

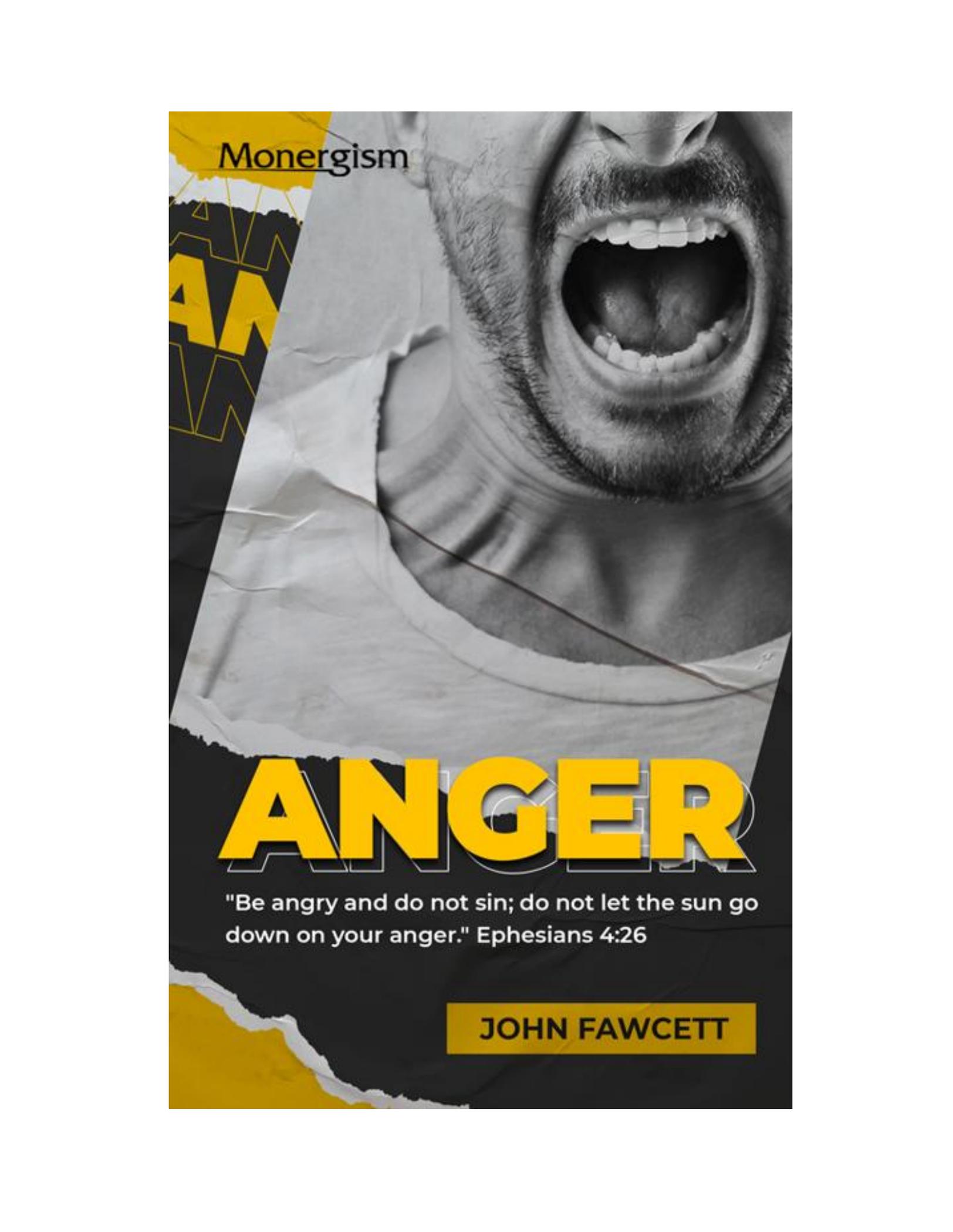
Monergism

AN

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by John Fawcett

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"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Colossians 3:12-14

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## **PREFACE**

In compliance with the earnest solicitations of a few select friends, for whom I have the highest esteem, the ensuing discourse is, with diffidence and humility, submitted to the candor of the public. I am conscious of many defects in it, and wish they may not be found of such consequence as to prejudice the good cause which I desire above all things to promote. The subject is important, and it is hoped that the author's aim in treating upon it will be deemed laudable. Those who know his circumstances may perhaps be disposed to make some kind allowances for the inaccuracies they may here meet with, and peruse these pages with Christian simplicity, rather than the severity of criticism.

The intelligent reader will observe, that I have availed myself of many hints and observations of the most valuable and approved authors, which I thought pertinent and striking. I have some times forborne to mention the names of those authors, not that I might appropriate their labors, or usurp their honors; but that I might not crowd the pages of this diminutive performance by ostentatious quotations. I hope this general acknowledgment will be deemed a sufficient apology for the liberty I have taken in this behalf.

It is not to be expected that many things can be advanced on moral subjects entirely new. The finest and most beautiful thoughts concerning the government of our passions, and the regulation of our

manners, have been carried away before our times; and little is left for us, but to glean after the ancients, and the most approved of the moderns.

I hope it will appear that it has been my endeavor throughout the whole to advance nothing on the subject but what is consonant with the sacred oracles, the infallible rule of faith and practice; and that my design is to promote the meekness, benevolence, peace and love, which are the brightest ornaments of the Christian character.

## INTRODUCTION

*Ungoverned anger* is a prolific source of harm to human life. Many of the scenes of public calamity and private distress which strike us with astonishment and horror, have originated from this direful spring. It is this which has overspread the earth with blood and slaughter it is this which has so often filled the poisoned bowl, loaded the murderous pistol, and pointed the assassinating dagger. It has through successive ages furnished ample materials for the poet's tragic muse, and the orator's pathetic declamation.

The wrath of princes has embroiled kingdoms in war and bloodshed. It has subjected nations to continual frights and losses, and made death and terror continually to walk about in their most horrid forms. Then what desolation reigns! Rest is disturbed, property destroyed, families are broken, friends are suspected, enemies are feared, laws are trampled upon, commerce is ruined, business is neglected, cities are wasted and filled with heaps of slain!

The wrath of priests has deluged the church in blood, the blood of those of whom the world was not worthy. It has slain its thousands and its tens of thousands. Detestable bigotry, what have you done! Cruel superstition, unhallowed rage, what havoc have you made in

the fold of Christ! Nothing can be more remote from the genius of the gospel of peace, from the nature of the religion of love, or from the precepts and example of him whose name is the Prince of Peace, whose nature is love, whose first and great command is charity, and who has left us an example of meekness and lowliness of heart.

The miseries and mischiefs occasioned by lawless anger in private societies, and domestic connections, are without end. Where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work. The disunion of nations, the breakup of families, and the disquietude of neighborhoods, arise in general from ungoverned anger—that root of bitterness, that fruitful source of human woes.

Be this then the subject of our present meditation. May the light of divine revelation guide our researches, and the Spirit of peace and love seal instruction on our hearts.

Anger, according to one, is uneasiness, or discomposure of mind, on the receipt of any injury, with a present purpose of revenge.

Anger is displeasure—its opposite is delight. It is that sensation, which we feel when a person seeks to prevent us from obtaining the good we wish to enjoy, when he strives to deprive us of the good we possess, or when he endeavors to bring upon us the evil we dread.

Anger is defined by one to be a propensity to occasion evil to another, arising from the apprehension of an injury done by him. It is accompanied with sorrow and grief, a desire for repelling the affront, and making the author of it repent his attempt, and repair the damage we sustain by him.

In the sacred writings, anger is often attributed to God. He is angry with the wicked every day. Not that he is liable to those evil emotions which produce, or are produced by this angry passion in men; but because he is resolved to punish the wicked with the severity of a provoked father an incensed master.

Anger is often joined with fury, even when attributed to the Almighty. We read of the *heat* of his anger, and the *fierceness* of his wrath. How much is the power of his anger to be dreaded! This sets forth the awful, the accursed nature of that which the Long-suffering God so much resents—sin. The impenitent, the obstinate sinner, because there is wrath, should beware, lest he be taken away with a stroke; and then a great ransom cannot deliver him. He should flee from the wrath to come!

Neither every kind, nor every degree of anger, is to be condemned. Anger simply, and in its own nature, cannot be sinful. Two reasons, I think, may convince us of the truth of this:

1. It seems to have been planted in the original frame of human nature. Every power of the human mind is now perverted by sin. Anger, among the rest, has become a depraved passion; but it existed before it was depraved; and, being the appointment of him who is perfect in purity, must in itself be an innocent passion, allowable on just occasions, and to be exercised in a proper and becoming manner. "Be angry and do not sin." To endeavor to banish it entirely, from our minds, would be an attempt equally foolish and fruitless.

2. The blessed and holy Jesus himself, that pattern of perfection, who has left us an example that we should walk in his steps, was, when on earth, sometimes angry. Mark 3:5, "And when he had looked roundabout on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he said to the man, stretch forth your hand." Here is anger without sin—anger in one who knew none, and in whose spirit there was no deceit. Nay, it would be no hard task to prove that this anger was a virtue. The hardness of their hearts called for this holy resentment. Their blindness was obstinate, their opposition to him was unreasonable to the highest degree. Such a temper, such a conduct could not be looked upon with coolness and indifference.

If we ourselves were perfectly free from sin, and were to converse only with creatures entirely innocent, it does not appear that there

would be any occasion for the exercise of anger. But we live in a world where iniquity abounds, where oppression and injustice every day is practiced; and as such there are many occasions for a righteous and holy resentment. It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing. God, who, does nothing in vain, has implanted in our natures the irascible passions, that we might rebuke those who trample on his laws, and treat their fellow-creatures with cruelty.

But our natures, alas, are so depraved and disordered through our apostasy from God, that in this as in other things, we pervert that which is right.

The anger which is exercised in general, is very sinful and mischievous. It is shown on improper occasions; it is rash, it is cruel, it is outrageous, or it is revengeful. This kind of anger is ranked with malice, wrath, and bitterness; and we are charged to cast it aside. He who is thus angry with his brother without a cause, is in danger of the judgment.

To consider violent anger as a mere infirmity incident to human nature, is to form wrong conceptions of it. We should remember that wrath and strife are as expressly enumerated among the works of the flesh, as impurity, murder, or drunkenness. The former may be as offensive to God, as ruinous to us, and as hurtful to our fellow-creatures, as the latter.

The suppression of sinful anger, therefore, every one must own to highly conducive to the comfort of human life, the honor of our holy religion, and the welfare and happiness of all societies, whether natural, civil, or sacred.

By a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price, we are enabled to govern ourselves when anything occurs that is provoking. As temperance serves to check and moderate our natural

appetites in regard to what is pleasing to the flesh, so by meekness we govern and guide our resentment of what is displeasing.

One of the seven sages of Greece left this maxim as a memorial of his knowledge and benevolence, "Be master of your anger." He thought, it should seem, that he could not lay on posterity a stronger obligation to revere his memory, than by leaving them a beneficial caution against furious and unguarded anger.

Rage, peevishness, and implacable resentment, can never be justified. They are so hateful and diabolical in their nature, and so mischievous in their effects, that they can never admit of any defense—every wise man condemns them. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; and who is able to stand before envy?

Violent anger makes itself visible by many outward signs. It renders the countenance sometimes red and fiery, sometimes pale and wan; it flames or scowls in the eyes, it wrinkles the brow, it enlarges the nostrils, and makes them heave; it fills the *tongue* with short spiteful words, or noisy threatening, and the *hands* with weapons of violence to assault the offender; and sometimes it causes a tremor through all the limbs.

"There is (says an excellent and judicious author) no passion, properly so called, and considered in itself as belonging to man, which is absolutely sinful in the abstract nature of it—all the works of God are good. But if anger is let loose on an improper object, or in an improper time or degree, or for too long a continuance—then it becomes criminal. *Esteem*, placed upon self as the object, and in an unreasonable degree, becomes pride. In the same way, *anger*, prolonged into a settled temper, often turns into malice; and if it is mingled with vices of the will, it becomes sinful also under that consideration."

The mettle of a young and vigorous steed is not only harmless, but serviceable, when under due regulation. Much the same may be said

of anger in the mind of man. When meekness is the bridle that restrains it, and wisdom the hand that guides it, we are safe. But if it is not under proper government, it breaks through all decorum, grows headstrong and outrageous, and threatens harm to ourselves or those about us. So the unmanageable horse tramples on those who stand in his way, and perhaps throws the rider headlong on the ground—it should be restrained, therefore, with bit and bridle. *We are not to submit to anger as to our master, but to govern it as our servant.* It should never appear but on proper occasions, nor then but under the strictest guard. We should never allow it to carry us beyond the bounds of decency. Our resentment should never be either deep or lasting.

My design in this essay is:

1. To point out the springs and causes of sinful anger.
2. To consider with what we may lawfully be angry.
3. What restrictions should attend our anger, that we offend not God by it.
4. To consider when anger is sinful.
5. To give some cautions against that anger which is violent and criminal, and to prescribe some rules for the suppression of it.

## **Chapter I.**

### **The Springs and Causes of Sinful Anger**

The irregularity of all our passions originates in the proneness of our nature to depravity. In the moral as well as the natural world, we

may plainly perceive the indications of some violent convulsion which has shattered and disordered the workmanship of the great Former of all things. The history of the several nations of mankind, through successive ages and generations, is more sparing of an exhibition of moral, good or virtue, but presents us with ample views of the follies and crimes of the descendants of Adam—the whole appears to be a continued tragedy. On this habitable globe, as on a spacious theater, the same repeated scene is exhibited of depredations, wrath, strife, debate, tumult, cruelty, oppression, and bloodshed; the follies of mankind breaking forth in a thousand guilty forms, and their passions hurrying them on to wretchedness and ruin. The virtues appear rarely, and only as single episodes.

The nature of man cannot be supposed to come forth from the hands of its glorious and gracious Former in the impure state in which it is at present—far be it from us to admit a thought so dishonorable to him who is glorious in holiness. He formed man after his own image—but that image has been defaced. He made man upright—but we have sought out many sinful inventions. Nothing impure could come out of his hands, but we are now all as an unclean thing.

It is true, amidst this wreck of human nature, there still remain some traces which bespeak its Author. Man, indeed, has not lost all his original brightness—some faint rays are seen to break through the horrid gloom, in which he is involved, and indicate his ancient splendor. But all the disorder which reigns within us, and the follies which constantly appear in our outward demeanor, arise from an abuse of our faculties through ages, as the streams which issue from a corrupted fountain. To this general source we may trace violent anger. But to be a little more particular.

**1.** A choleric TEMPERAMENT seems to dispose some men to be always of a froward disposition, and perpetually, hard to please—this is their settled temper. Their anger and resentment are ever ready—to rise on the slightest occasion they are angry with the work they are performing, or the instrument in their hands. When they cannot

succeed to their wish, they are often out of humor they know not why, and angry with they know not what—like Jonah, who was angry with the wind.

The reverse of this character is the man who is slow to anger. Such a one, says Solomon, is better than the mighty. He that rules his own spirit, than he who captures a city.

The temperament of the body may have considerable influence in disposing us to irascibility, or to natural mildness—since the passions are not merely the operations of the mind. They are mental exertions, in conjunction with the ferments of the blood, and commotions of animal nature. The *passions* are those powers in man which are of a mixed nature and belong partly to the soul and partly to the body.

When we see an object, for instance, that provokes our resentment, we not only feel some impression of mind, but some kind of commotion in our bodies, which we are not well able to explain. The animal spirits are agitated, the blood is thrown into a fermentation, the effects of which are very apparent to those who observe us, and cannot be concealed. Our brow, our eyes, our nostrils, our cheeks, our voice—all betray us on this occasion.

Now, since it is evident that our natural constitutions are very different, it must be allowed that some habits of body are more disposed to irascibility than others. Something like this, indeed, is very evident in brutes among those of the same species, some are much more disposed to anger than others. And hence it is that we see among men a tendency to some prevailing passion. The hot and choleric propensity predominates in nations, and runs in the blood from generation to generation. This may be termed a natural cause, or spring of excessive anger.

**2. PRIDE.** A contentious spirit, inspiration assures us, originates in pride. "Only by pride comes contention." "A proud and haughty

scorner is he who deals in proud wrath." It is pride that makes men passionate. They cannot bear the least slight, or that which has the appearance of it, because they think themselves of so much importance.

We have a remarkable instance of this in Haman. He is enraged, filled with indignation, and breathes nothing but revenge. The life of an individual cannot suffice; the blood of a whole nation must be shed to cool his wrath, and lay his vengeance to sleep. What is the cause of this desolating decree? An individual fails to pay him that idolatrous obeisance of which he thought himself so worthy; but this was an act of obeisance to which Mordecai in his conscience could not submit. Who does not see that if it should be asked, What means the heat of this great anger? The answer must be, it originates in pride!

Pride keeps men in continual vexation, while the meek and lowly possess their souls in peace and patience. The proud man's character is so odious that he meets with more affronts than other men; and indeed he has so good and so high an opinion of himself, that he considers those things as affronts of which a humble man would take no notice. He finds not that submission in his dependants, or respect from his equals, to which he thinks himself entitled; hence his life made up of disquietude and distraction. Angry, resentful, malevolent passions, torment his soul, haunt him like specters, and rob him of repose. So just is the remark of the wisest of men: "It is better to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."

It is pride that fills the world with so much animosity. We forget what we are, in the fullness of our self-esteem. We claim attentions to which we are by no means entitled, and we are rigorous to offences as if we ourselves had never offended. If pride were subdued, then anger would quickly subside. It is hard for a haughty man ever to forgive one who has caught him in a fault. His resentment will hardly cool until he has regained the advantage he

had lost, and provoked the other to do him equal wrong. He hates the man he has once offended.

**3. IGNORANCE** is more frequently the cause of sinful anger. A weak mind is easily kindled into resentment. A wise man may be angry when there is a sufficient cause for it, but his anger is restrained by prudence and discretion. It is therefore a necessary virtue in a Christian, that he be not soon angry. A fool's wrath is presently known; it rises and flames on the slightest provocation, it flashes in his countenance like lightning, and breaks out into such indecent expressions as betray his weakness and folly.

A prudent man covers shame, by suppressing his resentment, maintaining possession of himself, and keeping his mouth as with a bit and bridle.

The man of ungoverned anger says to everyone that he is a fool. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. He is jealous and suspicious, ready to catch at what he calls an affront, sudden in resenting it, and unguarded in expressing his resentment.

Solomon therefore gives us this necessary caution: "Be not hasty in your spirit to be angry; for anger rests in the bosom of fools." The discretion of a man defers his anger—it disposes him to be cautious of giving ear to false accusers and slanderers of his neighbors, who, as Satan's instruments, would incense him against others without just grounds. A discreet man defers the admission of anger until he has thoroughly considered all the circumstances of what, at first sight, appears to be a provocation, until he has seen it in a just light, and weighed it in an even balance. Nor will such a one be over critical in his resentment of what may be really deemed an offence against him; he knows that it is the glory of a wise man to pass over a transgression.

The bluster and noise of some men seem to indicate a consciousness of the narrowness of their own understandings. They feel their own

ignorance and insufficiency, and appear determined to gain by their clamors, that regard of which they know themselves to be undeserving.

How much are the servants of such men to be pitied. They are all the day long stunned with the bawling, and terrified with the fury of one whom they cannot but be tempted to despise. Seneca justly observes, that this angry passion indicates *weakness*. Little children, aged men, and such as are infected by disease, are most subject to it.

**4. COVETOUSNESS** is likewise a cause of sinful anger. When the covetous man is crossed in his designs, blasted in his hopes, or disappointed in his wishes—he sinks into impatience and fretfulness.

