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SOBER SINGULARITY

**AN ANTIDOTE AGAINST INFECTION BY THE EXAMPLE OF A MULTITUDE
BEING PRACTICAL MEDITATIONS, ON EXODUS 23:2**

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Or, An Antidote against Infection by the Example of a Multitude,

By Rowland Stedman, M.A.

Being Practical Meditations, On Exod. 23. 2.

Wherein is opened, the Influence of the practice of a Multitude, to draw men to Sin; the special cases, wherein it concerns us to be most cautious; Reasons why we must not follow them; together with the Application of the whole.

And therein, Besides the General improvement of the point, an Instance given of Nineteen practices of the Multitude to be avoided, Seven of their Grand Principles to be rejected: Sundry Particulars concerning Peace, and Unity, and the Sanctification of the Lord's Day, useful for these times.

1 Tim. 5.22. *Be not Partaker of other men's sins. Keep thyself pure.*

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A PREFACE TO THE READER.

As the just measure of the truth of all Theological Assertions, is to be taken from their consonancy to the word of God: So the usefulness and profit of any undertaking of that nature is to be estimated by the seasonableness and subserviency thereof to the grand Designs of the Gospel. In both which respects the following Treatise, however

attended with many imperfections, may for the substance and scope of it, make Appeal to the judgments of such as are really touched with the concerns of Religion; and have their senses exercised to discern wherein it's interest lieth, and how the progress of it is retarded.

The great Intendments of the Gospel, to the propagation and furtherance whereof all particular attempts should be subordinated, are mostly reducible to three heads. The illustration and magnifying of the Grace of God, in the salvation of lost sinners. The Exaltation and advancement of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator of the Covenant of Grace. The vindication and promoting of real holiness and purity, amongst the children of men. And the drift and purport of the Tract ensuing more directly relates to the last of these: To minister help in the following after Godliness, and to remove out of the way the main impediments, that hinder from a hearty closure therewith.

It is a point as clear as the Noon-day, and cannot be denied by such as own the Scriptures, that a vigorous and cordial prosecution of holiness in the greatest strictness and height of it, is of indispensable necessity to the Beatifical vision, and enjoyment of God. Without which, all professions of faith and love to God are but empty names, and counterfeits; indeed, a mere mockery of the Most High. How shall any be induced to believe, that a man doth unfeignedly embrace and love the principles, by which he refuseth to steer his course? Or that such divine truths have a real seat in his affections, which are openly disavowed and contradicted in his conversation. He that will give a solid testimony of his sincere respects to the doctrine of Christianity, must do it by a demeanor answerable thereunto. It is by upright and humble walking as in the sight of God, that Religion must be adorned, that it may attract the hearts of them that are

without: Hereby our profession must be justified, both in the sight of men and to the approbation of our own consciences: And in this way alone, we can comfortably expect to be conducted with safety to the Kingdom of Heaven.

When the nature and excellency of holiness and the fear of the Lord, are considered separately, in themselves, without reflection upon the quality of the persons pressed thereunto, it may seem a needless task, to spend much time, or many words, in defense of it. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations! for unto thee it doth appertain? Jer. 10.7. Who, that has any spark of sound wisdom, would not be found faithful, in the covenant of God? Who, that hath an insight into the beauty of holiness, would not admire and fall in love, with it?

But such is the enmity radicated in men's hearts, against the Lord, and their perverse disputing's against the purity of the ways of God; and their addictedness to conform unto this world; that it is rather a wonder of free grace, that any persons are prevailed upon, to close effectually with the power of Godliness; than that it should be confined within so narrow a compass, as the experience of all ages, too abundantly manifesteth it to be. Besides, it is a matter of no difficult observation, to a thoughtful Christian, who hath his eyes open, and is in the least degree akin to the children of Issachar, that had understanding of the times, what have been the crafty machinations and methods of the Devil, and his adherents, in these late days, to bring the strictness of Religion into contempt, and to make it a reproach; by casting loads of accusations upon the professors thereof: that so Godliness may be wounded through their loins, and the spirits of men deterred, and discouraged from the sedulous pursuance of it. And what if the miscarriages and extravagancies of some who seemed to be eminent for piety, have

ministered too much occasion to them, that lie at the catch, to raise an evil report, and to vent their slanderous reviling's against the truth? Yet it must needs appear to be but a very ridiculous piece of Logic, to argue from the corruption of some, to the condemnation of all. As if all sorts of money were to be rejected in payment, because some pieces are but brass silvered over: especially seeing it is none other, than what the spirit of God hath plainly intimated, that there will be tares mingled with the wheat until the harvest: There will be hypocrites and dissemblers in outward fellowship with the Saints, even unto the end.

However, from hence ariseth a necessity of Pleas, Apologies, and vindications to wipe off the slurs and calumnies, which men of profligate principles and seared consciences are wont to cast on the face of religion: And a like necessity of arguments and provocatives to quicken men to follow after righteousness: and of answers to be returned to the carnal reasonings, whereby they cavil against the truth; and study to evade the convictions that are sometimes wrought upon their spirits.

If the Meditations here commended to thy candid and serious perusal, may contribute assistance to this purpose; that any of the Truths that are according to Godliness may be cleared up; The prejudices and stumbling blocks removed out of the way of salvation; such as are declining may be recalled, and those that are sound in the faith further settled and established; the Author hath attained his end; and let all the glory be ascribed unto God. To whom doth most deservedly appertain, All honor, and praise, love, submission, and service, in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Sober Singularity.

Thou shalt not follow a Multitude, to do evil. Exod. 23. - The former part of the 2d. verse.

SECT. I.

These latter times have been observed to abound, above other ages, with sects and parties, as to the matters of Religion. And if an enquiry be made, who have mostly prevailed to draw disciples after them: It might, not untruly, be answered, these two, Custom and Example. The most numerous Sects are those of the Atheists, and Worldlings; and the greatest Sect-masters in religion are Custom and Example. For the generality of people are not wont to consider, how they ought to walk: but they either follow the old course, wherein they have been educated and trained up; or else conform themselves to the practice of others, and do as the rest of their neighbors do. And the more universal and extensive an example is, the greater commonly is the contagion; and the more forcible influence it hath to lead others along with it. When the most go before us in any course, or practice, we are easily wrought into a compliance with them; and that without any demurrer, or examination of the grounds, and principles, whereupon such a practice is undertaken. And therefore the Lord hath often warned us to take heed of this cheat, that we be not snared by the practice of the multitude. Though the greatest part of the world should turn aside into any way of ungodliness, it will not justify us in saying A confederacy with them: But our work is to keep on in the path of righteousness, though never so many others depart from it: and to hate the evil of sin, though a multitude embrace it. Thou shalt not follow a multitude, to do evil.

Which words have an entire sense in themselves, and hold forth a perfect lesson, or instruction of themselves: and therefore we shall not need to spend time, in searching into the relation which they bear, unto any precedent passages of this book. Only thus much in the general: the Text seemeth to come in, as a word of direction and advice, what course we must take and what circumspection we should use, that we may live up to the Precepts of God, and not be carried away from the observance of his commandments. Why, to this end we must diligently see to it, that we be not swayed and overruled by the example of others, be they never so many. In this and the former chapter we have a solemn promulgation of the divine laws, by which the Lord would have his people to be guided: and the Text is introduced as a serious caution, to warn us to stick close to those laws; though others reject them, and trample them underfoot. Although a multitude forsake them, yet must not we: that will not bear us out in any sin whatsoever. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

That we may open this portion of Divine writ, more clearly and methodically: let us take it asunder into 3 parts. Here is,

1. The end intended: or the design, that's carried on by this counsel: and that is to preserve us from evil. [Thou shalt not do evil] 1. Primarily, it is to preserve us from the evil of sin and transgression.
2. Consequentially to keep us from the evil of affliction and judgment, which is deserved by Sin: and which God is usually provoked to inflict upon sinners. If we would escape the evil of suffering, and sorrow; we must carefully avoid the evil of iniquity, and disobedience. Thou shalt not do evil.

2. The direction prescribed, in order to the attainment of that end. Why, to this purpose you must take heed, that you be not led by the

multitude. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil. [Thou shalt not follow them] It is a comprehensive expression, Thou shalt not be after them. It may reach to these 3. things. 1. Thou shalt not follow them, in point of inclination. Thy heart shall not hanker after their ways: thou shalt not desire to join with them in any wickedness. This is to follow a thing, in the dialect of the Scripture, when the affections are touched with any propension towards it. As the understanding is the eye of the Soul, whereby we discern or see into an object, so the will and affections are the feet of the Soul, whereby it goes out unto it, or follows after it. So that it imports thus much, thou shalt not so much as have any liking, or the least inclination in thy Spirit, to be of their society and fellowship. 2. Thou shalt not follow them, in respect of encouragement, q.d. This shall not embolden thee to sin against God, because thou seest many others to sin against him. What people are afraid to venture upon singly and by themselves; they will be animated unto, by observing others to go before them. But let it not be so, saith the Lord, in the case of Sin; though you see never so many go before you. 3. Thou shalt not follow them, in point of actual concurrence. You must not tread in their steps, if it be a sinful way wherein they travel. You must not take your pattern, from their practice: nor act according to the tenor of their actions, if they be evil. This I take to be principally meant, and the other in reference hereunto. Thus you read of those carnal wretches, They followed the way of Balaam, i.e. Their carriage was correspondent to his carriage; and their hearts went after covetousness, even as his, 2 Pet. 2.15. And it is mentioned of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, that he followed the sins of Jeroboam, that is, he carried on the same carnal interest, and committed the same abominations, This is the second thing to be noted in the Text.

