ed.

serves to be damned to this sin, who, in the search for hypocrisy, plays the hypocrite, like a naughty, dishonest constable that willingly overlooks him whom he searcheth for, and then says he cannot find him. Now, for the fuller satisfaction in this point, and help in the trial; it is that which both good and bad are mistaken in—the camal wretch flattering himself his heart is good and honest; the sincere soul kept under fear of being a hypocrite, and Satan abusing them both. I shall therefore, First. lay down the grounds with which a hypocrite shores up his rotten house, and will show the falsities of them. Second. I will lay down the grounds of the weak Christian's fear for his being a hypocrite, and the weakness of them. Third. I will lay down such positive discoveries of sincerity as no hypocrite ever did or can reach to.

[The grounds of a hypocrite's profession and their falsities.]

First. I shall lay down the grounds with which a hypocrite shores up his rotten house, and will show the falsities of them. The hypocrite will stand upon his defence, his heart is sincere. Well how will he prove it?

1. False Ground. The hypocrite will say 'Sure I am no hypocrite, for I cannot endure it in another.'

Answer. This is not enough to clear thee from being a hypocrite, except thou canst show thou dost this from a holy ground. Jehu, that asked Jehonadab whether his heart was right, carried at that same time a false one in his own breast. It is very ordinary for a man to decry that in another, and smartly to declaim against it, which he all the while harbours himself. How severe was Judah against Tamar? He commands, in all haste, to burn her, Gen. 38:24. Who would not have thought this man to be chaste? Yet he was the very person that had defiled her. There may be a great cheat in this piece of zeal. Sometimes the very place a man is in, may carry him—as the *primum mobile*²⁰ [i.e. the first cause of motion] does the stars—in a motion which his own genius and

20. *Primum mobile*. This designates, in the ancient astronomy, a ninth heaven or sphere, supposed to be beyond the fixed stars, and to be the prime mover of all the lower spheres. — Ed.

liking would never lead him to. Thus many that are magistrates give the law to drunkards, and swearers, merely to keep the decorum of their place, and shun the clamour that would arise from their neglect, who can possibly do both, when they meet with place and company fit for their purpose. Some [there are whose] zeal against another's sin is kindled at the disgrace which reflects upon them by it in the eye of the world; and this falls out when the sin is public, and the person that committed it stands related. This is conceived to be Judah's case, who was willing his daughter should be taken out of the way, that the blot which she had brought on his family might with her be out of sight. Some again find it a thriving trade, and make this advantage of inveighing against others' faults, to hide their own the better, that they may carry on their own designs with less suspicion. Absalom asperseth²¹ his father's government, as a stirrup to help himself into the saddle. Jehu loved the crown more than he hated Jezebel's whoredoms, for all his loud cry against them. In a word—for it is impossible to hit all—there may be much of revenge in it, and the person is rather shot at than his sin. This was observed of Antony's zeal against Augustus, *odit tyrannum amavit tyrannidem*—he hated the tyrant, but loved well enough the tyranny.

2. False Ground. The hypocrite saith, 'I am bold and fearless in dangers; sure I am no hypocrite;' but it is 'the righteous' that 'is bold as a lion.'

Answer. The better way, sure, were to try thy boldness by thy sincerity, than to conclude thy sincerity by thy boldness. Truly confidence, and a spirit undaunted at death and danger, are glorious things, when the Spirit and Word of Christ stand by to vouch them—when the creature can give some account of the hope that is in him, as Paul, who shows how he came by it. This [is] Christian, not Roman courage, *Romans 5:1-4*. Many rooms one passeth before coming to this, which indeed joins upon heaven itself. Faith is the key which lets him into all. First, it opens the door of justification, and lets it into a state of peace and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, 'being justified through faith, we have peace with God

21. *Asperseth*:—1. Sprinkle esp. to sprinkle with holy water. 2 to vilify with injurious charges. — SDB

through our Lord Jesus Christ,' Romans 5:1. Through this he passeth on to another room—the presence-chamber of God's favour—and is admitted nigh unto him, as a traitor once pardoned is; 'by whom also we have access by him into this grace wherein we stand,' ver. 2; that is, we have not only our sins pardoned, and our persons reconciled to God by faith in Christ, but now under Christ's wing, we are brought to court as it were, and stand in his grace as favourites before their prince. This room opens into a third room—and 'rejoice in the hope of glory.' We do not only at present enjoy the grace and favour of God and communion with him here, but have from this a hope firmly planted in our hearts for heaven's glory hereafter. Now he is brought to the most inward room of all, which none can come at but he that goes through all the former, ver. 3. 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.' If thou hast not entered at these doors, thou art a thief and a robber; thou gettest thy confidence too quickly to have it brought to thy hand by God. If God means thee well for eternity, he will make thee smart for this thy boldness, as he did Jacob for stealing his father's blessing; and therefore content not thyself with a bare boldness and confidence in dangers, but inquire whether it hath a Scripture bottom and basis to stand on, or whether the pillars supporting it, be not ignorance in thy mind, and stupidity in thy conscience. If the latter, thou art in a sad condition. Thy boldness will last no longer than thou seest it doth in one that is drunk; who, when he is wine-sprung, thinks, as they say, he can skip over the moon, and ventures to go without fear upon precipices and pitfalls, [but,] when sober, trembles to see what he did in his drunken fit. Nabal that feared nothing when drunk—his heart dies within him and became as stone, at the story Abigail told him in the morning, when the wine was gone out of him, 1 Sam. 25:37. Therefore, as he [who,] when his cause miscarried through the sleepiness of the judge on the bench, 'appealed from the judge asleep to the judge awake;' so do I here with you, that through the present stupidity of conscience are bold and fearless of death, and from this plead your uprightness. I appeal from your conscience asleep, to the sentence it will give when it shall be awake; which I wish may be in this world, that you may see your mistake where you may amend it.

3. False Ground. 'Sure,' saith another, 'I am not a hypocrite; for I perform secret duties in my closet. The hypocrite is nobody, except on the stage. That is the brand of the hypocrite—he courts the world for its applause, and therefore does all abroad.'

Answer. Though the total neglect of secret duties in religion speaks a person to be a hypocrite, yet the performing of duties in secret will not demonstrate thee a sincere person. Hypocrisy is in this like the frogs brought on Egypt. No place was free of them, no, not their bed-chambers. They crept into their most inward rooms. And so doth hypocrisy into closet duties, as well as public. Indeed, though the place be secret where such duties are performed, yet the matter may be so handled, and is by some hypocrites, that they are not secret in their closets; like the hen that goes into a secret place to lay her egg, but by her cackling, tells all the house where she is, and what she is doing. But where this is not, it is not enough; for we must not think but some hypocrites may and do spin a thread finer than other. In all arts there are some exceed others, and so in this trade of hypocrisy. The gross hypocrite whose drift is to deceive others, his religion commonly is all without doors; but there is a hypocrite that labours to keep a fair quarter with himself, and is very desirous to make conscience on his side, to procure which, he will go to the utmost link of his chain, and do anything that may not separate him and his beloved lusts. Now secret prayer and other duties may be so performed, as that they shall not more prejudice a man's lusts than any other. It is not the sword, though very sharp, that kills, but the force that it is thrust withal. Indeed, there are some secret duties, as examination of our hearts, trying of our ways, and serious meditation of the threatenings of the word against such sins as we find in our own bosoms, which with close application of them to ourselves would put sin hard to it. But the hypocrite can lay this sword so easily and favourably on, that his lusts shall not cry 'Oh!' at it, therefore still there needs a melius inquirendum—a further search before thou canst come off.

4. False Ground. 'Sure I am not a hypocrite, for I do not only pray, and that in secret too, against my sins, but I also fight against them, yea, and that to good purpose, for I can show you the spoils of my victories, that I have got over some of them. There was

a time I could not by the ale-house, but my lust bade me stand, and pulled me in; but now I thank God, I have got such a mastery of my drunken lust, that I can pass by without looking in.'

Answer. It is good when thou dost say, and I wish all thy drunken neighbours could speak as much, that—when the magistrate will not, or cannot, spoil that drunken trade—they that keep those shops for the devil, might even shut up their windows for want of customers; but is it not pity that what is good should be marred in the doing? Yet it is too common, and may be thy case.

1. Let me ask thee, how long it hath been thus with thee? Lusts, as to the actings I mean, are like agues, the fit is not always on, and yet the man not rid of his disease. And some men's lusts, like some agues, have not such quick returns as others. The river does not move always one way. Now it is coming, anon, falling water; and, though it doth not rise when it falls, yet it hath not lost its other motion. Now the tide of lust is up, and anon it is down, and the man recoils and seems to run from it; but it returns again upon him. Who would have thought it to have seen Pharaoh in his mad fit again, that should have been with him in his good mood, when he bid Moses and the people go? But alas! the man was not altered. Thus, may be, when a strong occasion comes, this, like an easterly wind to some of our ports, will bring in the tide of thy lust so strongly, that thy soul that seemed as clear of thy lust as the naked sands are of water, will be in a few moments covered, and as deep under their waves as ever. But the longer the banks have held, the better; yet, shouldst thou never more be drunk as to the outward fulfilling of the lust, would this not be enough to clear thee from being a hypocrite? Therefore,

2. Let me ask thee what was the great motive to take thee off? That which keeps thee from the ale-house now, may be as bad, in some sense, as that which heretofore drew thee to it. It is ordinary for one lust but to spoil another's market. He that should save his money from guzzling it down his throat, to lay in more finery on his back, what doth this man, but rob one lust to sacrifice it to another? Whether was it God or man, God or thy purse, God or thy pride, God or thy reputation, that knocked thee off? If any but God prevailed with thee, hypo-

crite is a name will better now become thee than when in the ale-house. Again, if God, what apprehension of God were they that did it? Some, the wrath of God for some particular sin hath so shaked them, that, as one scared with an apparition in a room, cares not for lying there any more, so they dare not, at least for a long time, be acquainted with that practice again. And as it is not the room but the apparition, that the one dislikes, so it is not the sin, but the wrath of God that haunts it, which the other flees from. In a word, may be thou hast laid down this sinful practice; but didst thou hate it and love God, and so leave it? Thou art become strange to one; have you not got acquaintance with another the room of it? Thou hast laid down the commission of an evil; but hast thou taken up thy known duty? He is a bad husbandman that drains his ground, and then neither sows nor plants it. It is all one if it had been under water, as drained and not improved. What if thou cease to do evil, if it were possible, and thou learnest not to do well? It is not thy fields being clear of weeds, but fruitful in corn, that pays thy rent and brings thee in thy profit; nor thy not being drunk, unclean, or [guilty of] any other sin, but thy being holy, gracious, thy having faith unfeigned, pure love, and the other graces, which will prove thee sound, and bring in evidence for thy interest in Christ, and through him, in heaven.

[The grounds on which a weak Christian argues against his own uprightness, and their falsity.]

Second. I will lay down the grounds of the weak Christian's fear for his being a hypocrite, and the weakness of them; in other words, the false grounds from which sincere souls do many times go about to prove themselves hypocrites, yea, for a while conclude they are such.

1. False Ground. 'Sure I am a hypocrite,' saith the poor soul, 'or else I should not be as I am. God would not thus follow me on with one blow after another, and suffer Satan also to use me as he doth.' This was the grand battery Job's friends had against his sincerity, and sometimes Satan so far prevails as to make the sincere soul set it against his own breast, saying, much like him, 'If God be with us, why is all this befallen us?'—if God be in us by his grace, why

appears he against us?

Answer. This fire into which God casts thee, proves thou hast dross, and if, because thou art held long in the furnace, thou shouldst say thou hadst much dross, I would not oppose; but how thou shouldst spell 'hypocrite' out of thy afflictions and troubles, I marvel. The wicked indeed make much use of this argument to clap 'hypocrite' on them; but the Christian, methinks, should not use it against himself. Though the barbarians presently gave their verdict upon sight of the viper on Paul's hand, that he was 'a murderer,' yet Paul thought not worse of himself for it. Christian, give but the same counsel to thyself, when in affliction and temptation, that thou usest to do to thy fellow-brethren in the same condition, and thou wilt get out of this snare. Darest thou think thy neighbour a hypocrite merely from the hand of God upon him? No, I warrant thee, thou rather pitiest him, and helpst him to answer the doubts that arise in his spirit from this very argument. It would make one smile to see how handsomely and roundly a Christian can untie the knots and scruples of another, who afterward, when brought into the like condition, is gravelled²² with the same himself. He that helped his friend over the stile is now unable to stride it himself. God so orders things that we should need one another. She that is midwife to others cannot well do that office to herself; nor he that is the messenger to bring peace to the spirit of another, able to speak it to his own. The case is clear, Christian. Affliction cannot prove thee a hypocrite, which wert thou without altogether, thou mightest safer think thou wert a bastard. The case, I say, is clear, but thy eyes are held for some further end God hath to bring about by thy affliction. But may be thou wilt say, it is not simply the affliction makes thee think thus of thyself; but because thou art so long afflicted, and in the dark also, as to any sense of God's love in thy soul. Thou hast no smiles from God's sweet countenance to alleviate thy affliction, and if all were right, and thou a sincere child of God, would thy heavenly Father let thee lie groaning, and never look upon thee to lighten thy affliction with his sweet presence? As

22. Gravelled:—perplex, confound; irritate, nettle.

— SDB

to the first of these—the length of thy affliction. I know no standard God hath set for to measure the length of his saints' crosses by, and it becomes not us to make one ourselves. This we do, when we thus limit his chastisements to time, that if they exceed the day we have writ down in our own thoughts—which is like to be short enough, if our hasty hearts may appoint—then we are hypocrites. For the other; thou must know that God can, without any impeachment to his love, hide it for a while. And truly he may take it very ill that his children, who have security given them for his loving them—besides the sensible manifestation of it to their souls—should call this in question, for not coming to visit them, and take them up in his arms when they would have him. In a word, may be thy affliction comes in the nature of purging physic. God may intend to evacuate some corruption by it, which endangers thy spiritual health and hinder thy thriving in godliness. Now the manifestation of his love God may reserve, as physicians do their cordials, to be given when the physic is over.