*Ahab* coveted his neighbor's vineyard; and on Naboth's refusing to comply with his unreasonable desire, he came to his house, angry and displeased, laid down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. He had all the delights of Canaan at his command, all the wealth, the honor and the power of a kingdom, and a throne in his possession—but the covetous man, like the grave, never says, "It is enough." *Inordinate desire is never satisfied.*

Ahab is sick with vexation, he pines away with resentment, and breathes revenge and slaughter. In his anger he slew the man, in his self-will he dug through the wall, and took possession of his innocent neighbor's estate—but the curse of God blasted his enjoyment. He pierced himself through with many sorrows, being caught in those temptations and snares which drown men in destruction and perdition!

If we attach ourselves to present objects as if we were to derive our whole felicity from them, it is no wonder we are thrown into frequent distraction; because we are sure to meet with continual disappointment. We easily grow impatient when we are crossed in the pursuit of those things of which we are over fond. *Jonah's* excessive pleasure in his gourd, laid the foundation for

his grief and anger when he was deprived of it. He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house with impatience and fretfulness when he cannot obtain what his soul lusts after, or when he loses what he has already gained.

**5.** Not duly watching over our own spirits. The word of command given us by the captain of our salvation is, "Take heed to your spirit." (Malachi 2:15.) *Those who would be kept from sin, must keep a jealous eye upon their hearts—for there all sin begins.* Take heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, was the charge which God gave to his ancient people. (Deuteronomy 4:9.) The motions of the inward man should be carefully and constantly guarded. Out of the heart are the issues of life. Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or otherwise—according as our tempers and passions are guarded or not. This is the reason the wise man gives, why we should keep our hearts with all *diligence*. (Proverbs 4:23.)

It is not enough to guard our eyes, our ears, our tongues, our hands or feet; the heart itself should be carefully guarded and kept with all *keeping*, as the word there signifies. There are many ways of keeping things—as by care, by strength, by calling in assistance; and all are necessary to be used in keeping the heart from violent and angry passions. The man of moderation is certainly of a more amiable character than he who is rash, unguarded, and inconsiderate.

He who is of a testy disposition, who takes no care to govern his own spirit, is boisterous and gentle by turns. He is either all storm, or all sunshine; and as such, his life is divided between guilt and repentance. One moment he is affronting and abusing you, the next moment he is asking you a thousand pardons. In conversation with his associates his jealousy suspects some insult to be offered where they are perfectly innocent; he is up in arms in an instant, without any opponent but his own suspicions. He answers the matter with hasty resentment before he hears it; and this is folly and shame to him.

Those who are particularly addicted to this weakness, should watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. If at any time when an affront is given, they find themselves unable to govern their own spirits—it may be best to leave the ground, to withdraw from the company, and retire into their closets. Let them there bewail their pride and ungovernable passion, ask forgiveness of God, and implore the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit to subdue their sinful tempers, and teach them to imitate their divine Redeemer in meekness and lowliness of heart.

**6.** Not considering the *evil* of sinful anger. A meek and quiet spirit of such real value, that God himself beholds it with delight and puts a high value upon it. In the sight of God it is of great price. (1 Peter 3:4) "Rash anger," as Seneca observes, "is the most outrageous, brutal, intractable, and dangerous of all passions!" Homer represents the wrath of Achilles as the source of unnumbered woes to the Greeks.

We always blame rash anger in others. And though we are prone to think too favorably of our own conduct, we are frequently ashamed of this angry passion in ourselves. It is therefore very common to hear men exculpate themselves, and solemnly declare that they are not angry, when they give undeniable proofs that they are.

Scarcely anything lessens us more in the eyes of those about us, than violent anger. It exposes us to the derision of those who are not in our power, and to the hatred of our inferiors and family. If the angry man gains any influence by his bluster and noise, he pays dear for his power. He forfeits his own tranquility, he loses the friendship of his equals, and incurs the hatred of his family. Solomon's counsel is in this, as in other things, highly worthy of attention. "Make no friendship with an angry man!" He is a churl, a *Nabal*, a man cannot speak to him with safety. "With a furious man you shall not go, lest you learn his ways, and get a snare to your soul."

The torment attending anger is strongly expressed in Scripture. "A man of great anger shall suffer punishment." He not only affronts his

neighbor, and disquiets his family, but he tears himself, his own heart in his anger. He takes his flesh in his teeth, and puts his life in his hand. If we did but consider these, and such like bitter fruits of anger—we would take more care to watch and pray against it.

An all-wise Providence has so ordered the succession of causes and effects, that the wrath which was meant to be poured forth upon others—frequently recoils, by its effects on the wrathful people themselves. In the *net* which they had laid for others, is their own foot taken. They fall into the pit which they had dug. This is evidently seen in the case of Haman: he is hanged on the gallows which his furious heart had prepared for the destruction of Mordecai.

7. Not duly considering the object which provokes us. The circumstances of that which we apprehend to be a provocation, should always be attentively viewed. *Nothing can be a stronger proof of a man's weakness, than his allowing his fiery passions to rise and flame before he knows whether there is any just occasion.* We should never be angry at a child, a spouse, or a friend—until we see from a clear and impartial survey of circumstances, that we have just reason to be so.

How much sinful anger, would be prevented by a little deliberation! Were we but, when we suppose, an affront is given us—swift to hear and slow to speak, we would be slow to anger. (James 1:19.)

We are often deceived with what at first sight appears to be a provocation. Anger should not be cherished until we are well assured that there is an offence committed. We should take time to deliberate on the merits of the cause, and forbear to be angry until we are well satisfied that it befits us to resent what is done or said. Otherwise we shall disquiet ourselves in vain, sink our own character, and expose our own folly—while we are pretending to correct what we often erroneously suppose to be amiss in others.

Human life, misconducted as it is, cannot supply great evils so often as the angry man thinks proper to fall into his fits of madness and fury, and therefore his rage frequently breaks out on trifling occasions. A little reflection afterwards must show him his own baseness.

In vain does he plead that his anger is soon over, that he cannot help it, that he harbors no malice, and the like. "These," says an ingenious writer, "are arguments for pardoning a *bull* or a *dog*; but shall never reconcile me to an rational savage. He is ready, perhaps, to do the very next moment, something that he can never repair; and has nothing to plead in his own defense, but that he is apt to do harm as fast as he can. Such a man, adds he, "may be feared, he may be pitied but he can never be loved."

To sum all up, these are some of the causes of sinful anger:

a choleric habit of body,  
pride,  
ignorance,  
covetousness,  
unwatchfulness,  
not considering the evil of sinful anger,  
not considering the object which provokes us.

## **Chapter II.**

### **With what we may Lawfully be Angry**

**1. It is lawful for us to be angry with our own sin.** To be displeased with ourselves seems necessary to true penitence. The repenting sinner is grieved at his own folly—he is angry with himself

that he has acted so unbecomingly, so unworthily, and in a manner so dishonorable to God.

Thus *Job* declared he abhorred himself—he saw his own vileness, and was filled with indignation against his sin.

The *people of Israel* were grieved and angry with themselves when they were made sensible of the evil they had done in their cruel and unnatural treatment of their brother.

Thus we may be angry and not sin. Let us turn our indignation against that evil thing which stirs up the displeasure of the Almighty, and is the source of all our woe. *We have done ourselves more injury by sin, than all other people could ever do to us.* "Let a man" (says Seneca) "consider his own vices, reflect upon his own follies, and he will see that he has the greatest reason to be angry with himself!"

**2. We may lawfully be angry with the vices and follies of others.** That quietness of spirit which is in the sight of God of great price, is not a passive tameness of mind where all steadiness of principle is renounced, and where a sinful conformity to the world vitiates the whole character. It is no part of Christianity to yield an unlimited compliance with the vices of mankind. As we are surrounded with those who work iniquity, and walk in the ways of death—the worst maxim, perhaps, which we can adopt, is that of always assenting to what we hear or see, and complying with what is proposed or done by others.

The purity and dignity of the Christian character can never be maintained, without resolution to oppose what evidently appears to be wrong. Nehemiah's anger was just and reasonable when the Jews uttered their impatient complaints: "I was very angry when I heard their cry." (Nehemiah 5:6, 7.) He was not guilty of that rashness which betrays men into the harms of ungoverned passion. He consulted within himself before he expressed his displeasure—he took time for sober thought, and then rebuked the nobles.

"A good man (says one) must be displeased with the vices of the wicked."

The meekness recommended in the word of God, is not a sinful easiness and indifference with respect to the abominations which are practiced by those about us. It is not to act the part of Ephraim, who willingly walked after the commandment of idolaters. (Hosea 7:11.) Where is our zeal for God, if we are entirely calm and unmoved when we see his laws trampled on, and hear his name dishonored?

In the case of the obstinacy and perverseness of the Jews in shutting their eyes against the clearest evidence, and hardening their hearts against the tenderest love—to have felt no grief, no resentment, would certainly have been a defect.

When a friend is ill-treated, or a brother unjustly reproached—it would be criminal to sit by in silence, and without concern; for, as the north wind drives away rain, so does an angry countenance a backbiting tongue. When an innocent person is injured, the defenseless widow oppressed, or the helpless orphan trampled upon—generosity and compassion call for some degree of resentment; but in this generous resentment, the mind, if awed by the majesty of God, and duly cautious, may still retain her own tranquil and peace.

In some circumstances it is necessary to resent the injuries done, or the insults offered to ourselves; but the greatest caution is necessary here. If the offence is slight, and the damage we sustain is trifling, it is better to pass it by in silence. The Christian is forbidden, both by the precept and example of his Lord and Master—to render railing for railing, or evil for evil.

But when the injury is great or the offence often repeated—our silence would have the appearance of stupidity, and despicable baseness, in the eyes of those who are not to be influenced by anything but their fears of falling under the scourge of justice, or the lash of the law.

The abominations of hardened transgressors, committed against God, should excite our holy resentment. "I beheld transgressors, and was grieved because they kept not your law." Moses' anger was kindled when he saw the people given to idolatry. Thus Lot's righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conduct of the wicked. He who is glorious in holiness, by a strong figure, is said to have been grieved at his heart when he saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth.

**3. It is lawful for us to be angry with the disorders and sins found in the house of God.** In the Corinthian church there was a notorious offender, an incestuous person. Christianity being but in its infancy among them, the members of that church did not see the evil of this conduct until the apostle laid it open before them. They immediately on receiving proper information, took the necessary measures to express their detestation of the offender's conduct: "they put away from among them that wicked person;" and the apostle commends their holy indignation and zeal. (2 Corinthians 7:11 )

The ancient *Jews* were censured that they were not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph; the sins, the disorders, and consequent calamities of the people professing to be the chosen of God. (Amos 6:6).

*Moses* was the meekest man of all the earth; yet when God's honor was concerned, none more warm and resolute than he. Hence his resentment of the golden calf, when in holy indignation at that abominable instance of apostasy in a people so remarkably favored and distinguished by the Almighty, he deliberately smashed the tables of the law at the foot of the mount.

And when Korah and his company presumptuously offended, Moses, in pious displeasure, said unto God, Respect not you their offering. When the house of prayer was profaned, and made a house of merchandise, a den of thieves, the precious Redeemer of mankind, who was meek and lowly in heart, corrected the abuse with holy

resentment made a scourge of small cords, and drove them out of the temple. The apostle Paul was a pattern of meekness: he bore the greatest injuries and indignities with astonishing patience, both among heathens, Jews, and false brethren; yet in the government of the church, whenever there was occasion, he zealously used the rod, of discipline.

**4. It is lawful for us to be angry with the disorders of our own families.** To preserve due authority in our families, so as to prevent or suppress disorder, negligence, and vice, without forfeiting our own peace of mind, is, perhaps, in our present state of imperfection, as difficult a branch of duty as any assigned us by providence. To train up our children in the way in which they should go, to have them in subjection with all gravity, to teach our households the way of the Lord, and command them to keep it, is enjoined upon us, as heads of families, by the Sovereign of the universe. To put away iniquity from our tabernacles, to stir up the slothful and negligent, to rouse the inattentive, and to restrain and correct the vicious and unruly, is absolutely necessary. This cannot be done without manly resolution, constant circumspection, sobriety and gravity. With out a certain degree of courage in insisting on what is right, and in resenting and opposing what is wrong, a family would soon be ruined with licentiousness and disorder. The censure passed on Eli was very heavy his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. In a family where no just authority is maintained by those whom God has placed at the head of it, every one will walk in the way of his own heart; and confusion, harm, and ruin, will inevitably follow. The great secret of family government lies in maintaining authority without moroseness, discipline without tyranny, and resentment of disorder without rash anger; in preserving decorum and regularity without wounding our own peace of mind. The wise and virtuous parent or master is armed with sedate resolution, and a proper firmness of soul. He knows that if his children and servants once conclude him to be incapable of resentment, they will deny him that regard which is his due, and indulge themselves in such liberties as good order forbids. The words

of the royal Psalmist are so apt to our purpose, that to omit the recital of them could hardly be excused. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way Oh! when will you come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. "He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who tells lies shall not tarry in my sight."

We conclude then, that it is lawful for us to be angry:

with our own sin;  
with the vices and follies of others;  
with the disorders found in the house of God;  
and with the irregularities of our own families.

## Chapter III.

### What Restrictions Should Attend Our Anger, That We Do Not Sin Against God

Though we are not absolutely forbidden to be angry, yet happy is he who has the least occasion for it. When the affairs of life seem to require a just resentment, we should consider it as a dangerous moment, and watch against such an excess of it as would be displeasing to God, hurtful to ourselves, and injurious to our fellow creatures. The word of God spends its curses on those whose wrathful passions lead them on to cruel practices; That our anger may riot be offensive to God,

**1. Our anger should not be partial.** We should hate every false way. To resent some branches of vice, and connive at others equally pernicious, would be to incur the censure passed on the ancient

Jews, who were partial in the law. To frown upon one offender, and spare another altogether as deep in guilt, would be to have respect of persons; and to be a respecter of persons, we are assured is not good. Such a conduct would leave ground of suspicion with regard to our sincerity. It might easily be inferred that our zeal was selfish, that our views were sinister, and that our resentment did not arise from a just sense of the evil of sin in its own nature. Let nothing be done through partiality.

**2. Our anger should be attended with pity and sympathy.** It has been observed, that even when a public ruler puts the vengeance of the law in execution, and takes away the life of a malefactor for the good of the rest of the world, it should be done without the passion of private anger. He should rather exercise his own pity to the offender, even when he condemns him to die, and makes him a sacrifice to the public vengeance. If private people then so far give way to resentful passions, as to divest themselves of pity and sympathy towards an offender, they know not what manner of spirit they are of.

The apostle Paul highly resented the conduct of some who were enemies to the cross of Christ, whose God was their belly, who minded earthly things, and who gloried in their Shame: but at the same time, his resentment was tempered with such a degree of pity and compassion, that the very mentioning of their names drew tears from his eyes. (Philippians iii. 18.)

Our reproofs and admonitions, though plain and faithful, should be tender and affectionate. The nature of the case may sometimes make it necessary to reprove with warmth; yet we should never do it with unfeeling resentment. Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, Lest you also be tempted. It is needful to be cautious; lest sinful anger shelter itself under the cover of zeal, against iniquity. The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. A tongue set on fire of Hell is not likely to promote the cause of Heaven. To a man overtaken with a fault, we should show that sympathy, kindness, and tenderness of heart, which we could wish

might be shown to us in a similar case. When we are clearly and fully convinced that there is just cause for our resentment, we should as much as possible let it appear that our anger is directed against the sin of the offender, rather than against his person.

**3. Our anger should be attended with proper arguments and endeavors to convince and reform.** When a man grows so violent against his fellow-creature as to seek and contrive to bring evil upon him, without any design or endeavor to reclaim him from his misconduct, it is properly termed revenge this is always criminal. The laws of Christianity entirely forbid such a disposition.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Before we give way to our angry passions, we should take time to consider, as has been observed, whether there be any real offence committed, or any injury done; and whether it were accidental, or done with deliberate design. Things appear to a ruffled and heated mind very different to what in reality they are. When Julius Cesar was affronted, he repeated the alphabet before he would open his lips to speak on the occasion.. A little deliberation may set things before us in a juster light. If indeed we find on reflex ion, just cause for resentment, let that resentment be tempered with the kindness of friendly admonition. Let the offender see that we have his good at heart, and that all we wish to obtain is his conviction and reformation. 'We should not eagerly contend about matters of little moment, nor be unguarded and intemperate in our zeal; The heathen moralist observes, that we should endeavor to reclaim an offender, not by the violence of anger, but by forcible, yet friendly admonitions: for surely the physician will not be angry with his patient whom he wishes to recover. Socrates finding his resentment too keen against his servant for an offence he had been guilty of, first corrected himself for that heat of temper which his philosophy taught him to condemn, and deferred the attempt to reclaim the

delinquent to a cooler hour. This precaution was truly commendable, and worthy to be imitated by those who call themselves Christians.

**4. Our anger should be attended with no rash or unwarrantable words or actions.** When anger rises to a high degree, it swells into wrath, fury, and rage in that state it is termed a short madness. The furious man rages. like a wild bull in a net: reason quits the helm: and some, by an excessive indulgence of this temper, pour out the most horrid language, fling about everything that comes in their way, and act in other respects for a time the part of madmen. Nay, it is recorded of some, that they have cherished this phrenzy so far, as that they have actually grown distracted. Furious anger, say some philosophers, is the boiling boiling of the blood about the heart, the fumes whereof rise so fast into the brain, that reason, is for a time dislodged.

If we have just cause to be angry, which is far from being so often the case as we are ready to suppose, discretion should teach us to guard our tongues and our hands, until there be no danger of running into indecencies: we should give our anger time to cool. Plato said once to his servant, who had been greatly wanting in his duty, "I would beat you but that I am angry," The passionate man is provoked on every trivial occasion, and sometimes vents his rage in fierce vociferations, furious threats, and cutting reproaches. It is true his rage often fumes away in outcries of injuries done him, and protestations of vengeance; but if a child, a lackey, or an apprentice, be the object of his resentment, he will not be sparing of his blows, nor merciful in the use of his cane.

While we are in this world of sin and disorder, we must meet with provocations: but the frailty of the weak, the omissions of the negligent, the follies of the imprudent, and the levity of the fickle, should not so far ruffle our spirits as to cause us to use rash words, or to break forth into sudden acts of violence.

What means the heat of this great anger? If fire be not kept in its proper place and degree, it may do great harm to ourselves and those about us. Anger is fire, and may be serviceable under due regulation: but it requires strong restraints. Behold how great a matter a little degree of immoderate anger kindles! When this anger is unguarded, it is the great disturber of human life, the enemy of private tranquility, and of public happiness. The wise man tells us that anger is outrageous; when it rises to a high degree, it is like a breaking out of waters. It breaks through the bounds of reason, of conscience, of the laws of God and man, of friendship, and even of natural affection; as in the case of Cain, who slew his brother. Cease from anger, therefore, and forsake wrath; fret not your self in any wise to do evil.

What a frightful and odious spectacle is the man who delivers himself up to the tyranny of his violent and wrathful passions! What ridiculous airs he gives himself; what a storm appears in his disfigured countenance; what fury, what flames and fierceness in his eyes! He breathes out direful threatenings; he abuses the wife of his bosom he flies upon the children of his own body with the rage of a lion or tiger. He spares not his dearest and most valuable friends; tumult and disorder appear in his whole nature distraction tortures his soul; his reason is beclouded; neither truth nor virtue, law nor justice, are any longer regarded by him. The man is transformed into a brute, or rather into a fiend and fury. Detestable sight! Who can behold him without horror? Fly from him; he is a disgrace to human nature, He is now only a fit companion for devils, and ought to be shunned and dreaded by human beings. Leave him to be scourged by the rage of his own diabolical passions: he is not fit for the society of reasonable creatures. He is so far from having any claim to the character of a Christian, and a child of God, that, he is unworthy the name of a man.

Oh! how necessary is it to suppress; the first motions of immoderate anger; to quench the spark before it becomes a flame, and breaks through all bounds! Give the latent fire no vent, that it may be

smothered and stifled, before it breaks out to do harm. Command your tongues to silence, and your hand to stillness, until your spirits are cooled; until calm and sober reason shall preside at the helm, and direct your operations. Have patience a little while, and the illusion which anger always raises, will vanish: you now behold everything through a false medium.