3. We have observable, the manner of the prescribing this rule of direction: how the caution is delivered, as to this matter. And that is,

1. Singularly, or personally, included in the verb.

2. Negatively.

1. The prohibition is laid down singularly, or personally. [Thou] that it might extend to all sorts of people, without exception of any: that everyone of us might take it home to ourselves, and apply it to our own souls: that none might think himself exempted from the obligatory power of this prohibition. As the prophet Malachi: speaks unto the Priests, cap. 2.1. This commandment is for you. The like may I say, in this case, to men of all ranks and qualities. Art thou a master, or governor? This precept is for thee. Art thou a child, or servant? This prohibition reacheth thee. Art thou a Magistrate, or a subject? young, or old? rich, or poor? Jew, or Gentile? whatever thy condition is, thou art included herein. Thou shalt not follow, &c.

2. It is delivered negatively. It is one of those precepts which are usually called negative precepts: That it might be of a binding force as to all times and seasons. Herein is a special difference betwixt affirmative and negative precepts. The affirmative commandments always bind, but not to all times. For instance, Hear the word: Search the Scriptures: Give alms of thy Goods. These, and such like injunctions, always bind, but not to all times and seasons, i.e. I am not obliged to be every moment of my life, in the actual discharge of those duties. But negative precepts bind universally and unlimitedly, to all times and seasons, ex. gr. Lye not one to another. Thou shalt not steal. There is no time of a man's life, wherein these may be done. And such a precept is this of not complying with the multitude. Sinners are apt to think, they must strictly walk up to such rules, whilst they may be observed with safety: But in perilous times they must be excused; when it may cost them their livelihoods, or their lives, if they step out of the common road. Nay, but you must never

take the liberty to break the bounds of this law: you must see to it that, at no time, you say a confederacy with the multitude, in sin.

The Text being thus explained, will afford us this practical lesson.

DOCT. That in order to our keeping close to the commandments of the Lord, and for the right ordering our conversations in the presence of the Lord; we must take heed to ourselves, that at no time whatsoever we follow a multitude to do evil.

We must not sin against God, though we see never so many go on in sin before our faces. We must stick fast to God's testimonies, and do only what is acceptable in his sight, though we have very few to bear us company: though we are forced to go alone in the ways of holiness, Hos. 4.15. Though thou Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend. Israel was the greatest body of the people; it contained ten of the Tribes, whereas the kingdom of Judah consisted but of two. Why but, saith the Lord, though they are a very numerous company, that have fallen off to Idolatry, and yourselves are but an handful in comparison; yet you must not give ground, because of their multitude: though you have the 10. Tribes to lead you the way in iniquity, yet you must not be led by their example. This was the doctrine in which Isaiah was instructed with a mighty hand; intimating that it is a difficult point to be learnt, and a matter of great concernment: If we will be the servants of God in truth, we must learn this Lesson, Isa. 8.11, 12. For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me, that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, say ye not a confederacy to all them, to whom this people shall say, a confederacy: neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid; q. d. Though the whole people combine together to do wickedness, cast not in thy lot amongst them: keep thyself far from their combination. Dare not to tread in their steps, nor join in their

association, be they never so numerous a company: keep thyself free from their confederacy, and fear the Name of the Lord.

For the handling of this Point, as a Preservative against infection by the practice of the multitude, I shall lightly pass over four Heads of enquiry in the doctrinal part of our discourse; and then close up all, with a practical improvement of the whole.

1. What are we to understand by the doing of evil? which is the matter to be avoided.
2. What usual influence hath the practice of a multitude, to incline a man or woman to the doing of evil?
3. In what cases especially doth it concern us to be most cautious, upon this account, that we be not drawn to evil by the example of a multitude?
4. What are the principal reasons, that may be produced for the confirmation of this point; and pressed upon our hearts, to preserve us from seduction by the example of a multitude?

SECT. II.

QU. 1. To begin with the first of these. What are we to understand by the doing of evil? which is the matter to be avoided. Thon shalt not do evil.

ANS. In answer to this enquiry, I shall speak very briefly; as being a matter that needs not any large explication. All that I have to deliver under this Head, shall be gathered into five plain Conclusions.

CONCL. 1. This caution, that is laid down here against the doing of evil (for the extent of it, how far it reacheth) may be well taken in the greatest latitude, and comprehensiveness of the expression: as it sets against all sorts, and kinds, and qualities of sin whatsoever. Whether they are greater, or lesser; sins of omission, or commission; against the first table of the Law, or the second: Whether they are sinful contrivances of the mind, or inordinate passions working in the heart and spirit; whether it be rotten communication that proceedeth out of the mouth, or any manner of disorderliness in the outward behavior, and carriage.

A man's actions or doings, in a restrained sense, are sometimes contradistinguished, and opposed to his words, and thoughts, and affections, Col. 3.17. In word, or deed. Jam. 2.12. So speak ye, and so do. But in this place you may take it without any limitation, or restriction: for it is delivered indefinitely, and without exception. It may possibly have a special reference to the sin of bearing false witness, (as some think) which is mentioned immediately before the Text; or to the sin of wresting judgment (according to the apprehensions of others) being the sin which is condemned in the words following the Text: But it ought not to be confined to either. As, where the holy Ghost hath not distinguished, we must not distinguish: so where the Spirit of God hath not set restrictions and limits, we must not restrain. Besides, The original word is in the plural. Thou shalt not follow a multitude <H&G>, ad mala, to evils, i.e., not to any sort of evil. So that the meaning may be this. Thou shalt not join with a multitude, in their plots and contrivances against the ways of God. Thou shalt not talk vainly, and frothily, or in any wicked manner, as they speak. You must not act in anything after the pattern and similitude of their sinful actions: But in everything keep yourselves pure, and unspotted, from the taint of their abominations.

CONCL. 2. This doing of evil (for the nature of it, wherein it consists) is a breaking of the Law of God, or walking contrary to the dictates of his revealed will, which he hath given as the rule for the guidance of our steps. It is the neglecting of anything, which God hath enjoined to be performed; or the doing of that which he hath forbidden to be done. Herein lies the ratio formalis, or the nature of sin, that it is a want of conformity to the Law of God, or a transgression of it, 1 Joh. 3.4. So that if you would examine yourselves, in order to repentance, what evils you have done; you must compare your actions with the Law of God, and bring your lives and conversations unto the word of the Lord, Psal. 119.59. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies. So in relation to the time to come; if you would be directed for the avoiding of evil, you must be well versed in the Law of God, and get a through insight into the word of God, Psal. 119.9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. Sin is sometimes called, A going astray, and a turning aside, Isa. 53.6. All we like sheep have gone astray, Psal. 14.3. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy. The word of the Lord is compared to the way, wherein a Believer is to travel, that he may arrive at the land of promise: Now the doing of evil is nothing but a declension from that path, or a stepping aside out of the way, Deut. 5.32. You shall observe to do therefore, as the Lord your God commandeth you: you shall not turn aside to the right hand, or to the left.

CONCL. 3. For the reason of the name and appellation. The committing of sin, or breaking the Law of God, is called the doing of evil: because of the destructiveness and malignity that is in sin, and the sad and fearful consequences that attend thereupon.

It is the most poisonous and venomous thing in the world: the most mischievous thing under the Sun. It is the great evil; the most signal

evil. Sinners may have low thoughts, and slight apprehensions of it: They are apt to ask, when they are charged with some kinds of ungodliness, What hurt is there in them? But in the conclusion they will be found to be the principal evils. When God doth awaken the conscience, or begin to take the work of judgment into his hands, sinners shall be forced to acknowledge it to be so, Jer. 44.4. Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. And v. 7. Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls? Neh. 13.17. What evil thing is this that ye do, & profane the Sabbath day? Men imagine it is for their ease, and pleasure, and sometimes for their profit and good to break the Sabbath, and to borrow now and then a point of conscience: But in the upshot you will find it to be for your hurt and ruin. We reckon poverty in the estate, and sickness of body, and outward disasters and calamities, to be the main evils: But, alas, they are nothing, if laid in the balance with sin. That is the great evil in a fivefold respect.

1. It is sin which hinders us in the enjoyment of God, which is the chiefest good: that doth put an obstacle in the way of the participation of his favor, and the light of his countenance, which is better than life itself, Isa. 59.1, 2. Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God: and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. 'It is that which is a contempt of the divine Majesty, who is an infinite and incomprehensible Being. It is that which makes Jehovah to become our adversary, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lord's: in whose hands our breath, and our days, and all our comforts are. For Sirs, God doth not abhor and cast off any of the children of men, because they are poor or friendless, or low in the world; but because they are workers of iniquity. Therefore his wrath is kindled against them, and they suffer evil from him, because they do evil against him, Deut. 32.29.

2. It is sin which murders and destroyeth the soul: which is the principal part of man, and ought chiefly to be regarded by him. So Job calleth it, Job 30.15. Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul [H&G, my principal one] as the wind. In comparison of the soul all the riches of the earth are as nothing, Mark 8.36, 37. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Now, The more excellent the subject is upon which an evil falls, the greater is the evil that falleth upon it. And sin is that which is a plague to the soul, and bringeth desolation upon the soul: and murders the immortal part, which all the men on earth are not able to kill, Prov. 8.36. He that sinneth against me [they are the words of Christ, the infinite wisdom of God] wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death.

3. It is sin which maketh persons miserable forever: that renders them everlastingly wretched, without cessation or end: that doth cast them into that pit, from whence there is no redemption. Other evils have their period, and determinate time of continuance; and then they are removed from us, or we shall be removed from them. But now sin doth expose a man to eternal vengeance. The guilt of the least transgression, if laid upon the sinner, would sink him unavoidably into the bottomless pit of destruction, from whence there is no deliverance. You read of it as the just guerdon and punishment of ignorance; which many account so small a sin, that they hope thereby to excuse all their other impieties, 2 Thes. 1.8, 9. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels in flaming Fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

4. To commit sin is to do evil; For that is the fountain evil: the original and well-spring of all other evils whatsoever. It is the evil of transgression, that brings affliction upon men's persons, and a curse into their families and estates, and puts vanity and vexation into their creature-comforts, and accommodations. It is sin that lets in wars and commotions into kingdoms, and burns up Towns and Cities; and makes a Land desolate, by turning a fruitful place into barrenness. 'It is sin that bringeth diseases upon the body, and filleth the spirit with bitterness, and puts fear, and horror, and astonishment into the heart: that compasseth a person about with terrors on every side, and at last carrieth him to the King of terrors, Rom. 5.12. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. What is the source of all that wretchedness and misery, that followeth the children of men continually at the heels? See the answer returned by the Lord himself, Jer. 13.22. And if thou say in thy heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare. Read Job 20. from v. 12. to the end.