2. False Ground. 'I fear I am a hypocrite,' saith the tempted soul; 'why else are there such decays and declensions to be found in me? It is the character of the upright that he goes from strength to strength, but I go backward from strength to weakness.' Some Christians—they are like those that we call close men in the world—if they lose anything in their trade, and all goes not as they would have it, we are sure to hear of that over and over again. They speak of their losses in every company; but when they make a good market, and gains come in apace, they keep this to themselves—not forward to speak of them. If Christians would be ingenuous, they should tell what they get as [well as] what they lose. But to take it for granted that thou dost find a decay, and to direct our answer to it.

Answer 1. I grant it as true that the sincere soul grows stronger and stronger—but how?—even as the tree grows higher and bigger, which we know meets with a fall of the leaf, and winter, that for a while intermits its growth. Thus the sincere soul may be put to a present stand by some temptation—as Peter, who was far from growing stronger when he fell from professing to denying Christ, from denying to swearing and cursing if he knew him. Yet as the tree, when spring comes, revives and gains more in the summer

than it loseth in the winter, so doth the sincere soul. Just as we see in Peter, whose grace that squatted in for a while came forth with such a force, shaking temptations, that no cruelty from men could drive it in ever after; [so will the sincere soul ever] end in settlement, according to the apostle's prayer, 'The God of all grace,...after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you,' 1 Peter 5:10.

Answer 2. There is a great difference between the decay of a sincere soul and of a hypocrite. The hypocrite declines out of an inward dislike of the ways of God. Hence they are called 'backsliders in heart,' Prov. 14:14. So long as they served his lust, and contributed any help to the obtaining his worldly interest, so long he had a seeming zeal; but the argument taken away, he begins to remit by degrees, till he comes to be key-cold, yea, as heartily sick of his profession as Ammon of Tamar. When the hypocrite begins to fall, he goes apace. Like a stone down the hill he knows no ground but the bottom. Now speak freely, poor soul. Darest thou say there is an inward dislike to the ways of God. May be thou dost pray not with that heat and fervency which thou hast; but is it because thou dost not like the duty as formerly? Thou dost not hear the word with such joy; but dost thou not therefore hear it with more sorrow? In a word, canst thou not say with the spouse, when thou sleepest thy 'heart waketh,' Song. 5:2; that is, thou art not pleased with thy present declining state, but heartily wishest thou wert out of it—as one that hath a great desire to rise and be at his work—his heart is awake—but is not able at present to shake off that sleep which binds him down. This will clear thee from being a hypocrite.

3. False Ground. 'I fear,' saith the poor soul, 'I am a hypocrite, because I have such a divided heart in the duties I perform. I cannot, for my life, enjoy any privacy with God in duty, but some base lust will be crowding into my thoughts when I am at prayer, hearing of the word, or meditating. Now I am lift up with a self-applauding thought, anon cast down to the earth with a worldly thought. What with one and another, little respite have I from such a company. And do such vermin breed anywhere but in the dung-hill of a false hypocritical heart?'

Answer. Woe were it to the best of saints, if the

mere rising and stirring of such thoughts as these, or worse than these, did prove the heart unsound; take heed thou concludest not thy state therefore, from the presence of these in thee, but from the comportment and behaviour of thy heart towards them. Answer therefore to these few interrogatories, and possibly thou mayest see thy sincerity through the mist these have raised in the soul.

(1.) Interrogatory. What friendly welcome have such thoughts with thee, when they present themselves to thee in duty? Are these the guests thou hast expected and trimmed thy room for? Didst thou go to duty to meet those friends, or do they unmannerly break in upon thee, and forcibly carry thee—as Christ foretold of Peter in another case—whither thou wouldst not? If so, why shouldst thou bring thy sincerity into dispute? Dost thou not know the devil is a bold intruder, and dares come where he knows there is none will bid him sit down? And that soul alone he can call his own house, where he finds rest, Luke 11:24. Suppose in your family, as you are kneeling down to prayer, a company of roisters should stand under your window, and all the while you are praying, they should be roaring and hallooing, this could not but much disturb you; but would you from the disturbance they make, fall to question your sincerity in the duty? Truly, it is all one whether the disturbance be in the room, or in the bosom, so the soul likes the one no more than he doth the other.

(2.) Interrogatory. Dost thou sit contented with this company, or use all the means thou canst to get rid of them, as soon as may be? Sincerity cannot sit still to see such doings in the soul; but, as a faithful servant when thieves break into his master's house, though [so] overpowered with their strength and multitude, that he cannot with his own hands thrust them out of doors, yet he will send out secretly for help, and raise the town upon them. Prayer is the sincere soul's messenger. It posts to heaven with full speed in this case; counting itself to be no other than in the belly of hell with Jonah, while it is yoked with such thoughts, and as glad when aid comes to rescue him out of their hands, as Lot was when Abraham recovered him from the kings that had carried him away prisoner.

Objection. But may be thou wilt say, though thou darest not deny that thy cry is sent to heaven

against them, yet thou hearest no news of thy prayer, but continuest still pestered with them as before, which increaseth thy fear that thy heart is naught, or else thy prayer would have been answered, and thou delivered from these inmates.

Answer. Paul might as well have said so when he besought the Lord thrice, but could not have thorn in the flesh plucked out, II Cor. 12:8. He doth not by this show thee to be a hypocrite, but gives thee a fair advantage of proving thyself sincere—not much unlike his dealing with the Israelites, before whom he did not, as they expected, hastily drive out the nations, but left them as thorns in their sides. And why? Hear the reason from God's own mouth, 'That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not,' Judges 2:22. Thus God leaves these corruptions in thee, to prove whether thou wilt at last fall in and be friends with them, or maintain the conflict with them, and continue praying against them; by which perseverance thou wilt prove thyself to be indeed upright. A false heart will never do this. He is soon answered that doth not cordially desire the thing he asks. The hypocrite, when he prays against his corruption, goes of his conscience's errand, not his will's; just as a servant that doth not like the message his master sends him about, but dares not displease him, and therefore goes, and may be knocked at the man's door whither he is sent, yet very faintly—loath he should hear him. All that he doth is that he may but bring a fair tale to his master, by saying he was there. Even so prays the hypocrite, only to stop the mouth of his conscience with his flam²³, that he hath prayed against his lust. Glad he is when it is over, and more glad that he returns re infectâ—the matter being unaccomplished. Observe therefore the behaviour of thy heart in prayer, and judge thyself sincere, or not sincere, by that, not by the present success it hath. God can take it kindly that thou askest what at present he thinks it better to deny than give. Thou wouldst have all thy corruptions knocked down at one blow, and thy heart in a posture to do the work of thy God, without any stop

or rub from lust within, or the devil without; wouldst thou not? God highly approves of your zeal, as he did of David's, who had a mind to build him a temple; but as he thought not fit that the house should in David's time be reared—reserving it for the peaceful reign of Solomon—so neither doth he, that this thy request should be granted in this life, having reserved this immunity as an especial part of the charter of the city that is above, which none but glorified saints, who are inhabitants there, enjoy. He hath indeed taught us to pray, let thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; but we must expect the full answer to it when we come there. But learn therefore, poor soul, to take this denial as David did his. Because God would not let him build the house in his days, he did not therefore question the love and favour of God, neither did he desist from preparing materials for it, but did what he might towards it, though he might not what he would. Far be it from thee also, that thou shouldst for this either cast away thy confidence on God, or lay aside thy endeavour for God, in mortifying thy corruptions, and adding to the store thou hast at present of his graces, which, though now imperfect and unpolished, he will make use of in the heavenly building which he intends thee for, where all the broken pieces, as I may so say, of our weak graces shall be so improved by the power and wisdom of God, that they shall make up one glorious structure of perfect holiness, more to be admired by angels in heaven, for the rare workmanship of it, than Solomon's temple was on earth by men when in its full glory.

4. False Ground. 'Oh but,' saith the tempted soul, 'I have sometimes inward checks from my own conscience that this duty I did hypocritically, and that, in that action, much falseness of heart discovered itself. And if my heart condemn me, how can it be otherwise but I must needs be a hypocrite?'

Answer. I shall help to resolve this by laying down two distinctions, and applying them to the case in hand. (1.) We must distinguish between conscience proceeding by a right rule in its judgment, and conscience proceeding by a false rule. (2.) We must distinguish between a conscience that goes by a right rule, and is also rightly informed how to use it; and a conscience that judgeth by a right rule, but is not rightly informed in its use.

23. Flam, a freak or whim, also a falsehood; an illusory pretext. Imp. Dict. — Ed.

To apply the first—

(1.) We must distinguish between conscience proceeding by a right rule in its judgment, and conscience proceeding by a false rule. Then conscience proceeds by a right rule, when it grounds its charge upon the word of God; for, being but an under officer, it is bound up to a law by which it must proceed. And that can be no other than what God appoints it, who gives it commission, and puts it in office. And that is the word of God, and that only. So that we are to give credit to our conscience's commanding or forbidding, condemning or acquitting us, when it can show its warrant from the word of God for these; otherwise, as subjects that are wronged in an inferior court and cannot have justice there, may appeal higher, so may and ought we, from conscience, to the word of God. And you must know conscience is a faculty that is corrupted as much as any other by nature, and is very oft made use of by Satan to deceive both good and bad, godly and ungodly. Many that now {know?} their consciences, they say, speak peace to them, will be found merely cheated and gulled when the books shall be opened. No such discharge will then be found entered in the book of the word, as conscience hath put into their hand. And many gracious souls, who passed their days in a continual fear of their spiritual state, and were kept chained in the dark dungeon of a troublesome conscience, shall then be acquitted, and have their action against Satan for false imprisonment, and abusing their consciences to the disturbing their peace. And now let me ask thee, poor soul, who sayest thy conscience checks thee for a hypocrite, art thou a convicted hypocrite by the word? Doth conscience show thee a word from Christ's law that proves thee so? or rather, doth not Satan abuse thy own fearfulness, and play upon the tenderness of thy spirit, which is so deeply possessed with the sense of thy sins, that thou art ready to believe any motion in thee that tells any evil of thee? I am sure it is oft so. The fears and checks which some poor souls have in their bosoms, are like those reports that are now and then raised of some great news, by such as have a mind to abuse the country. A talk and murmur you shall have in every one's mouth of it, but go about to follow it to the spring-head, and you can find no ground of it, or author of credit that will vouch it. Thus here:—a

bruit²⁴ there is in the tempted Christian's bosom, and a noise heard as it were continually whispering in his ears, 'I am a hypocrite, my heart is naught; all I do is dissembling;' but when the poor creature, in earnest, sets upon the search to find out the business—calls his soul to the bar, and falls to examine it upon those interrogatories which the word propounds for trial of our sincerity—he can fasten this charge from none of them all upon himself, and at last comes to find it but a false alarm of hell, given out to put him to some trouble and affrightment for the present, though not [to] hurt him in the end. [It is] like the politician's lie, which, though it be found false at last, yet doth them some service the time it is believed for true. As one serious question, such as this, seriously put to a gross hypocrite. is able to make him speechless, viz. —What promise in all the Bible hast thou on thy side for thy salvation?—so it is enough to deliver the troubled soul from his fears of being a hypocrite, if he would but, as David, ask his soul a Scripture reason for his disquietments—'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?' The sincere soul hath firm ground for his faith at bottom, however a little dirt is cast by Satan over it, to make him afraid of venturing to set his foot on it. But we must also distinguish,

(2.) We must distinguish between a conscience rightly informed, and a conscience misinformed. A conscience may be regular, so as to choose the right rule, but not rightly informed how to use this rule in his particular case. Indeed, in the saint's trouble of spirit, conscience is full of Scripture, sometimes, on which it grounds its verdict, but very ill interpreted; 'O,' saith the poor soul, 'this place is against me:' —'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile,' Ps. 32:2. 'Here,' saith he, 'is a description of a sincere soul, to be one in whose spirit there is no guile. But I find much guile in me. Therefore I am not the sincere one.' Now this is a very weak, yea, false inference. By a spirit without guile, is not meant a person that hath not the least deceitfulness and hypocrisy remaining in his heart. This is such a one, as none, since the fall, but Christ himself, was ever found,

24. Bruit, rumour, report. — Ed.

walking in mortal flesh. To be without sin, and to be without guile, in this strict sense, are the same;—a prerogative here on earth peculiar to the Lord Christ; ‘who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth,’ 1 Peter 2:22. And therefore, when we meet with the same phrase attributed to the saints—as to Levi, ‘Iniquity was not found in his lips,’ Mal. 2:6, and to Nathanael, ‘Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile,’ John 1:47—we must sense it in an inferior way, that may suit with their imperfect state here below, and not put that which only was Christ’s crown on earth, and is the glorified saint’s robe in heaven, to wear on the weak Christian while militant on earth—not only with a devil without, but a body of sin within him. Wipe thine eyes again, poor soul, and then, if thou readest such places wherein the Spirit of God speaks so highly and hyperbolically of his saints’ grace, thou shalt find he doth not assert the perfection of their grace as free from all mixture of sin; but rather, to comfort poor drooping souls and cross their misgiving hearts—which from the presence of hypocrisy are ready to overlook their sincerity as none at all—he expresseth his high esteem of their little grace by speaking of it as if it were perfect, and their hypocrisy as none at all. O Christian, thy God would have thee know that thou dost not more overlook thy little grace for fear of the hypocrisy thou findest mingled with it, than he doth thy great corruptions, for the dear love he bears to the little, yet true grace he sees amidst them. Abraham loved and owned his kinsman Lot when a prisoner carried away by those heathen kings. So does thy God [love and own] thy grace, [as] near in blood to him, when it is sadly yoked by the enemy in thy own bosom; and, for thy comfort know, when the book shall be opened, the word too, and also the judgment of thy own conscience in the great day of Christ. Christ will be the interpreter of both. Not the sense which thou hast in the distemper of thy troubled soul, when thou readest both with Satan’s gloss put upon them, shall stand; but what Christ shall say. And to be sure he hath already declared himself so great a friend to weak grace, when on earth, by his loving converse with his disciples, and [the] free testimony he gave to his grace in them—when God knows they were but raw and weak Christians, both as to their knowledge and practice—that, poor soul, thou needst not fear he will then

and there condemn, what here he commended and so dearly embraced. Yea, he that took most care for his little lambs how they might be used gently, when he was to go from them to heaven, will not be unkind himself to them, at his return, I warrant thee.