It is recorded to the honor of Edward the Third of England, commonly called the Confessor, that one day being laid down upon the bed, one of his servants, who did not know he was in the room, stole some money out of a chest he found open, which the king let him carry off; without saying a word. Presently after the boy returned to make a second attempt; the king called out to him without any violence of passion, "Sarah, you had best be satisfied with what you have got; for if my chamberlain come and catch you, he will not only take away what you have stolen, but also whip you severely." The chamberlain coming in and missing the money, fell into a great rage; but the king calmly said to him, "Be content; the chest should not have been left open, the temptation was too strong for the poor youth; he wanted money more than we do, and there is still enough left for us."

**5. Our anger should not be lasting.** When anger continues so long as to be fixed and rooted in the heart, when we refuse an accommodation, and are determined not to be reconciled, it is rancor, it is hatred, it is fixed malice. This kind of anger is slow, secret and revengeful, like that of Esau to Jacob: The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother. Anger may enter into the bosom of a wise man, but in the heart of fools it rests, it resides, it remains; the fire continues to burn. Such a man gives place to the devil, to irritate and inflame him, and keep: up turbulent and revengeful passions in his mind. He gratifies that, malicious spirit by yielding to his destructive designs. He meditates revenge, and is pushed, on to execute some dreadful purpose of sin and harm. What need have we therefore to beware of lasting anger, and to stand on our guard whenever we find our spirits heated! Let

not the sun go down upon your wrath, to unfit you for your evening devotions, or to disturb your sleep in the night: much less should it remain with you the following day.

Pythagoras, a heathen philosopher, recommended to his disciples, that if any quarrel should arise, or any degree of anger be cherished, they should, before the sun went down, shake hands and become friends again. Dr. Watts, in his excellent discourse on the passions, has given the following description of that slow and inveterate anger which is most of all to be dreaded. "Some times it spreads paleness over the countenance; it is silent and sullen, and the angry person goes on from day to day with a gloomy aspect, and a sour and uneasy carriage, averse to speak to the offender, unless it be now and then a word or two of a dark and spiteful meaning. The vicious passion dwells upon the soul, and frets and preys upon the spirits: it inclines the tongue to tease the offender with a repetition of his crime in a sly manner, upon certain seasons and occurrences, and that for, weeks and months after the offence, and sometimes for years. This sort of wrath sometimes grows up into settled malice, and is ever contriving revenge and harm. May divine grace form my heart in a better mold, and deliver me from this vile disposition and conduct!" As we should seldom allow our anger to be awakened, so the continuance of it should always be very short. The sullen and long continued resentment above described, is as much contrary to the grace of meekness as a sudden fit of rage and fury. And as it is a settled and deliberate passion, the guilt of it is more heinous, and marked with deeper aggravations in the sight of God.

To sum all up, that we offend not God by our anger:

- it should not be partial;
- it should be attended with pity and sympathy;
- it should be accompanied with proper arguments and endeavors to convince and reform;
- it should express itself in no rash or unwarrantable words or

actions;  
it should not be lasting.

## Chapter IV.

### When Our Anger Is Sinful

Anger is not absolutely forbidden to a wise and good man; yet the greatest care is constantly necessary, that we give not a wild and unwarrantable liberty to our anger. We must hold the reins of government with a strong and steady hand, lest our wrath should break out into forbidden harm. In no part of our conduct are we more prone to offend. The divine rule is short, but very comprehensive: Be angry, and do not sin. Our present business is, to consider when we transgress this divine law.

**1. When we are angry with the providence of God, our anger is sinful and unwarrantable.** The events of providence are sometimes grievous and afflictive; they cross our inclinations, and seem to oppose our secular interests. Yet it becomes us not to be angry, sullen, and impatient; to strive with our Maker, and to rage like a wild bull in a net; or to struggle and fret like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Humility and meekness would teach us to kiss the rod, to bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him. When Aaron beheld that awfully severe dispensation which cut off his two sons under the manifest displeasure of God, he held his peace; he uttered not a murmuring word. (Leviticus x. 3.) On the other hand, the man after God's own heart was displeased on an occasion somewhat similar, because the Lord had made a bread upon Uzza. (2 Samuel vi. 8.) Much happier was he when on a more trying occasion he uttered these words: Behold here I am, let him do to me as seems good in his sight. (2 Sam 15. 25, 26.) Amiable temper! Submission and meekness here reign

and triumph over every evil disposition. When Caius Caesar's banquet was interrupted by lightning, and his diversions spoiled by thunder, he was angry with the heavens, and reproached the Deity. Let us not resemble that impious monarch.

We have not, I think, a more striking instance of the power of anger against the conduct of divine providence, than what appears in the character of Jonah. We wonder at the patience of Job; but the impatience of Jonah is not less surprising. That angry prophet was displeased with the forbearance and long-suffering of the Almighty. He was sent to preach to the Ninevites, and to declare to them, that within forty days their city should be destroyed. This declaration implied the idea of their continuing impenitent. Jonah's reluctance to deliver the message prevailed so far that he fled from the presence of the Lord a storm is raised to chastise his disobedience; Jonah is cast into the sea, and swallowed by a great fish which God had prepared for that purpose. Miraculously preserved in the belly of the fish, he humbled himself, and, offered up strong cries and tears, to him that is able to save. God had respect to his humiliation; and commanded the fish to vomit him up on dry ground. He went, at length, to deliver the awful message. The Ninevites repented, and God' spared them; for great are his mercies. Jonah, instead of rejoicing at the success of his ministry, was displeased, and full of that restless impatience which always accompanies unreconciledness to the dispensations of providence. While he sat in anxious expectation, waiting to see the issue of his prediction, the Lord provided a gourd and made it come up over Jonah, to protect him from the heat of the sun: but all earthly enjoyments are transient, and of short duration. Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. When we set our hearts on any earthly comfort, we have reason to expect its speedy removal the days, of mourning for its departure are at hand. God prepared a worm, and it smote the gourd, that it withered... No gourd can flourish, no worm can smite, but at his word. The prophet's joy was short indeed: while he rejoiced in the shadow of the gourd, he knew not what was doing at the root of it. Created comforts are withering things; they perish while we admire them:

they come forth like flowers and are cut down. That proves least safe which is most dear.

But whether God gives or takes away; whether he sends a gourd or a worm to destroy that which he has sent, still he is carrying on the same design of good to us. His intention is to humble and instruct us, and confirm our hearts in his service. Jonah was to learn, by the loss of his gourd, compassion and tenderness. If we are morose, unkind and resentful towards our neighbors, the infinitely wise disposer of events will find a way to teach us more of that disposition and spirit in which he delights. And yet, who would have thought it? we find the prophet lost in impatience, and hurried away with angry passions, for the loss of his gourd! Astonishing! This potsherd of the earth strove with his Maker, and yet was not broken to pieces! Seasons of trial are allotted us to show us what is in our hearts. If the private history of any of us were written by an inspired pen, and every secret thing laid open, how should we blush and tremble at the thought of its being made public to the world! Jonah wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. The God of patience asked him, Do you well to be angry? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death! Strange! to be angry at God, and angry too for a gourd; and still to justify his anger in the face of his Maker! How unaccountably anger blinds the mind, that a man under the influence of it should make light of sin, and bid defiance to death; nay, should even in the presence of the divine Creator, justify his rage, and wish to die under the influence of so bad, so shocking a disposition

It is the unhappy conduct of some, that when the Almighty brings them under any sore affliction, they are fretful and angry with their relatives and friends around them. Patience would teach them to be calm and easy toward their fellow-creatures, while they endure divine chastisement: but instead of this, they scatter abroad their discontents in their own families, and many times make them fall heaviest on those who do all in their power to comfort and relieve them. Should these discontents be searched to the bottom, perhaps it

would be found, that the spring of them is anger and impatience at the chastening hand of God. They are not so daring as to vent their uneasiness at Heaven in a direct manner; the thought of this would shock and terrify them: the stream of their resentment is therefore diverted from the Most High, and directed towards their fellow-creatures. This anger, as it is distressing to the friends and attendants of the afflicted, so it must be displeasing to him who searches the heart, and knows the true spring and cause of it.

**2. Our anger is sinful when we are angry with the laws of God.** His laws are holy, just and good; and every disciple of Jesus delights in them after the inward man. They are esteemed by him above gold and silver, and preferred in sweetness to honey or the honey-comb yes, says the Psalmist, by them is your servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward. But rebellious minds dislike these restraints: instead of quarreling with themselves, they are displeased with the laws of their Maker. They say unto God, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him; and what profit shall we have When we pray to him?? If anger be, as Aristotle describes it, a desire to displease those who are displeasing to us, how hateful is this angry passion when it has the laws of God for its object! when its language is, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us!

**3. Our anger is sinful when we are angry with the doctrines of the gospel.** We see this kind of anger in the Jews, when they heard the preaching of Jesus. He spoke as never man spoke. Words of peace, pardon, and salvation flowed from his lips; yet some of his hearers exclaimed, These are hard sayings; who can hear them,? Sometimes they were filled with indignation, and sought to lay bands on him, and destroy him. (Luke iv. 28) In after days, they were grieved that the disciples taught in the name of Jesus, and some of them contradicted and blasphemed. The wrathful man, says Seneca, is angry with truth itself, when it is opposite to his inclination, or his disposition.

**4. Our anger is sinful when we are angry at the good we see in others.** Thus Jonah was angry with the Ninevites for that which was pleasing to God, their repentance and humiliation. The Psalmist speaks of some who requited him evil for good, because, says he, I follow the thing that good is. Joseph was hated for his dreams, and for his words; and Daniel for his continuance in prayer and supplication to his God. Cain, the wicked one, slew his brother, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Perhaps there is no species of anger so diabolical as this; to be angry with others because of their excellencies.

**5. Our anger is sinful when we are angry with those who differ from us in religious sentiments.** The church of God, since the days of its infancy, has been always more or less exposed to the wrath of the world. This wrath has frequently broken forth into all the rage of persecution: the godly have been pursued with fire and faggot, racks and tortures. They have had trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings; yes, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They have been stoned, they have been sawn asunder, they have been tempted and slain with the sword. The very people of whom the world was not worthy, have wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. They have wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth, through the fury of the oppressor. But the anger of persecutors, through the over-ruling power of the church's Head and Governor, has ever been made to turn against itself, to the destruction of its own purpose. The rage and policy of men have in vain united their efforts to extinguish the light of divine truth. The constancy and fortitude of those who have suffered in defense of it, have always had a much greater effect in promoting the good cause of virtue, than all the rage and cruelty of persecutors in diminishing it.

The heat of persecution on a religious account, is, in these our happy days, very much abated: if the fire be not quenched, at least it is smothered. The natural rights of mankind, of searching the scriptures for their own direction in matters of religion, of thinking

and judging for themselves, and acting according to the light they have, in what relates to conscience, the worship of their Maker, and the salvation of their souls—were never better understood than they are at present. Even in Pagan countries, some are beginning to emerge from the abyss of darkness, to assert their native rights; and little by little, to shake off the fetters of superstitious tyranny. May their exertions be animated with increasing vigor, and their efforts crowned with success!

Why should I be displeased with any man for his differing from me in his religious opinions? He has the same reason to be angry with me for the liberty I have thought proper to assume. The *right of private judgment* is the very ground of reformation. Without maintaining that right in the fullest sense, we condemn all that was done in the glorious revolution of Christianity from idolatry, as nothing more than a faction in the state, and a schism in the church.

This right was asserted by our Lord Jesus Christ in the whole of his ministry. He charged his disciples to call no man master on earth; and exhorted the people to search the scriptures, and so to judge for themselves. Such an exhortation would have been full of impertinence, if the right of private judgment could be supposed to have been denied. The apostle Paul, and his fellow apostles, maintained this right. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. I speak as to wise men, you judge what I say. Their hearers assumed this privilege, and searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so.

Let us not therefore thunder out anathemas against those who may differ from us in some points of doctrine, or branches of worship. Neither let us pass angry censures upon them. Let us remember, that *meekness and love are essential to Christianity*. Without these, though we speak with the tongues of men and angels, though we have all knowledge, and understand all mysteries, we are nothing. Love is the fulfilling of the law; love is also the spirit and tendency of

the gospel. Its author is the Prince of Peace. Its sum and substance is peace, peace to him that is afar of and to him that is near.

What pity is it that Christianity should ever have been so explained as to promote all the violent and resentful passions that human nature in its deepest depravity is capable of, and to patronize the bloodiest cruelties that the world ever beheld! Surely there can be nothing more diametrically opposite than religion and revenge, piety and persecution, prayer and plunder, the service of God and the slaughter of those who bear his image. Heat and violence, anger and resentment in religious disputes naturally lead on to persecution. The beginning of strife is as when one lets out water; therefore leave off wrathful contention before it is meddled with. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.

One of the disciples of Jesus said to his Master, "We saw one casting out devils in your name, and we forbade him, because he followed not with us." Jesus said, "Forbid him not." Afterwards, when the Samaritans did not receive him, John and James being too violent in their resentment, and having but a scanty acquaintance with the genius of the gospel—spoke of commanding fire to come down from Heaven to consume them. Jesus turned, and rebuked them, and said, "You know not what manner of spirit you are of."

We pretend respect and zeal for the religion of Jesus; and shall we at the same time allow ourselves to be carried away with that harshness and severity which are so opposite to its very nature and tendency? Shall we give all men reason to conclude, that whatever we may profess, real Christianity has no power over our hearts or lives? Let us not presume to retain the Christian name, if we are so entirely destitute of the Christian spirit, lest we draw upon our heads that awful censure, "You have a name that you live, but you are dead!"

A meek and gentle disposition, amidst the strife of interfering interests, prevents the violence of contention, renews endearments, softens animosities, and keeps alive the seeds of harmony. Banish this disposition of mind from a religious society, and suppose a body of men of angry, resentful and contentious spirits; and you have, instead of a Christian church—a house of strife, a den of wolves, ready to bite and devour one another, and in danger of being consumed by one another. The solitude of a desert is preferable to such society!

In respect to those who differ from us in religious opinions, we should make allowances for their education, the power of the prejudices they have early imbibed, and the influence of others over them. We should not exclaim against every mistake as heresy, or every error as blasphemy. This is harsh and unchristian treatment, more likely to irritate and harden, than to convince or inform. Religious disputes are seldom managed with that coolness and calmness of disposition which befit the gospel of Christ.

In those points of doctrine wherein wise and good men are differently minded, meekness and modesty should teach us not to be too confident; nor to censure and condemn those who differ from us, as if we were the people, and wisdom should die with us. It is a humiliating consideration, and cannot be thought of without grief and shame, that there never have been greater, more outrageous or more, inveterate and lasting dissensions in the world, than among those called Christians, and upon the ground of their religious differences. The most inflexible animosities from age to age have been kept up on this score. Nothing I am ready to conclude has brought greater scandal on the Christian cause, or tended more to prejudice and harden those given to skepticism against our holy profession.

Merciful God! author of peace, and lover of concord—forgive the angry contentions of those who call themselves your children!

What dreadful havoc has the intolerance and cruelty of sects of Christians made, all professing a belief in the same God and in the same Christ; and in the same charity, love, brotherhood, forgiveness, and forbearance; all preaching the doctrines he gave and all violating them.

What deplorable scenes did thirty years exhibit in Germany, a war of religious opinion; what havoc has *the Inquisition* made on the unfortunate Jews and Gentiles, Moors and Saracens, reformers and reformed. In every part of the world has superstition and the lust of power, usurped the name of Christianity to violate its most sacred precepts; the wars of the Cevennes, the burning of Servetus at Geneva, and of the Martyrs in Smithfield, the massacres of heathens by Charlemagne in Saxony, the *Huguenots* in France, and of the Catholics in Ireland, where the extirpation of the people of a whole province of every age and gender by Cromwell, was perpetrated in the name of the living God. The persecutions for religion alas! not for religion but in its defiance and abuse, has exceeded all other persecutions for cruelty and horror! The indiscriminate slaughter for which neither former benefits nor alliances, nor authority were any protection; countless are the instances of friends murdering their intimates in the blasphemous belief that they were serving God; as if God were not a judge, a mighty and a just judge in his own cause with his own creatures—but that weak man should snatch his scepter to deal out infuriate wrath in the name of the Lamb of Peace and good will to man.

I cannot suppress wholly, though I am unwilling to enlarge upon the persecutions which the non-conformists or dissenters from the established church of England underwent for many years; when ministers and people of the fairest character lost their all, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods by heavy fines. When I cast my eyes across the Atlantic and see the wilderness become the refuge, and the savage the milder enemy of those who fled from the wrath of religious intolerance; and when I see the new nations which have arisen in the new world, cherishing the churches and agreeing in love

though differing in tenets; worshiping the same God in peace and concord in various modes of discipline as in one communion of faith; then I turn my eyes homeward with sorrow, and the remembrance of past days is far from being pleasing. It has been computed that among those who suffered in England for conscience sake, the loss of near twenty millions sterling was sustained by one means and another. Ten, or according to the lowest reckoning, eight thousand people, imprisoned for nonconformity, lost their lives in prisons and dungeons in those affective times.

**6. Our anger is sinful when we are angry at reproof.** The wrathful man flies in the face of his reprover and says with the Egyptian to Moses, "Who made you a judge over us?" We should not fall upon our admonisher with railing speeches, fretting that he has found out our sore; but submit with meekness, and lay our souls under conviction; provided the reproof is just. Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil that shall not break my head. It will heal the wounds that sin has given, and make my face to shine.

It is most ungrateful to be angry with a kind reprover, who has our welfare at heart, and warns us of that which would be pernicious to us; then, if ever, our anger is to be condemned. When he who reproves in the gate, is hated for his faithfulness, it may truly be said that iniquity abounds, and love waxes cold.

"A good man," says Seneca, "rejoices when he is admonished. A wicked man cannot endure a reprover." If we do that which deserves a rebuke, and our friends are so just and kind as to deal faithfully with us, we ought not to quarrel with them, and return hatred for their love; we should allow the word of exhortation, and take it patiently and kindly. Thus David blessed God for Abigail's counsel, and thanked her as his messenger—he hearkened to her voice, and accepted her person.

The reprover may magnify the offence; his admonition may be defective in point of prudence—yet in the main, it is a real instance of kindness, and it would be highly criminal to resent it.

It was no disparagement to Naaman to hearken to the reproof of his servant, when he turned away from the prophet in a rage—it is recorded to his honor. "As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." These two excellencies are rarely to be found, a wise reprover, and an *obedient ear*; but when found they are of great value.

**7. Our anger is sinful when it provokes us to wish or desire anything unlawful.** When we are provoked to wish that the object of our anger may suffer some considerable inconvenience, our anger rises to malevolence; especially when we desire that some lasting harm may attend the offending party. Perhaps the tender and affectionate parent, who, on some just ground, is angry with the child whom he dearly loves—may lawfully wish his child some present pain, in order to amend and cure his folly. This seems to be implied in the nature of parental correction and the end of it is the child's real advantage. But to wish some lasting harm to befall the object of our resentment, is base, malicious, and wicked.

Nor can those sudden wishes for our own death, which violent anger sometimes produces, be at all excused. "It is better for me, said the angry prophet, to die than to live. I do well to be angry, even unto death." Moses is celebrated for his meekness; and yet some expressions he used on certain trying occasions, indicate a defect even in that for which he is most commended. (Numbers 11:15.) "If you deal thus with me, then kill me immediately."

**8. When we use unlawful means to avenge ourselves, we sin in our anger.** Anger is often defined to be a desire of revenge for some injury offered. Though this definition perhaps may not be accurate, yet it is certain that men of hot and heady tempers are too often desirous of vengeance, as soon as ever they imagine themselves

injured—hence punishments are inflicted disproportioned to the offence. This is criminal, and the error is still more aggravated when the offence is only *imaginary*. Where a *real* injury of consequence is sustained, religion forbids us not to seek proper and adequate reparation; but calm and cool deliberation is necessary in order to this.