5. To commit wickedness, is to do evil: For sin, in a right sense, is the only evil, and nothing but evil. All other things are no further evil, than they are contempered with sin, and proceed from thence, or have a tendency thereto. The sorest afflictions and calamities have something of good in them: As they come from the Lord, and are the operation of his hands; as they are demonstrations of his being, and righteousness; and means for the vindication of his holiness. For the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth. But iniquity and transgression is purely evil, nothing but evil, and that which makes other things to be evil. For the sting of death is sin, 1 Cor. 15.56. The bitterness of sickness is from sin: and the poison of all corrections and distresses is from thence, Psal. 107.17, 18. Fools,

because of their transgressions; and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death. It is that which puts gall and wormwood, into whatsoever we find made bitter unto us, Jer. 23.10, 11, 12, 14, 15.

CONCL. 4. For the original of it, whence it doth proceed: All the evils which are done in the life of a sinner, proceed from within out of the heart, and flow from the native pravity and corruption of the Spirit. When a person walketh in any sinful course, he doth but, as the spider, weave a cursed web out of his own poisonous bowels. At the first, man's sinful and irregular actions did corrupt his nature; and now, our polluted nature doth transmit defilement into our actions. We are not forced and compelled unto the practice of evil, but our hearts incline and carry us thereunto, Mar. 7.21.22. For from within out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evils come from within. This is a point of great concernment to be studied, and effectually pressed upon the conscience. (1) That it may work in us a holy shame, and self-abhorrence in respect of actual transgressions; and we may be induced to loath ourselves in our own sight. For my brethren, a person will never be thoroughly humbled for the sins of his life, till he hath learnt to trace them unto his heart, and seeth them to be streams issuing out of that sink of filth and folly that is within him, Psal. 73.21, 22. Ezek. 6.9. (2) That it may leave full convictions upon our spirits, of the absolute necessity of sanctifying and regenerating grace: that our natures must be changed, and our very spirits within us must be purified, in order to fellowship with God, and that we may be fitted for his service; because the principal seat of pollution is within, and all inordinate motions in the practice are but rivulets flowing from that troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, Psal. 51.5, 6, 7, 10. (3) That it may prevail upon us, to

keep a continual eye of suspicion and jealousy upon our hearts, and to be in a constant posture of watchfulness over them, lest they should carry us aside. For he that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool. Prov. 28.26. i.e., He is grossly deluded, and mistaken, in the internal disposition and bent of his own spirit. He doth not know what a deceitful, and treacherous piece, his heart is: what very madness, and wickedness, is bound up within him. For did a sinner know, that there are seven abominations [all sorts and kinds of corruption] within him, he would never put confidence in his heart; but would work out his salvation with fear and trembling, lest he should miscarry. (4) Again, this is a point to be thoroughly studied and considered, that we may not hearken to those vain excuses, whereby we are apt to cover our sins, and to translate the guilt from off ourselves. There is a proueness in sinners, to lay the blame of their miscarriages upon anything, rather than upon themselves; and they are hardly wrought to an ingenious acknowledgment of their evil doings: but they have ever something to plead in their own vindication, and to maintain their innocence. The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat, Gen. 3.12. The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat, v. 13. I saw the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together to Michmash, &c. I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering, 1 Sam. 13.11, 12. We have spared of the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, 1 Sam. 15.15. Such evasions men have to avoid conviction: and such pretenses they plead, to color over their rebellion; and to put a fair gloss upon their iniquities. God knows my heart is good, will a carnal person say, but the Devil owed me a spite, and he drove me on to this practice. I am necessitated, saith another, to take this course. I am in a mean estate and have a multitude of business on my hands, and have no time to spare to mind religion, and converse with God; But I mean well, and

my heart is for God. Thus they dig deep, to hide their wickedness; and stand up in defense of the integrity of their hearts, whatever their conversations have been: Whereas Sirs all evil cometh out of the heart, Mat. 12.35. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. So that, Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, i.e. Let not the children of men charge their sins either directly or consequentially upon the God of heaven. Let them not say, The Lord made me thus; it was my fate and destiny, and I could not withstand what he had appointed me to. Let them not say, that God doth necessitate them to sin. Let them not lay the fault upon the condition of life wherein God hath placed them, or upon the providences under which he doth exercise them. For all sin proceedeth from within out of the heart. For God cannot be tempted with sin, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed, Jam. 1.13, 14. Suggestions from without can do nothing, except there were Lust within, to swallow the bait, and to give entertainment to the allurements of the world, and solicitations of the devil.

CONCL. 5. Although the internal and inbred corruption and wickedness of the heart of a sinner, is the seed plot of evil, whence it doth spring up; yet outward occasions and provocatives, have commonly a great influence to the educing of that corruption into exercise, and to the actual production of that which is evil. From thence it is that the heart of a man, which is full of sin, is irritated and emboldened to the commission of sin. These are the motives and arguments which Satan doth make use of, to instigate and stir up the children of men, to acts of wickedness; and to incite and encourage them in a way that is not good. As now for instance, when sinners abuse the patience of God, to strengthen their hands in a course of ungodliness; It is the heart of the sons of men that is set to do evil;

and the forbearance and longsuffering of God that is made use of for an encouragement unto the doing of it, Eccl. 8.11. When persons defile themselves with sin, that they may avoid trouble and persecution; it is corruption in the heart, that doth lead them unto sin, and is the agent in sin; and it is ease and safety, and the advancement of a carnal interest, which helps to draw forth that corruption, Gal. 6.12. And herein doth appear the desperate wickedness and malignity of man's heart: As it is full of evil, and of a cursed forwardness unto evil; so it is apt to pervert all sorts of providences thereunto. A sinner, like a toad, will suck poison out of everything. Or like the salt sea, will turn all sorts of water into its own brinish taste. As a believer improveth all kinds of dispensations, to set him with greatest detestation against sin: so doth a carnal heart make use of them, as motives and arguments unto sin.

Now amongst other encouragements unto evil, the example of a multitude is wont to be of much prevailing efficacy. The practice of the generality should increase detestation; but sinners are apt to make use of it to encourage imitation. And therefore in the text we have a special warning given, that we be not led into sin, by seeing a multitude go before us. So I descend to the second head of enquiry.

SECT. III.

QU. 2. What usual influence hath the example of a multitude, to incline a man or woman to the doing of evil? This prohibition doth suppose there is an inclination to follow them. Now the question is, whereupon is this inclination grounded? or How doth the practice of a multitude put forth its efficacy, to encourage a sinner to do evil?

ANS. I answer, There is a seven fold-influence it hath to this purpose. There are seven things arising from the practice of the multitude, from whence persons are emboldened, and incited to do evil.

1. The example of the multitude, doth minister an argument unto the Soul, for the justifying of sin: that it may appear to be nothing but the doing of that which may lawfully and warrantably be done. When a considerable number join together in a sinful action, persons are apt from thence to plead against the sinfulness of it: and to have good thoughts of it, as that which is just and honest; upon that very account because many do it: especially if it be in a matter that is not exceeding clear, and obvious to the meanest apprehension; if it will but admit of the least debate. What! will they say, do you think if such a thing were evil, and abominable in the sight of God, so many would venture upon the doing of it? Would not they see it's sinfulness, as well as ourselves? shall we think ourselves wiser than the greatest part of men besides, to condemn that which they unanimously practice; and to scruple that which they make no question of? This may seem to be overmuch strictness, and curiosity, 1 Pet. 4.4. Wherein they think it strange, that you run not with them, to the same excess of riot. *Insolens illis videtur* (as one renders the place) It seems to them to be an insolent thing, an act of pride, and self-opinionatedness; it has a tang of high-mindedness and self-conceit, in their apprehensions, for you that are but a handful to prefer your judgment before theirs. It seemeth strange, *Absurdum illis videtur* (as another expresseth it) In their account 'tis an absurd, and unreasonable thing, that you will not subscribe to their practice. Is it not more equitable that a few should give up themselves to the guidance of many, than that many should alter their course upon the apprehensions of a few? If there were any hurt in these reveling's, banqueting's, wantonness, and excess of wine, why should not they discern it themselves, as well as you? It seems a strange thing, an

unreasonable thing, that your single opinion should carry more weight, than their united judgment. Or they think it strange, <H&G>, rem novam, peregrinam, & admirandam esse ducunt (thus others) It is a matter of admiration and astonishment, that any people should be so nice, as to question that which is of general practice. Thus they stifle the convictions of conscience; and silence the clamors thereof, when it chargeth them with sin, by producing the general practice as an argument against the sinfulness of their way.

A little to open this point more fully and clearly to the understanding, let us take it asunder into three distinct propositions.

PROP. 1. One of the usual ways which sinners are wont to take, that they may go on freely, and uncontrolledly, in a course of sin, is by stopping the mouth of conscience; that would otherwise check them for their sin; and perplex and disturb them in their course. Conscience is God's officer, whom he hath appointed to this purpose to warn men of sin, and to restrain them from it: to make them restless in spirit, whilst they are doing of evil; and to terrify them in apprehensions of divine wrath, which is thereby provoked, and so cause them to desist from their ungodliness. Hence it is the design of the devil, to sear men's consciences, and to lull them asleep in security, that they may not be disquieted or interrupted in his service. And they are willing for the most part, to comply with Satan herein; Fain they would drink down the pleasures of sin, without any remorse upon their spirits, to embitter that cup. They desire to be soothed up in their wickedness, and cannot endure anything that hath a tendency to discover the evil they are about; or to awaken them out of their carnal peace. Isa. 30.10. They say to the Seers, see not: and to the Prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things: Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits, Jer. 5.31. The Prophets

prophesy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so. This is that which pleaseth them well, if ministers would deal tenderly with them, and never meddle with their sins: If they would bear them in hand, that they might be saved without leaving their wonted practice. For then a sinner might say as the drunkard, Prov. 23.35. They have stricken me, and I was not sick: they have beaten me and I felt it not. I took my liberty to serve my lusts, and never felt the smart of it. For when conscience is seared, then Satan leads the sinner captive at his pleasure: He can satisfy his inordinate desires, and yet have no convictions to affright him.