[Four characters of truth of heart or sincerity.]

Third. I will lay down such positive discoveries of sincerity as no hypocrite ever did or can reach to. Having broken the flattering glasses wherein hypocrites use to look, till they fall in love with their own painted faces, and conceit themselves sincere; as also those which disfigure the sweet countenance and natural beauty of the sincere soul, so as to make it bring the grace of God which shines on it into question; I now proceed to draw a few lineaments, and lay down some undoubted CHARACTERS OF THIS TRUTH OF HEART, and godly sincerity, whereby we may have the better advantage of stating to everyone his own condition.

1. Character. A sincere heart is a new heart. Hypocrisy is called ‘the old leaven;’ ‘purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump,’ 1 Cor. 5:7. Dough once soured with leaven, will never lose the taste of it. Neither will corrupt nature cease to be hypocritical, till it cease to be corrupt nature. Either the heart must be made new, or it will have its old quality. There may be some art used to conceal it, and take away its unsavouriness from others, for a while, as flowers and perfumes cast about a rotten carcass may do its scent; yet both the rotten carcass and the corrupt heart remain the same. They say of the peacock, that roast him as much as you will, yet his flesh, when cold, will be raw again. Truly, thus let a carnal heart do what it please—force upon itself never such a high strain of seeming piety, so that it appears fire-hot with zeal, yet stay a little, and it will come to its old complexion, and discover itself to be but what it was, naught and false. ‘One heart,’ and a ‘new heart,’ both are covenant mercies, yea, so promised, that the ‘new’ is promised in order to the making of the heart ‘one:’ ‘And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart,’ &c. Eze. 11:19. God promiseth he will give them one spirit, that is a sincere spirit to God and man; contrary to a divided heart, a

heart and a heart, the mark of hypocrisy. But how will he give it? He tell them, 'I will give you a new spirit,' and how will he do that? 'I will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh;' upon which words one very well thus glosseth, 'I will give you one heart; which that I may so do, I will cast it anew; and that I may do this also, I will melt and soften it; as one that having many pieces of old silver, or plate lying by him, which he intends to put into one bowl, first resolves to cast it anew, and to that end throws it into the fire to melt, and so at last shuts up all in one piece.' Indeed, by nature man's heart is a very divided and broken thing, scattered and parcelled out, a piece to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while, this vanity hires him, as Leah did Jacob of Rachel; anon, when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets himself out to another. Thus divided is man and his affections. Now, the elect—whom God hath decreed to be vessels of honour, consecrated for his holy use and service—he throws into the fire of his word, that, being there softened and melted, he may by his transforming Spirit cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that he who was before divided from God, and lost among the creatures and his lusts, that shared him among them, hath now his heart gathered in from them all to God. It looks with a single eye on God and acts for him in all it doth. If therefore thou wouldst know whether thy heart be sincere, inquire whether it be thus made new.

Hath God thrown thee into his furnace? did ever his word, like fire, take hold upon thee, so as to soften thy hard heart and melt thy drossy spirit, [so] that thou now seest that desperate hypocrisy, pride, unbelief, and the like, which before lay hid like dross in the metal, before the fire finds it out? and not only seest it [hypocrisy, &c.], but seest it sever and separate from thy soul, [in such a way] that thou who before didst bless thyself as in a good condition, now bewailest thy folly for it, heartily confessing what an unsavoury creature thou wert to God in all thou didst. The things which appeared so gaudy and fair in thy eye—thy civil righteousness, keeping thy church, slubbering over a few duties in thy family—that for them thou thoughtest heaven was, as it were, in mortgage to thee; dost now lament to think how thou didst mock God with these hypocritical pageants abroad, while

thy lusts were entertained within doors in thy bosom, there sucking the heart-blood of thy dearest affections? In a word, canst thou say that thou art not only melted into sorrow for these, but that thou findest thy heart, which was so divided and distracted betwixt lusts and creatures now united to fear the name of God? Hast thou but one design—that, above all, thou pursuest, and that, viz. to approve thyself to God, though with the displeasing of all beside? one love—how thou mayest love Christ, and be beloved of him. If the streams of thy affections be thus, by the mighty power of God renewing thee, gathered into this one channel, and with a sweet violence running this way, then blessed art thou of the Lord. Thou art the sincere soul in his account, though much corruption be found in thee still, that is roying thy stream, and endeavouring to stop the free course of thy soul God-wards. This may put thee to some trouble. As the mountains and rocks do the river water running to the sea, causing some windings and turnings in its course, which else would go the nearest way, even in a direct line to it; so thy remaining corruptions may now and then put thee out of thy way of obedience. But sincerity will, like the water, go on its journey for all this, and never leave till it bring thee, though with some compass, to thy God, whom thou hast so imprinted in thy heart, as that he can never be forgot by thee. But if thou never hadst the hypocrisy of thy heart thus discovered and made hateful to thee, nor a new principle put into thy bosom, to turn the tide of thy soul contrary to the natural fall of thy affections; only thou, from the good opinion which thou hast of thyself—because of some petty flourishes thou makest in profession—takest it for granted thou art sincere, and thy heart true; I dare pronounce thee an unclean hypocrite. The world may saint thee, possibly, but thou wilt never, as thou art, be so in God's account. When thou has tricked and spruced up thyself never so finely, into the fashion of a Christian, still thou wilt have but a saint's face, and a hypocrite's heart. It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel, that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell within. New trimmings on an old garment will not make it new, they only give it a new look. And truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in fining up an old suit that will drop in a while to tatters and rags, when a little more

might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labour to get a new heart, that all thou doest may be accepted and thou saved, than to loose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also, for want of it?

2. Character. A sincere heart is a plain heart, a simple heart, sine plicis—a heart without folds. The hypocrite is of the serpent's brood. He can, as the serpent, shrink up, or let himself out for his advantage—unwilling to expose himself much to the knowledge of others. And he has reason to do so. For he knows he hath most credit where he is least known. The hypocrite is one that 'seeks deep to hide his counsel,' Isa. 29:15; 'their heart is deep,' Ps. 64:6; their meaning and intent of heart lies nobody knows how far distant from their words. A sincere heart is like a clear stream in a brook; you may see to the bottom of his plots in his words, and take the measure of his heart by his tongue. I have heard say that diseases of the heart are seen in spots of the tongue, but the hypocrite can show a clear tongue and yet have a foul heart. He that made that proverb, loquere ut te videam—speak that I may see you, did not think of the hypocrite, who will speak that you shall not see him. The thickest clouds that he hath to wrap up his villainy in, are his religious tongue and sandy profession. Wouldst thou know whether thou hast a true heart in thy bosom? look if thou hast a plain-dealing heart. See them joined, II Cor. 1:12, for Paul and the rest of the faithful messengers of Christ, had their conversation among the Corinthians 'in simplicity and godly sincerity.' They had no close box in the cabinet of their hearts, in which they cunningly kept anything concealed from them of their designs, as the false apostles did. Now this plain dealing of the sincere heart appears in these three particulars.

(1.) Particular. A sincere heart deals plainly with itself, and that in two things chiefly.

(a) In searching and ransacking its own self. This it doth to its utmost skill and power. It will not be put off with pretenses, or such a mannerly excuse as Rachel gave Laban, when at the same time she sat brooding on his idols. No, an account it will have of the soul, and that such a one as may enable it to give a good account to God, upon whose warrant it does its office. O the fear which such a one shows lest any lust should escape its eye, and lie hid, as Saul in the

stuff; or that any, the least grace of God, should be trodden on regardlessly by belying or denying it! When David found his thoughts of God, which used to recreate him, and be his most pleasing company, occasion some trouble in his spirit—'I remembered God, and was troubled,' Ps. 77:3—this holy man, wondering what the matter should be, do but see what a privy search he makes. He hunts backwards and forwards, what God's former dealings had been, and 'communes with his heart, and makes diligent search' there, ver. 6; never gives over till he brings it to an issue; and finding the disturber of his peace to be in himself, he is not so tender of his reputation as to think of smothering the business or smoothing it over, but attacks the thief, indicts his sin, and confesseth the fact, to the justifying of God, whom before he had hard thoughts of. 'And I said, This is my infirmity,' ver. 10; as if he had said, 'Lord, now I see the Jonas that caused the storm in my bosom, and made me uncomfortable in my affliction all this while; it is this unbelief of mine that bowed me down to attend so to the sorrow and sense of my present affliction, that it would not suffer me to look up to former experiences, and so, while I forgot them, I thought unworthily of thee.' Here was an honest plain-dealing soul indeed. What akin art thou, O man, to holy David? is this thy way in of searching thy soul? dost thou do it in earnest, as if thou wert searching for a murderer hid in thy house; as willing to find out thy sin, as ever Papist in Queen Mary's days was to find Protestants—to discover whom they would run their swords and forks into beds and haymows²⁵, lest they should be there? Or, when thou goest about this work, art thou loath to look too far, lest thou shouldst see what thou wouldst willingly overlook? or afraid to stay too long, lest conscience should make an displeasing report to thee? Tertulian said of the heathen persecutors, noluerunt audire, quod auditum damnare non possint—they would not let the Christians be heard, because they could not then easily have had the face to condemn them, their cause would have appeared so just. The contrary here is true. The hypocrite dares not put his

25. Haymow, a mow or mass of hay laid up in a barn for preservation. Imp. Dict. — Ed.

state upon a fair trial, because then he could not handsomely escape condemning himself. But the sincere soul is so zealous to know its true state, that when he hath done his utmost himself to find it out, and his conscience upon this privy search clears him, yet he contents not himself here; but jealous lest self-love might blind his eyes, and occasion too favourable a report from his conscience, he calls in help from heaven, and puts himself upon God's review. 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?' Ps. 139:21. His own conscience answers to it: 'I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies,' ver. 22. Yet David, not wholly satisfied with his own single testimony, calls out to God, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart;...see if there be any wicked way in me,' ver. 23,24. And wise physicians will not trust their own judgments about the state of their own health; nor sincere Christians themselves about their souls' welfare. It is God that they attend to. His judgment alone concludes and determines them. When they have prayed and opened their case to him, with David, they listen what he will say. Therefore you shall find them putting themselves under the most searching ministry, from which they never come more pleased than when their consciences are stripped naked, and their hearts exposed to their view; as the woman of Samaria, who commended the sermon, and Christ that preached it, for this unto her neighbours, that he had told her all that ever she had done, John 4:29. Whereas a false heart like not to hear of that ear. He thinks the preacher commits a trespass when he comes upon his ground, and comes up close to his conscience; as if he could, he would have an action against him for it. This stuck in Herod's stomach, that John should lay his finger on his sore place. Though he feared him, being conscious, yet he never loved him, and therefore was soon persuaded to cut off his head, which had so bold a tongue in it, that durst reprove his incestuous bed.

(b) The true heart shows its plain-dealing with itself, as in searching, so in judging itself, when once testimony comes in clear against it, and conscience tells it, 'Soul, in this duty thou betrayedst pride, in that affection, frowardness and impatience.' Such a one is not long before it proceeds to judgment, and this it doth with so much vehemency and severity,

that it plainly appears zeal for God—whom he hath dishonoured—makes him forget all self-pity. He lays about him in humbling and abasing himself, as the sons of Levi in executing justice on their brethren who knew 'neither brother nor sister' in that act. Truly such an heroic act is this of the sincere soul judging itself. He is so transported and clothed with a holy fury against his sin, that he is deaf to the cry of flesh and blood, which would move him to think of a more favourable sentence. 'I have sinned,' saith David, 'against the Lord,' II Sam. 12:13; in another place, 'I have sinned greatly, and done very foolishly,' II Sam. 24; in a third, he, as unworthy of a man's name, takes beast to himself—'so foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee,' Ps. 73:22. But with a false heart—if conscience checks him for this or that, and he perceives by this inward murmur in his bosom which way the cause will go, if he proceeds fairly on to put himself upon the trial—the court is sure to be broken up, and all put off to another hearing, which is like to be at leisure; so that, as witnesses, with delays and many put-offs, grow at last weary of the work, and will rather stay at home than make their appearance to little purpose, so conscience ceaseth to give evidence where it cannot be heard, can have no judgment against the offender.

(2.) Particular. A true heart is plain as with itself so with God also. Several ways this might appear. Take one for all; and that is in his petitions and requests at the throne of grace. The hypocrite in prayer juggles, he asks what he would not thank God to give him. There is a mystery of iniquity in his praying against iniquity. Now this will appear in two particulars, whether we be plain-hearted or not.

(a) Observe whether thou beest deeply afflicted in spirit when thy request is not answered, or regard not what success it hath. Suppose it be a sin thou prayest against, or some grace thou prayest for; what is thy temper all the while thy messenger stays, especially if it be long? Thou prayest, and corruption abates not, grace grows not. Now thy hypocrisy or sincerity will appear. If thou art sincere, every moment will be an hour, every hour a day, a day a year, till thou hearest some news from heaven. 'Hope deferred' will make 'the heart sick.' Doth not the sick man that sends for the physician think long for his coming? O he is afraid his messenger should miss of

him, or that he will not come with him, or that he shall die before he bring his physic. A thousand fears disturb him, and make him passionately wish he were there. Thus the sincere soul passeth those hours with a sad heart that it lives without a return of its request. 'I am a woman,' said Hannah to Eli, 'of a sorrowful spirit,' I Sam. 1:15. And why so? Alas, she had from year to year prayed to God, and no answer was yet come. Thus saith the soul, 'I am one of a bitter spirit, I have prayed for a soft heart, a believing heart, many a day and month; but it is not come. I am afraid I was not sincere in the business. Could my request so long have hung in the clouds else?' Such a soul is full of fear and troubles—like a merchant that hath a rich ship at sea, who cannot sleep on land till he sees her, or hears of her. But if, when thou hast sent up thy prayer, thou canst cast off the care and thoughts of the business, as if praying were only like children's scribbling over pieces of paper—which when they have done, they lay aside and think no more of them—if thou canst take denials at God's hands for such things as these, and blank no more than a cold suitor doth when he hears not from her whom he never really loved—it breaks not thy rest, embitters not thy joy—if so, a false heart set thee on work. And take heed that, instead of answering thy prayer, God doth not answer the secret desire of thy heart, which should he do, thou art undone for ever.