To have a secret fixed resolution to avenge ourselves, is base and diabolical. A celebrated moralist has expressed himself with great energy on this subject: "What shall we think of him who has a soul so infected, that he can never be happy until he has made another miserable! What wars may we imagine perpetually raging in his breast; what dark stratagems, unworthy designs, inhuman wishes, dreadful resolutions! A serpent curled in many intricate mazes, ready to sting a traveler, and to hiss him in the pangs of death, is no unfit emblem of such a malicious person."

Condemned forever be that false notion of *honor* which introduced, and still supports the practice of *duelling*. Who can think without horror of two rational beings, settling with cool and deliberate preparation, the circumstances for murdering each other! True courage enables a man rather to suffer, than to sin; to pass by an affront, rather than to destroy a soul; and plunge a man into eternity with all his loads of folly and fury about him. He who accepts a challenge is therefore a coward, dreading the reproach of fools more than the wrath of Heaven. He who refuses a challenge, lest he should sin against God, and injure his neighbor, despising the shame that might be cast upon him by the thoughtless rabble, is the truly valiant man. He who can deny the brutal lust of revenge, rather than violate the laws of love, is truly resolute and courageous. Mildness and fortitude are not inconsistent; they may dwell together in the same breast. Moses confronted Pharaoh in his own court, not fearing the wrath of the king; yet he was the meekest of all the men of the earth; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

It can never be esteemed in the judgment of sober reason, an instance of wisdom or true courage for a person to hazard his life at the mere caprice of an inconsiderate and barbarous ruffian, who neither fears God nor regards man. On account of some mere punctilio, some trifling affront—he would take a savage pleasure in spilling my blood, cutting me off from all my dear social connections, and plunging me into eternity in a moment! Shall I put my own welfare, and that of my parents, my wife, my children, and other relatives—on a level with that of an impetuous barbarian who gives me a challenge? Because he is desperate enough to risk his life—shall I then put mine in his hands, and give him leave to gratify his brutal disposition, by lodging a bullet in my breast, and leaving me weltering in my blood? If he has no regard for his family—shall I have none for them, or for my own?

What an endless train of calamities might they be involved in, by a compliance with the diabolical challenge? To give a challenge is murderous, to accept it is to drink into the same spirit; since the latter implies a willingness either to fall a sacrifice to the challenger's rage, or to imbrue our hands in his blood, and perhaps plunge his soul into everlasting darkness! He who gives the challenge, makes an attempt on the life of his fellow-creature, and thirsts for his blood; as such, he is a greater enemy to society, and commits a more flagrant outrage, than he who stops a passenger on the highway only to take his money from him. For what is a little present cash, that a man may chance to have in his pocket—in comparison of life, precious life, and the continued comfort of our family and friends! Such a one, therefore, ought to be treated as an enemy to society, as a disturber of the peace, and a felon.

In such a light the mischievous practice we are speaking of, was held by Pharamond, king of the Gauls, whose edict against duels I beg leave to recite.

"Whereas it has come to our royal notice and observation, that in contempt of all laws, divine and human, it has of late become a

custom among the nobility and gentry of our kingdom, upon slight and trivial, as well as great and urgent provocations, to invite each other into the field, there, by their own hands, and of their own authority, to decide their controversies by combat; we have thought fit to take the said custom into our royal consideration, and find, upon inquiry into the usual causes whereon such fatal decisions have arisen, that by this wicked custom, notwithstanding all the precepts of our holy religion and the rules of right reason, the greatest act of the human mind, forgiveness of injuries, has become vile and shameful that the rules of good society and virtuous conversation are hereby inverted; that the loose, the vain, and the impudent, insult the careful, the discreet and the modest; that all virtue is suppressed, and all vice supported, in the one act of being capable to dare to death. We have also further, with great sorrow of mind, observed that this dreadful action, by long impunity, has become honorable, and the refusal to engage in it ignominious. In these our royal cares and inquiries, we are yet farther made to understand, that the people of most eminent worth, of most hopeful abilities, accompanied with the strongest passion for true glory, are such as are most liable to be involved in the dangers arising from this wicked practice. Now, taking the said premises into our serious consideration, and well weighing, that all such affronts are particularly provided for by laws heretofore enacted; and that the qualities of less injuries, like those of ingratitude, are too minute and delicate to come under general rules; we do resolve to blot this wicked custom, or wantonness of anger, out of the minds of our subjects, by our royal resolutions declared in this edict, as follows: No person who either sends or accepts a challenge, or the posterity of either, though no death ensues thereupon, shall be, after the publication of this our edict, capable of bearing office in these our dominions. The person who shall prove the sending or receiving a challenge, shall receive to his own use and property, the whole personal estate of both parties; and their real estate shall be immediately vested in the next heir of the offenders, in as ample a manner as if the said offenders were actually deceased. In cases where the laws (which we have already granted to our subjects) admit of an appeal for blood, the criminal is

condemned by the said appeal, he shall not only suffer death, but his whole estate, real, mixed, and personal, shall from the hour of his death, be vested in the next heir of the person whose blood he spilt. That it shall not hereafter be in our royal power, or that of our successors, to pardon, the said offences, or restore the offenders to their estates, honor, or blood, forever."

Our anger is certainly criminal when it excites us to render evil for evil to him who has injured or offended us. This is constantly condemned by the rules of our holy religion. Let the man be a friend or a foe, who has acted an unrighteous and injurious part towards us, we should beware of giving way to revengeful or passionate resentments, which may lead us to seek the hurt of the offender by way of retaliation. This would be to imitate his evil example, and to become sharers in his guilt. No provocation should ever irritate us so far as to abate our concern for peace. We should keep so strict a watch over our angry passions, as never to meditate and contrive, much less to attempt anything by way of private and personal revenge. If we are under the necessity of seeking justice in a due course of law from those who have injured us, we should never do it from a litigious spirit; but from a desire to preserve peace and good order in society, and to obtain justice to ourselves from the affronts and injuries we have received from unreasonable and wicked men.

Vengeance belongs to the Supreme Ruler and Judge of the Universe. It is his right and prerogative to inflict deserved punishment. Let us never, therefore, presume so far as to attempt to wrest the scepter out of his hands. But, leaving our cause with him, let us be ready to do every office of kindness and compassion, even to the worst of our enemies. Let us bless those who curse us, and pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us. Let no ill treatment we meet with from others, so far inflame our angry passions, as to make us desirous of rendering evil for evil, or even to cause us to grow weary of showing love and kindness to them. Let us evidence the power of divine grace on our hearts, by exercising meekness, kindness, and

forbearance, under the highest provocations. This is the way not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21.)

**9. Our anger is sinful when it unfits us for the discharge of duty to one another.** Violent anger ruffles our disposition and disturbs our reason, and as such unfits us for the duties of life. It darkens the mind, burdens the conscience, and puts the whole soul out of frame.

Giving and receiving reproof are duties of great utility. If a brother is overtaken with a fault, we should restore such a one; but this can only be done in the spirit of meekness. Reproof should never be given with a wrathful heart and angry tongue; for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.

In like manner, it should be received with humility and gratitude. We should be thankful to our kind reprover for his kind care, and offer up our prayers to God for him. We are commanded to be full of pity and tender-hearted; to bear one another's burdens; to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice; to love as brethren; to follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another. Whatever disposition of mind unfits us for these duties, it is wrong, it is offensive to God, it is mischievous and hurtful.

Some men confess themselves negligent on slight occasions, and in the ordinary course of life, of the government of their temper; but they are attentive, as they pretend, to the great duties of charity and beneficence, whenever any remarkable opportunity presents itself of performing important services to society. But let such people remember, that virtue must be formed and supported, not by unfrequented acts, but by continual and daily exertions. It should not, like the blaze of a comet, break forth only occasionally with a transient luster—it ought to be regular in its course, like the light of day.

In the common transactions of life, and the fellowship of domestic society, the government of our disposition is absolutely necessary for promoting the happiness of those with whom we daily converse. In the conjugal relation, the care of the husband is to please his wife, and the care of the wife is to please her husband—this mutual endeavor to oblige is of great importance, and highly conducive to domestic happiness. No man who is hurried away by ungovernable passion, can perform the duties of his station with wisdom and kindness.

To sum all up, our anger is sinful:

- when we are displeased with the providence of God;
- when we are angry with his laws, or with the doctrines of the gospel;
- when we are angry with the good we see in others;
- when we are angry with those who differ from us in religious sentiments;
- when we are angry at reproof;
- when our anger provokes us to wish or desire anything sinful;
- when we use forbidden means to avenge ourselves;
- and when our anger unfits us for the discharge of duty to one another.

## Chapter V.

### Cautions Against Violent and Sinful Anger

**1. Sinful anger destroys our own peace of mind.** How serene and peaceful a region would every man's soul be to himself, if

heavenly meekness did but reign in his breast, to the suppression of anger, wrath, malice, and bitterness!

The heathen moralist represents this to us by a comparison drawn from the celestial regions: "The upper and better ordered part of the world next the stars is never hurried into no tempest, never tossed about in any whirlwind, but is ever free from anything of tumult. Only the inferior regions throw about thunder and lightning's. So is the sublime mind always quiet, in a state of undisturbed tranquility, sober, venerable, and composed."

It is true, there may be a quiet behavior outwardly, either through constraint, or with some base and disguised design, while in the mean time the soul is rough and turbulent. The words may be softer than oil, while war is in the heart. But if our behavior is stormy and morose, we cannot have peace within.

By the frequent indulgence of this furious passion, it gains strength, and becomes habitual; and then a man's internal tranquility is nearly at an end. He will kindle into a flame at the first touch of provocation. He will not be able to restrain his resentment even until he has full proof of the offence; neither will he proportion his anger to the cause which excites it, or regulate it by any decency or discretion. A man thus enslaved to an angry temperament is to be ranked among the unhappiest of mortals. He grows still more miserable as he sinks in years; disease and infirmity increase the distemper of his mind. His friends desert him, being weary of his peevishness; and he is left, as one of the ancients strikingly expresses himself, to devour his own heart in solitude and contempt. He may disguise his sufferings before the world, but to be inwardly torn with wrathful and revengeful passions, is to be truly miserable. Thus the punishment is connected with the crime. "Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you. It is an evil thing and bitter that my fear is not in you, says the Lord."

When humility and meekness reign within, we are least in hazard of being ruffled by outward occurrences. But if the clouds of disgust and ill humor gather on the mind, every object is blackened to our view, and the slightest discourtesy heightens our disquietude. That inward serenity, which is the first requisite of every pleasurable feeling, is destroyed—and we behold everything in the most unfavorable light. The meek and patient man is happily superior to all those slight provocations and trifling offences which wound the tranquility of others. He is exempted from numberless disquietudes which agitate those of a contrary disposition.

As fire kindles fire, so that which provokes anger is the anger of others. But meekness enables us to turn away the wrath of our neighbor, and to keep possession of our own souls. It teaches us either not to speak at all, to curb the tongue, and to keep the mouth as with a bridle—or to give a soft answer. It is said of Naphtali that he gave goodly words, and as such he had the happiness to be satisfied with favor. For every man will kiss his lips, who gives a kind answer.

The meek man's *thoughts* are calm, his *purposes* are composed, his *prospects* are rational, and his *affections* are regular. He is free from many of the pains and tortures of those angry souls who vex themselves with trifles; whose reason is bewildered, and whose affections are hurried on with an impetus as uneasy as it is hazardous. He has that peace which the world can neither give or destroy—while the fretful and passionate man eats the bread of sorrow, in pursuit of revengeful projects. He delights himself with abundance of peace. *He has ten thousand times more satisfaction in forgiving injuries than others can have in revenge.*

The character which is given of that cruel and furious monarch, king Henry VIII towards the latter part of his life, is very striking. "When bodily diseases prevailed upon him, and particularly a pain in his leg, he was more furious than a chained lion! He had been ever stern and severe, but he was then outrageous. In this state he continued for nearly four years before his death—the terror of all, and the

tormentor of himself. As his end approached, his anguish and remorse were such as cannot be described."

**2. Sinful anger hurts the unity of spirit among brethren.** Were but the minds of Christians more eminently clothed with humility, and habited with the meekness and gentleness of Christ—what a blessed calm would it introduce into religious societies! It might then be truly said of the Christian church, "This is the house of God, this is the gate of Heaven!"

A learned, pious, and candid writer on the absurdity and injustice of religious bigotry and persecution, has these Words: "Could we see the members of Christ's mystical body divested of bigotry and prejudice, no longer divided by parties and factions, nor stained and sullied by viciousness of life; joined together by a union of friendly dispositions and kind affections, and vying with each other in the promotion of mutual benevolence and good will—this would give us the strongest idea we can at present have of the happiness of the future world, and of those sublime social pleasures which the righteous shall enjoy when they come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to God the judge of all, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

Some men seem to be of such a disposition, that they are not only careless of pleasing others, but studious to offend them. They imagine that they aggrandize themselves by humiliating those about them, and teasing them with affronts. They delight in wanton provocations, and contemptuous insolence. This tyranny arises from that excess of *pride* which can never be quietly endured by mankind. It provokes the resentment of those about us; and thus the peace of society is disturbed.

Some are so morose and ill natured, so sudden and so noisy in their resentment, that there is no peace or rest to be enjoyed near them.

They interrupt the quiet of all who are so unhappy as to be within the reach of their clamors.

Among the disciples of the lowly Jesus, nothing should be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind each should esteem others better than himself. Some good men are so unhappily addicted to an angry temper, that the poet's inquiry concerning his angry deities, seems applicable to them: "Can so much wrath be found in heavenly minds?"

When we meet with provocations from men of this cast, it is most eligible and honorable so far to suppress the heat of our own temper, as to endeavor to turn away their wrath with a soft answer. (Proverbs 15:1.) "A soft answer turns away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." If we intemperately and unseasonably set ourselves to oppose them, we shall but irritate them more and more. If mildness will not overcome them by leaving them room and time to cool, in keeping out of their way we shall escape to a calmer shore.

Without a degree of candor, forbearance and mutual love, the peace of Christian societies cannot be maintained. There must be reciprocal endeavors to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. When the members of a religious community are meek and lowly, full of kindness and benevolence one towards another, then and then only they adorn the doctrine of God their Savior, and exemplify the true spirit of Christianity. They are then cautious of inflicting the least wound on a brother's mind they are affable in their address, and mild in their behavior; ever ready to oblige, and as willing to be obliged by others. Reproofs are administered with the greatest tenderness; and good services performed with ease and modesty. No one is assuming in his opinions, or intemperate in his zeal about lesser matters. No one is self-willed, forward to contradict, or eager to blame. Everyone thinks it his duty and his honor to be clothed with humility, and to put on in his whole behavior that charity which is the bond of perfectness. Everyone seeks to please his neighbor for his good unto edification; to conceal that superiority of

rank or talents which might be oppressive to the weak of the flock, to be kind and tender-hearted, to be full of pity and courteous; and in a word, to evidence himself to be under the influence of the wisdom from above, "which is pure and peaceable, gentle to be in treated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and with out hypocrisy. Of such a society, it may be said, "the beauty of the Lord our God is upon them."

With some people, to speak and to offend are but one and the same thing. Their words are fraught with gall and wormwood, from a proud and malevolent disposition. The dull, the stupid and the mute are to be preferred to these. They are not satisfied with giving sharp answers; they insolently attack those present, and wound the character of the absent. Some domestic connections are dreadfully disturbed by feuds, jealousies, and antipathies—at the same time that they outwardly seem easy, affectionate, and cheerful; and we suppose they enjoy a quiet to which they are strangers. Your visit which you make to them, only suspends a domestic quarrel, which waits but for your absence to be renewed. Or if you are so unhappy as to reside with such people as are engaged in perpetual quarrels, they will force you to hear their mutual complaints; and you will live, as it were, in a court of justice, and be pestered from morning tonight with pleadings.

**3. Sinful anger blocks up our way to the throne of grace.** If we attempt to draw near to God with rancor and wrath in our hearts, he will not hear our prayers. First go and be reconciled to your brother—then come, and offer your gift. No wrathful disposition must be indulged, if we would lift up holy hands to God. Bitterness, wrath, and evil-speaking must therefore be laid aside, if we desire to hold converse with God, and to have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. We are not to expect forgiveness from our Maker, unless we from our hearts forgive others. So far does a wrathful disposition unfit us for devotion. Can we come boldly to the throne of grace so long as we cherish wrath in our bosom?

Anger indisposes us for your duty; and renders it, if performed, unacceptable to God. The tumult of our passions makes us both unable and unwilling to pray; and should we attempt it in such a spirit, God will not hear us.

**4. Sinful anger frequently exposes a man to danger.** When an angry man meets with a fury like himself, they frequently fall into harm. A rude hectoring fellow lately passing through the streets of a certain town, jostled another who stood in his way. The offended party, equal to him in brutality, drew his sword and spilt his blood. It is an honor to a man to cease from strife; but every fool will be meddling to his hurt. Wise men turn away wrath, but a fool's lips enter into contention; his mouth calls for strokes; and he some times receives them, as the just reward of his insolence. No one draws his sword or his pistol at the meek and inoffensive lamb; but the noisy barking cur frequently feels the lash. The meek and humble escape many troubles which the angry and revengeful pull down on their own heads. A soft answer turns away wrath; a soft tongue breaks the bone. The kindness of David overcame Saul; and the meekness of Jacob melted the heart of Esau.

**5. Sinful anger makes work for bitter repentance.** We frequently hear of parents who undertaking to correct their children in a fit of passion, have been so unhappy as to occasion irreparable harm to their helpless offspring. What must they feel on every sight of their afflicted children, thus disabled by their fury! What stings of remorse must attend them through every succeeding day of their lives! Who can think of the condition to which Cain had reduced himself by his rage and murder, without horror? Stung with the keenest anguish and remorse, he was a terror to himself wherever he went, and dreaded by all who knew him. He cried out in the bitterness of his soul, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" No sorrow can repair the harm—years cannot recompense what has been done in an instant in wrath and fury. "There are a thousand evils," (says Seneca) "included in this one of anger, and diversified into a thousand different branches."

The greatest part of the harm which men suffer in this life, are brought upon them by their own ungoverned passions. Should they escape the external harm which these passions naturally occasion, they cannot shun the internal misery which they certainly produce. The government of the world is maintained with such depth of wisdom, that the divine laws execute themselves against the sinner, and carry their sanction along with them. There is no need for the prison of Hell to be unlocked, or the thunders of Heaven to be poured forth, in order to punish the wrathful and the cruel man. It is enough that those furious passions which render such people the disturbers of others, be allowed to burn and rage within them, and that they be delivered up to the horrors of their own guilty minds. "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

**6. Sinful anger prevents us from doing or receiving good.** A drunken man in the height of his intoxication is looked upon as so far from being fit to receive or impart instruction, that he is considered as no longer master of his own conduct. He seems to act without consciousness, and to rush into harm without apprehension of danger. As such, he is either pitied or despised by those about him; and for the time, is hardly entitled to the rank of rational beings.

It is much the same with him who is intoxicated with anger. Such a man cannot gain much influence over any, but those who are necessarily his dependents. He may frighten his children and his wife; but if his eyes were open, he might easily see that while he tramples on those who cannot resist him, he is not revered for his virtue, but dreaded or despised for his brutality; and that he lives only to excite the contempt or hatred of society. *He who has his hand against every man, need not wonder if every man's hand is against him.* He lives in a state of war with mankind, as he is destitute of that *meekness which is the cement of society*, that love which is the bond of perfectness, that charity which covers a multitude of sins. In the present state of imperfection, mutual allowances are necessary to mutual usefulness. Without such allowances, variance, strife, and

contention will keep us perpetually at a distance from each other; and prevent us both from doing good to our fellow-creatures, and receiving good from them.