PROP. 2. A special means that is made use of, by the sons and daughters of men, to stifle the workings of conscience, that it may not rebuke and condemn them for sin, is by standing up in justification and defense of their sin: that so it may seem to be a matter that may be justly practiced, and no way displeasing in the sight of God. When the affections are violently bent on that which is evil, they do prompt the understanding to find out arguments to plead for it. Corrupt passions blind the judgment, and sometimes bribe the judgment, to invent ways and reasons to guild over a wickedness; that it may not appear in its proper colors: But may look like that which is good and honest. Therefore you read of persons washing over their iniquities, and pleading innocence in their transgressions, Jer. 2.22. Though thou wash thee with nitre; and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me saith the Lord God, i.e. Though thou puttest a fair gloss upon a foul matter, and hast many excuses and evasions whereby to avoid the charge of guilt upon thy soul; yet it is naked and evident before mine eyes, saith the Lord. Again v. 23. How canst thou say, I am not polluted? And v. 24. Wherefore will ye plead with me? intimating that they were ready to justify their wickedness, and had somewhat to plead for the warrant of it. See what pains Saul takes to cover his sin, and

to maintain his rebellion, 1 Sam. 15.20. I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, &c.

PROP. 3. To complete this matter and bring it home to our purpose, take this third proposition. That the example of the multitude is a principal argument, which sinners produce to this end, and much insist upon to this purpose; namely to justify and defend their ungodly deeds, and to maintain the corruptions wherewith they are defiled. If such an action were sinful, do ye think so many persons would comply with it? Have not they cause to be careful of their souls, as well as we? And have not they as good knowledge of the mind of God, as we have? If it were so bad to tipple and lie in the alehouse, now and then, do you think, so many judicious men would practice it? If it were a sinful thing to game, and revel, and the like, would not others leave it? If such a worship were corrupt, can you imagine, that so many knowing men would not abhor it? shall we think ourselves to be wiser then the most? These are the reasonings of men's spirits, whereby they strive to defend their crooked ways. As Eliphaz speaks to Job cap. 15.7, 8, 9. Art thou the first man that was born? Or wast thou made before the hills? Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? What knowest thou that we know not? what understandest thou which is not in us? So are sinners apt to argue the case, when they are reprov'd for any indirect practice. Do you think yourself wiser than the most? They make no scruple at such things, and have they not as much knowledge as we? Shall we be so arrogant as to restrain wisdom to ourselves? Surely it is not to be condemned, or otherwise so many would not approve of it, and follow it. For mind it Sirs as a most certain rule; that as the custom and the commonness of the practice of sin, doth usually take away the sense and conscience of sin, in them that commit it; so it many times takes away the opinion of sin, in them that observe it. Surely, think they, if there were any harm in

it, people would not so readily and universally close with it. It was the very argument they brought against our Lord Jesus Christ, and the religion of his followers, because it was generally opposed, Act. 28.22. As concerning this sect, we know it is everywhere spoken against.

Now for the deadening of this influence I shall entreat you to observe and lay to heart these three things.

1. That this is double wickedness in the sight of God, and so may justly expose us to a greater measure of his indignation, for a person not only to live in the practice of sin, but to defend and justify those practices. For a man first to break the law of God, and then to plead against the law, and as much as in him lieth to enervate and invalidate the obligatory power of it. This is one of the greatest contempt's that can be offered against the Lord of glory. And it is far from the temper of a true believer. A child of God may fall, through temptation, into sin; but he will not plead the cause of sin; He will stand up in defense of the word of God against himself, and take confusion of face unto himself. But when a wicked man doth endeavor to maintain his wickedness, that is a high affront unto the Sovereign Lord, and Lawgiver: It is in effect to set his mouth against the heavens, as it is expressed, Psal. 73.8, 9. I remember, a heathen Philosopher being asked his opinion, what they deserved who committed murder, or adultery, in their drunkenness, and then excused it because they were in drink: His answer was that such should be twice punished; first for the fact committed, and again for their drunkenness. So may I say of sinners of this sort, God may justly execute upon them the fierceness of his anger, and make them taste the sorest of his displeasure; He may destroy them with a double destruction; first for the evils which they commit, and again for the justifying of those evils. You have a particular woe denounced

on this account Isa. 5.20. Woe unto them that say concerning evil, it is good; and of good, it is evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

2. For a person thus to plead in defense of his sin, it is to put himself at the greatest distance from repentance and conversion, and consequentially from the pardoning grace and favor of God annexed thereunto. The reason is apparent, because conviction is the first step that leads to conversion. It is impossible a sinner should be humbled for, or turned from his ungodliness, till he be convinced of it. As long as he stands up in justification of his corruptions, he will never loath and abhor himself for them. And therefore when the Lord cometh in a way of saving mercy to a soul, and takes him into a covenant with himself, he doth take them off, from pleading in their own justification any further, that they may lie down in their shame, Ezek. 16.62, 63. And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth anymore because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God. Mark it, before time, their mouths were opened and they had something to speak in their own behalf, all the world almost went on in such a way, and why might not we as well as others? and the like. But when the spirit works effectually, and bringeth them into the bond of the covenant, you shall not hear a word more of these corrupt reasonings. Now they see their vileness, and that they have nothing farther to plead; but they lay their hands upon their mouth.

3. The rectitude, or irregularity, of any course or action, is not to be measured and judged from the carriage of the greatest number of men, but by the word of the living God. It is the scripture which is the standard both for the trying of doctrines, whether they are sound or

corrupt; and for the weighing of actions whether they are sinful or warrantable. Indeed the practices of the generality are so far from justifying any proceedings whatsoever, that we have cause to suspect them, on that very account: Because it is such an ordinary thing for them to combine together in the service of the devil, Jer. 5.11, 12. For the house of Israel, and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me saith the Lord. They have belied the Lord, and said, it is not he, neither shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see sword nor famine, Jer. 6.13. From the least of them, even unto the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness: and from the prophet even unto the priest, everyone dealeth falsely. Mark it, it was not here and there a single person, but the whole body of the people collectively and unanimously were corrupted, men of all ranks and conditions. So that for the trying of the particulars of your conversation you must not pass sentence according to the general practice; but have recourse to the Law and the testimony, Psal. 119. v. 59. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. So much for the first influence which the example of the multitude hath to lead into sin, viz. By ministering an argument for the justification of sin.

2. The example of a multitude is commonly a powerful inducement to the commission of sin, By contributing to the extenuation and lessening of the evil of sin. From hence persons will conclude that, if an action be granted to be evil, yet undoubtedly it is not so great an evil, as some would persuade them: surely it is but a small matter, and of no heinous nature, or else others would avoid it, and it would not be so commonly embraced. Thus Sirs; if a man hath but slight and low apprehensions of the evil of sin, he will never be steadfast and resolute in opposition against it: he will soon be brought to a compliance with it. As your thoughts of sin are, so your carriage towards it in a measure will be. If it be reckoned as a little evil, men

will never be at any great cost, or make much ado for the avoiding of it. Now, the consideration of the practice of a multitude, that many walk in such a way, doth hugely tend to the extenuation of the evil of it, in a man's thoughts. It is a difficult thing, to keep up abhorring thoughts, in the Soul, of that which multitudes live in the practice of. They will be ready to conclude that, without controversy, there is no great hurt in it, nor any considerable danger: or otherwise so many would not agree together therein. Ezek. 8.17. Then he said unto me, hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? Observe, it was a general corruption, and so accounted small in their eyes. Is it a light thing? q.d. It is in your estimation, but a small matter. Certainly you reckon it but a light and trivial thing, little to be regarded. And thus the people answered the prophet Jeremiah, when he labored to set before them the greatness of their folly, and wickedness; they produce the general practice for it. It is that which we have done, we, and our fathers, our Kings, and our Princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, Jer. 44. v. 7.17.

To abate the force of this influence, let us duly ponder and press upon our spirits, these three particulars.

1. Although all sins, if considered comparatively, are not equally heinous, some being of lesser malignity, and others of a crimson die; yet there is no sin little in itself, or that has but little evil in the nature of it. It is an argument of a graceless heart, that is an utter stranger to the spirit of regeneration, to account any sin to be a small evil. For hadst thou lain under the burden of thine iniquities, and felt that smart, and bitterness in the sense of sin, which is the usual preparative, and antecedent to a saving conversion, it would rectify thy thoughts in this respect: thou wouldst account the guilt of the least sin, to be an insupportable burden. And indeed there is reason

for it: For the least transgression cannot be expiated at a lower rate, then by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without spot, or blemish. All the angels in heaven, and all the treasures upon earth, cannot make an atonement, for the least offense, against the Law of God. The smallest sin is a contempt of the great King, even of the Lord of hosts, who is of infinite and unsearchable majesty, and excellency. You know, the horridness of a fact is not only to be collected from the matter wherein it doth consist, but principally from the object against whom it is committed. That which is but a petty misdemeanor if against another, is treason if done against a King. Why, Sirs, every sin is a slighting of the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lord's; it is a rising up in rebellion against the sovereign possessor of heaven. As Joseph argueth against the temptation, Gen. 39.9. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? So should you reason the case against conjunction with a multitude, in any unjust way: Though all the world be defiled, with this, or the other abomination, yet I perceive it is rebellion against the incomprehensible God, and how shall I dare to join in confederacy with them? Isa 7.13. Hear ye now, O house of David, Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? q. d. Can that be a light thing, which is a despising of the Lord, and an eclipsing of his glory? Is it a small matter that openeth the door of hell, and makes the sinner liable to everlasting condemnation? Why, the wages of sin [quatenus sin, and therefore of the smallest transgression] is death [everlasting death and destruction, as appeareth by its opposition to eternal life] Rom. 6.23.