(b) Observe whether thou usest the means to obtain that which thou prayest God to give. A false heart sits still itself, while it sets God on work; like him that, when his cart was set in a slough, cried, Jupiter, help! but would not put his own shoulder to the wheel. If corruptions may be mortified and killed for him, as Goliath was for the Israelites—he like them looking on, and not put to strike stroke—so it is; but for any encounter with them, or putting himself to the trouble of using any means to obtain the victory, he is so eaten up with sloth and cowardice, that it is as grievous he thinks, as to sit still in slavery and bondage to them. But a sincere soul is conscientiously laborious. 'Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens,' Lam. 3:41. That is, saith Bernard, *oremus et laboremus*—let us pray and use the endeavour. The hypocrite's tongue wags, but the sincere soul's feet walk, and his hands work.

(3.) Particular. The sincere soul discovers its

plainness and simplicity to men. 'We have had our conversation' among you, saith Paul to the Corinthians, 'in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom.' The Christian is one that cannot subject his heart to his head—his conscience to his policy. He commits himself to God in well-doing, and fears not others, if he be not conscious to himself; and therefore he dares not make a hole in his conscience to keep his skin whole, but freely and openly voucheth God without dissembling his profession; while the hypocrite shifts his sails, and puts forth such colours as his policy and worldly interest adviseth. If the coast be clear, and no danger at hand, he will appear religious as any; but no sooner he makes discovery of any hazard it may put him to, but he tacks about, and shapes another course, making no bones of juggling with God and man. He counts that his right road which leads to his temporal safety. But quite contrary is the upright, 'The highway of the upright is to depart from evil,' Prov. 16:17. This is the road that this true traveller jogs on in, and if he be at any time seen out of it, it is upon no other account, than a man that hath unwillingly lost his way—never quiet till he hath strike into it again.

3. Character. The sincere, true-hearted Christian is uniform. As truth in the doctrine differs, from its opposite, that it is one, error diverse—there is no harmony among errors, as among truths—so truth of heart, or sincerity, is known from hypocrisy by the same character. Indeed, truth in the heart is but the copy and transcript of the other. They agree, as the face in the glass doth with the face in the man that looks in it, or as the image in the wax with the sculpture in the seal from which it is derived. Therefore, if truth in the word be uniform and harmonious, then truth in the heart, which is nothing but the impression of that there, must also be so. A sincere Christian in the tenure of his course is like himself, *vir unius coloris*—a man of one colour; not like your changeable stuffs, so dyed that you may, by waving of them divers ways, see divers colours. There is a threefold uniformity in the sincere Christian's obedience. He is uniform, *quoad objectum, subjectum, et circumstantias obedientiæ*—as to the object, subject, and several circumstances that accompany his obedience.

(1.) The sincere Christian is uniform quoad

objectum—as to the object. The hypocrite indeed is in with one duty and out with another. Like a globous body, he toucheth the law of God in one point—some particular command he seems zealous for—but meets not in the rest; whereas the sincere heart lies close to the whole law of God in his desire and endeavour. The upright man's foot is said to 'stand in an even place,' Ps. 26:12, he walks not haltingly and uncomelily, as those who go in unequal ways, which are hobbling and up and down; or [as] those whose feet and legs 'are not even'—as Solomon saith, the legs of the lame are not even,' and so cannot stand 'in an even place,' because one is long and the other short. The sincere man's feet are even, and [his] legs of a length, as I may say;—his care alike conscientious to the whole will of God. The hypocrite, like the badger, hath one foot shorter than another; or, like a foundered horse, he doth not stand, as we say, right of all four—one foot, at least, you shall perceive he favours, loath to put it down. The Pharisees pretended much zeal to the first table. They prayed and fasted in an extraordinary manner, but they prayed for their prey, and, when they had fasted all day, they sup at the cost of a poor widow whose 'house' they mean to 'devour.' A sad fast, that ends in oppression, and only serves to get them a ravenous appetite, to swallow others' estates under a pretence of devotion! The moralist is very punctual in his dealings with men, but very thievish in his carriage to God. Though he will not wrong his neighbour of a farthing, [he] sticks not to rob God of greater matters. His love, fear, faith are due debt to God, but he makes no conscience of paying them. It is ordinary in Scripture to describe a saint—a godly person—by a particular duty, a single grace. Sometimes his character is 'he that feareth an oath,' Ecc. 9:2; sometimes, 'one that loves the brethren,' I John 3:14; and so of the rest. And why? but because, wherever one duty is conscientiously performed, the heart stands ready for any other. As God hath enacted all his commands with the same authority—wherefore, it is said, Ex. 20:1, 'God spake all these words,' one as well as the other—so God infuseth all grace together, and writes not one particular law in the heart of his children, but the whole law, which is a universal principle, inclining the soul impartially to all, so that if thou likest not all, thou art sincere in none.

(2.) The sincere Christian is uniform quoad subjectum—as to the subject. The whole man, so far as renewed, moves one way. All the powers and faculties of the soul join forces, and have a sweet accord together. When the understanding makes discovery of a truth, then conscience improves her utmost authority on the will, commanding it, in the name of God, whose officer it is, to entertain it; the will, so soon as conscience knocks, opens herself, and lets it in; the affections, like dutiful handmaids, seeing it a welcome guest to the will—their mistress—express their readiness to wait on it, as becomes them in their places. But in the hypocrite it is not so. There one faculty fights against another. Never are they all found to conspire and meet in a friendly vote. When there is light in the understanding, the man knows this truth and that duty; then, oft, conscience is bribed for executing its office—it doth not so much as check him for the neglect of it. Truth stands as it were before the soul, and conscience will not so much as befriend it as to knock, and rouse up the soul to let it in. If conscience be overcome to plead its cause, and shows some activity in pressing for entertainment, it is sure, either to have a churlish denial, with a frown, for its pains—in being so busy to bring such an unwelcome guest with it—as the froward wife doth by her husband, when he brings home with him one she doth not like; or else only a feigned entertainment, the more subtly to hide the secret enmity it hath against it.

(3.) The sincere soul is uniform quoad circumstantias obedientiæ—as to the circumstances of his obedience and holy walking such as are time, place, and company and manner. He is uniform as to time. His religion is not like a holiday suit—put on only at set times; but come to him when you will, you shall find him clad alike, holy on the Lord's day, and holy on the week-day too. 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times,' Ps. 106:3. It is a sign it is not a man's complexion, when the colour he hath while he sits by a fire dies away soon after. There are some, if you would see their goodness and be acquainted with their godliness, you must hit the right time, or else you will find none. [They are] like some flowers that are seen but some months in the year; or like some physicians that they call forenoon men—they that would speak

with them to any purpose, must come in the morning, because, commonly, they are drunk in the afternoon. Thus, may be, in the morning, you may take the hypocrite on his knees in a saint's posture, but, when that fit is over, you shall see little of God in all his course till night brings him again, of course, to the like duty. The watch is naught that goes only at first winding up, and stands all the day after; and so is the heart, sure, that desires not always to keep in spiritual motion. I confess there may be a great difference in the standing of two watches. In one the difference may arise from the very watch itself, because it hath not the right make—and it will ever be so, till the work is altered; another, possibly, is true work, only some dust clogs the wheels, or [a] fall hath a little battered it, which removed, it will go well again. And there is as great difference between the sincere soul and the hypocrite in this case. The sincere soul may be interrupted in its spiritual motion and Christian course, but it is from some temptation that at present clogs him. But he hath a new nature, which inclines to a constant motion in holiness, and doth, upon the removing the present impediment, return to its natural exercise of godliness. The hypocrite, however, fails in the very constitution and frame of his spirit; he hath not a principle of grace in him to keep him moving.

Again, the sincere Christian is uniform as to place and company. Wherever he goes he carries his rule with him, which squares him. Within doors, amidst his nearest relations, David's resolve is his, 'He will walk within his house with a perfect heart,' Ps. 101:2. Follow him abroad; he carries his conscience with him, and doth not bid it—as Abraham his servants, when ascending the mount—to stay behind till he comes back. The Romans had a law that every one should, wherever he went, wear a badge of his trade in his hat or outward vestment, that he might be known. The sincere Christian never willingly lays aside the badge of his holy profession. No place nor company turns him out of the way that is called holy. Indeed his conscience doth not make him foredo his prudence. He knows how to distinguish between place and place, company and company; and therefore when cast among boisterous sinners, and scornful ones, he doth not betray religion to scorn, by throwing its pearls before such as would trample on

them, and rend him. Yet he is very careful lest his prudence should put his uprightness to any hazard. 'I will behave myself wisely,' saith David, Ps. 101:2, 'in a perfect way;' that is, I will show myself as wise as I can, so I may also be upright. Truly, that place and company is like the torrid zone, uninhabitable to the gracious soul, where profaneness is so hot, that sincerity cannot look out, and show itself by seasonable counsel, and reproof, with safety to the saint; and therefore, they that have neither so much zeal as to protest against the sins of such, nor so much care of themselves as to withdraw from thence, where they can only receive evil and do no good, have just cause to call their sincerity into question.

4. Character. The sincere Christian is progressive—never at his journey's end till he gets to heaven. This keeps him always in motion, advancing in his desires and endeavours forward; he is thankful for little grace, but not content with great measures of grace. 'When I awake,' saith David, 'I shall be satisfied with thy likeness,' Ps. 17:15. He had many a sweet entertainment at the house of God in his ordinances. The Spirit of God was the messenger that brought him many a covered dish from God's table—inward consolations, which the world knew not of. Yet David has not enough. It is heaven alone that can give him his full draught. They say the Gauls, when they first tasted of the wines of Italy, were so taken with their lusciousness and sweetness, that they could not be content to trade thither for this wine, but resolved to conquer the land where they grew. Thus the sincere soul thinks it not enough to receive a little, now and then, of grace and comfort, from heaven, by trading and holding commerce at a distance with God in his ordinances here below; but projects and meditates a conquest of that holy land, and blessed place, that he may drink the wine of that kingdom in that kingdom. This raiseth the soul to high and noble enterprises—how it may attain to further degrees of graces, every day more than another, and so climb nearer and nearer heaven. He that aims at the sky, shoots higher than he that means only to hit a tree. 'I press,' saith Paul, 'toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,' Php. 3:14. Others admired Paul's attainments—O that they had Paul's grace, and then they should be happy!—but he would count himself very unhappy if he might have no more. He

professeth he hath not apprehended what he runs for. The prize stands not in the mid-way, but at the end of the race; and therefore he puts on with full speed, yea, makes it the trial of uprightness in all. 'Let us therefore, as many as be perfect'—that is sincere—'be thus minded,' ver. 15. It is the hypocrite that stints himself in the things of God. A little knowledge he would have, that may help him to discourse of religion among the religious; and for more, he leaves it, as more fitting for the preacher than himself. Some outward formalities he likes, and makes use of in profession—as attendance on public ordinances—and sins which would make him stink among his neighbours he forbears; but as for pressing into more inward and nearer communion with God in ordinances, labouring to get his heart more spiritual, the whole body of sin more and more mortified, this was never his design: like some slighty tradesman, that never durst look so high as to think of being rich, but thinks it well enough if he can but hold his shop-doors open, and keep himself out of jail, though with a thousand shifting tricks.

Having laid down characters of the sincere heart, it will be necessary to make some improvement of them, as the report shall be that conscience makes in your bosoms, upon putting yourselves to the trial of your spiritual states by the same. Now the report that conscience makes, after examination of yourselves by those NOTES [or DOCTRINES] prefixed, will amount to one of these three inferences. Either, First. Conscience will after examination condemn you as hypocrites: or, Second. It will, upon diligent inquiry, give fair testimony as to your sincerity; or, Third. It will, upon inquiry, bring you in as ignorant, and leave you doubting souls, who are indeed sincere, but dare not be persuaded to think yourselves so. That I may therefore find thee, reader, at one door, if I miss thee at another, I shall speak severally to all three.

[Directions to those who, upon trial,
are found insincere and false-hearted.]

First Sort. I come first to those who upon the trial are cast—whose consciences, after examination, condemn as hypocrites. Evidence comes in so clear and strong against them, that their conscience cannot hold, but tells them plainly, 'if these be the marks of

sincerity, then they are hypocrites.' The improvement I would make of this trial for your sakes, is to give a word of counsel—what in this case you are to do that you may become sincere.

1. Direction. Get thy heart deeply affected with thy present dismal state. No hope of cure till thou beest chased into some sense and feeling of thy deplored condition. Physic cannot be given so long as the patient is asleep; and it is the nature of this disease to make the soul heavy-eyed, and dispose it to a kind of slumber of conscience, by reason of the flattering thoughts the hypocrite hath of himself, from some formalities he performs above others in religion, which fume up from his deceived heart, like so many pleasing vapours from the stomach to the head, and bind up his spiritual senses into a kind of stupidity, yea, cause many pleasing dreams to entertain him with vain hopes and false joys, which vanish as soon as he wakes and comes to himself. The Pharisees, the most notorious hypocrites of their age, how fast asleep were they in pride and carnal confidence, despising all the world in comparison of themselves—not afraid to commend themselves to God, yea, prefer themselves before others: 'God, I thank thee, that I am not like this publican'—as if they would tell God, they did look to find some more respect from him than others, so far beneath them, had at his hand! Therefore Christ, in his dealing with this proud generation of men, useth an unusual strain of speech. His voice, which to others was still and soft, is heard like thunder breaking out of the clouds, when he speaks to them. How many dreadful claps have we almost together in the same chapter fall on their heads, out of the mouth of our meek and sweet Saviour. 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,' Matt. 23. No less than eight woes doth Christ discharge upon them, as so many case-shot together, that by multiplying the woes, he might show not only the certainty of the hypocrite's damnation, but precedency also; and yet how many of that rank do we read of to be awakened and converted by these rousing sermons? Some few there were indeed, that the disease might not appear incurable; but very few, that we may tremble the more of falling into it, or letting it grow upon us.