**7. Sinful anger fires the minds of those about us.** The associates and family of an angry man live with suspicion and solitude—as in the presence of a tame lion or tiger, watching the capricious savage, and expecting the moment when he will begin his tremendous roar. And when he breaks forth in unreasonable reproaches, it is no wonder that the hearts of those about him are kindled into resentment. Hence mutual animosities prevail; and who can tell where the harm may end. It is better to dwell in the corner of a house top, than with such a one in the most splendid and spacious palace. Grievous words stir up anger.

*Meekness* predisposes and gains the hearts of our opponents. It persuades, when every other argument proves ineffectual. It disarms the violent, and softens the stubborn mind.

On the other hand, the heat of *anger* confirms the opposition it intends to subdue, raises the resentment of those who were indifferent, and even turns our very friends into enemies.

A judicious writer on this subject has justly observed, that in the ruffled and angry hour, we view every appearance through a false medium. The most trivial affront swells into a momentous offense, and threatens immediate ruin. But after passion or pride is subdued, we look round in vain for the mighty harm we dreaded; the fabric which our disturbed imagination had reared, totally disappears. But though the cause of contention has dwindled away, its consequences remain:

- we have irritated the passions of others;
- we have alienated a friend;
- we have embittered an enemy;
- we have sown the seeds of future suspicion, malevolence or

disgust.

He who is hasty in his spirit, exalts his folly.

**8. Sinful anger makes us unlike the meek and lowly Jesus.** That mind which was in Jesus should be in us. He was patient under the rudest injuries and most barbarous treatment. The vilest affronts were offered to him, and yet he was as meek as a lamb. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. When he suffered, he threatened not. He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to those who plucked off his hair; he hid not his face from shame and spitting. For the greatest evil, he returned the greatest good. He shed his blood, and gave his life to redeem those from Hell who treated him with disdain. And while they mocked his dying agonies and abused him, he cried, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." While we admire this amiable and lovely part of the dear Redeemer's conduct, let us remember that he has left us an example that we should walk in his steps. But ah! How unlike him are we, when we allow angry passions to rise on the most trifling occasions!

No harshness, no pride, no stately distance of behavior appeared in our divine Master, during his fellowship with men upon earth. He was easy of access, mild in his answers, condescending, lowly, and obliging in his whole demeanor. This distinguishing part of his character was so generally known, that the apostle Paul, in order to gain the hearts of his followers, and engage them to a compliance with what he proposes, uses this form of address: "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Let us cultivate a humble, kind, gentle temper. This was the disposition of our divine leader. This is the disposition of the inhabitants of Heaven. Let this disposition also be in us; then shall we escape the miseries which always accompany an arrogant and resentful mind.

The religion which Jesus established has this distinguishing peculiarity, that it teaches all who profess it to forgive their enemies, and to love those who hate them. How unworthy shall we be of the

name of Christians and followers of Christ, if we give way to fretfulness, anger, and a revengeful spirit! Let us love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us.

**9. Sinful anger makes us resemble madmen and devils.** An angry man makes him like a furious wild beast, a lion or a tiger. Whereas, when the grace of meekness reigns, it transforms the lion into a lamb.

Saul, the king of Israel, when the violence of his angry passion prevailed, appeared like a fury. When David was absent, he stormed and raged with the fierceness of a lion. When David was present, he whirled his javelin at him to smite him against the wall.

We see also the madness which violent anger occasions in the character of Haman. We can scarcely conceive a person more thoroughly wretched than Haman appears to have been, even when surrounded with power, opulence, and pleasure. One Jewish man, who despised his greatness, and disdained submission—while a whole kingdom trembled before him—made Haman completely miserable. He was lost to all enjoyment, through the fierceness of his angry passion; he was stung by disappointment, torn and distracted by rage, beyond what he was able to bear. He made that humiliating confession: "All this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate." This was not a private soliloquy of Haman's within himself, but a confession which he made to others; and as such, it proves that his misery had become burdensome and insupportable.

**10. Sinful anger is cruel and murderous.** We have a striking instance of this in the first family of mankind. Cain was angry with his brother Abel, because his own works were evil, and his brother's works were righteous. God smiled upon the one, and frowned upon the other. Cain cherished his resentment to that degree that he thirsted for Abel's life, and at last imbrued his hands in his own

brother's blood. Many of the evils to which the life of man is exposed arise from *anger* protracted into *malevolence*, and exerted in *revenge*.

Many of the dreadful calamities which fill the histories of past ages have originated here. We could scarcely read these accounts without some doubt of the veracity of the historians, did we not see the same causes still tending to the same effects. What tides of *human blood* have been shed, how many *cities* have been subverted, how many *countries* have been desolated, and how many *nations* have been massacred to gratify this cruel and furious passion!

How solemn and striking is the exclamation of the dying patriarch Jacob, concerning his two sons! "Simeon and Levi are brothers—their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstrung oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel." Genesis 49:5-7

The wrathful man is cruel to his neighbor; as in the case above, and in that of Jezebel with Naboth. He is cruel to his children and wife; he is cruel to the very beast which carries him and does his drudgery. "A good man regards the life of his animals; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Thus Balaam only wished for a sword that he might slay his innocent donkey. How many excellent and useful creatures groan under the cruelty of furious men! When they exert themselves to the utmost stretch of their ability, they are still beaten without mercy. We need not indeed wonder at the wrathful man's cruelty to his animals, since his cruelty has been displayed against his Savior, in whom innocence and perfection shone in their brightest luster. "When they heard these things, they were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill, that they might cast him down headlong."

The wrathful man is cruel even to himself—many have died in a fit of rage. The tortured soul has rushed forth from its clay tenement—to dwell among fiends and furies, its fittest companions. Thus it is said by the inspired penman, "For anger slays the foolish man, and jealousy kills the simple." Job 5:2

Let us learn to suspend our violence and govern our tempers when causes of discord arise. Let us allow ourselves time to think how little prospect we have of gaining by fury and rage, and how much of the true happiness of life we are sure of throwing away.

Wrath is cruel. Astyages, king of Persia, being displeased with Harpagus, invited him to supper and caused that miserable parent to feed on the flesh of his own son; and then asked him how he liked the meal. When *Darius* had subdued Scythia; Oebasus, a nobleman whom he had conquered, requested of the tyrant that he would leave one of his three children to comfort his distressed father, and content himself with the service of the other two. The conqueror promised that he would murder them all; and hereupon caused them all to be slain, and the dead bodies to be cast at the feet of the unhappy father.

Alexander, at a festival, murdered his own friend Clitus, because he would not flatter him in his follies. He also threw Lysimachus to the fury of a lion.

Nebuchadnezzar being full of fury against Shadrach, Mesheck, and Abednego, caused them to be cast into a fiery furnace, heated to seven-fold rage.

Lucius Sylla, in his anger against Marcus Marius, punished him by having his legs to be broken, his eyes to be pulled outs, his hands to be cut off, and his body to be torn asunder.

Commodore Byron was an eye-witness to the following shocking scene of brutal rage, on the coasts of Patagonia. I beg leave to present the reader with it in his own words: "Here I must relate a little anecdote of the Indian chief. He and his wife had gone off, at some

distance from the shore in their canoe, when she dived for sea-eggs; but not meeting with great success, they returned a good deal out of humor. A little boy of theirs, about three years old, whom they appeared to be doatingly fond of, watching for his father and mother's return, ran into the surf to meet them. The father handed a basket of sea-eggs to the child, which being too heavy for him to carry, he let it fall; upon which the father jumped out of the canoe, and catching the boy up in his arms, dashed him with the utmost violence against the rocks. The poor little creature lay motionless and bleeding, and in that condition was taken up by the mother; but died soon after. She appeared inconsolable for some time; but the brute his father showed little concern about it."

Thus we have seen that sinful anger:

destroys our own peace of mind,  
hurts the unity of the brethren,  
blocks up our way to the throne of grace,  
exposes us to unnecessary dangers,  
makes work for bitter repentance,  
inflames the mind of others,  
makes us unlike the meek and lowly Jesus,  
causes us to resemble madmen and devils,  
and is cruel and murderous.

## **Chapter VI.**

### **The Character of Protervus**

Protervus was notorious in his childhood for his genius in pranks of mischief and malevolence. His fond and foolish parents instead of restraining him, praised his genius, admired him for his courage, and prided themselves in what they called the seeds of heroism and

prowess. Finding this the road to honor and applause, young Protervus was quickened in his course, and proceeded from one degree of malignity to another until he became the scourge of society. When arrived to years of maturity, the rashness and ungoverned anger of Protervus pushed him on to a mischievous and sinful conduct. His lips often poured out foolishness, and through the impatience of his spirit, he rushed into many snares, and sometimes involved his best friends in the same harm.

It is confessed, Protervus had sometimes honest and honorable projects in his head, but the violence of his temper was such that he was easily diverted from the point he should have kept in sight. He pursued nothing with that steadiness which is necessary in order to success. He was very easily offended; and his resentment was consequently often founded on misunderstandings, and wrong interpretations of words or actions. That which a small share of humility and charity would have passed over in silence, Protervus swelled into a great and heinous provocation. He never could suspend his anger until the truth was ascertained, and the facts were examined. When once displeased, he was inflexibly severe and resolutely implacable. The truth of this will appear from the following relation:

The unhappy Erumnosus offended his neighbor Protervus. I do not now perfectly recollect the circumstances of the case, but Erumnosus soon found that he had incurred the resentment of one whose tender mercies were cruel. A rigorous prosecution was entered against him. His humiliating confessions, his willingness to make all the satisfaction in his power, the earnest supplications of his distressed wife and seven helpless children, were of no avail. Erumnosus was sent to the county jail; he was tried, cast, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment. On the side of Protervus there was power; but the unfortunate Erumnosus had no comforter. I had the following account of his distressed situation, from one who saw him in his imprisonment.

I was told by the keeper that that was the cell of Erumnosus. I looked through the twilight of his grated door, and saw his body half wasted away with long confinement; and felt what kind of sickness of the heart it was which arises from *hope deferred*. Upon looking nearer I saw him pale and feverish; in twelve years the western breeze had not fanned his blood; he had seen no sun, no moon in all that time; nor had the voice of a friend breathed through his lattice.

"He was sitting upon the ground upon a little straw, in the farthest corner of his dungeon, which was alternately his chair and bed; a little calendar of small sticks were laid at the head, notched all over with the dismal days and night he had passed there; he had one of these little sticks in his hand, and with a rusty nail he was etching another day of misery to add to the heap.

As I darkened the little light he had, he lifted up a hopeless eye towards the door, then cast it down. He shook his head, and went on with his work of affliction. I heard his chains upon his legs, as he turned his body to lay his little stick upon the bundle; he gave a deep sigh, and I saw the iron enter into his soul. I burst into tears, and withdrew, deeply impressed with the propriety of petitioning the Father of mercies to have compassion on all prisoners and captives."

But the unfeeling heart of Protervus was incapable of commiseration, and the unhappy Erumnosus languished away in his fetters until death released him.

Protervus looked upon himself as a man of consequence, and would assume overbearing and lofty airs, because he had more money than his neighbors. He was better dressed, and better fed than many of his fellow-creatures. He loved to aggrandize himself in his own esteem, in his language, and in his behavior on that account. His vanity, his haughtiness, and insolence were insufferable. He would treat his servants as if they were dogs. He did not acknowledge that a poor man was made of the same clay, and descended from the same common parent with himself. His servants hated him, and seldom continued

long under his roof. When he stood in need of any assistance from them, he could brook no delay; he would make no allowances for the various hindrances which always attend human life, and may stop the speed of the most diligent and active servant. He would be perpetually railing at them; and on the slightest failure in their duty, he would storm and rage like a chained lion!

Protervus was faultfinding, and ready to take exception and offence without just ground; nor would he give up a prejudice once entertained, upon the best reasons offered, or the most condescending steps taken to satisfy him. He was so far from being won by kindness, that it only made him more insolent; every concession emboldened his fury. There was, in fact, no peace to be had with him, but by ceasing to have anything to do with him. He would treat those with whom he had dealings, with insolence and rudeness, with injurious and reproachful words. His language was indecent, provoking, and often outrageous he was contrary, and sowed strife.

He was unmercifully rigorous with those who were so unhappy as to stand indebted to him for sums of money which they were not immediately able to pay. He took a malicious pleasure in causing such people to *rot in the jail*, as he used to express himself, though he would sometimes pray at church that God would forgive his debts as he forgave his debtors. He now and then heard the lesson read in which it is solemnly declared, that he shall have judgment without mercy, who has showed no mercy.

Debitor, one of his poor tenants, was by the loss of his cow and the blighting of his corn, rendered absolutely incapable of paying his annual rent in due time. Protervus went out one morning, and found this poor sufferer in the fields; he seized him by the throat as if he would have strangled him, and severely demanded immediate payment; saying, "Pay me all that you owe."

Debitor fell down at his feet, and besought him; saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all; only grant me a little forbearance, and I will discharge the whole sum. But at present, through the loss I have sustained, I am unable to do it." But Protervus had no tenderness towards him; he was deaf to his entreaties, he would not hear his cries; but went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt.

Here this innocent but unhappy man was secluded from the common comforts of human life, oppressed with the corrosion of just but unavailing resentment, the heaviness of sorrow, the corruption of confined air, the lack of usual exercise and sometimes of food, the contagion of diseases, from which there was no retreat, with all the other *complicated horrors of a prison*; while his wife and children, deprived of the support of his industry, and the consolation of his company, languished in wretchedness and misery, because of the fury of the oppressor.

Protervus seemed to delight in vexing his fellow-creatures; he took a kind of malicious pleasure in giving them pain and torment. He had no regard for his neighbor's welfare, and lived only for himself. If he had but wealth and ease, it was no matter of concern with him what calamities would befall the rest of mankind. He was rough, quarrelsome, ill natured, sullen, and greedy of revenge. Death at length, that king of terrors, rid the world of this enemy of society. A raging fever seized his frame; and in a few days he breathed out his indignant soul, in distraction, horror, and despair!

## **Chapter VII.**

### **The Character of Eugenius**

As soon as Eugenius had a house and a family, he selected a room in it where the word of God was read, and prayers were constantly offered. These were not omitted on account of any guest whom providence might conduct within those happy walls; for Eugenius esteemed it a part of due respect to those who were brought under his roof, to take it for granted they would look upon it as a very bad compliment, to imagine they would have been obliged by neglecting the duties of religion on their account.

His character was uniformly regular and amiable, but he particularly excelled in that self-government which this essay is designed to promote. His meekness of disposition was not a mere natural disposition—it was a Christian grace; a fruit of the Spirit. It arose from pious principles; a regard to God's authority as enjoining it, and a sense of the evil and sinfulness of the contrary. He knew that to have a hostile and revengeful disposition towards our neighbor, is highly offensive to God.

On this ground, he constantly embraced all befitting methods for the cultivation and promotion of meekness and gentleness in himself and others. He followed peace with all men, and avoided everything which might have a tendency to break it. He was so far from allowing himself to do his neighbor a real injury, that he constantly endeavor to conciliate and secure his affection, by all the offices of friendship and humanity. He was solicitous to make all around him easy and happy. It was a pleasure to him to contradict his own inclinations, and to deny himself, that he might serve the interests of his friends. It was not indeed always possible for him to live in peace and amity with his neighbors. He sought peace, and pursued it, but it sometimes could not be attained.

In the course of his life he had to do with some of a perverse temperament and of unreasonable obstinacy. They were so reproachful as to take offence without any foundation. They would catch at the most innocent occasion to work up their minds to resentment. This made him very uncomfortable. He was often, in

such a case, heard to cry, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul has long dwelt with him that hates peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war."

Some would not be at peace with him, unless he would violate his conscience. He could only do what he might do lawfully; he acted conscientiously towards God; he could not wound his conscience for peace. If men were displeased with him for that, he could not help it. He would neither sacrifice truth nor holiness, though all the world should be angry with him for his zealous attachment to them.

But in what concerned himself, Eugenius was willing to sacrifice little things and to recede from what was strictly his right, in some cases, rather than make a breach, or perpetuate a quarrel with his neighbors. He took this to be one part of our Savior's meaning in that remarkable injunction: "Whoever shall smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. If any man will sue you at court and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also; and whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him twain."

He would meekly pass these things over for the sake of peace, especially when he had any reason to hope that such kind treatment would make a good impression on those who would at any time treat him ill. He used frequently to speak of Abraham's mild and gentle behavior towards Lot. When the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot had quarreled, the father of the faithful, instead of saying, "I have as much right as you to the country; or I have a superior right, as I am the elder, and the uncle" he spoke as follows, "Let there be no strife, I beg you, between you and me, for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? If you will take the left hand, I will go to the right; or if you will depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Eugenius was deeply sensible that when a quarrel is begun, however innocently at first on one side, yet it scarcely ever happens but there are faults on both in the progress of the contention. Mutual usefulness is obstructed; mutual criticisms, evil surmises, undue

resentments, and indecent sallies of angry passion can hardly be avoided in such a case. Therefore Eugenius thought it best in many circumstances, to leave of contention before it were meddled with. His soul was calm and composed. He breathed love and peace and as such, he made it his study and business to live a quiet life, and to promote the peace and welfare of mankind; and so far as it was in his power, to compose and settle his associates in amity and love.

He was endowed with many divine gifts, he was adorned with virtue and merit, and yet he always seemed insensible of his own superiority. He was base in his own eyes, and drew a curtain of concealment before himself, that men might not observe him. If any were inclined to draw aside the veil, and make his merit visible, it gave pain to his modesty. He condescended to men of no wealth, would hear their requests and complaints, and converse familiarly with them on matters of importance. He remembered that the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, visits the afflicted, and dwells with the poor and lowly. He was far from sinking his character by these condescensions, or doing any dishonor to his station in the world; for all good men were constrained to love and honor him; and indeed, it is difficult to determine whether he was most *honored*, or most *beloved*.

If at any time, in conversation with his friends for mutual improvement, a debate arose, he would manage it with a liberality and calmness of mind which were truly amiable and edifying. If the power of the argument lay on his side, you would see nothing in him like insult and triumph. When his opponent had the advantage, he would readily acknowledge it, and modestly yield to the force of reason. He could sit and hear violent opposition made to his sentiments without kindling into flame and fury; he could bear to be contradicted without resenting it as an affront.

He was compassionate and merciful to the poor, afflicted, and distressed. Their pains and diseases of body, their sorrows and troubles of mind, their necessitous circumstances, their unjust

sufferings from those who oppressed them, and even the miseries brought upon themselves by their own imprudence, excited his sympathy and tenderness. In the distribution of his bounty, he was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the poor and the afflicted. The blessing of him who was ready to perish, came on this amiable man; and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. Those whom it was not in his power to relieve, were recipients of his tender sympathy, his good wishes, and affectionate and fervent prayers. It was his food and drink to be engaged in contriving, endeavoring, promoting, and rejoicing in the welfare and happiness of others. He lived not to himself; he sought not his own things, but the things of others. He studied not to please himself, but his neighbor, for his good and edification.

Some, who were themselves unacquainted with the power and comforts of religion, were ready to charge Eugenius with fanaticism—but that the charge was altogether unjust. Yet it must be owned, that if habitual love of God, firm faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a steady dependence on the divine promises, a high esteem for the blessings of the heavenly world, and a sincere contempt for the vanities of this—can properly be called fanaticism, then was Eugenius one of the greatest fanatic our age has produced. In proportion to the degree in which he was so, I must esteem him one of the wisest and happiest of mankind.

I don't intend to say that Eugenius was perfect in love and meekness. It belongs not to human nature to possess these qualities in perfection. But it was his study and endeavor to come as near to the pattern of perfection exhibited in the character of the Savior, as the frailty of a human being would admit. He often mourned in secret on account of the defects of which he was conscious.