2. This is so far from lessening the evil of sin, because it is generally practiced; that it is one aggravating circumstance of it, whereby the danger is increased: And therefore it should render us more watchful against it, and cause us to be very cautious and circumspect, least we

be defiled therewith, As with an infectious disease, the more epidemical it is, the more perilous; and the greater care will persons take against the contagion. I dare say, that in a town where is the plague, or pestilence, the farther it spreads, the more fearful would the inhabitants be. O that men would tender the health of their souls, according to the care they take of their bodies! And that they were affected with spiritual evils and maladies, as they are wont to be with temporal! Then they would keep a strict watch against common abominations. The Prophet speaks of it as an heightener of the guilt, that it was like a spreading leprosy that went through the whole body of the Land, Jer. 6.26, 28. O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall come suddenly upon us. What is the provocation, whereby this sore evil is procured? Why see v. 28. They are all grievous revolter's, walking with slanders: they are brass and iron, they are all corrupters. And again, Mal. 3.9. Ye are cursed with a curse [i. e. you are certainly, and dreadfully, and terribly, accursed] for you have robbed me, even this whole Nation.

3. Is it a small matter (as thou pleadest) that is thus done against the Lord? Why, then the greater is thy contempt of his Majesty, and the more inexcusable art thou, in despising the Holy one of Israel. Wilt thou prefer a trivial matter before the pleasing of God, and the enjoyment of his favor? This is a shrewd sign that thou wouldest not serve him in a greater. How couldest thou lay down thy life for his sake, and part with all that thou hast at his call, who wilt disobey him for a trifle, as it is in thine account? If you go to a neighbor, or friend, to lend you a small sum of money, or to do you a lesser kindness, and he will not do it; you will presently conclude, He would never be at any great expense to do you good, nor trust you with a matter of any considerable value. So may the Lord say in this case, This is an

hypocritical wretch who thus complieth with the multitude, to sin against me, in a small matter; Surely he will never stick close to me, in times of danger, and difficulty; when he must exercise any greater measure of self-denial. You know the words of our Savior unto Peter, Mat. 26.40. He come unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? What may be the reason, that he doth expostulate the case with Peter, more particularly, than with the rest? Why, you shall find in 35. v. Peter had promised, that although he should die with Christ, yet he would not deny him: and therefore he said unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? q.d. How couldest thou die for me? If thou faulter in the smallest, how wouldest thou be able to grapple with greater hardships? So should you reason the case with your own spirits: If I will be a Christian indeed, I must be ready to forsake all that I have at his command, and to follow him through tribulations and distresses whithersoever he leadeth me: And how shall I be able to do it, if I stick with him for a trifle? Besides, as was intimated before, It is a monstrous and intolerable slighting, and undervaluing the authority of God, and that eternal blessedness to be enjoyed in his presence, to venture the loss of it, for matter of little weight and moment. This is instead of counting all things to be but dross and dung, in comparison of the favor of God, to esteem dross and dung above the light of his countenance. Jer. 2.11, 12, 13. Hath a Nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods? But my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water; q.d., If they had exchanged me for something of worth and value, the contempt had not been so great: but they cast me off, for that which is of no worth. The weaner and the slighter is the object, wherewith you close in

contradiction unto God's precepts, the greater is your contempt of his Majesty, and the lighter esteem you have of his loving-kindness. So much for the second influence, which the practice of the multitude hath to draw persons to sin, viz. By contributing to the extenuation, and lessening the evil of sin.

3. By the practice of the multitude men are usually drawn into sin, By being from thence encouraged, to expect impunity in their sins; and to be free from the judgments that are deserved thereby. Surely, think they, the Lord will spare us, for we are a great number; he will not execute his wrath upon so many. Take it thus, Sirs: That passion which God doth make especial use of, as a preservative against sin, it is the passion of fear, and dread of his judgments; and that both as to the righteous and the wicked, the just and unjust. This made Laban the Idolater, that he durst not meddle with Jacob, nor speak a word to his hurt, because the dread of the wrath of God was upon him, Gen. 31.24, 29. And this restrained the Heathen, that they durst not disturb Jehoshaphat in his reformation, The fear of God was upon all the Kingdoms of those Countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel, 2 Chron. 20.29. And what made Job so strict and precise in his carriage, that he made a Covenant with his eyes, that he might not so much as think upon a maid? that he did not despise the cause of his man-servant or his maid-servant when they contended with him? See what account he giveth of it, himself, Job 31.1, 2, 3. Is not destruction to the wicked, and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? And again v. 23. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure. So that, when sinners have gotten but some competent measure of presumptuous hopes, that they shall be free from divine vengeance, notwithstanding their transgressions; this will let loose the reins of restraint, and open the current to all profaneness and licentiousness, Psal. 10.13. Wherefore doth the

wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. And so much is plainly intimated, in the Apostles question to the impenitent, Rom. 2.3. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? q. d. Certainly these are thy vain imaginations, and the secret workings of thy spirit. For did the ungodly believe and consider, that they shall be everlastingly damned for sin, It would cause their hearts to tremble, in the very apprehensions of lying under the guilt of it. If they were in expectation of the judgments of God, as the certain consequent of their impieties, they would hasten to make their peace with him; and nothing should hinder them from returning to him by repentance. But, the truth is, they hope to escape, and to have peace, though they walk in the imaginations of their evil hearts. Now, the example of a multitude doth confirm these hopes, and strengthen them mightily in such expectations. For they are apt to conceive, that however the Lord may proceed in severity against some particular persons, yet he will not destroy a multitude when they are joined together. See how sinners argue themselves into a Fools-confidence from this very consideration, Ezek. 33.24. Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: But we are many, the land is given us for an inheritance. Mark it, They make no question, but God would deal favorably with them, because they were many. The Lord had threatened them by his Prophets, with utter desolation and ruin, because of their abominations; and that the land wherein they dwelt should spew them out. Yea, but, say they, we cannot believe it; God gave this land to Abraham, who was but one, and behold we are many; and therefore undoubtedly he will have mercy upon us.

To discover a little the weakness and folly of this argumentation, let me beseech you to give heedful attendance to these three particulars.

1. Although the consideration of a multitude may carry some stroke with men, as to the mitigating, or with-holding the punishment deserved: yet it is of no validity whatsoever, to stave off the execution of the vengeance of God, or to abate the severity of his proceedings. For he is of infinite power, and everlastingly blessed in the enjoyment of himself. Indeed, men are wont to forbear the executing the rigor of the Law, when a multitude offend together; or at most they punish but some, for an example and terror to the rest. And what is the reason of it? Why, possibly it may be dangerous to provoke many thousands, by the rigor of the law; and may force them to run upon desperate courses: Perhaps, they to whom the administration of justice is committed, have not power to bring under the whole body of a rebellion, without using lenitives, and mildness towards some; and engaging for their security and indemnity. Or in some cases, the common-wealth would be impaired, and a Nation or Kingdom dispeopled, if all that have their hand in a rebellion should be cut off together. But alas, what are these things in reference to the God of heaven? Is there anything too hard for the Lord? Is it not as easy for him, to cut off many as few? Doth he stand in need of your service, that he should spare you, out of respect to his own advantage? Why man, All thy service and homage doth not extend unto the Lord. He hath thousand thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand attending upon him. He can bring glory to himself in thine utter extirpation and destruction. And see what he hath said, Psal. 9.17. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. So that, if a whole Kingdom or Country; nay, if many people and Countries conspire together in sin, the Lord will not spare them; but will bind them in bundles together, and cast them into the furnace of fire. So in that dreadful parable of the boiling pot, Ezek. 24.6. Woe to the bloody City, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it; bring it out piece by piece, let no lot

fall upon it. It is as much as if God had said, They are universally corrupted, and I will destroy them all, I will not have compassion on any one of them. It is spoken in allusion to the practice of Commanders in war; when Soldiers mutiny, they do not want to cut off a whole legion, or regiment; but only some are made exemplary, and to that end they used to cast lots, who should die, and which of them should be spared: and the like lottery was used, when captives were taken, for the saving of some, and putting others to the sword. Well, but, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will deal with these rebels after another rate; I will utterly consume them without exemption of any: There shall no lot fall upon them. And study well that Scripture which is peculiarly designed to overthrow this ground of presumption, Prov. 11.21. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished; i.e. Though sinners strengthen themselves by mutual counsels and combinations; and join together in parties, for the doing of evil, yet it shall not stand them instead: The God of heaven will break in upon them, in his fury, and sweep them away with the besom of destruction: He will pull them out piece-meal, one after another, and there shall none of them escape. And if you do not see this always executed visibly, in signal outward judgments; yet you must remember there are spiritual plagues poured out upon the wicked here, which are the forest of judgments; and that the wicked are reserved unto the day of destruction, and shall be brought forth to the day of wraths.