Peter learned of his master how to handle the hypocrite. Having to do with one far gone in this dis-

ease, Simon Magus, he steeped his words, as it were, in vinegar and gall. 'Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God,' Acts 8:21. There he lays the weight of his charge, that he carried a hypocritical heart in his bosom, which was a thousand times worse than his simoniacal fact, though that was foul enough. It was not barely that fact, but, proceeding from a heart inwardly rotten and false—which God gave Peter an extraordinary spirit to discern—that proved him to be 'in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;' only in this better on it than the damned souls in hell, that they were in the fire, he in the bond of iniquity, like a faggot bound up, fit for it, but not cast in; they past hope, and he with so much left as might amount to a 'perhaps if the thought of his heart might be forgiven.'

To give but one instance more, and that of a whole church, hypocritical Laodicea. The Spirit of God takes her up more sharply than all the rest, which, though he charged with some particular miscarriages, yet he finds something among them he own and commends; but in her, because she was conceited already as this leaven of hypocrisy naturally puffs up, he mentions nothing that was good in her, lest it should feed that humour that did so abound already, and take away the smartness of the reproof, which was the only probable means left of recovering her. All that inclines to sleep is deadly to a lethargic; and all that is soothing and cockering²⁶, dangerous to hypocrites. Some say the surest way to cure a lethargy, is to turn it into a fever. To be sure, the safest way to deal with the hypocrite, is to bring him from his false peace to a deep sense of his true misery. Let this then be thy first work. Aggravate thy sin and put thy soul into mourning for it. When a person who was, but the priest—who was to judge in cases of leprosy—pronounced unclean, the leper thus convicted was to rend his clothes, go bare-headed, and put a covering upon his upper lip—all ceremonies used by mourners—and to cry 'Unclean, unclean,' Lev. 13:45. Thus do thou, as a true mourner, sit down and lament this plague of thy heart. Cry out bitterly,

'Unclean, unclean I am,' Eze. 15:17²⁷. Thou art not fit, by reason of thy hypocritical heart, to come near God or his saints, but to be, like the leper, separate from both. If thou hadst such a loathsome disease reigning on thee as did pollute the very seat thou sittest on, bed thou liest in, and as would drop such filthiness on everything thou comest near—even into the meat thou eatest, and cup thou drinkest from—that should make all abandon thy nasty company; how great would thy sorrow be, as thou didst sit desolate and musing alone of thy doleful condition! Such a state thy hypocrisy puts thee into. A plague it is, more offensive to God than such a disease could make thee to men. It runs like a filthy sore through all the duties and goodly coverings that you can put over it, and defiles them and thee so, that God will take an offering out of the devil's hand as soon as out of thine, while thou continuest a hypocrite. Further, did the saints of God, with whom thou hast, may be, so much credit as to be admitted to join with them at present, know thee, they would make as much from thee, as from him on whom they should see the plague-tokens. But shouldst not thy disease be known till thou art dead, and so keep thy reputation with them, yea, possibly by them be thought, when thou diest, a saint—will this give thee any content in hell, that they are speaking well of thee on earth? 'O poor Aristotle,' said one, 'thou art praised where thou art not, and burned where thou art!' He meant it was poor comfort to that great heathen philosopher to be admired by men of learning, that have kept up his fame from generation to generation, if he all the while be miserable in the other world. So here, O poor hypocrite, that art ranked among saints on earth, but punished among devils in hell.

2. Direction. When thy heart is deeply affected with the sin and misery of thy hypocritical heart, thou must be convinced of thy insufficiency to make a cure on thyself. Hypocrisy is like a fistula sore. It may seem a little matter by the small orifice it hath; but is therefore one of the hardest among wounds to be cured, because it is so hard to find the bottom of it. O

26. Cockering, Indulging, pampering. — SDB

27. As you might know, there is no 17th verse in Ezekiel 15; in fact, it has only 8 verses. And I was unable to locate any verse that had the phrasing exactly as Rev. Gurnall has it here. But see Lev. 13:45. — SDB

take heed thy heart doth not put a cheat upon thyself. It will be very forward to promise it will lie no more, be false and hypocritical no more; but, take counsel of a wise man, who bids thee not rely on what it saith: 'He is a fool that trusts his own heart.' O how many die, because loath to be at pains and cost to go to a skilful physician at first. Take heed of self-resolutions and self-reformations. Sin is like the king's-evil²⁸; God, not ourselves can cure it. He that will be tinkering with his own heart, and not seek out to heaven for help, will in the end find [that] where he mends one hole, he will make two worse; where he reforms one sin, he will fall into the hands of many more dangerous.

3. Direction. Betake thyself to Christ, as the physician on whose skill and faithfulness thou wilt rely entirely for cure. Si pereundum inter peritissimos—if thou perish, resolve to perish at his door. But for thy comfort, know that never any whom he undertook miscarried under his hand; nor ever refused he to undertake the cure of any that came to him on such an errand. He blamed those hypocrites, John 5:40, 43, because they were ready to throw away their lives, by trusting any empiric who should come in his own name without any approbation or authority from God for the work, but 'would not come to him that they might have life,' thought he came in his Father's name, and had his seal and license to practise his skill on poor souls for their recovery. And he that blamed those for not coming, will not, cannot, be angry with thee who comest. It is his calling; and men do use to thrust customers out, but invite them into their shops. When Christ was on earth, he gave this reason why he conversed so much with publicans and sinners, and so little among the Pharisees, because there was more work for him, Matt 9:11, 12. Men set up where they think trade will be quickest. Christ came to be a physician to sick souls. Pharisees were so well in their own conceit, that Christ saw he should have little to do among them, and so he applied himself to those who were more sensible of their sickness. If thou, poor soul, beest but come to thyself so far, as to groan under thy cursed hypocrisy, and directest these

thy groans in a prayer to heaven for Christ's help, thou shalt have thy physician soon with thee, never fear it. He hath not, since he ascended, laid down his calling, but still follows his practice as close as ever. We find him sending his advice from heaven in that excellent receipt to Laodicea—what she should do for her recovery out of this very disease of hypocrisy—'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed,' &c., Rev. 3:18; as if he had said, 'Laodicea, thou tradest in false ware, deceiving thyself and others with appearances for realities, counterfeit graces for true; thy gold is dross, thy garments rotten rags, which do not hide but discover thy shame. Come to me, and thou shalt have that which is for thy turn, and better, cheap also.' For though here is mention of buying, no more is meant than to come with a buyer's spirit, valuing Christ and his grace so high, that if they were to be bought, though with all the money in thy purse, yea blood in thy veins, thou wouldst have them; and not go home and say thou wert hardly used neither. It is the thirsty soul that shall be satisfied, only look thy thirst be right and deep.

(1.) Look that thy thirst be right, a heart-thirst and not simply a conscience-thirst. It is a very different heat that causeth the one and the other. Hell-fire may inflame the conscience, so as to make the guilty sinner thirst for Christ's blood to quench the torment which the wrath of God hath kindled in his bosom! But it is heaven-fire, and only that, which begets a kindly heat in the heart, that breaks out in longings of soul for Christ and his Spirit with sweet cooling dews of grace to slack and extinguish the fire of lust and sin.

(2.) Look that thy thirst be deep. Physicians tell us of a thirst which comes from the dryness of the throat, and not any great inward heat of the stomach; and this thirst may be quenched with a gargle in the mouth, which is spit out again, and goes not down. And truly there is something like this in many that sit under the preaching of the gospel. Some light touches are now and then found upon the spirits of men and women, occasioned by some spark that falls on their affections in hearing the word, whereby they on a sudden express some desires after Christ and his grace in such a way that you would think they would

28. King's-evil:—Scrofula; from the former belief that it could be cured by a king's touch. — SDB

in all haste for heaven; but, being flighty flashes and weak velleities²⁹, rather than strong volitions and deep desires, their heat is soon over and their thirst quenched; with a little present sweetness they taste, while they are hearing a sermon of Christ—which they spit out again as soon as they are gone home almost—as well as may be, though they never enjoy more of him. Labour therefore for such a deep sense of thy own wretchedness by reason of thy hypocrisy, and of Christ's excellency by reason of that fulness of grace in him which makes him able to cure thee of thy distemper; that, as a man thoroughly athirst can be content with nothing but drink, and not a little of that neither, but a full satisfying draught, whatever it costs him, so thou mayest not be bribed with anything besides Christ and his sanctifying grace—not with gifts, professions, or pardon itself, if it could be severed from grace; no, not with a little sprinkling of grace; but mayest long for whole floods, wherewith thou mayest be fully purged and freed of thy cursed lust which now so sadly oppressteth thee. This frame of spirit would put thee under the promise—heaven's security—that thou shalt not lose thy longing. If thou shouldst ask silver and gold, and seek any worldly enjoyment at this rate, thou mightst spend thy breath and pains in vain. God might let thee roar, like Dives, in hell, in the midst of those flames which thy covetous lust hath kindled, without affording a drop of that, to cool thy tongue, which thou so violently pantest after. But if Christ and his grace be the things thou wouldst have, yea must have, truly then thou shalt have them. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled,'

Matt. 5:6.

[Exhortation to those who upon trial are found sincere, to wear the girdle of truth close around, with DIRECTIONS for its daily exercise.]

Second Sort. I come to the second sort, such, I mean, whose consciences, upon diligent inquiry, give a fair testimony for their sincerity, that their hearts are true and upright. That which I have by way of

counsel to leave with them is, to gird this belt which they have about them, close in the exercise and daily practice of it. Gird this belt, I say, close to thee, that is, be very careful to walk in the daily practice and exercise of thy uprightness. Think every morning thou art not dressed till this girdle be put on. The proverb is true here, 'Ungirt, unblessed.' Thou art no company for God, that day in which thou art insincere. If Abraham will walk with God, he must be upright; and canst thou live a day without his company? Rachel paid dear for her mandrakes to part with her husband for them. A worse bargain that soul makes, that to purchase some worldly advantage, pawns its sincerity, which gone, God is sure to follow after. And as thou canst not walk with God, so thou canst not expect any blessing from God. The promises, like a box of precious ointment, are kept to be broken over the head of the upright: 'Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' Micah 2:7. And sure it is ill walking in that way where there is found no word from God to bid us good speed. Some are so superstitious, that if a hare crosseth them, they will turn back, and go no farther that day. But a bold man is he that dares go on when the word of God lies cross his way. Where the word doth not bless, it curseth; where it promiseth not, it threatens. A soul is in its uprightness, approving itself to God, is safe. [It is] like a traveller going about his lawful business betwixt sun and sun; if any harm, or loss comes to such a soul, God will bear him out. The promise is on his side, and by pleading it he may recover his loss at God's hands, who stands bound to keep him harmless. See to this purpose Ps. 84:11. But they are directions, not motives, I am in this place to give.

1. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, walk in the view of God. That of Luther is most true, *omnia præcepta sunt in primo tanquam capite*—all the commands are wrapped up in the first. For, saith he, all sin is a contempt of God; and so we cannot break any other commands, but we break the first. 'We think amiss of God before we do amiss against God.' This God commended to Abraham *instar omnium*—of sovereign use to preserve his sincerity, 'Walk before me, and be thou upright,' Gen. 17:1. This kept the girdle of Moses strait and close to his loins—that he was neither bribed with the treasures of Egypt, nor brow-beaten out of

29. Velleities, the lowest degree of volition, a slight wish or tendency. — From Webster's. — SDB

his sincerity with the anger of so great a king—‘for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible,’ Heb. 11:27. He had a greater than Pharaoh in his eye, and this kept him right.

(1.) Walk, Christian, in the view of God’s omniscience. This is a girding consideration. Say to thy soul, *cave videt Deus*—take heed, God seeth. It is under the rose, as the common phrase is, that treason is spoken, when subjects think they are far enough from their king’s hearing; but did such know the prince to be under the window, or behind the hangings, their discourse would be more loyal. This made David so upright in his walking, ‘I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee,’ Ps. 119:168. If Alexander’s empty chair, which his captains, when they met in counsel, set before them, did awe them so, as to keep them in good order; what would it, for to set God looking on us in our eye? The Jews covered Christ’s face, and then buffeted him. So does the hypocrite. He first saith in his heart, ‘God sees not,’ or at least he forgets that he sees; and then makes bold to sin against him, Mark 14:60. He is like that foolish bird which runs her head among the reeds, and thinks herself safe from the fowler;—as if, because she did not see him, therefore he could not see her. *Te mihi abscondam, non me tibi.* Aug.—I may hide thee from my eye, but not myself from thine. Thou mayest, poor creature, hide God by thy ignorance and atheism, so that thou shalt not see him, but thou canst not so hide thyself as that he shall not see thee. ‘All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Heb. 4:13. O remember thou hast to do with God in all thou doest, whether thou beest in shop or closet, church or market; and he will have to do with thee, for he sees thee round, and can tell from whence thou comest, when, like Gehazi before his master, thou enterest into his presence, and standest demurely before him in worship, as if thou hadst been nowhere. Then he can tell thee thy thoughts, and without any labour of pumping them out by thy confession, set them in order before thee; yea, thy thoughts that are gone from thee, like Nebuchadnezzar’s dream from him, and thou hast forgot what they were at such a time, and in such a place, forty, fifty years ago, God hath them all in the light of his countenance, as atoms are in the beams of the sun, and he

can, yea will, give thee a sight of them that they shall walk in thy conscience to thy horror, as John Baptist’s ghost did Herod’s.