Thus he gained the esteem of his friends and associates. He was consulted by them as an oracle; and he saved many from distress, and even from ruin by his council and *advice*, as well as by his prudent and amiable *example*. Thus his conduct in life was of

singular advantage to others as well as to himself. When he saw oppression and violence practiced among men, he always took the part of the injured person, and acquitted himself in such a manner, as to calm the resentment of the oppressed, and soften the oppressor, if not into pity and tenderness, at least to a compliance with the rules of equity.

He lived in a neighborhood where he saw several sects of Christians carried away with the furious torrent of rigorous notions, and where some were addicted to several practices bordering on superstition. They were frequently engaged in fierce contentions and angry disputes. They could not live in peace, nor judge favorably of one another's spiritual state, motives or conduct. Eugenius beheld them with concern; and one day, falling into the company of several of these zealots, who belonged to different parties, he addressed them in the following manner:

"My friends, I esteem and honor you all. Your zeal for truth and holiness is, in many respects, laudable; but the matters wherein you differ are not, perhaps, so very important as you may imagine. The great truths and necessary duties of Christianity should be very dear to us. We ought, if providence calls us to it—to contend earnestly for the essential articles of faith once delivered to the saints. But it appears to me that the points of difference among you are not of this kind. There are some truths, and some practices of less importance to the Christian life. The things you dispute about are not of such a nature as that they should engross your chief attention. Your different conceptions about these things, since you are of one mind concerning matters of far greater consequences, should not lead you into these hot and angry disputes. You plainly see that your contentions are to no profit; they sour your minds, they embitter your social interactions, they cool your affections to one another, and leave your souls barren and uncomfortable. The cultivation of meekness and mutual love is of far greater importance than the trifles about which you contend. Let me in treat you to cease from

strife, and to follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another."

I do not exactly know what success he had resulting from this address, but many have heard Eugenius pathetically lament the general unsuccessfulness of all endeavors to promote peace among those who are *lovers of contention*. He would often say, "How sadly do these people mistake the nature and design of Christianity! Were they worshipers of Moloch, or the advocates of Mohammad—then their animosities might admit of some excuse."

Thus did this amiable man seek peace and pursue it; and the blessing pronounced on the head of the peacemaker rested upon him.

His own soul was tranquil and serene as the unruffled ocean. He was no enthusiast, as we have observed. He made no boast of his internal consolations; yet neither his eyes nor his aspect could restrain the expression of that celestial peace which reigned within Eugenius. He held himself and his abilities in very low estimation; a sense of his own baseness prevented him from being offended by any affront. He was so far from seeking the honor which comes from men, that he seemed to take pleasure in being little and unknown. It is rare to meet with an eminent person who can bear an equal; but it was Eugenius's choice and delight to prefer every one to himself. And this he did in a manner so remote from affectation, so free and easy that in him it appeared perfectly natural.

He would not allow any unkindness shown to him, to be mentioned again if any instance of this happened to be named, he would say, "I beg to let that drop, and enter on a new subject of conversation." From this root of *genuine humility* sprung that patience which disposed him to submit to every cross with alacrity and pleasure. For the good of his neighbor nothing seemed hard, nothing wearisome. He never thought anything too base but sin; he looked on nothing else as beneath his character. In bearing afflictions he was most

exemplary, and continued more and more so in his last illness, of which we shall give a brief account by and by.

It is true, Eugenius was naturally a man of strong passions, and prone to anger in particular; but he humbled himself on this account, and implored with many tears and supplications victory over his own spirit. He did not seek in vain; he obtained what he sought and labored after in a very eminent degree. For many of the latter years of his life no one ever saw him out of temper, nor ever heard him utter a rash expression on any provocation whatever.

The testimony which Dr. Burnet bears of Robert Leighton, might be borne of Eugenius with equal propriety: "After an intimate acquaintance with Mr. Leighton for many years, and after being with him by night and by day, at home and abroad, in public and in private, on sundry occasions and in various affairs, I must say I never heard an idle word drop from his lips, nor any conversation which was not edifying. I never saw him in any disposition in which I myself would not have wished to be found at death."

Eugenius was ever ready to bear with the weaknesses, and forgive the failings of others. He never mentioned the faults of an absent person, unless absolute necessity required it; and then he spoke with the utmost tenderness, extenuating rather than aggravating the offence. His courtesy was pure and genuine, without any artifice or affectation, constraining him to behave to everyone with an inexpressible mixture of humility, love, and respect. This directed his words, the tone of his voice, his looks, his whole attitude, his every motion. His behavior was suited with a peculiar gracefulness to every people and the occasion.

Eugenius treated the *wife* with a manly tenderness, giving her the most natural evidences of a cordial, habitual esteem; and expressing a most affectionate sympathy with her under all her infirmities. He had at all times a most faithful care of her interests, and especially those relating to the state of religion in her mind.

He took great care to instruct and admonish his *children*, and train them up in the way in which they should go. He thought an excess of indulgence to be one of the most dangerous faults in education, by which he everywhere saw great numbers of young people undone; yet he was gentle towards his dear offspring, as a nurse cherished her children. He was ever solicitous to guard against a severity which might terrify or discourage them, and though he endeavored to take all prudent precautions to prevent the commission of faults, yet when at any time they had been committed, and there seemed to be a sense of them, he was always ready to make the most candid allowances for the thoughtless of unripened years, and tenderly to cherish every purpose of a more proper conduct for the time to come.

His behavior to his *servants* was full of condescension, humanity, and kindness. He would lay no heavier burdens upon them, nor exact any harder labor from them than they were able to bear. In case of slight mistakes, he would forbear threatening, and not gall and irritate them by abusive words. He was sometimes heard to say among his particular friends, that he thought nothing could be more odious, or more contemptible, than for a man to pretend to be a disciple of Jesus, while he is a *lion* in his own house, or tyrannical over his servants; and that the most melancholy and most mischievous object on earth is a selfish, passionate, unmerciful governor of a family calling himself a Christian, and valuing himself on that account. "Surely, (he would say) the servants of such a man, and all who observe his behavior towards them, will be tempted to despise that religion which they see joined with such obvious and loathsome hypocrisy!"

He kept in view the transitory nature of all earthly glory, human distinctions, and worldly honors. He remembered that the world is passing away, and the lusts thereof; that the *rapid stream of time* is carrying its proudest people away, and burying them in oblivion; that the hour is approaching when all shall stand on a level, and the servant be free from his master; and then it will appear that only he

who has done the will of God, whether in a humble or higher station, abides forever.

"The firmest human establishments, (he would say) the best systems of policy, are of no long duration. The mightiest states and nations perish like the individuals that compose them. In one page we read their history, we admire their achievements, we are interested in their successes—but then we turn the page, and no more than a name is left. The Ninevehs and Babylons of Asia are fallen; the Sparta and Athens of Greece are no more; and the monuments that promised to endure to eternity are erased, like the mount of sand which yesterday the children cast upon the shore."

It is but justice to observe that Eugenius was careful to give to all in their several stations the regard and respect which they might claim. He paid a cheerful submission to lawful authority; he abhorred the murmurings and complaints of discontented minds against those in power, when any step in the administration appears dubious to them. Eugenius had modesty enough to be tender in judging of things which he had sufficiently studied. It was a pleasure to him to render to all their due—custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

I cannot prevail with myself to conclude this sketch of his character without giving a hint at his candor in judging of others. He knew it was no act of charity to strengthen the profane in their vices, by flattering them; or leaving them to flatter themselves that they shall have peace, though they walk in the sinful ways of their own heart. He knew that this would only be joining with Satan, and lending him aid to ruin their souls forever. He was deeply sensible, that because of drunkenness, whoredom, fraud, lying, covetousness, and the like offences—the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. At the same time he knew that a considerable part of the conduct of men is of a doubtful cast; and here Eugenius would exercise his candor, by thinking, judging, and hoping the best. The commission

of a single offence, contrary to the general course of a person's life, he could not, admit as a proof of that person's insincerity.

He knew that the best of men, even those on whom God has put the highest honor in this world, did not always persevere in a uniform course of obedience, without falls and blemishes. He likewise considered himself as weak and liable to all temptations. He was not suspicious of ulterior motives in others, unless he had the clearest grounds to go upon. The words of Jesus were often repeated by him, and no doubt had great weight with him, to dispose his mind to candor and charity: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Matthew 7:1-2

This amiable man was at length visited by a heavy and long continued affliction, the forerunner of his *great change*. He patiently and quietly submitted to his heavenly Father's will, and bore the awful trial with resignation and fortitude. His whole body was in pain, and his soul mourned within him; yet his passions were calm. He took kindly all the relief that his friends attempted to afford him; he gave them no uneasiness, but what they felt through the force of sympathy and compassion. His behavior in the midst of his calamities was so full of meekness, tenderness, and love, that the hearts of his friends were still more firmly united to him, as the season approached when he must be taken from them.

That which alleviated his affliction, and afforded him rational tranquility in the prospect of his dissolution, was the gospel of Him in whose hands are life and death; and the assurance of another and better state, in which all tears will be wiped away, and the whole soul filled with ineffable joy. Supported by these hopes and prospects, the latter end of this amiable man was peace—the peace of God which surpasses all understanding possessed his mind, and disarmed the *king of terrors*.

Philosophy may infuse fortitude, but it is only true religion which gives to the weak, and poor, and afflicted, consolation in life, and divine tranquility in the dying hour. The precepts of Epicurus, who teaches us to endure whatever God's providence sends, may silence the mind that is strengthened by grace. Only true religion can strengthen people in adversity, or to support them in that important hour. That precious gospel in which life and immortality are brought to light, was the sovereign consolation of Eugenius to the last moment of his existence. When his heart and his flesh failed, he knew that God was the strength of his heart, and his portion forever. His last words to his friends were, "Behold, I am dying; be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

## Chapter VIII.

### Some Rules for the Suppression of Sinful Anger

**1. Let us study the importance of domestic happiness and tranquility.** *Husbands* should not be bitter against their wives. *Parents* should not provoke their children to anger. *Masters* must forbear threatening. The intemperate passion of superiors is often veiled under the excuse of necessary strictness and maintaining of authority.

We should not ruin domestic peace by being always chiding; every little default should not put us into a flame; we should not be easily provoked; small offences should be passed by, and when such are committed as call for reproof, it should be given without heat and fury. A fiery and hasty behavior, abusive and harsh language, will at once sink our character, lessen our authority, and wound our family

peace. Shouting and anger will render us contemptible and ridiculous, and convince our family that we are so far from being fit to govern others, that we are unable to govern ourselves.

A due expression of displeasure against what is wrong, and such as necessary to the edification of the offender, will very well comport with the meekness of wisdom. Solemnity and composedness, tempered with mildness and good will, would preserve our authority, and command that respect which we wish to secure—more than shouting, bluster, and wrathful chiding. We were once inferiors ourselves; and should treat those who are now under us, as we then wished to be treated. The happy medium between *Eli's indulgence*, and *Nabal's brutal churlishness*, should be studied by us, if we would preserve peace and good order in our dwellings. Of the latter it is said, "He was such a churl, such a son of Belial, that a man could not speak to him." Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than such a fury. There is no peace where he comes.

*Servants* in families should be mild, gentle, teachable, and submissive; not argumentative; not sullen nor forward; and not giving way to unjust and unreasonable murmurings, nor complaints without cause. Each should study to please, and endeavor to oblige one another for mutual advantage. For "Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the dew of Hermon, which descended on the mountain of Zion. For there the Lord commanded the blessing."

There is not, perhaps, a more mischievous source of anger and resentment in families, than the fond *partiality* of parents to their children. Of all the infirmities (says Dr. Hunter) to which our nature is subject, none is more common, none is more unreasonable, unwise, and unjust, none more fatal in its consequences to ourselves and others—than that of *partiality* between one child and another. It discourages him or her who is slighted, and it frequently ruins the favorite. It sows the seeds of jealousy, anger, discord, and malice, which frequently produce innumerable mischiefs in families, which

embitter the lives of both parents and children. It sets the father against the mother, and the mother against the father; the sister against the brother, and the brother against the sister.

Parents ought to examine, and to watch over themselves carefully on this head. If they are unable to suppress the feelings of their own hearts, the expression thereof at least is in their power; and both policy and justice demand of them an equal distribution of their affection, their assistance, and their possessions. If there is a folly which more certainly than another punishes itself, it is this sinful *partiality* of which we are speaking.

Some of the best and wisest of men have erred in this particular. In the patriarchal age, we find both Isaac and Jacob caught in the same snare. Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his venison; and Rebekah loved Jacob. This disturbed the repose of Isaac's family. It was not long before the effect of parental partialities appeared: a competition for precedence and the rights of primogeniture engaged the attention of the two brothers, and inflamed their minds against each other from their earliest years. The claims of each were supported respectively by the parents, and the family was torn with internal dissension.

The trifling circumstances of personal likeness, of beauty, and the like, which in themselves have neither merit nor demerit, have been shown to establish distinctions in families which have been destructive of peace and promotive of ruin. It is difficult indeed to bear an even hand between one child and another, and to prevent jealousies and animosities; but the difficulty makes it more necessary to be prudent and circumspect.

How shocking it is to live a life of tumult and contention in our own families; to have perpetual disquietudes in our own houses, where above all other places we should be concerned to maintain peace! If a man has not peace at home, then where can he expect it? Neither sacred nor civil concerns go on well amidst strife and contention at

home. Our prayers will be hindered, our converse and mutual edification prevented, our convivial meals embittered, our rest discomposed, and our comforts destroyed.

Let us study to be quiet, let us be of one mind, let us live in peace—and the God of love and peace shall be with us. His blessing which makes rich shall rest upon us. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Some are obliging, gentle, and good humored among strangers—but *morose and ill natured at home*. This is sheer hypocrisy. It shows how little they are concerned for the comfort of their families, and that the *fear of man* has a greater restraint over their passions than the *fear of God*. Great prudence and patience are often called for in family life.

*Abigail* had her churlish Nabal,  
*Job* had a wife who tempted him to curse God,  
*Moses* had a Zipporah, averse to duty,  
and *David* had a scoffing Michal.

**2. When we have given just offence to anyone, we should be ready to acknowledge it.** When we have committed an error, our pride prompts us to vindicate it, and to stand it out. We imagine that our honor is concerned; but penitence and humble submission would, in such a case, be a thousand times more to our credit. Yielding pacifies great offences. Most men are sensibly touched with the ambition for honor and reputation, yet few consider properly either wherein these lie, or what is the right way of obtaining them. Meekness and gentleness in the point of true honor have the preference over resentment and obstinacy, both in the sight of God and men. He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. More honor is due to him than to an *Alexander*, or a *Caesar*. A rational victory is more honorable than a brutal one. To govern an *enemy within us*, is more glorious than to kill an enemy without us. The former is certainly more difficult than the latter. To quiet internal broils, to still an

insurrection of passions in our own bosoms, is a harder and a nobler effort than to trample on an outward opposer.

**3. Let us ever remember, that anger has a direct tendency to trouble the understanding and darken the mind.** The fumes which arise from a heart boiling with anger, becloud reason; nothing is in reality what it appears to be in that unhappy moment. *Perhaps no two people can differ more from each other than the same man differs from himself, when heated with anger, and when calm and composed.* If anger bears rule, our judgment of the case before us can neither be sound nor true; the consideration of this should excite us to be continually on our guard. There cannot be a greater proof of the tendency of anger to blind the mind, than the disposition an angry man generally reveals to justify his extravagance. "I do well to be angry," is the language of most when their minds are heated. Certainly *Jonah* could not think so when his mind was cool, and when he poured out his soul in humble supplication to God. There is nothing said or done in anger, but it may be better said and better done when the *storm* is over.

**4. Let us consider that indulged anger may do us more harm than he who offends us.** He who can endure to have his bosom torn, and his peace of mind destroyed by this passion, might with much more ease overcome an injury and possess his tranquility of mind. *It is a thousand times better to suffer two injuries than to revenge one.* If any man smites you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. To preserve our spirits calm, easy, and innocent amidst injuries and insults, is honorable to ourselves, to God, and his cause.

An angry man, to justify his own resentment, magnifies a slight offence, and sets it forth with every possible circumstance of aggravation. It is much the wiser part to mitigate and qualify the provocation; to suppose that it was an oversight, that there is no harm done, or at most, that there was none intended. When the disciples of Jesus slept in the garden while their divine Master was in

his agony, he gently rebuked them: Could you not watch with me one hour? Yet he kindly made this allowance for the infirmity of nature: The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

**5. Let us consider the circumstances of the person who has offended us.**

Is he a child? His youth will plead his defense.

Is he an aged person? Allowance must be made for his years and infirmities.

Is he poor? His poverty should move our compassion.

Is he rich? His wealth lays him under a temptation to forget himself.

Is he a wise man? Let respect for his abilities soften our resentment.

Is he a weak and foolish man? He knows no better.

Is he a wicked man? We need not wonder at his ill-treatment of us; it is his general character. He fears not to offend God—so why should we think it strange that he offends us?

Is he a good man? It is pity to harbor resentment against a worthy character.

To contend with our equals, is dubious.

To contend with our superiors, is madness.

To contend with our inferiors, is baseness.

When Pisistratus was reviled by a drunkard inflamed with wine, his attendants urged him to avenge the insult; but the chief replied that he was no more moved with his reproaches than he would have been with a blind man who had happened to bump against him by mistake.

**6. Let us keep in memory our own errors and follies.** We resent the faults of others, because we forget our own. When I am informed that a man has spoken evil of me, let me recollect whether I have not given him just occasion so to do. If another treats me with disrespect, before I kindle into resentment, let me remember how I have treated others. Mercifulness and kindness may melt the heart of an enemy, and transform him into a friend. A ready forgiveness of an offence committed by an intimate friend will strengthen the ties of his friendship towards us.

When anyone offends us, it may be proper to reflect that we ourselves either have done, or might have done the like. We use patience towards ourselves, and are always ready to excuse ourselves; let us learn to love our neighbor as we love our-selves. We have been guilty of a thousand faults towards those with whom we have to do. We wish them to bear with our infirmities. Let us remember that divine rule: "In everything do unto others as you would have them do unto you; for this is the law and the prophets." Surely we should not be so hot in resenting the faults of others, since we have so many of our own.

**7. Neither is it enough for us to bear in mind our offences directly committed against our fellow-creatures; we should also remember, and be deeply humbled for our sins against God.** A deep sense of sin and inward shame, are inseparable from a penitent frame of heart. A view of what passes in our own hearts, and of the faults and follies of our lives, tends greatly to subdue haughtiness of spirit; and consequently, makes it easy to pass by those provocations which set the proud and self admiring all on a flame.

The truly penitent are not readily moved to resentment, or kindled into passion, whatever is said of them, or done to them. A man truly humbled for his sin before God, will be ready to reflect, when a provocation to anger is before him. "The heart-searching God knows all my foolishness, and that I am deserving of far worse treatment."

This inducement to suppress anger, the apostle Paul urges in all its force. He founds his exhortation to guard against every violation of the law of meekness, solely on the sinful state in which we are all by nature. "Remind them," says he to Titus, "to be gentle, showing all meekness unto all men; for we ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

**8. Let us every evening review the conduct of the past day, and see what progress we have made in meekness and patience.** "When the candle is withdrawn, (says the heathen moralist) I review the day that is past, and ruminate on my words and actions. I hide nothing from myself; I let nothing escape me. In that dispute, I say to myself, "I was too angry, I spoke rashly; I will hereafter be more cautious." "I admonished a friend; but doing it with too much severity, I offended instead of reforming him."

I resented an injury, (may the Christian say) but I did it with so much anger, that my own mind was thrown into tumult and disquietude. I exposed myself to shame, I wounded my own conscience, and acted unworthy my Christian character and profession; the recollection confounds me. I pray God to forgive me what is past, and grant me the meekness of wisdom, that I may demean myself more suitably for the future."

We should inquire what ground we have gained in the government of ourselves; what advancement we have made in meekness and patience. Seasons of self examination, in which our past actions pass in review before us to be condemned and rectified where they appear to have been wrong, are highly requisite to moral improvement.