2. The examples of the judgments of God, that are upon record in the word, may abundantly suffice to show the vanity of this kind of reasoning. When the greatest numbers have conspired, to reject his word, and to trample upon his glory, what hath been the manner of his dealing with them? Why, He hath come down in the height of indignation, against them, and set them forth as Paradigms, or public examples of his justice; that others might be induced to take

warning. Look into the wilderness, when the people did join themselves to Baal Peor, and did eat the sacrifices of the dead, Psal. 106.28. i.e., when they did partake of the worship that was tendered to Idols, which are but dead God's, which never had any reality of being, and forsook Jehovah who is the living and true God: when they were sharers with Idolaters in their offerings: or by the sacrifices of the dead, you may understand, the funeral banquets which amongst Idolatrous Nations were used by way of solemn parentation to the dead. You will find that this idolatry was a spreading corruption, multitudes were defiled with it: And were they delivered because of their multitude? Why, consult the History, Num. 25. The plague brake in amongst them, and there died in one day three and twenty thousand; and afterwards a thousand more. And this instance of severity is recorded for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come, 1 Cor. 10.8, 11. Let us look a little higher into the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, the inhabitants of which Cities were a great company, and they were in confederacy together in sin, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And were they spared because they were many? See Gen. 19.24, 25. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord, out of heaven. And he overthrew those Cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the Cities, and that which grew upon the ground. In the old world there was a numerous multitude, and all flesh had corrupted their way, and filled the earth with violence. And were they exempted from punishment upon the account of their numbers? Indeed the Lord spared them for a time, and his longsuffering waited expecting their repentance; but at length he brought the flood upon the world of the ungodly. The fallen angels were a very comprehensive body, of glorious creatures, and yet when they kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation God hath reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. But, you

will say, what are these examples unto us? We hope the Lord will not be so severe now in the days of the Gospel. Mark therefore how the Apostle Peter doth argue from this Topic, 2 Pet. 2.4, 5, 6, 9. If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down into hell, &c. and spared not the old world, &c. and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample to those that after should live ungodly: The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished: q. d. He is the same God, as holy and just as ever, and hateth iniquity with as perfect a hatred, and will repay them that hate him to their face.

3. The conjunction of many together, in any evil way, is so far from procuring freedom from punishment, that is a shrewd argument of unavoidable wrath and destruction, hanging over the heads of such persons. This very thing will accelerate and hasten the ruin and desolation; and cause it to come with the greater speed, undoubtedness and severity, when sin begins to grow ripe, by spreading itself amongst a multitude. So that it is a gross and palpable delusion, to imagine, that God will forbear to punish, because a multitude sin; for however he may deal with single persons, yet he will never suffer an united company to escape, Jer. 8.10, 13. Therefore will I give their wives to others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them, for everyone, from the least even to the greatest, is given to covetousness: from the Prophet, even unto the Priest, everyone dealeth falsely, Isa. 2.8, 9. Their land also is full of idols, they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself, therefore forgive them not. That is the third way, how the practice of a multitude doth encourage men to sin, by causing them to hope for impunity in their sins.

4. Sinners are induced to follow the example of a multitude in the commission of evil, Because that is a ready fence against the shame, that would otherwise arise from the evil committed. People think it no shame, to do what is commonly done, though it be never so vile: They never blush to walk in a sinful course, wherein they have the generality to lead them the way. Let me open it thus unto you, my brethren. The reason why many abstain from the actual perpetration of some wickedness's, to which they are much inclined, it is not for conscience towards God, or out of any respect they have to his commandments; But shame of the world doth restrain them, and keep them within compass. The world would cry out of them, if they did such an evil: it would tend to their reproach, and disgrace, and ignominy, in the face of all that dwell round about them: they should not be able to look their neighbors in the face. And therefore it is, that in secret they can take liberty to give those corruptions vent, which are kept under, and smothered in open view: They will not stick to do those things in the closet, and in the private chambers, which they are very loath should come upon the public stage of the world. You read of such persons, who in the eyes of men carried matters smooth and fair, and possibly with a seeming austerity and gravity; when it was a shame to speak of those things, which were done of them in secret, Eph. 5.12. So that if the shame of the world were removed, if that obstacle were but taken out of the way, then they could run on freely to all excess of riot: and make no bones in swallowing such impieties as now they boggle at. We find it of the men of Laish, that they dwelt careless and secure, for there was no Magistrate to put them to shame in anything, Judge. 18.7. Now the commonness of a sin doth usually take from the shamefulness of it. Indeed it is always a shameful thing in itself; but the seeing of multitudes commit it, doth notably help to harden men's faces, and to steel their fore-heads, that they are not sensible of it. Men are ashamed to go on singly, and personally, in any way of ungodliness;

when they are no whit ashamed to be led by the company of others, and to do as the rest of their society doth. You read in Jer. 6.13. of a general deluge of corruption and naughtiness that had overflowed the whole land: and mark what followeth, v. 15. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.

To enervate the strength of this fourth influence it hath, let us often resolve in our most serious and deliberate contemplations these three following truths.

1. That it is a sure token of abundant, desperate atheism, lodging in the heart, and that mightily prevaieth over the heart, when a sinner is kept from pollutions, merely from the shame of the world, and is not afraid of them in the presence of God. Why man, dost thou believe that there is a God in heaven, that beholdeth all the dwellers upon earth? whose eyes are upon all the ways of man, and who pondereth all his goings? And art thou not ashamed to commit abominations in his sight? Should not the regard of the most high have a greater efficacy upon thy spirit, to keep thee from sin, than all the cries of the children of men? The truth of it is, thou art an atheist, and dost not believe there is a God, or else thou castest the thoughts of him behind thy back, Psal. 10. v. 4, 5. And if thou forgettest the Lord, or deniest his being, never expect that God should in mercy be mindful of thee: Well mayest thou fear lest he should come upon thee in some dreadful and terrible judgments, in order to the confutation of thy atheistical heart, Psal. 50.22. Consider this ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

2. Although an impenitent sinner may escape the shame of the world here, yet he shall not be able to escape everlasting shame and contempt hereafter, when he is brought before the tribunal seat of

our Lord Jesus Christ. How will he then be ashamed of his foolishness, and madness, in regarding the cries of men, more than the word of God? How will he be then filled with confusion, to bethink himself, that he was so sottish and vile as to serve the devil, the Prince of darkness, rather than to be obedient to the voice of the Lord of glory? With what vexation and torment will it then fill a man's spirit, to remember, that he was offered salvation amongst the little flock of Jesus Christ, but he chose rather to go to hell with the multitude? A reflection upon this will cover the sinners face with blackness, and make him ready to tear out his very bowels with indignation. O, will he think, what phrensy did possess me, that I should act after this manner? What a wretch was I, thus to neglect my soul? What a blind ignorant unadvised course did I take, to go with the multitude in the broad way of destruction? Then shall the wicked be covered with shame, and their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten, as the expression is Jer. 20.11. When the Saints of God shall lift up their heads with boldness and confidence, then shall all the ungodly hang down their heads as a bulrush, and be ashamed to look Jesus Christ in the face, whose laws they despised, and preferred the pleasing and regarding the multitude before him. For you know that is one of the differences which God will put between his own servants, and evil doers hereafter, Dan. 12.2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3. All sin whatsoever is shameful in its own nature and tendency, as considered in itself, and however it is committed; though no eye of the world take cognizance of it. Is it not a shameful thing for a rational creature to be in subjection to base and sensual lusts and pleasures? For a man to degenerate into a condition, viler than the beasts that perish? For a person to be so besotted, as to sell his soul for a trifle? Is it not a shameful thing for a knowing creature to rebel

against his creator, upon whom he hath his constant dependence, and by whom he wholly subsist? Why Sirs, if ever God intend you mercy, he will cause you to bear your shame, and to loath yourselves upon the account of your iniquities: He will open your eyes, and cause you to see that the shamefulnes of sin doth not only lie in the opinions of men, but in its own nature and tendency, Ezek. 20.43. And there you shall remember your ways, and all your doings wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for all the evils that ye have committed. And see the language of true converts, Jer. 3.25. We lie down in our shame and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God. Thus I have dispatched the fourth encouragement to sin taken from the practice of the multitude.

5. Persons are easily prevailed with, to follow a multitude in their sins; Lest they should be reproached and reviled, for dissenting from them: lest they should bespatter them, and cast dirt upon them, if they withdraw from their fellowship. My brethren, if a man will not join with the multitude in the work of their hands, he shall be sure to suffer under the lash of their tongue. If he will not do evil with them, they will be sure to speak evil of him. They will brand him for a factious, troublesome, and seditious person; one that is over much wedded to his own way; and proud, and high conceited of himself. They will be apt to mark him as the troubler of Israel, and the pest and plague of the land wherein he dwelleth, 1 Pet. 4.4. Wherein they think it strange, that you run not with them to the same excess of riot? speaking evil of you. Mind it, if you separate from them in your conversation, they will do what in them lieth, to blast your reputation. And to avoid this reproach, people are easily persuaded to close with them. For it is an hard thing to suffer taunts, and

reviling's, for the sake of Christ: because of that monstrous pride that is in men's hearts. They have high thoughts of themselves, and therefore cannot endure that others should vilify and debase them. There are many who can rather suffer loss in their estates, and some pains to be inflicted on their bodies, than reproach should be cast upon their names. Hence they are called cruel mocking's; because they pierce deep into the soul, and lie heavy upon the spirit, Heb. 11.36. And the heart of David was even broken with them, Psal. 69.20. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. This had almost turned aside the Prophet Jeremiah from the course of obedience, had he not been kept by an almighty power, and followed with the effectual operation of the spirit of God, Jer. 20.7, 8, 9, 10. I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried violence and spoil, because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said I will not make mention of him, nor speak anymore in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

To fence you against the prevalency of this powerful temptation, there are five things worthy to be seriously weighed.