(2.) Walk in the view of God’s providence, and care over thee. When God bids Abraham be upright, he strengthens his faith on him, ‘I am God Almighty, walk before me and be thou perfect;’ as if he had said, ‘Act thou for me, and I will take care for thee.’ When once we begin to call his care into question towards us, then will our sincerity falter in our walking before him. Hypocrisy lies hid in distrust and jealousy, as in its cause. If the soul dare not rely on God, it cannot be long true to God. Abraham was jealous of Abimelech, therefore he dissembled with him. Thus do we with God. We doubt God’s care, and then live by our wit, and carve for ourselves. ‘Up, make us gods,’ they say, ‘we know not what is become of Moses.’ The unbelieving Jews, flat against the command of God, keep manna while [i.e. until] the morrow, Ex. 16:19. And why? but because they had not faith to trust him for another meal. This is the old weapon the devil hath ever used to beat the Christian out of his sincerity with. ‘Curse God and die,’ said he to Job by his wife. As if she had said, What! wilt [thou] yet hold the castle of thy sincerity for God? Captains think they may yield when no relief comes to them, and subjects account [that] if the prince protect them not, they are not bound to serve him. Thou hast lain thus long in an afflicted state, besieged close with sorrows on every hand, and no news to this day comes from heaven of any care that God takes for thee; therefore ‘curse God, and die.’ Yea, Christ had him using the same engine to draw him off his faithfulness to his Father, when he bade him turn stone into bread. We see, therefore, of what importance it is to strengthen our faith on the care and providence of God, for our provision and protection, which is the cause why God hath made such abundant provision to shut all doubting and fear of this out of the hearts of his people. The promises are so fitly placed, that as safe harbours, upon what coast soever we are sailing—condition we are in—if any storm arise at sea, or enemy chase us, we may put into some one or other of them, and be safe; though this one were enough to serve our turn, could we find no more: ‘For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them,’ or strongly

to hold with them, 'whose heart is perfect toward him,' II Chr. 16:9. God doth not set others to watch, but his own eyes keep sentinel. Now to watch with the child, like the own mother, there is the immediacy of his providence. We may say of sincere souls, what is said of Canaan, Deut. 11:12, 'It is a land,' so they are a people, 'which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always on them.' Again, 'his eyes run to and fro;' there is the vigilancy of his providence. No danger, no temptation, finds him napping; but, as a faithful watchman is ever walking up and down, so the eyes of God 'run to and fro.' 'He that keepeth Israel'—the sincere soul which is the 'Israelite indeed'—shall neither slumber nor sleep,' Ps. 121:4. That is, not little or much—not slumber by day, or sleep by night. Two words are there used; one that signifies the short sleep used in the heat of the day; the other for the more sound sleep of the night.

(3.) Throughout the whole earth, there is the universality and extent of God's care. It is an encompassing providence; it walks the rounds—not any one sincere soul left out the line of his care. He has the number of them to a man, and all are alike cared for. We disfigure the beautiful face of God's providence, when we fancy him to have a cast of his eye, and care, to one more than another.

(4.) To show himself strong in the behalf of them, there is the efficacy of his care and providence. His eyes do not 'run to and fro' to espy dangers, and only tell us what they are; as the sentinel wakes the city when any enemy comes, but cannot defend them from their fury. A child may do this, yea, the geese did this for Rome's capitol. But God watcheth not to tell us our dangers, but to save us from them. The saints must needs be a 'happy people,' because a 'people saved by the Lord,' Deut. 33:29. God doth not only see with his eyes, but also fights with his eyes. He gave such a look to the Egyptians, as turned the sea on them to their destruction.

2. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, labour to act from love, and not fear. O, slavish fear and sincerity cannot agree. If one be in the increase, the other is always in the wane. See them opposed, II Tim. 1:7, 'For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,' that is, sincere, where he

implies that fear is weak, and impotent—easily scared from God, his truth, and service; and not so only, but unsound also—not trusting such a one with any great matter. The slave though he works hard, because indeed he dares no other, yet is soon drawn into a conspiracy against his master, because he hates him while he fears him. We see this not only among the Turks—against whom those Christians used as absolute slaves by them in their galleys do, when they have advantage in sight, often purchase their own liberty by cutting the throats of their tyrant masters—but also in kingdoms, where subjects rather fear than love their princes. How ready they are to invite another into the throne, or welcome any that should court them! Thus fast and loose will he be with God, that is pricked on with the sword's point of his wrath, and not drawn with the cords of his love. Israel is an example beyond parallel for this, 'When he slew them, then they sought him;...nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him,' Ps. 78:34,36. They feared God, and loved their lusts, and therefore they betrayed his glory at every turn into their hands; as Herod did the head of John, whom he feared, into her hands whom he loved. And truly there is too much of this slavish fear to be found in the saints' bosoms, or else the whip should not be so often in God's hand. We find God checking his people for this, and make their servile spirit the reason of his severity towards them. 'Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled?' Jer. 2:14. As if God had said, What is the reason I must use thee, who art my dear child, as coarsely as if thou wert a servant, a slave, laying on blow after blow upon thy back with such heavy judgments? wouldst thou know, read ver. 17. 'Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?' Thou mayest thank thyself for this my unusual dealing with thee. If the child will forget his own ingenuity, and nothing but blows will work with him, then the father must deal with his child according to his servile spirit. When God led Israel by the way, as a father his child, lovingly, he flung from him; and if they would not lead by love, then no wonder he makes them drive by fear. O Christian, act more by love, and thou wilt save God's putting thee into fear with his whip. Love will

keep thee close and true to him. The very character of love is, it 'seeketh not her own, I Cor. 13:5; and what is it to be sincere, but when the Christian seeks Christ's interests, and not his own? Jonathan loved David dearly. This made him incur his father's wrath, trample on the hopes of a kingdom which he had for him and his posterity, rather than be false to his friend. Lot delivers up his daughters to the lust of the Sodomites, rather than his guests. Samson could not conceal that great secret, wherein his strength lay, from Delilah whom he loved, though it was as much as his life was worth to blab it to her. Love is the great conqueror of the world. Thus will thy soul be inflamed with love to Christ—set all thy worldly interest adrift, rather than put his honour to the least hazard. Abraham did not more willingly put his sacrificing knife to the ram's throat to save his dear Isaac's life, than thou wilt be to sacrifice thy life to keep thy sincerity alive. Love is compared to fire; the nature of which is to assimilate to itself all that comes near it, or to consume them. It turns all into fire or ashes. Nothing that is heterogeneous can long dwell with its own simple pure nature. Thus love to Christ will not suffer the near neighbourhood of anything in its bosom that is derogatory to Christ. Either it will reduce, or abandon it, be it pleasure, profit, or whatever else. Abraham, who loved Hagar and Ishmael in their due place, when the one began to juggle with her mistress, and the other to jeer and mock at Isaac, he packs them both out of doors. Love to Christ will not suffer thee to side with anything against Christ, but take his part with him against any that oppose him, and so long thy sincerity is out of danger.

3. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, meditate often on the simplicity and sincerity of God's heart to his saints. What more powerful consideration can be thought on to make us true to God, than the faithfulness and truth of God to us? Absalom, though as vile a dissembler as lived, yet, when Hushai came out to him, he suspected him. 'And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?' II Sam. 16:17. His own conscience told him it was horrible baseness for him, that had found David such a true friend now to join in rebellious arms against him; and though Absalom that said this did offer greater violence to this law of love, yet he questioned, it

seems, whether any durst be so wicked besides himself. When therefore, Christian, thou findest thy heart warping into any insincere practice, lay it under this consideration, and if anything of God and his grace be in thee, it will unbend thee and bring thee to rights again. Ask thy soul, 'Is this thy kindness to thy friend;' such a friend God hath been, is, and surely will be to thee for ever? God, when his people sin, to put them to the blush, asks them whether he gives them cause for their unkind and undutiful carriages to him, 'Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me,' Jer. 2:5. So Moses, intending to pay Israel home, before he goes up and dies on Nebo, for all their hypocrisy, murmuring, and horrible rebellions against God, all along from first setting out of Egypt to that day, he brings in their charge, and draws out the several indictments, that they were guilty of. Now to add the greater weight to every one, he, in the forefront of all his speech, shows what a God he is that they have done all this against. He makes way to the declaiming against their sins, by the proclaiming of the glory of God against whom they were committed. 'I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God,' Deut. 32:3. And very observable it is, what of God's name he publisheth, the more to aggravate their sins, and help them to conceive of their heinous nature. 'He is the Rock, his work is perfect;...a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.' ver. 4. He chooseth to instance in the truth and sincerity of God's heart to them, in all his dispensations, as that which might make them most ashamed of their doings. Now because this one consideration may be of such use to hedge in the heart, and keep it close to God in sincerity, I shall show wherein the truth and sincerity of God's love appears to his saints, every one of the particulars of which will furnish us with a strong argument to be sincere and upright with God.

(1.) The sincerity of God's heart appears in the principle he acts from, and in the end he aims at, in all his dispensations. Love is the principle he constantly acts from, and their good the end he propounds. The fire of love never goes out of his heart, nor their good out of his eye. When he frowns with his brow, chides with his lips, and strikes with his hand, even then his heart burns with love, and his

thoughts meditate peace to them. Famous is that place for this purpose: 'I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good, for I will set mine eyes upon them for good,' Jer. 24:5. And this was one of the sharpest judgments God ever brought upon his people, and yet in this he is designing mercy, and projecting how to do them good. So in the wilderness, when they cried out upon Moses for bringing them thither to kill them, they were more afraid than hurt. God wished them better than they dreamed of. His intent was to humble them, that he might do them good in the latter end. So sincere is God to his people, that he gives his own glory in hostage to them for their security. His own robes of glory are locked up in their prosperity and salvation. He will not, indeed he cannot, present himself in all his magnificence and royalty till he hath made up his intended thought of mercy to his people. He is pleased to prorogue³⁰ the time of his appearing in all his glory to the world, till he hath actually accomplished their deliverance, that he and they may come forth together in their glory on the same day. 'When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory,' Ps. 102:16. The sun is ever glorious in the most cloudy day, but it appears not so till it hath scattered the clouds that muffle it up from the sight of the lower world. God is glorious when the world sees him not, but his declarative glory then appears when the glory of his mercy, truth, and faithfulness break forth in his people's salvation. Now what shame must this cover thy face with, O Christian, if thou shouldst not sincerely aim at thy God's glory, and your happiness in one bottom³¹, that he cannot now lose the one and save the other.

(2.) The truth and sincerity of God to his people appears in the openness and plainness of his heart to them. A friend that is close and reserved, deservedly comes under a cloud in the thoughts of his friend; but he who carries, as it were, a window of crystal in his breast, through which his friend may read what

thoughts are written in his very heart, delivers himself from the least suspicion of unfaithfulness. Truly thus open-hearted is God to his saints. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.' He gives us in his key that will let us into his very heart, and acquaint us what his thoughts are, yea were, towards us, before a stone was laid in the world's foundation; and this is no other than his Spirit, one who knows 'the deep things of God,' I Cor. 2:10, for he was at the council-table in heaven, where all was transacted. This his Spirit he employed to put forth, and publish in the Scripture indited by him, the substance of those counsels of love which had passed between the Trinity of persons for our salvation; and that nothing may be wanting for our satisfaction, he hath appointed the same Holy Spirit to abide in his saints, that as Christ in heaven presents our desires to him, so he may interpret his mind out of his word to us; which word answers the heart of God, 'as face answers face in the glass.' There is nothing desirable in a true friend, as to this openness of heart, but God performs in a transcendent manner to his people. If any danger hangs over their heads, he cannot conceal it. 'By them,' saith David, 'is thy servant warned,' speaking of the word of God. One messenger or other God will send to give his saints the alarm, whether their danger be from sin within, or enemies without. Hezekiah was in danger of inward pride. God sends him a temptation to let him 'know what was in his heart,' that he might, by falling once, be kept from falling again. Satan had a project against Peter; Christ gives him notice of it, Luke 22:31. If any of his children by sin displease him, he doth not, as false friends use, dissemble the displeasure he conceives, and carry it fair outwardly with them, while he keeps a secret grudge against them inwardly; no, he tells them roundly of it, and corrects them soundly for it, but entertains no ill will against them. And when he leads his people into an afflicted state, he loves them so, that he cannot leave them altogether in the dark, concerning the thoughts of love he hath to them in delivering them; but, to comfort them in the prison, doth open his heart beforehand to them, as we see in the greatest calamities that have befallen the Jewish church in Egypt and Babylon, as also the gospel-church under Antichrist. The promises for the deliverance out of all these were expressed before the sufferings came.

30. Prorogue: to defer, postpone; to terminate a session of (as a British parliament) by royal prerogative. From Webster's. — SDB

31. Bottom, i.e. vessel of burden.

When Christ was on earth, how free and open was he to his disciples, both in telling them what calamities should betide them, and the blessed issue of them all, when he should come again to them! And why? but to confirm them in the persuasion of the sincerity of his heart towards them, as those words import, ‘If it were not so, I would have told you,’ John 14:2; as if he had said, ‘It would not have consisted with the sincere love I bear to you to hide anything that is fit for you to know, from you, or to make them otherwise than they are.’ And when he doth conceal any truths from them for the present, see his candour and sincerity, opening the reason of his veiling them to be, not that he grudged them the communication of them, but because they could not at present bear them. Now, Christian, improve all this to make thee more plain-hearted with God. Is he so free and open to thee, and wilt thou be reserved to him? Doth thy God unbosom his mind to thee, and wilt not thou pour out all thy soul to him? Darest thou not trust him with thy secrets, that makes thee privy to his councils of love and mercy? In a word, darest thou for shame go about to harbour, and hide from him, any traitorous lust in thy soul, whose love will not suffer him to conceal any danger from thee? God, who is so exact and true to the law of friendship with his people, expects the like ingenuity from them.

(3.) The sincerity of God’s heart and affection to his people appears in the unmovableness of his love. As there is ‘no shadow of turning’ in the being of God, so not in the love of God to his people. There is no vertical point—his love stands still. Like the sun in Gibeah, it goes not down nor declines, but continues in its full strength; ‘with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer,’ Isa. 54:8. Sorry man repents of his love. The hottest affection cools in his bosom. Love in the creature is like fire on the hearth, now blazing, anon blinking, and going out; but in God it is like fire in the element, that never fails. In the creature it is like water in a river, that falls and riseth; but in God, like water in the sea, that is always full, and knows no ebbing or flowing. Nothing can take off his love where he hath placed it; it can neither be corrupted nor conquered. Attempts are made both ways, but in vain.