**9. If we would keep our resentment within due bounds, let us be accustomed to examine our thoughts.** Self government should be habitual. In vain shall we endeavor to obtain the conquest, if the attempt is only made when some violent provocation has inflamed the mind. If it is not our aim at other seasons, and on less

trying occasions, to rule our own spirits—then it can hardly be expected that we shall succeed when some remarkable temptation presents itself. When at any time we feel the risings of anger, we should do well to put that question to ourselves which was pronounced to Cain: "Why am I angry? Is there any cause for it? If a slight provocation has been given me, then why should I allow my thoughts to dwell upon, and magnify it in my imagination, so as to nourish the resentment I feel rising in my bosom?"

We must deny ourselves early and inflexibly, if we would have the government of our own souls, and not be slaves to anger. It is necessary for the health of our souls, at some seasons, to forbear to do what may innocently be done, that we may, through grace, be better able to resist the temptation when self-interest and other deluding inducements shall lend their charms to guilt.

Let us therefore live in the continual practice of self-denial, and not allow ourselves to be irritable or hard to please in our food, drink, clothes, or relationships. Let us learn to subdue our fondness for those things which suit our preferences, and our aversion to those we dislike; otherwise we shall meet with frequent occasions of resentment. It is not enough to repress those passions which are directly criminal. Even innocent gratifications must be sometimes forborne; for he who complies with all his lawful desires on all occasions, will lose his empire over himself. That is an excellent rule which Plutarch gives for the preservation of meekness: Be not over fond in diet, clothes; for those who need but few things are not liable to anger, if they are disappointed of many."

**10. Let us be clothed with humility.** Pride, we have seen, is the parent and nurse of anger. The humble soul is meek and patient. What others call affronts and wrongs, give the humble man no pain or uneasiness. He knows that every other person has his own opinions, desires, and inclinations as well as he; and he is not so weak as to think it reasonable for them to yield up their sentiments and will to his desires and gratification. He does not readily suppose

his neighbor has a design to affront him; he is kind and candid, and takes everything in the most favorable light. If injuries are done to him, he does not immediately resent them; but takes pains with himself to forget by degrees what at first wounded his mind.

Humility is an ornament which well befits forgiven sinners. It should be put on with our daily clothing, and we should vie with each other as to who shall show it in its greatest perfection. As pride is the source and spring of angry passions, so to have this evil subdued and to learn the practice of humility, is the only successful way to attain true meekness.

**11. Let us ever be ready to forget and forgive injuries.** The answer of Cato to him who had struck him, and came to acknowledge his offence, was worthy of so great a man, "I do not remember it," said Cato.

It is the part of a great mind, the glory of a man to pass over a transgression. A certain noble courtier being once asked, by what means he had continued so long in favor; replied, "By being thankful, and patiently enduring injuries." Socrates having without any provocation received a hard blow on his head by an insulting bravado; bore it with that patience which may put Christians to the blush. Among us, such an affront would have been followed with a duel; and perhaps, issued in death. But Socrates kept his temper, and only made this calm and humorous remark on the insult he had received: "It is pity that a man cannot know when he ought to go abroad with a helmet on his head."

We are commanded to show all meekness unto all men. That is, bearing, forbearing, condescending, and forgiving meekness; the *meekness which will endear our friends, and reconcile our enemies*. The *law of love* should be written on our hearts, and the law of kindness expressed by our lips. Meekness should not only be shown to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. *A spirit of forgiveness is essential to Christianity*; and the consideration of

God's forgiving us our great and manifold provocations, should induce us to a ready forgiveness of those who have injured us. *God for Christ's sake has forgiven you*, is the grand argument the gospel makes use of to soften the rigor of our resentment to an offending brother, and dispose us to forgive him.

**12. Let us consider of what importance it is for us to endeavor by a kind, gentle and obliging behavior, to conciliate the affection and esteem of those with whom we have to do.** Our great Creator has formed us for society; he has made it natural to us to desire that our neighbors should wish our welfare, and treat us with decency, kindness, and love; that they should promote our interest, and lend us assistance when we stand in need of their help. Consequently, he has laid us under obligations to *treat them as we wish they should treat us*. The more meekness and gentleness we show to them, the greater reason we have to expect the same returns of love and goodwill from them. When we fall under affliction, or are overtaken by distressful calamities, we need the sympathy, counsels, prayers, and other friendly aids of those in the society of whom providence has placed us; but how can we expect any of these instances of kindness from them, if we have made them our enemies by our own morose and unfriendly behavior towards them? If we have seemed to take pleasure in vexing them by our peevish or furious passions, what kindness can we expect from them?

Although the blessed God supremely regards his own glory, yet he is so far from requiring any kind of homage from us his creatures, which is in the least detrimental to the interests of society, that it is impossible to please him without showing kindness, love, and good will to one another. No parent ever more affectionately sought the happiness of his offspring, or delighted more in their harmony, than our Father in Heaven seeks our mutual welfare, and delights in seeing us obey the great command of loving our neighbor as ourselves. It is evidently his will that, as Christians, we should stand

as much distinguished by the amiableness of our deportment towards men—as by faith, devotion, and zeal towards God.

**13. Let us remember that men can proceed no farther in their insults and injurious treatment of us, than divine wisdom permits them.** The wicked are God's sword. Shimei curses not without God's permission. Men's affronts are God's chastisements; their reproaches are his rebukes. Job kept his eye more fixed on the permissive hand of God, than on the instruments of his affliction—the Sabeans and Chaldeans. Instead of venting his rage in fruitless anger at their cruelty and rapacity, he humbles himself and says: "The Lord gave, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the lord!" God has wise and gracious purposes to answer in allowing men to treat us as they do; he means to humble and to prove us, that he may do us good in our latter end. "You thought evil against me," said Joseph to his brethren; "but God meant it for good."

**14. Let us live under a habitual sense of the divine presence, and be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.** By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. "You God see me," is a proper and suitable reflection at all times, and especially in times of temptation and danger.

**15. Let us learn to expect injuries and affronts, that we may not be surprised when they occur.** We do not live among angels, nor among men free from perverseness, and unspotted with impurity; we dwell among a people of irregular tempers, and unclean lips. If we would have no provocations, we must needs go out of the world. In all connections and relations we may justly expect something displeasing. How can we expect to be perfectly at ease in this restless world? Offences will come among those whose natures are depraved, and whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? If you see the violent perverting of judgment and justice, marvel not at the matter.

Do not be surprised into irritation and anger, when you meet with provocations from corrupt and fallen creatures. The briers and thorns are with us; we dwell among scorpions. We should keep our mouths as with a bridle while the wicked are before us; and be as cautious as those who walk with a lighted candle among barrels of gunpowder. There are savages in this wilderness through which we pass to the heavenly land, and we need not think it strange if we sometimes hear them roar against us. Meekness will teach us to pass offenses without resentment, and courage will embolden us to proceed without fear or dismay. If fiery tongues set on us, we should not be like tinder, ready to catch the flame, and render evil for evil.

The patriarch Isaac grew rich and great in the land of Abimelech; but the Philistines envied him. They were angry with him because God prospered him. The wells which his father's servants had dug, the Philistines stopped up, and filled with dirt. Resentment considers that as gained to itself, which is lost to the object of it; it enjoys the harm which it works merely for harm's sake.

Isaac prudently gives way, and pitches his tent in the valley of Gerar; but the unrelenting rage of the Philistines pursues him thither. No sooner has he by industry procured water for his family and flocks, than they endeavor by violence, to possess it for themselves. Isaac, fond of peace, chooses rather to recede from his just right, than to support it by force; and still retires, seeking relief in patience and industry. He finds himself still pursued by the pride and treachery of his neighbors; but at length he conquers by yielding. A victory the most honorable, and the most satisfactory. He went up from thence; and to remove as far as possible every ground of quarrel, he fixed his residence at Beer-sheba; where feeling himself at home, he at once pitches his tent for repose, and builds an altar for devotion.

Here, as one well observes, the hatred, resentment, and violence of man are lost and forgotten in communion with God; His meek and placid behavior, together with the smiles of providence upon him, rendered the patriarch so respectable, that Abimelech felt himself

impelled at length to court his friendship, and to secure it by a solemn covenant. If then a man's ways please the Lord, he makes his enemies to be at peace with him.

**16. Let us pour out our souls in humble supplication to Almighty God whose grace alone can effectually subdue our irregular tempers.** His aid is graciously promised to those who seek it with humility and fervor; he will subdue our iniquities. Let us humble ourselves in his presence, confess and bewail our weakness and folly, and ask help of him who gives liberally to all men, and upbraids not, and it shall be given us.

Fellowship with God in its own nature softens that hardness of heart, and that moroseness of spirit which we are apt to contract from converse with a perplexing world. It humbles, it elevates and refines the soul; it makes us averse to give offence, and careful to cultivate harmony, and promote peace among our fellow creatures. *He who lives near to God will be unwilling to contend about trifles*; he will be disposed to live peaceably with all men. He will be, in a great measure, exempted from that continual irritation which imaginary injuries raise in suspicious minds; and that God who knows the frailties of the human heart, and hears the prayer of the humble, works in him that which is well-pleasing in his sight. If any man lacks the meekness of wisdom, let him ask it of God. Immediate prayer to God, when provocations occur, are of special service to cool and calm the mind, and prevent the out-breakings of anger to our fellow-creatures. When David's heart was hot within him, and the fire burned in his bosom, the first words he uttered were those of fervent prayer: Lord make me to know my end, and the measure of my days!

**17. Let us nourish kindness and Christian cheerfulness.** Let us endeavor to shake off that sullenness which makes us so uneasy to ourselves, and to all who are near us. Pythagoras quelled the perturbations of his mind by the use of his harp; and David's music calmed the distraction of Saul, and banished the evil spirit from him. Anger, fretfulness, and peevishness prey upon the tender fibers of

our frame, and injure our health. Why should we delight to punish ourselves because some one has done us an injury, or is supposed to have treated us wrongly?

The man who is of a sour, morose, malevolent temper—looks only on the defects and imperfections of his neighbors. He is ignorant of the art of combining their weaknesses with their virtues, and of rendering the imperfections of others supportable, by a just and humiliating reflection on his own sins. Such a one exclaims against society, because due attention is not paid to his wicked heart. He tells you that there is very little in human society that is desirable. We own this is too true; it would however be incomparably less desirable, if all men were of this sour and unkind disposition. A society composed of people of such a cast, would bear a striking resemblance to the infernal regions!

**18. Let us avoid the company of angry and furious men.** We learn the manners, and drink into the spirit of those with whom we are conversant. Like the chameleon, we take a tincture from that which is near us. The wise man's advice is therefore beneficial, "Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered—or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared." Familiarity with drunkards endangers our sobriety. Familiarity with the lewd, endangers our chastity. Familiarity with the proud, endangers our humility. Familiarity with the angry, endangers our meekness and gentleness. Let the meek and lowly be our chosen companions. The wolf and the lion are not fit companions for the lamb. Let the quiet of the land be the men of our council, that we may observe in them the excellency of meekness, learn their ways, and copy after their example. We shall find from them that none live so happy as those who have the government of their passions. We shall learn that none are so amiable as those who have the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. The peevish and weak-minded take offence at trifles, and often make their own jealousies a sufficient ground for their indignation; let us withdraw from them.

**19. Let us labor to have our hearts continually affected with a sense of the love and kindness of God towards us.** If we are Christians indeed, we shall often be saying within ourselves, "What kind of love has the Father bestowed on us! How great, how free, how undeserved! He gave his Son to be a sacrifice for our sins, that we might be reconciled to him; and shall we be unwilling to be reconciled to an offending brother? He pardons our blackest crimes, our numerous and enormous transgressions; and shall we be full of anger and resentment against a brother for some petty offence? And an offence too, of one with whom we hope to dwell in the regions of peace and felicity forever?"

He tells us that if we forgive not such a brother, he will not forgive us; and can we still be implacable? He gives us the spirit of peace and love to dwell in our hearts; and shall we be deaf to his gracious injunctions? Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. *The love of Christ is the sweetest and happiest constraint we can possibly be under, the kindest and most efficacious incentive to love and good works.*

Dr. Cheyne, who has done honor to his profession as a physician, has observed that love to God, as it is the sovereign remedy of all miseries, so in particular it prevents the bodily disorders which the passions introduce, by keeping the passions themselves within due bounds. And by the unspeakable joy, and perfectly calm serenity and tranquility it gives the mind, becomes the most powerful of all the means of health and long life.

The object of this love is infinitely perfect. If we are properly affected with his love, so as to be engaged to love him in a supreme degree—then anger, hatred, and malice will be suppressed. Love is the noblest, and most joyful affection of the mind. *Our joy and*

*happiness will always rise in proportion to our love to Him in whose presence is fullness of joy.* Placing our supreme love on him, and preferring his favor above all—will render us serene, calm, and pleased; and as such, most effectually subdue our angry passions.

Let us be firmly persuaded then that the enjoyment of inward tranquilities and a sense of the divine favor, form the chief happiness of our rational nature. It is for lack of adverting to this, that our passions are thrown into tumult by outward occurrences.

Where we expect too much from others, we are sure to meet with disappointment; and disappointment involves us in vexation. All immoderate attachments to creatures are to be considered and avoided as acts of idolatry; but a small degree of regard should be entertained for those objects, which, at most, can afford us but a momentary felicity.

*Love to God is the foundation of all holiness.* He is supremely lovely, and should be supremely loved by us. His favor is life, and ought to be preferred to every other enjoyment.

Our hearts should adopt the language of the pious psalmist, "It is good for me to draw near to God. Whom have I in Heaven but you; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you!" Then will our bosoms glow with the warm flames of kind benevolence. Our souls will be absorbed in tender sympathy with the distressed; we shall feel a brother's woe, and hasten to his relief; we shall bear with his infirmities, and cover them with the mantle of charity.

The pleasure which affects a human mind with the most lively and transporting touches, and which has the happiest influence over all his passions, is what arises from the favor of the Most High, and the prospect of being rewarded at length with a happiness large as our desires, and lasting as our immortal souls. This is a perpetual spring of cheerfulness and gladness in the mind. It softens the asperities of our tempers, and clothes us with the meekness and gentleness of

Christ. It lessens the calamities, and doubles the joys of life. Without this, the highest state of worldly advancement is but vanity and vexation; and with it, the lowest condition is a paradise.

Where this happy state of mind prevails, the rest of the soul is undisturbed; its comforts are not plundered, its government is not disordered; the laws of reason and religion bear the sway, and communion with God and his saints is enjoyed.

In such a man, there is the joint concurrence of all the affections to the peace and quiet of the soul, every one exerting itself in its own order for the good of the whole. The kingdom of God there prevails, which is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

**20. Let us set before us, and as much as possible keep in sight—the shortness of human life, and the certain approach of death, judgment and the eternal world.** What avails this turmoil of angry passion, this irritability and petulance about things which will presently come to an end? If eternity lies open to view, with all its solemn concerns—then what can appear so considerable in present occurrences as to agitate our passions and discompose our minds? Shall we, instead of preparing for a higher existence, absurdly waste the few moments allotted us here, in contending about trifles? Eternity, eternity is at hand!

Let us not add the harm's and miseries of strife and contention, to the troubles of the present hour. Let us study to smooth the rugged path by meekness and gentleness, as much as in us lies, living peaceably with all men. Let us study to be quiet, and finish what remains of life in peace and love.

When we are disposed to be angry with a fellow-creature, let us remember, that we know not but he and ourselves too may be summoned to appear before the judgment seat of Christ within the

present hour. This night our souls may be required of us. Were we sure that this would be the case, our angry spirits would be cooled, and other concerns would engage our thoughts. And since every moment's existence here is uncertain to us, why should we nourish any disposition which is unsuitable for a dying man? Let not the sun go down upon your anger.

**21. Let us keep in view the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.** It was the design of God to set his Son before us as *the model of Christian virtue*. I am far from asserting that this was the only, or the chief errand on which he was sent into our world. Jesus himself tells us, that he came to give his life a ransom for many, to seek and to save those who are lost, and to lay down his life for the sheep. But a subordinate end of his mission, was to give a living representation of those dispositions, graces, and virtues for our imitation, which are . . .

pleasing to God,  
profitable to us,  
ornamental to our character, and  
edifying to those with whom we have to do.

We are directed to imitate inferior examples, so far as they are good. A cloud of witnesses is set before us, to animate us in the Christian race. We are to be followers of those who through faith and patience now inherit the promises. God has not only shown us our duty in his laws and commands, but he has made known his will to us in the more striking, the more engaging way of *living examples*.

The life of Jesus is particularly designed for our imitation; we have a fair transcript of the law in his amiable disposition and conduct. A minute account is given us of his whole behavior by the four evangelists, that in the mouth of so many witnesses every word might be established. His cheerful obedience to his divine Father and regard for his glory; his zeal against sin, his love to mankind, his patience, his meekness, and lowliness of heart—all shone with such splendor as may justly engage us at once to learn and love the way of

holiness. Our Lord himself took care to lead his disciples to consider him as their pattern. He tells them that he who would claim relation to him, or interest in him, must follow him; that they who would find rest in him, must learn of him; and that they must love one another, as he has loved them. Hence, *our abiding in him is to be proved by our walking as he walked.*

We readily and naturally imbibe the spirit of an intimate friend, and run into a similitude of mind and manners with him. We say of Jesus, "This is my Friend," and he condescends to call us his friends. A relation so intimate and endearing should engage us to follow his example. We profess to be his disciples; we call him Master, and Lord; and as such, it is highly reasonable that we should imitate him.

The several sects of philosophers among the heathens were influenced by the *practice* of their leaders and founders, as well as by their *precepts*; they were censured or applauded as they degenerated from the virtues of their masters, or copied after them.

"You call me Master and Lord," says our gracious Redeemer, "and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you!" His doctrine and practice were in perfect unison; we should therefore regard him and follow him in both.

We hope to be like him hereafter; he is the *model* of our final happiness. If we are now in reality the sons of God, the heirs of promise—then we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. If we take delight in the prospect of future conformity to him, we certainly should be aspiring after it now; we should be pressing towards the mark. Every man who has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure. *In vain do we flatter ourselves with the hope of being with Jesus hereafter, if we are not like him here.* Let us study his example, as it is drawn in the gospel history, with care and attention. No part of scripture is more

proper for our search and meditation, than that which gives us the picture of the disposition and life of our divine Savior. Let us never allow ourselves to rest contented without a real and growing conformity to him. The more we contemplate his lovely example, the more we shall be charmed with it. And while we steadfastly behold the glory of the Lord in the looking-glass of the gospel, the more we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the agency and operation of the Spirit of the Lord. Our rough, morose and angry dispositions shall be subdued, and we shall be more and more assimilated to the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

The divine Redeemer always preferred truth and obedience to his Father, to the pleasing of men. Yet, as far as was consistent with his Father's will, he constantly showed a strong disposition to prevent angry contentions. Instead of offering injury to any, he went about doing good to all. It was foretold of him in prophecy, that he should not strive nor cry out, neither should any man hear his voice in the streets. He acted correspondent to this prediction, pursuing the great design upon which he came into the world, without noise or contention, disturbance or tumult. He checked the first appearances of strife among his followers. He paid tax to the exacters of it, though it was not due from him; this he chose to do, as himself declares, lest they should be offended. When he had miraculously cured a leper, rather than displease the Jewish priests, he ordered the man whom he had healed, to go and carry the gift to them, which God had ordained to be given to the priests, when they were concerned in the cure of the leprosy. But I forbear to enlarge, and shall close this essay with a few brief remarks.

## **Chapter IX.**

### **The Harmfulness of Anger**

**1. We see from what has been said on this subject, sufficient evidence of human depravity.** The history of mankind is in every page demonstrative of our original apostasy from God. Whence is it that men are agitated with such lawless passions as set them at continual war with each other? Whence is it, that not content with the evils which nature has entailed upon them, they exert all their talents for multiplying and speeding the means of perdition to one another? Whence is it that we see half the world employed in pushing the other half from the verge of existence? Whence is it that even in their religious contests, such wrathful and malevolent passions reign among men as are disgraceful to humanity?