1. Are you likely to be reproached for the sake of Christ, and because you will not say, a confederacy with the multitude in sin? Why, this is none other than he hath particularly warned you of, that you should expect, and look for, if you will be faithful unto him, and steadfast in his covenant. This is one of the terms and articles, upon which salvation by Christ is propounded and offered unto sinners, that you be willing to be made a reproach for his sake, and to be accounted as the scum of the world, and the offscouring of all things. If you are Israelites indeed, disciples of Christ in reality, this will undoubtedly come upon you: You will be reckoned as the worst and vilest of men,

especially at some seasons, when religion is discountenanced. So that this is part of the cost you must reckon to be at, if you will be wise builders in the matters of eternity. This is one of the incumbrances that is entailed upon godliness, and the favor of the most High: and if you will enjoy his favor, you must have it with all the incumbrances that attend it, Mat. 10.21. You shall be hated of all men for my names sake, And v. 25. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? q. d. You must expect to be accounted, as very monsters of men, nay as very devils, if you will be upright with the Lord. So that you have no cause to complain of religion, or the ways of holiness, when you find yourselves reproached for them: because it is no more than you were told of, before you entered into that estate. As when we sell a commodity in the market, that hath some defect and imperfection, and we deal openly and plainly with the buyer, giving him information of it, and yet he will have it; If afterwards he come and complain of it, we are ready to say, Did not I tell you what it was? Have I done you any wrong? Were not you acquainted with it before hand? So may the Lord say unto such as profess his name for a while, and at length boggle at his precepts, when they find themselves reproached: Friends, I have done you no wrong. Did not I warn you of it before hand, that it would surely come thus to pass? If you were not resolved to go through good report and evil report, why did you list yourselves amongst the number of my followers, when as I took you into my service upon no other terms and covenants? And pray mark it Sirs, Christ hath forwarned us of reproaches attendant upon godliness, to this very purpose, that when we happen to meet with them we might not be offended with him, or his ways, on that account, Joh. 16.1, 2, 3, 4. These things have I spoken to you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the Synagogues: yea the time cometh that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service. And these things they will do unto you, because

they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.

2. Art thou reproached for following the Lord Jesus Christ, and keeping close to him, when the generality of people depart from him? Why remember how he was reproached for thy sake, if thou belongest unto him; and what reviling's he endured for the salvation of thy soul. He was stigmatized for a glutton, and a winebibber, and one that encouraged profane sinners in their profaness: He was accounted a Witch and a Conjuror, as one that held confederacy with Beelzebub the prince of the devils: He was reckoned for a rebel and traitor, an enemy to Caesar; and a seditious murderer was preferred before him. He was buffeted and spit upon, and reviled upon every hand: The Soldiers reviled him, saying, Prophecy who smote thee. The people reviled him, If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross and we will believe. One of them that suffered with him reviled him. And he was put to an ignominious, and reproachful death. Was he willing to suffer this reproach and disgrace, for our spiritual and everlasting advantage, and shall we flinch back from him, for fear of some scoffs and reproaches, that we may suffer? Look unto Jesus, when this temptation begins to prevail, fix your eyes upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds, Heb. 12. v. 2, 3. See the carriage of the Apostles in this respect, Act. 5.41. They departed from the presence of the counsel, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Why for his name? Why, because he is the Son of God, and so able to recompense them plentifully, for any loss they sustained in his service: He loved them with the most

affectionate love, and that unto the end: He had suffered shame for their sakes, and in order to the carrying on of their Salvation.

3. The day of judgment, that is at hand, will be a day of revelation as well as of recompense. If you be unjustly reproached and scandalized now, then you shall be cleared, and acquitted, and discharged with honor, in the face of all the world. For as that will be a judicature appointed for the trying of titles, so for the clearing of the people of God from all the blots that were cast upon them, and the hard speeches that were vented against them. As there will be a resurrection of bodies out of the dust of the earth, so there shall be a resurrection of the names of true believers out of that dirt and filth wherein they have been buried. This quieted the spirit of S. Paul when he was censured, and scandalized, 1 Cor. 4.3, 4, 5. With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: (i.e., I am little troubled at your censures and reproaches) yea I judge not my own self. For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God; i.e. Then it will be discovered, who are praiseworthy: The Lord will cause the uprightness of the upright to appear, and he will vindicate their reputation in the presence of men and Angels.

4. The best and most comfortable way, as much as is possible, to avoid reproach and disgrace, it is, not to join in correspondency with the wicked; but to endeavor to be exact and circumspect in your carriage before the wicked, that they may not have so much as an occasion whereupon to bottom an evil report. As a Philosopher being told that some evil minded men did charge him with such and such miscarriages. And I, answered he, will so demean myself, that none

shall believe them. Here Sirs, is an excellent means to prevent reproaches, and a good use to be made of them. Do men charge thee with pride and haughtiness of spirit? Carry thyself with that humility and meekness, that none may believe them. Art thou cried out of as a turbulent, factious, and seditious, person? Let thy demeanor be so quiet, and peaceable, and inoffensive, that none may give credit to the report. Labor to cut off occasion of evil speaking, from them that desire occasion: And if notwithstanding they will defame thee, study to prove them liars amongst all with whom thou dost converse. And this is the very counsel of the Holy Ghost, 1 Pet. 2.11, 12. Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you, as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. And v. 15. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. And if nevertheless it be your lot to be scorned and despised for your holiness, then remember for your consolation, and support; that you have a promise of blessedness, on this very account, Mat. 5.11, 12. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.

5. If you cannot bear reproaches, for the sake of Christ, and upon the account of holiness, God may justly give you up to the lusts of your own hearts, to fall into some horrid, monstrous, and unheard-of abomination, that you may get a blot upon that account, which shall never be wiped out. If men will not suffer for God, they may justly expect to suffer under the hand of God. As I have read of a Smith in Queen Mary's days, who was convinced of the truth, and being pressed by a message from one of the Martyrs, not to dissemble his

profession but to own it; returned answer, He could not burn: But within a while it fell out, that his Shop was on fire, and was burnt down to the ground, and himself in it, as he was endeavoring to quench the fire. He that could not burn in the cause of God, was burnt under the just judgments of God. The like may befall you in the case of reproach and reviling's: If you cannot bear them, in the way of righteousness, the Lord may deliver you over into the hands of the devil, and to be led by your own hearts into some desperately wicked courses, that you may suffer reproach as the devils Martyrs: and such reproach as may stick by you forever. And this is none other than what God hath threatened upon such as despise commandments, that he will make them a reproach, either by the execution of temporal or spiritual judgments, Ezek. 5.14, 15. Moreover, I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the Nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by, Jer. 23.40. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame which shall not be forgotten. See also Jer. 29.18, 19.

So much for the fifth way how this temptation prevaleth.

6. Sinners are soon persuaded to go down the stream with a multitude, in sin, Because otherwise they should be persecuted, and opposed by them. They are willing to live at ease and quiet, and to sleep in a whole skin (as we are wont to express it) and therefore they dare not contradict the generality, lest they should be set against by them, and be reduced into sufferings under their hatred and malice. Thus it wrought with those false teachers mentioned, Gal. 6.12. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised: only lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ. Mark it, The most of the Jews were eagerly set upon the retaining of circumcision and other ceremonies of the Mosaical pedagogy; and they were apt to be violently bent against any that

went about the abrogation of them. Now these false teachers knew well enough, that all such types were abolished, by the death of Christ; but they durst not own it; still they preached up circumcision, and forced it upon the practice of the converts at Galatia, against the light and convictions of their own consciences. What was the reason of it? Why, they knew that if they stiffly adhered to the simplicity of the Gospel, and waved the Mosaical ceremonies, which most of the Jews were zealous for, they should be persecuted by them: And this was the only reason that induced them to comply with the multitude. My brethren, you have many that would willingly be the disciples of Christ and his followers, as long as they may do it with safety, without endangering their estates, or life's, or their liberties by it: But when they come to take up the Cross there they falter. As the rottenness, and unsoundness, the hypocrisy, and unbelief of the heart is the fountain whence apostasy proceeds: so the days of tribulation and distress are the time of discrimination, when Apostates are wont to discover themselves. They can well be contented to make a profession of godliness, and to perform some of the external duties, but they are not able to go through persecutions. And therefore they keep all things fair with the multitude, and walk in ways of compliance with them; lest if they followed truth and holiness too close at the heels, it should strike out their teeth: lest if they withdrew from the multitude, they should be hated and persecuted by them. For pray Sirs, what's the reason why the world hates, and sets against the people of God? Why, It is for this very thing, because they walk in a way by themselves, and will not do as the rest of their neighbors do: they separate themselves from the generality in their practice, and walk more strictly and precisely, and dare not allow themselves in such licentious courses, wherein others live: and so their lives are a practical condemnation of the others, and as a corrosive to their consciences, Joh. 15.19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: But because you are not of the

world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Mark it, If believers were of confederacy with the wicked; if they could drink, and revel, and be vain, and wanton, as others are, and did not take a different course by themselves, they should be cherished and beloved as well as others: but therefore they are hated, and persecuted, because they are a select company, and have a peculiar way by themselves. And to escape this hatred and persecution, people are apt to join with the world, and to walk according to their pattern and practice.

To abate the edge, and take off the efficacy of this influence, let me counsel you to be frequent in the meditation upon these three spiritual truths.

1. That the everlasting wrath of God, which is reserved as the portion of the wicked hereafter, is an evil infinitely beyond all the tribulations and persecutions that can come upon the godly here. So that if thou canst not bear some sharp afflictions for a time, How wilt thou be able to lie under torments forever? If thou darest not walk in the ways of holiness, for fear of some trouble & persecution from men, How wilt thou stand under the wrath of God, when he will glorify his power in the destruction of his adversaries? Why Sirs, one of these will unavoidably befall you; either you must live godly in Christ Jesus, and then you will suffer persecution; or else you must go down with the multitude, into perdition: either you must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven, or everlastingly be sent into hell torments. And can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Are you able to stand before the devouring fire? Lay these in the balance together, and see which is to be chosen. Should not a man willingly undergo the greatest hardships upon earth, rather than fall into the damnation of Hell. See how pathetically our Savior presseth this very point, Mark 9. 43, 44. If thy hand offend thee cut it

off: [that is, mortify and keep under the most beloved corruption, deny thyself in the dearest enjoyments thou hast, willingly suffer and undergo the greatest troubles, and the sorest distresses] It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, then having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

2. That even the inward peace and consolation of the spirit, that is to be had in the ways of holiness, is abundantly to be preferred before that outward quiet and safety, which sinners promise themselves by compliance with the multitude in their wickedness. Shalt thou be thereby freed from persecutions without? But what if God send trouble and horror upon the conscience within? That will be a heavier, and a more insupportable burden, than all external calamities whatsoever. It is not the favor and friendship of all the men in the world, that can minister support and comfort against the clamors of an evil conscience, when it is thoroughly awakened by the spirit of God, Prov. 18.14. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