(a) His love cannot be corrupted. There have

been such that have dared to tempt God, and court, yea bribe, ‘the Holy One of Israel’ to desert and come off from his people. Thus Balaam went to win God over to Balak’s side against Israel; which to obtain, he spared no cost, but built altar after altar, and heaped sacrifice upon sacrifice, yea, what would they not have done to have gained but a word or two out of God’s mouth against his people? But he kept true to them; yea, left a brand of his displeasure upon that nation for hiring Balaam, and sending him on such an errand to God, Deut. 23:4. This passage we find of God minding his people, to continue in them a persuasion of his sincere steadfast love to them; ‘O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal,’ Micah 6:5. And why should they remember this? ‘That ye may know the righteousness of the Lord;’ that is, that you may know how true and faithful a God I have been to you. Sometimes he makes use of it to provoke them to be sincere to him, as he, in that, proved himself to them, Joshua 24:9; he tells them how Balak sent Balaam to set God a cursing them, but saith the Lord, ‘I would not hearken unto him,’ but made him that came to curse you, with his own lips entail a blessing on you and yours. And why is this story mentioned? see ver. 14, ‘Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth’—a most natural and reasonable inference from the premises of God’s truth and faithfulness. O Christian! wouldst thou have thy love to God made incorruptible, embalm it often in thy thoughts, with the sweet spices of God’s sincere love to thee, which is immortal, and cannot see corruption. Believe God is true to thee, and be false to him if thou darest. It is a solecism and barbarism in love to return falsehood for faithfulness.

(b) The love of God to his saints cannot be conquered. That which puts it hardest to it, is not the power of his people’s enemies, whether men or devils, but his people’s sins. God makes nothing of their whole power and wrath, when combined together; but truly, the sins of his people, these put omnipotency itself to the trial. We never hear God groaning under, or complaining of, the power of his enemies, but often sadly of his people’s sins and unkindnesses. These load him; these break his heart, and make him cry out as if he were at a stand in his thoughts, to use

a human expression, and found it not easy what to do, whether to love them, or leave them—vote for their life or death. Well, whatever expressions God useth to make his people more deeply resent their unkindnesses shown to him, yet God is not at a loss what to do in this case. His love determines his thoughts in favour of his covenant people, when their carriage least deserves it, *Hosea 11:9*. The devil thought he had enough against Joshua, when he could find some filth on his garment, to carry this in a tale, and tell God what a dirty case his child was in, *Zech. 3:6*. He made just account to have set God against him, but he was mistaken; for instead of provoking him to wrath, it moved him to pity—instead of falling out with him, he find Christ praying for him. Now improve this in a meditation, Christian. Is the love of God so unconquerable that thy very sins cannot break or cut the knot of that covenant which ties thee to him? and does not it shame thee that thou shouldst be so fast and loose with him? Thou shouldst labour to have the very image of thy heavenly Father's love more clearly stamped on the face of thy love to him. As nothing can conquer his love to thee, so neither let anything prejudice thy love to him. Say to thy soul, 'Shall not I cleave close to God, when he hides his face from me, who hath not cast me off when I have sinfully turned my back on him? Shall not I give testimony to his truth and name—though others desert the one and reproach the other—who hath kept love burning in his heart to me, when I have been dishonouring him? What! God yet on my side, and gracious to me, after such backslidings as these; and shall I again grieve his Spirit, and put his love to shame with more undutifulness? God forbid! this were to do my utmost to make God accessory to my sin, by making his love fuel for it.'

4. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, beware of presumptuous sins. These give the deepest wound to uprightness, yea they are inconsistent with it: 'Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright,' *Ps. 19:13*. One single act of presumption is inconsistent with the actual exercise of uprightness, as we see in David, who, by that one foul sin of murder, lost the present use of uprightness, and was in that particular too like one of the fools in Israel, and therefore stands as the

only exception to the general testimony which God gave unto his uprightness. 'Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite,' *I Kings 15:5*. That is, there was not such presumption in any other sin committed by him, and therefore they are here discounted, as to this, that they did nor make such a breach on his uprightness as this one sin did. And as one act of a sin which is presumptuous is inconsistent with actual uprightness, so habitual uprightness is very hardly consistent with habitual presumption. If one act of a presumptuous sin, and, as I may so say, one sip of this poisonous cup, doth so sadly infect the spirits of a gracious person, and change his complexion, that he is not like himself, how deadly must its needs be to all uprightness, to drink from day to day in it? And therefore, as 'But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat,' *Dan. 1:8*, so do thou daily put thyself under some such holy bond, that thou wilt not defile thyself with any presumptuous sin; for indeed, this is properly 'the king's meat'—I mean the devil's—that prince of darkness, who can himself commit none but presumptuous sins, and chiefly labours to defile souls by eating of this dish. Say, as Austin in another case, 'Errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo—I may err, but I am resolved not to be a heretic. I may have many failings, but by the grace of God, I will labour that I be not a presumptuous sinner.' And if thou wouldst not be in a presumptuous sin, take heed thou makest not light of less infirmities. When David's heart smote him for rending the skirt of Saul, he stopped and made a happy retreat. His tender conscience giving him a privy check for rending his skirt, and would not suffer him to cut his throat, and take away his life, which was better than raiment. But at another time, when his conscience was more heavy-eyed, and did not do this friendly office to him, but let him shoot his amorous glances after Bathsheba, without giving him any alarm of his danger, the good man, like one whose senses are gone, and head dizzy at the first trip upon a steep hill—could not recover himself, but tumbled from one sin to another, till at last he fell into the deep pit of murder. When the river is frozen, a man will venture to walk, and run,

where he durst not set his foot if the ice were but melted or broken. O when the heart of a godly man himself is so hardened that he can stand on an infirmity, though never so little, and his conscience not crack, under him, how far may he go! I tremble to think what sin he may fall into.

5. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, get above the love and fear of the world. The Christian's sincerity is not eclipsed without the interposition of the earth betwixt God and his soul.

(1.) Get above the love of the world. This is a fit root for hypocrisy to grow upon. If the heart be violently set upon anything the world hath, and it comes to vote peremptorily for having it—I must be worth so much a year, have such honour—and the creature begins, with Ahab, to be sick with longing after them, then the man is in great danger to take the first ill counsel that Satan or the flesh gives him for attaining his ends, though prejudicial to his uprightness. Hunters mind not the way they go in—over hedge and ditch they leap—so they may have the hare. It is a wonder, I confess, that any saint should have so strong a scent after the creature, that hath the savour of Christ's ointments poured into his bosom. One would think the sweet perfume, which comes so hot from those beds of spices, the promises, should spoil the Christian's hunting game after the creature, and one scent should hinder the taking in the other. The purer sweetnesses—that breath from Christ and heaven in them—should so fill the Christian's senses, that the other enjoyments, being of a more gross and earthly savour, could find no pleasing resentment in his nostrils; which indeed is most true and certain so long as the Christian hath his spiritual senses open, and in exercise, but alas! as upon some cold in the body, the head is stopped, and the senses bound up from doing their office, so through the Christian's negligence, a spiritual distemper is easily got, whereby those senses, graces I mean, which should judge of things, are sadly obstructed. And now when the Christian is not in temper for enjoying these purer sweetnesses, the devil hath a fair advantage of starting some creature-enjoyment, and presenting it before the Christian, which the flesh soon scents and carries the poor Christian after, till grace comes a little to its temper, and then he gives over the chase with shame

and sorrow.

(2.) Get above the fear of the world. The fear of man brings a snare. A coward will run into any hole, though never so dishonourable, so he may save himself from what he fears; and when the holiest are under the power of this temptation, they are too like other men. Abraham in a pang of fear dissembles with Abimelech. Yea, Peter, when not his life, but his reputation seemed to be in a little danger, did not 'walk uprightly'³², according to the truth of the gospel.' He did not foot it right as became so holy a man to do, but took one step forward, and another back again, as if he had not liked his way; now he will eat with the Gentiles, and anon he withdraws. Now what made him dissemble, and his feet thus double in his going? nothing but a qualm of fear came over his heart, as you may see, Gal. 2:12, compared with ver. 14: 'Fearing them which were of the circumcision,' he dissembled, and drew others into a party with him.

6. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, keep a strict eye over thy own heart in thy daily walking. Hypocrisy is a weed with which the best soil is so tainted that it needs daily care and dressing to keep it under. He that rides on a stumbling horse had need have his eye on his way, and his hand on his bridle. Such is thy heart, Christian. Yea, it oft stumbles in the fairest way, when thou least fearest it; look to it therefore, and keep a strict rein over it, מנל'מתמד—'above all keeping keep thy heart,' Prov. 4:23. The servant keeps his way when he travels in his master's company; but when sent of an errand alone, then he hath his vagaries. Many a wry step, and extravagancy in thy daily walking, may be prevented, didst thou walk in company with thyself, I mean observe thyself and way. In this sense, most in the world are besides themselves, strangers to their own walking, as much as to their own faces. Every one that lives with them knows them better than themselves, which is a horrible shame. And let not so vain an opinion find place with thee, that, because sincere, thou needest not keep so strict an eye over thy heart; as if thy heart which is gracious, could not play false with God and thee too. Doth not Solomon brand him on the fore-

32. ὀρθοποδεῖν.

head for a fool 'that trusteth his own heart?' If thou beest, as thou sayest, sincere, I cannot believe should so far prevail with thee. They are the ignorant and profane whose hearts are stark naught, that cry them up for good. But it is one part of the goodness of a heart made truly good by grace, to see more into, and complain more of, its own naughtiness. Bring thy heart therefore often upon the review, and take its accounts solemnly. He takes the way to make his servant a thief that doth not ask him now and then what money he hath in his hand. I read indeed of some in good Jehoiada's days that were trusted with the money for the repair of the temple, with whom they did not so much as reckon how they laid it out; 'for they dealt faithfully,' II Kings 12:15. But thou hadst not best to do so with thy heart, lest it set thee on score with God, and thy own conscience, more than thou wilt get wiped out in haste. Many talents God puts into thy hand—health, liberty, Sabbaths, ordinances, communion of saints, and the like, for the repair of thy spiritual temple—the work of grace in thee. Ask now thy soul, how every one of these are laid out; may be thou wilt find some of this money spent, and the work never a whit more forward. It stands thee in hand to look to it, for God will have an account, though thou art so favourable to thy deceitful heart to call for none. We have done with the second sort of persons—those who, upon search, find their consciences bearing witness for their uprightness.

[Counsel and comfort to those who, upon trial,
are found sincere, but still are drooping
doubting souls.]

Third Sort. We come now to the third sort which yet remains to be spoken to, and they are doubting souls, who are indeed sincere, but dare not be persuaded to think so well of themselves. They come from the trial which they were desired to put themselves upon, and which brings them in ignorant, not knowing whether they be sincere or no. Now to these I would give these few words of counsel, and the Lord give his blessing with them.

1. Counsel. Take heed Satan doth not draw you to conclude you are hypocrites because you are without the present evidence of your sincerity. To say so were to offend against the generation of God's dear

children, many of whom must, if this were a true inference from such premises, pass the same sentence upon themselves. For such precious souls there are, from whose eyes the truth of their grace and sincerity of their hearts is at this day hid, and yet are not without either. The patriarchs had their money all day bound up in their sacks as they travelled, though they did not know this, till they came to their inn and opened them. Thus there is a treasure of sincerity hid in many a soul, but the time to open the sack, and let the soul know its riches, is not come. Many are now in heaven—have shot the gulf, and are safely landed there—who were sadly tossed with fears all along their voyage about the truth of grace in them. Faith unfeigned puts a soul into the ark Christ; but it doth not hinder, but such a one may be seasick in the ship. It is Christ's work, not grace's, to evidence itself to our eye so demonstratively as to enable us to own it. Besides an organ fitly disposed, there is required a light to irradiate the medium; so, besides truth of grace, it is necessary that the spirit being another light, for want of which the soul is benighted in its thoughts, and must cry for another—and he no other than the Holy Spirit—to lead them into the light. This is the great messenger which alone is able 'to show a man his uprightness.' But, as the eye may be a seeing eye in the dark, when it doth not see anything, so there may be truth of grace, where there is not present sense of that truth. Yea, the creature may be passionately hunting from ordinance to ordinance, to get that sincerity which he already hath; as sometimes you may have seen one seek very earnestly all about the house for his hat, when at the same time he hath it on his head. Well, lay down this as a real truth in thy soul, 'I maybe upright, though at present I am not able to see it clearly.' This, though it will not bring in a full comfort, yet it may be some support till that come, as a shore to thy weak house; though it does not mend it, yea it will underprop and keep it standing till the master workman comes—the Holy Spirit—who, with one kind word to thy soul, is able to set thee right in thy own thoughts, and make thee stand strong on the promise—the only true basis and foundation of solid comfort. Be not more cruel to thy soul, O Christian, than thou wouldst—to thy friend's, shall I say? yea, to thine enemy's body. Should one thou didst not much love lie sick in thy

house, yea so sick that, if you should ask him whether he be alive, he could not tell you—his senses and speech being both at present gone—would you presently lay him out, and coffin him up for the grave, because you cannot have it from his own mouth that he is alive? Surely not. O how unreasonable and bloody then is Satan, who would presently have thee put thyself into the pit-hole of despair, because thy grace is not so strong as to speak for itself at present!