The cause of all this disorder is, alas, but too evident. We are by nature children of wrath! We are naturally the subjects of enmity to God and his law. This is evident from the confessions and complaints of those who have the most just and truest acquaintance with their own hearts. The sacred scriptures abound with the groans and cries of those who have felt themselves infected with the loathsome disease. "Behold I am vile!" says holy Job. "You desire truth in the inward parts," says David, the man after God's own heart; but "behold I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me!" Nay, it is the acknowledgment of holy men in general: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags." "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

This depravity is TOTAL and entire, diffusing itself through all the powers of the soul. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.

This depravity is UNIVERSAL; involving all nations, both Jews and Gentiles. It involves all ranks; the high and the low, the rich and the poor. Whatever difference there may be as to birth or country, blood or baseness, education, place or office—all flesh have corrupted their way. What nation, what tribe, what kindred, what family, what

people or language can be produced, before or after the flood, under the law or under the gospel—who have escaped the direful infection? Happy is the man who could make the pleasing discovery.

This depravity is likewise CONSTANT. Blindness in the understanding, impotence in the will, disorder in the affections—are not visitants, but inhabitants! They are interwoven in our whole constitution. This fatal distemper is more deeply rooted than the Ethiopian's sooty complexion, or the leopard's spots. Hence no ordinary means will take effect for the removal of it. The most awakening threats and thundering menaces, will not rouse us from our lethargy. The *heart* is stony, the *neck* is an iron sinew, and the *brow* is brass. The most pathetic entreaties and moving expostulations, cannot entice the mind to close in with that which is absolutely necessary to its own solid peace and final happiness. Divine power alone can make the sinner willing.

**2. Our natural depravity strongly bespeaks the necessity of our renewal by grace.** We must have a new and a better life than that which we drew with our first birth. The stream will not rise higher than the fountain. Human nature can produce no more than that which is natural. If in our first birth we are children of wrath, what but being born from above can make us the children of God? I know this remark will be deemed by some the cant of enthusiasm, but should the fear of incurring such a censure impose silence upon me, I would think myself unworthy of the Christian name, and much more unworthy to sustain the sacred character of a minister of that Jesus, who has taught us all, that unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Unless a new heart is given to us, and a new spirit put within us, we shall ever be strangers to true Christian meekness.

The apostle Paul carefully informs us that meekness is a fruit of the Spirit. The pruning of the branches is not sufficient; the tree itself must be made good. An outward reformation is not enough; we must be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Neither circumcision avails

anything, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature. Grapes will not grow upon thorn bushes, nor figs upon thistles. The ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit, which are in the sight of God of great price, are only found in him who is created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

To deliver us from the guilt, pollution, and misery of our sinful state, was the end of our blessed Redeemer's coming into this world. He gave himself for our sins; he submitted to a state of poverty and baseness, to reproach and shame, to incessant labor and toil; he yielded and delivered himself up, as a willing victim, into the hands of avenging power, and was stricken, smitten and afflicted by God, wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He was exceeding sorrowful, and very heavy; his heart melted like wax; he was in an agony, and sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground; he gave himself up into the hands of cruel and wicked men, and underwent the bitter pains and horrors of an accursed death. And all this, that he might make reconciliation for our iniquity, give himself as an atoning sacrifice for our offences, and procure the full remission of them all. Without shedding of blood there was no remission of sin; but we have redemption through the blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

With his stripes we are healed, says the evangelical prophet. He did not die for our sins—that we should live in them, and under the power of them; but that he might free us from their tyranny, and release us from their captivity; that henceforth we should not serve sin. He was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, reduce us to subjection to himself, reign in our hearts by his spirit and grace, maintaining his throne there in righteousness, peace, and joy.

On this subject, reader, may your thoughts delightfully expand! Here is the remedy for all the evils which sin has introduced! Here is the destruction of sin itself, the cause, the direful, the fatal cause of all our woe! Here is the sovereign cure for the disorders of your mind!

Here is the precious balm for a wounded conscience. This, this is all our salvation, and should be all our desire.

"Blessed Jesus, may we look to you and be healed of all our maladies! We have been foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. May we, as the happy consequence of your atoning sacrifice, be saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit! Thus shall our angry passions, on account of which we are compared to lions and tigers, wolves and bears—be all brought into subjection and obedience to you! The lion shall become a lamb, the churl shall become liberal, and the fierce and furious shall be clothed with gentleness. Conquer by the omnipotence of your grace, our perverse affections, and reign in us, that we may conquer and reign with you. Let our rebellious hearts hear your voice, tremble and obey!"

How astonishing it is that the wonders of saving love should so little engage the attention of mankind. The salvation of a lost world has employed the thoughts and counsels of Jehovah from everlasting. At how many times, in how many different ways, did He speak of this subject unto the fathers? How many embassies of angels did He send to give intimation of it? How were all the designs of the Most High in the course of his adorable providence, and the execution of them, rendered subservient to this one glorious purpose, which rises superior to, and absorbs all the rest—the plan of salvation by a Redeemer! As if the great God had been carrying on no design from the beginning but one, a design of love to ruined men; that one, which of all others, these ungrateful creatures treat with the greatest slight, indifference and neglect.

Shall that which thus occupied the Eternal Mind; which has been declared to man by so many signs in Heaven above, and on earth beneath, by the tongues of so many prophets, by so many oracles; to announce which angels and archangels have descended from their thrones; and to accomplish which, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, preached unto the Gentiles, received up into

glory—shall it be announced, unfolded, and executed in vain? Shall men make light of it all, and treat it as a cunningly devised fable? Shall they still regard it as a worthless thing? Reader, whatever you approve or reject in these pages— neglect not this great salvation. But renouncing your sins, and embracing the messages of life and peace, enter cordially into the views of God your Maker and Redeemer, and earnestly pursue the same object with him, the salvation of the soul!

Should you be disposed to say, "What connection has this with your subject?" I answer, a very intimate connection. Were I to trace out the *disease* without once hinting at the *remedy*, I would acquit myself but poorly in this business. Like a surgeon who probes a wound, but leaves it open and bleeding, without the necessary dressings. The whole, indeed, need not a physician, but those who are sick.

**3. What shall we think of those mighty "heroes" who have been so unjustly celebrated in every age for their prowess and valor?** Were not many of them the oppressors and butchers of mankind? And yet poets, painters, sculptors, statuaries, and historians have united their efforts to make them famous. Themistocles spoke the language of sober reason, when, being asked whom he considered as the greatest of heroes, he answered, "Not him who conquers, but him who saves. Not the man who ruins, but the man who erects; who of a village can make a city, or turn a despicable people into a great nation." Yet the serene acts of benevolence, the small still voice of goodness are neither accompanied by noise nor ostentation. It is uproar and tumult, the downfall of sacked cities, the shrieks of ravished matrons, and the groans of dying nations—that fill the trumpet of fame, and gain the plaudit of the world. Men of cruelty and blood, of ambition and power, find distinction and glory very easy to be attained in this way; as it is indisputably more easy . . .

to destroy, rather than to build,  
to give death, rather than to give life,

to pull down, rather than to build up,  
to bring devastation and misery, rather than plenty, peace and prosperity upon earth. But let us not ascribe honor and acclamation to deeds which call loudly for infamy and the gibbet.

Henry the fourth of France, just before a battle, in which he obtained an entire victory, devoutly poured out his soul in prayer to the God of armies, to the following purpose: Oh Lord Almighty, who sees through the thickest veil and closest disguise, who views the bottom of my heart, and the deepest designs of my enemies; who has in your hands, as well as before your eyes, all the events which concern human life. If you know that my reign will promote your glory, and the safety of your people; if you know that I have no other ambition in my soul, but to advance the honor of your holy name, and the good of this state—then favor, oh great God, the justice of my cause, and reduce all the rebels to acknowledge him whom your sacred decrees, and the order of a lawful succession, have made their sovereign. But if your good providence has ordered it otherwise, and you see that I should prove one of those kings whom you give in your anger—then take from me, oh merciful God, my life and my crown; make me this day a sacrifice to your will; let my death end the calamities of France; and let my blood be the last that is spilt in this quarrel!"

**4. Whatever be our different conceptions as to matters of speculation, let us be very assiduous to cultivate a Christian temperament.** Let us be careful to give evidence of a ready and hearty submission to the word of God, and a cheerful resignation to his providence.

Let us be modest, humble, and lowly in our behavior towards men, cautious of giving offence, and not hasty to take offence at others. Let us learn to be calm under real provocations, and always in readiness to be reconciled when the offence is acknowledged. In all our religious connections and concerns especially, let us ever wear the garment of humility, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; this will be more to the honor of our divine Savior, more to the credit

of our holy religion, than the most exact orthodoxy in doubtful matters without it.

We may err in lesser concerns, and yet be safe as to our final state; but if we are destitute, wholly destitute of a true Christian temperament, the mind that was in Christ Jesus, we are in the gall of bitterness, in the bond of iniquity. It matters not by what name we choose to be distinguished, or to what sect of Christians we professedly adhere; if pride, anger, wrath, and malice reign in our hearts, and govern our lives, all our religion is hypocrisy. If any man seems to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, betrays the perverseness and malignity of his disposition—then that man's religion is vain. Let no man deceive himself.

**5. What care is necessary that the tempers of children are not ruined by an improper upbringing.** The severity of a tyrannical parent may be productive of much harm to his tender charge. After having devoted many years of life to the important task of cultivating youthful minds, I hope I may be allowed to speak what I have learned by experience. Children may be induced to do anything by kindness; but severity would rouse and harden them into opposition. To be perpetually chiding them, or frequently beating or scourging them, would have a natural tendency to stir up their resentment against us, and lead them to consider us as their greatest enemies.

The infliction of chastisement requires great prudence, and a happy command of temper. That it may produce the desired effect, it should at least appear to flow from a just displeasure at the offence committed; but for a parent not to be able to command his passion, would be to set a bad example before children. It would lessen his authority, by showing his weakness before them; for it is great weakness in an instructor to be often carried away by the impulse of anger.

Few people meet with more frequent provocations than those who have a number of children to manage and govern. If such do not check the risings of anger, they will find it grow upon them, and become habitual; this would make their own lives very unhappy, and lead them to sudden acts of cruelty and barbarity, which they might immediately repent of, but in vain. Slight expressions of displeasure or approbation, will produce happy effects on children. A frowning look, or a sharp word will succeed better with such as a corrective, than many stripes with others. Praise and shame will frequently be found sufficient to answer the parent's purpose; but vice and immorality, idleness and harm will, at times, require the rod of correction. It would be awful to allow children to walk in the way of their own heart. The fertile soil must not lie uncultivated, and over run with weeds.

A *severity* is ever to be condemned, so an excess of *lenity* is not less pernicious. It is an ancient observation, and which has received the sanction of experience in every age: He who spares his rod, that is, when absolutely necessary, hates his son; but he who loves him chastens him early. When lenity and softness are ill-judged and excessive, they are in effect cruelty. "Impunity (says Cicero) is the greatest enticement to the commission of offences." A wiser than he has told us, that a child left to himself, brings his mother to shame.

I lately heard of a certain youth, of a hot, malignant, fiery disposition, much addicted to quarreling with his companions when at school; and who being always accustomed to be treated with indulgence, grew up to such a degree of self-will, that on meeting with some opposition from his parent, in an affair he had in hand when grown up to years of maturity, he could not bear to be controlled, but took a loaded pistol, and shot himself dead.

Experience shows that the tempers of children may be spoiled, either by an excess of lenity, or of severity. The golden mean between the two extremes is the safest path.

*Severity* may break the spirits, Do not provoke your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

*Lenity* on the other hand is amiable; the motives to it are noble and much may be said in its praise; and the advocate for it will find an attentive audience. Yet lenity carried to an undue degree, frequently involves the object of it in misery and perdition! Human nature is, at every stage of life, prone to evil; and particularly so at a time, when, to inherent depravity are added, weakness of understanding, and lack of thought and experience. Proper methods must be devised of influencing the hopes and fears of children and these methods must be accommodated to their different dispositions. Wisdom from God is needed to know and perform the proper balance.

**6. Let *aged* people be particularly on their guard against angry, fretful, and irritable dispositions.** The many disappointments we have met with through life, the coldness and neglect with which we begin to be treated, together with the load of infirmities incident to those who are advanced in years—have a tendency to sour our tempers, and make us uneasy to ourselves and those about us. Many of our old friends are gone down to the grave before us; and those who survive, perhaps, have almost forgotten us. Some of our children are taken away by death, others removed to a distance from us; or, which is still more afflictive, there may be others of them who prove ungrateful and wayward.

In such circumstances we stand in need of great grace to enable us to possess our souls in patience, and to keep us serene, gentle, and composed. We are apt to be too soon thrown out of humor, to assume an angry look, and to utter bitter words.

But let us remember, that we stand in need of help and assistance; we should, therefore, for our own sakes, avoid everything that would disgust and drive away our friends, from whom we may still hope for some comfort.

Let us especially watch against a prideful, haughty overbearing temper; a fretful, uneasy, discontented spirit. Let us not be always complaining of slights and neglects. Let us not be continually finding fault with those in younger life; for these are the people chiefly from whom we may expect consolation. It must be a very extraordinary degree of piety and good nature, that will incline people to help those who are always uneasy, cross, peevish and irritable.

If we drive away those who could help us, then we may stretch out our hands in vain, and hope for friendly assistance and sympathy without success. Nay, we may thank ourselves for it—if we are deserted, overlooked, and neglected still more and more, and if the world appears desirous to be rid of us.

But nobler motives than these should excite us to meekness and patience; the hopes, prospects and comforts of Christianity should calm our spirits, and sooth our hearts to rest. All true Christians know, that the gospel and the religion of Jesus afford a rich profusion of solid peace and consolation, amidst the sorrows, disappointments, and afflictions attendant on our pilgrimage state. Instead of repining at any humiliating circumstances that may be allotted to us in our declining years, let us, my aged and honored friends, draw water out of the wells of salvation. By patience and comfort of the scriptures, let us embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. This, if anything, will smooth our ruffled tempers, relieve our fatigued spirits, and check our petulant dispositions. This will dissipate the gloom of our solitary years, and support our weary steps in the last stages of our journey. Let the blessed gospel be our constant theme; the dignity of its Author, the gentleness of its injunctions, the nature, extent, and duration of its promises—these, and innumerable other blessings, make the richest provision for rational consolation, and refined joy.

**7. I have already recommended Christian cheerfulness as an antidote against that anger which this essay is humbly intended to suppress and correct.** A celebrated author has

given us his thoughts on this subject with a justness and propriety peculiar to himself. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of presenting a few of his observations to the reader; nothing, I apprehend, can be better adapted to my purpose. I shall not therefore beg my reader's pardon for the liberty I am going to take, because I am very much mistaken, if he will not think the following extracts the most valuable part of my *Essay on Anger*.

Joseph Addison, 1712:

"I have always preferred cheerfulness to mirth; the latter I consider as an act, the former as an habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often raised into the greatest transports of mirth, who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy. On the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such an exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into the depths of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning, which breaks through a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of day-light in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity.

"Men of austere principles look upon mirth as too wanton and dissolute for those in a state of sin, and as filled with a certain triumph and insolence of heart, which is inconsistent with a life every moment liable to the greatest dangers. Writers of this complexion have observed, that the sacred person who was the great pattern of perfection, was never seen to laugh. Cheerfulness of mind is not liable to any of these exceptions; it is of a serious and composed nature; it does not throw the mind into a condition improper for the present state of humanity; and is very conspicuous in the character of those who are looked upon as the greatest philosophers among the heathens, as well as among those who have been deservedly esteemed as saints and holy men among Christians.

"If we consider cheerfulness in three lights, with regard to ourselves, to those we converse with, and to the great Author of our being—it will greatly recommend itself on each of these accounts.

"The man who is possessed of this excellent frame of mind, is not only easy in his thoughts, but a perfect master of all the powers and faculties of the soul; his imagination is clear, and his judgment undisturbed; his disposition is even and unruffled, whether in action or in solitude. He comes with a relish to all those goods which God has provided for him, tastes all the pleasures of the creation which are poured forth about him, and does not feel the full weight of those accidental evils which may befall him.

"If we consider him in relation to the people with whom he converses, it naturally produces love and good will towards him. A cheerful mind is not only disposed to be affable and obliging, but raises the same good disposition in those who come within its influence. A man finds himself pleased, he does not know why, with the cheerfulness of his companion; it is like a sudden sun-shine that awakens a secret delight in the mind without attending to it. The heart rejoices of its own accord, and naturally flows out into friendship and benevolence towards the person who has so kind an effect upon it.

"When I consider this cheerful state of mind in its third relation, I cannot but look upon it as a constant, habitual gratitude to the great Author of nature. An inward cheerfulness is an implicit praise and thanksgiving to providence, under its dispensations. It is a kind of acquiescence in the state wherein we are placed, and a secret approbation of the divine will in his conduct towards men.

"There are but two things, which, in my opinion, can reasonably deprive us of this cheerfulness of heart. The first of these is the sense of guilt. A man who lives in a state of vice and impenitence, can have no title to that evenness and tranquility of mind, which is the health of the soul. Cheerfulness in a wicked man deserves a harder name than language can furnish us with, and is many degrees beyond what we commonly call folly and madness.

"Atheism, by which I mean a disbelief of the Supreme Being, and consequently of a future state, under whatever title it shelters itself, may likewise very reasonably deprive a man of this cheerfulness of temper. There is something so particularly gloomy and offensive to human nature in the prospect of non-existence, that I cannot but wonder, with many excellent writers, how it is possible for a man to outlive the expectation of it.

"For my own part, I think the being of a God so little to be doubted, that it is almost the only truth we are sure of. We see the existence of God in every object, in every occurrence, and in every thought. If we look into the character of this tribe of infidels, we generally find they are made up of pride and sin; it is indeed no wonder that men, who are uneasy to themselves, should be so to the rest of the world. The vicious man and atheist have therefore no pretense to cheerfulness, and would act very unreasonably should they endeavor at it.

"After having mentioned these two great principles which are destructive of cheerfulness in their own nature, as well as in right reason, I cannot think of any other that ought to banish this happy disposition from a virtuous mind. Pain and sickness, shame and reproach, poverty and old age, nay death itself, considering the shortness of their duration, and the advantage we may reap from them—do not deserve the name of evils. The tossing of a tempest does not discompose him who is sure it will bring him to his home harbor. The consideration of that Being on whom we have our dependence, and in whom we see everything that we can imagine as great, glorious or amiable—is a source of cheerfulness to a good mind. We find ourselves everywhere upheld by his goodness, and surrounded with an immensity of love and mercy. We depend upon a Being, whose power qualifies him to make us happy by an infinity of means, whose goodness and truth engage him to make those happy who desire it of him, and whose unchangeableness will secure us in this happiness to all eternity.

"Such considerations which every person should perpetually cherish in his thoughts, will banish from us all that secret heaviness of heart, which unthinking men are subject to, when they lie under no real affliction; all that anguish which we may feel from any evil that actually oppresses us.

"I may likewise add that those little cracklings of mirth and folly that are more apt to betray virtue than support it; and establish in us such an even and cheerful temper, as makes us pleasing to ourselves, to those with whom we converse, and to him whom we are made to please."

May this happy disposition be cultivated by us, and this advantage among many others will be sure to follow—we shall not be soon angry.

I shall now put an end to this essay, humbly submitting it to the candor of the public. I wish it may in any degree answer the expectations of those, who have been so kind as to favor its publication with their encouragement.

May the God of love and peace seal instruction to all our hearts, and render this feeble effort to promote his glory in the present and everlasting welfare of his creatures, happily conducive to the answering of the desired end! May we, by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and learning of him to be meek and lowly in heart, be formed to a meekness for, and finally by his saving mercy be brought to the possession of, the regions of perfect peace and purity, where friendship, harmony, and love flourish and reign through immortal ages! Amen.

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