2. Counsel. Let me send thee back upon a melius inquirendum—a closer examination. Look once again more narrowly, whether Satan—that Joab—hath not the great hand in these questions and scruples started in thy bosom about thy sincerity, merely as his last design upon thee, that he may amuse and distract thee with false fears, when thou wilt not be flattered with false hopes. The time was thou wert really worse, and then, by his means, thou thoughtest thyself better than thou wert: and now, since thou hast changed thy way, disowned thy former confidence, been acquainted with Christ, and got some savour of his holy ways in thy spirit, so as to make thee strongly breathe after them, thou art affrighted with many apparitions of fears in thy sad thoughts, if not charging thee for a hypocrite, yet calling in question the truth of thy heart. It is worth, I say, the inquiring, whether it be not the same hand again—the devil—though knocking at another door. No player hath so many several dresses to come in upon the stage [with], as the devil hath forms of temptation, and this is a suit which he very ordinarily hath been known to wear. If it were thy case only, thou mightest have more suspicion lest these fears should be the just rebukes of thy own false heart; but when thou findest the complaints of many thy fellow-brethren—of whose sincerity thou darest not doubt, though thou savest not so much charity for thyself—so meet with thine, that no key though made on purpose, can fit all the wards of a lock, than their condition doth thine. This, I say, may well make thee set about another search, to find whether he be not come forth as a ‘lying spirit,’ to abuse thy tender spirit with such news as he knows worse cannot come to thy ears—that thou dost not love Jesus Christ as thou pretendest, and deceivest but thyself to think otherwise. Thus this foul spirit—like a brazen-faced harlot that lays her child at an honest person’s door

—doth impudently charge many with that which they are little guilty of, knowing that so much of his bold accusation will likely stick to the poor Christian’s spirit, as shall keep the door open to let in another temptation, which he much desires to convey into his bosom, by the favour and under the shadow of this. And it is ordinarily this, viz. to scare the Christian from duty, and knock off the wheels of his chariot, which used so often to carry him into the presence of God in his ordinances, merely upon a suspicion that he is not sincere in them. And [it is] better [to] stay at home, without hearing or joining with God’s people in any other duty, than [to] go up and show the naughtiness of thy heart, saith the devil. Had the serpent a smoother skin and a fairer tale when he made Eve put forth her hand to the forbidden fruit, than he comes with in this temptation to persuade thee, poor Christian, not to touch or taste of that fruit which God hath commanded to be eaten—ordinances, I mean, to be enjoyed by thee? Yet, Christian, thou hast reason, if I mistake not, to bless God if he suffers thy enemy so far to open his mind, by which thou mayst have some light to discover the wickedness of his design in the other temptation of questioning thy sincerity. Dost thou not now perceive, poor soul, what made the loud cry of thy hypocrisy in thy fears? The devil did not like to see thee so busy with ordinances, nor thy acquaintance to grow so fast with God in them, and he knew no way but this to knock thee off. Bite at his other baits thou wouldst not. Sin, though never so well cooked and garnished, is not a dish for thy tooth, he sees; and therefore, either he must affright thee from these by troubling thy imagination with fears of thy hypocrisy in them, or else he may throw his cap at thee and give thee [up] for one got out of his reach. Dost thou think, poor soul, that if thy heart were so false and hypocritical in thy duties, that he would make all this bustle about them? He doth not use to misplace his batteries thus—to mount them where there is no enemy to offend him. Thy hypocritical prayers and hearing would hurt him no more than if [there were] none at all. Neither doth he use too be so kind as to tell hypocrites of the falseness of their hearts. This is the chain with which he hath them by the foot, and it is his great care to hide it from them, lest the rattling of it in their conscience awaken them to some endeavour to knock it

off, and so they make an escape out of his prison. Be therefore of good comfort, poor soul. If thy conscience brings not Scripture proof to condemn thee for a hypocrite, fear not the devil's charge. He shall not be on the bench when thou comest to be tried for thy life, nor his testimony of any value at that day; why then should his tongue be any slander to thee now?

3. Counsel. Neglect no means for getting thy truth of heart and sincerity evidenced to thee. It is to be had. This is the 'white stone' with the 'new name' in it, 'which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it,' promised, Rev. 2:17. And I hope thou dost not think this to be such an ens rationis—an imaginary thing, as the philosopher's stone³³ is, [of] which none could ever say to this day that he had it in his hand. Holy Paul had this white stone' sparkling in his conscience more gloriously than all the precious stones in Aaron's breast-plate. 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity...we have had our conversation in the world,' II Cor. 1:12. And Job, sure, was not without it when he durst, with such a confidence, appeal to the thoughts that God himself had of him, even then when God was ransacking and searching every corner of his heart by his heavy hand—'thou knowest that I am not wicked,' Job 10:7. Mark, he doth not deny that he hath sin in him—that you have again and again confessed by him—but he was not wicked; i.e. a rotten-hearted hypocrite. This he will stand to, that God himself will not say so of him, though, for his trial, the Lord gives way to have him searched, to stop the devil's mouth, and shame him who was not afraid to lay suspicion of this spiritual felony to his charge.

Objection. But maybe thou wilt say, these were saints of the highest form, and though they might come to see their sincerity, and have this 'white stone' in their bosoms; yet such jewels cannot be expected to be worn by ordinary Christians.

Answer. For answer to this, consider that the weakest Christian in God's family hath the same witness in him that these had. 'He that believeth on the

Son of God hath the witness in him,' I John 5:10. Mark, it is indefinite, every one that believeth; not this eminent Christian, or that, but every one. 'The witness' is the same; for, the same Christ and Spirit dwell in thy heart, that do in the highest saint on earth; the same blood thou hast to sprinkle, and the same water to wash thee. These can and will, when the Lord please, testify as much for thy grace and sincerity as it doth for theirs; only, as witnesses in a court stay till the judge call them forth, and then, and not till then, give their testimony, so do these; and God may and doth use his liberty, when he will do this. Just as it is also on the contrary. Every wicked impenitent sinner carries a witness in his own bosom that will condemn him; but this doth not always speak, and presently make report of the sad news it hath to tell the sinner; that is [only] when God calls a court, and keeps his private sessions in the sinner's soul, which are at his pleasure to appoint. Only, means must not be neglected, of which I shall propose a few.

(1.) Means. Reach forth, Christian—for such I must call thee, whether thou wilt own the name or no—to further degrees of grace. The more the child grows up, the more it comes to its right complexion; and so doth grace. There is so much slavish fear, selfishness, with other imperfections at present, like so much scurf³⁴ on the face of this new-born babe of grace, that they do hide its true favour. This, however, by degrees will wear off as it grows up. Yea, the spiritual reason of a Christian ripens, as the whole body of grace grows, whereby he is more capable, by reflecting on his own actions, to judge of the objections Satan makes against his sincerity; so that if you would not be always tossed to and fro with your own fluctuating thoughts, whether sincere or not, but grow up to higher stature, and thou wilt grow above many of thy fears, for, by the same light that thou findest the growth of thy grace, thou mayest see the truth of it also. Though it be hard in the crepusculum, or first break of day, to know whether it be daylight or night-light that shines; yet when you see the light evidently grow and unfold itself, you, by that, know it to be day. Paint doth not grow on the face fairer than it was; nor

33. Philosopher's stone— an imaginary stone, substance, or chemical preparation believed to have the power of transmuting baser metals into gold and sought for by alchemists. From Webster's. — SDB

34. Scurf: the foul remains of something adherent.

— SDB

do the arms of a child in a picture get strength by standing there months and years. Do thy love, hope, humility, godly sorrow, grow more and more, poor soul, and you yet question what it is—whether true grace or not? This is as marvelous a thing, that thou shouldst not know what thy grace is, and whence, as it was that the Jews should not know who Christ was, when he had made a man born blind to see so clearly, John 9:2.

(2.) Means. Readily embrace any call that God sends thee, by his providence, for giving a proof and experiment of thy sincerity. There are some few advantages that God gives, which, if embraced and improved, a man may come to know more of his own heart and the grace of God therein, than in all his life besides. Now these advantages do lie wrapped up in those seasons wherein God more eminently calls us forth too deny ourselves for his sake. But be ready to entertain and faithful to obey that heavenly call, and thou wilt know much of thy heart; partly because grace in such acts comes forth with such glory, that, as the sun when it shines in a clear day, it exposeth itself more visibly to the eye of the creature; as also, because God chooseth such seasons as these to give his testimony to the truth of his children's grace in, when they are most eminently exercising it. In this way, when does the master speak kindly to his servant and commend him, but when he takes him most diligent? Then he saith, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' May be, some time or other, God is calling thee to such an act of self-denial, wherein, if thou wilt answer God's call, thou must trample upon some dear enjoyment or other, as credit, estate, or it may be a sweet child, a dear wife; yea, it may be thou canst not do the work God calls thee to but with hazard to them all—these, and more too. Well, friend, be not sick to think of thy great strait, or disquieted at the sight of the providence that now stands at thy door. Didst thou know what errand it comes about, thou wouldst invite it in, and make it as welcome as Abraham did the three angels, whom he feasted in his tent so freely. I will tell thee what God sends it for, and that is to bring thee to a sight of thy sincerity, and to acquaint thee with that grace of God in thee whose face thou hast so long desired to see. This providence brings thee a chariot—to allude to Joseph's waggons sent for old Jacob—wherein thou mayest be carried to

see that grace alive, whose funeral thou hast so long kept in thy mournful soul. And does not thy spirit revive at the thought of any means whereby thou mayest obtain this? Abraham was called to offer up his son, and he went about it in earnest. Now such a piece of self-denial God could not let pass without some mark of honour; and what is it he gives him but his testimony to his uprightness? 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad;...for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me,' Gen. 22:12. Why? God knew this before. Yes, but he speaks it that Abraham may hear, and take it from God's mouth that he was sincere. May be thou art called to deny thy own education, and principles sucked in by it, [to deny] thy own company, and cross the judgment of those thou highly esteemest, yea, thy own wisdom and reason, to entertain a truth, or take up a practice, merely upon account of the word. If thou canst do this, and that without affectation of singularity, or a humour of pride, blowing thee that way, it is an act of deep self-denial, and goes most cross to the most ingenuous natures, who are afraid of drawing eyes after them, by leaving their company to walk in a path alone, yea, [are] very loath to oppose their judgments to others, more, for number and parts, than their own; in a word, who love peace so dearly, that they can be willing to pay anything but a sin to purchase it. In these it must needs be great self-denial; and therefore such have the greater ground to expect God's evidencing their sincerity to them. He did it to Nathanael, who had all these bars to keep him from coming to Christ, and believing on him; yet he did both, and Christ welcomes him with a high and loud testimony to his uprightness. 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile,' John 1:47.

Again, may be the thing God would have thee deny thyself in is thy wrath and revenge, which, to give thee a fair occasion to do with greater demonstration of thy sincerity, he puts thy enemy into thy power, and lays him bound, as it were, under thy hand; yea, so orders it in his providence, that thou mayest have thy will on him with little noise; or, if it be known, yet the notorious wrongs he hath done thee, and some circumstances in the providence that hath brought him into thy hand, concur to give thee an advantage of putting so handsome a colour upon

the business, as shall apologize for thee in the thoughts of those that hear it—making them, especially, who look not narrowly into the matter, rather observe the justice of God on thy enemy’s judgment befallen him, than thy injustice and sin, who wert the instrument to execute it. Now when the way lies smooth and fair for thee to walk in, and thy own corruption calls thee forth—yea useth God’s name in the matter, to make thee more confident saying to thee, as they to David, ‘Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee,’ I Sam. 24:4;—if now, thou canst withstand the temptation, and, instead of avenging thyself upon the person, thy enemy, revenge thyself on thy revenge—thy greater enemy of the two—by paying good into thy adversary’s bosom for the evil he hath done thee; and, when thou hast done this, canst escape another enemy in thy return, I mean pride, so as to come out of the field a humble conqueror, and wilt consecrate the memorial of this victory not to thy own [praise] but [to the] praise of God’s name—as Goliath’s sword, which was not kept by David at his own home, to show what he had done, but in the tabernacle ‘behind the ephod,’ as a memorial of what God had done by it in David’s hand, I Sam. 21:9;—[if thou canst do this,] thou hast done that which speaks thee sincere, yea a high graduate in this grace, and God will sooner or later let thee know so. David’s fame sounds not louder for his victories got in the open field over his slain enemies, than it doth for that he got in the cave, though an obscure hole, over his own revenge, in sparing the life of Saul—[an incident] in which you have the case in hand every way fitted. By the renown of his bloody battles, he got ‘a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth,’ II Sam. 7:9; but, by this noble act of his self-denial, he got a name, great, like unto the name of those that are famed for their holiness, in the Scripture; and rather than David shall not have the commendation of this piece of self-denial, God will send it to him in the mouth of his very enemy, who cannot hold—though by it he proclaims his own shame and wickedness—but he must justify him as a holy righteous man. ‘And he,’ that is Saul, ‘said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee

evil,’ I Sam. 24:17.

(3.) Means. Continue thou to wait upon God in all the ways of his ordinances—every one in their season. Whenever thou comest to get the comfortable sight of thy sincerity, it is the Spirit of God that must befriend thee in it, or else, like Hagar, thou mayest sit by the well and not find it; thou mayest round thy field again and again, but find not the treasure hid in it. It is the Spirit of God by which we ‘know the things that are freely given to us of God,’ I Cor. 2:12. Now the Spirit sits in the ordinances, as a minister of state in his offices, whither we must resort, if we will have the truth of our graces—that are our evidences for heaven—sealed to our consciences. Thither go therefore, yea, there wait, for thou knowest not, as the wise man saith of sowing seed, Ecc. 11:6, whether thy waiting on this or that, now or then, shall prosper and be successful to thee in the end. It is enough to confirm, yea, quiet and comfort thee in thy attendance, that thou art at the right door; and though thou knockest long and hearest no news of his coming, yet thou canst not stay so long, like Eglon’s servants, Judges 3:25, that thou needst be ashamed. They indeed waited on a deadman, and might have stood long enough before he had heard them; but thou on a living God, that hears every knock thou givest at heaven-gate with thy prayers and tears; yea, a loving God, that, all this while he acts the part of a stranger, like Joseph to his brethren, is yet so big with mercy, that he will at last fall on thy neck and ease his heart, by owning of thee and his grace in thee. Lift up thy head then, poor drooping soul, and go with expectation of the thing; but remember thou settest not God the time. The sun riseth at his own hour, whatever time we set it. And when God shall meet thee in an ordinance—as sometimes no doubt, Christian, thou findest a heavenly light irradiating, and influence quickening, thy soul, while hearing the word, or may be on thy knees wrestling with God—this is a sweet advantage and season thou shouldst improve for the satisfying soul. As when the sun breaks out, we then run to the dial to know how the day goes; or when, as we are sitting in the dark, one brings a candle into the room, we then bestir ourselves to look for the thing we miss, and soon find what we in vain groped for in the dark; so mayest thou, poor soul—as many of thy dear brethren and sisters before thee have done

—know more of thy spiritual state in a few moments at such a time, than in many a day when God withdraws. Carefully therefore watch for such seasons and improve them. But if God will hide thy treasure from thy sight, comfort thyself, comfort thyself with this, that God knows thy uprightness, though wrapped up from thy own eye. Say as David, ‘When my spirit

was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path,’ Ps. 142:3; and God will do with thee, not by the false accusations thou bringest in against thyself—as it is to be feared some have suffered at men’s hands—but by the testimony which his all-seeing eye can give to thy grace.