3. When God doth suffer his people to fall into persecutions, for their righteousness sake, He doth not leave them alone: but hath promised himself to be graciously present with them. He will minister strength to enable them to bear their burdens: and will dart comfort into their souls, that shall sweeten the most bitter cup of tribulation. He will restrain the rage and fury of their oppressors, that they shall not lay upon them more than is conducive unto their spiritual good: For although God doth sometimes let his children fall into the hands of the ungodly, yet he never delivereth them over to the will of the ungodly. At length he will make a way for them to escape, and cause all their sufferings to work together for their good: and give them an ample recompense, that shall make a plentiful amends, for whatever

cost they have been at in his service, Isa. 43.1, 2. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and thorough the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest thorough the fire, thou shalt not be burnt: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel thy Savior. And are the consolations of God small unto you? Is it a light thing to be under the promise of his special presence, and providence? Woe be to sinners, when trouble comes from the hand of God, and there is no ministration of support from the gracious assistance of God. What will they then do in the day of tribulation? But the Lord will not leave his own people comfortless, but will come himself, and minister unto them. This made the Apostle Paul that he could rejoice in his sufferings, 2 Cor. 12.10. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong, i.e. when I am at the lowest ebb of outward enjoyments, then is the Lord pleased to communicate the greatest spiritual vigor, and consolation unto my heart. When my body is at the lowest, and my outward man at the weakest, then is my soul filled with special refreshments from above. God doth make up the oppressions of my outward man, by imparting grace unto, and lifting up the light of his countenance upon, my inward man; so that I have no cause to complain.

This shall suffice, to be spoken unto the sixth way how this temptation worketh.

7. And lastly. There is a secret inclination in men's spirits to follow the example of a multitude in sin: Because it is a pleasant thing to walk with company; and in competition therewith; the ways of holiness and the fear of the Lord, seem to be sad, melancholy, and tedious ways. It is a kind of irksome and unpleasant thing for a man to go alone in any course; but to walk with company is delightsome,

and suitable to a man's heart and spirit. Now therefore, to avoid the loneliness of the service of God, people are ready to comply with the multitude of the ungodly. As the Israelites argued the case with Samuel in respect of a King, 1 Sam. 8.5, 20. We will be like all the nations, and that our King may judge us. So are sinners apt to plead themselves into wickedness: We cannot endure to be solitary, and in a path by ourselves; but let us do as others do. You have a particular caution from S. Paul to take heed of this reasoning, 1 Thes. 5.6. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others: but let us watch and be sober, intimating, that there is a great proness in men's spirits, to do as others do, and to travel in that road where they may have much company with them.

Now to show you the folly and weakness of this kind of argumentation, I will only subjoin these two considerations.

1. That a sound believer, that liveth by faith in Christ, and in the exercise of repentance, and purifieth himself as Christ is pure, hath the infinitely blessed God, for the man of his counsel, and to bear him fellowship in his way. And is not he Sirs, the best companion in the world? that can give you the best help and succor upon every occasion, and bring the greatest and most heart-warming joy and gladness into the soul? As the glory of God is a believers ultimate end at which he aimeth; and as the spirit of God is his principal guide by whom he is conducted; and as the word of the Lord is the high-way wherein he travels; So the Lord of hosts himself is his constant companion. 'It is said of Enoch, He walked with God three hundred years, Gen. 5.22. And Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God, Gen. 6.9. And my brethren, can that be a tedious and melancholy way, where the God of consolations is ever at hand, he that dwelleth in the souls of his children, that he may revive their spirits? The truth is, most men's

hearts are carnal, and sensual, and they cannot taste the sweetness of communion with God, or else they would not complain for want of society, and fellowship. The Apostle speaks of it, as the highest privilege under the sun, and that in a way of gloriation, and boasting, 1 Jo. 1.3, 4. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full, q. d. Here is the well-spring of joy, here is a sovereign antidote against sadness and disconsolateness of spirit: this will cause you to abound in joy, above the joy of harvest, above what will arise from the increase of corn and wine and oil. if you will have your vessels filled, come unto these waters, secure your interest in this blessed fellowship.

2. If you would have the society of men, your fellow creatures, to go along with you; Why, the wisest course to be taken for the attainment of that, is not to comply with the wicked; but to labor what in you lieth, to turn them from their wickedness. So that, be much in prayer for them, that God would open their eyes and show them the way of truth; that he would sanctify their hearts, and turn them unto the truth: Set a good example before them, that they may be won over by the loveliness of your conversations: Deal faithfully with their Souls by meekness of reproof, and admonition, as there is occasion: Often provoke and stir them up to follow after righteousness, that so they may bear you company in the way to heaven. Let me give you the counsel of the Lord to Jeremy in this case, Jer. 15.19. Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. But perhaps you will object and say, this is the work of a Minister. Yea, my brethren, and it is incumbent on every particular Christian also, what in them is, to render the ways of God lovely and amiable in the sight of others, and to endeavor to win them over, by all means to an effectual closure with those ways, Prov. 11.30. He that winneth souls is wise, Jam.

5.19, 20. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him [any one, this is a work to be minded by everyone of you, without exception] Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. So we are come to the close of the second head of enquiry, concerning the influence which the practice of a multitude hath, to incline a man or woman to do evil.

SECT. IV.

QU. 3. In what cases especially, doth it concern us, to be most cautious and circumspect, upon this account, that we be not drawn to evil by the practice of a multitude.

Ans. For satisfaction to this enquiry, you must well observe and remember, that this caution is needful in every case, and doth oblige us to be circumspect in every respect, to keep a strict eye of jealousy upon ourselves at every turn, that we be not ensnared or drawn aside into sin by following a multitude. The counsel is delivered indefinitely without limitation to times, persons, or cases: and is equipollent to a universal prohibition. For as where the spirit of God hath not added, we must not make additions; so where he hath not limited, we must not set bounds and limits, by a narrowing interpretation. Thou shalt not follow a multitude, i.e., not any multitude, of what sort soever, wheresoever they are, or in what ages or places soever they live, in the doing of evil.

Nevertheless there are some peculiar cases, in which this word of advice doth especially concern us: wherein we are more than usually inclined, to follow the multitude, and therefore ought to be more

than ordinarily watchful over our hearts, that they do not turn us aside upon this temptation. I will only mention six.

1. In case of our Ancestors, and progenitors, that have gone before us. When our forefathers have generally taken any corrupt way, there is a great addictedness in their posterity to take the same course, and there needs a great measure of caution, that we be not followers of them. What! will some say, shall we condemn our forefathers, and judge ourselves wiser and better than all that have been before us? they made no scruple of such and such actions; they worshipped God in this, or the other manner; and shall we be more scrupulous than they were? No, we will be for the old way, and cleave to that religion, which our fathers were of. This was the argument which the woman of Sychar produced, in her discourse with Christ, to countenance the schismatical temple on Mount Gerizim, Joh. 4.20. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. As if she had said, whatever scriptures you may bring, or reasons you may press, to keep close to the institution of God, and to worship him at Jerusalem; yet I am sure, Our fathers were of another mind: They thought the punctilio's of institution, and divine appointment, were not so stiffly to be adhered unto: and why should not we do, as our fathers have done? And how hot were the Scribes and Pharisees for maintaining and upholding their fathers traditions? though some of them were down right contradictions against, and others corrupt additions unto the word of the Lord? See how they plead and quarrel with Christ, and his disciples for their non-conformity therein, Mar. 7.5. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? q.d. This constitution we received from our fathers, the elders of former generations: and why should not you be concluded by it, and give obedience thereunto? If it had been a novel, upstart

opinion, something might be said against it: but it hath continued a long time in the Church, even since the days of our forefathers.

To set you right in this matter, and to discover the vanity, and danger of this way of ratiocination; Give me leave to put you in mind of these five things.

1. It was one end of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, wherein all those are sharers, that are saved by him, that he might redeem his people from the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers: that he might bring them to embrace the commandments of God, and to give up themselves entirely in subjection to the Law of the Lord. So that, mark it Sirs, Have you an interest in the blood of Jesus Christ? would you make it appear that you are reconciled unto God by the sufferings of his Son? Why, this is one way to prove it, By renouncing the vain traditions of your Fathers, as far as they are [inconsistent] to the word of God, and have no footing in the word. As Christ redeemed God's peculiar people from the curse of the Law, that their persons might be accepted, and their iniquities forgiven: and as he redeemed them from their bondage unto Satan, that their natures might be sanctified, and themselves set apart unto communion with God: So he redeemed them also from the vain practices of their Fathers, that their lives might be ordered according to the Law of the Lord. What can be more perspicuous and evident? 1 Pet. 1.18, 19. Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

2. One special reason, why the Lord was graciously pleased to give forth the Scriptures, and to leave his will upon record in the Scriptures was this, that we might not pin our faith upon our fathers

sleeves, nor think it enough to do, as our ancestors have done. Sirs, If God had intended the traditions of our fathers as a rule of direction for us, and that they should have been obligatory upon us on all occasions, he would have left us unto them, and not have signified his will by writing in the word. So that take heed lest you frustrate the grace of God, in sending the holy Ghost to endite the Scriptures, and stirring up the Prophets and holy men of God, to be the pen-men thereof, that we might have a certain rule from which we must not recede. For as the Apostle argueth in the case of justification. If righteousness came by the moral Law, then there was no need of the death of Christ: the same will hold good in case of the rule of life, If the traditions of our fathers were a sufficient guide, then there was no need of the Scriptures. And therefore you shall find that the Lord gave forth his statutes and testimonies, as to supply the deficiency of the light of nature; so to call men off from cleaving to the corruptions of their fathers, Psal. 78.5, 6, 7, 8. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers: that they should make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born: who should arise and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments: And might not be as their Fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.

3. Whereas people are apt to plead for the Religion of their forefathers, and to be in love with it, because of its antiquity; that being the old way, to which therefore they will adhere; You must observe, That it is not every old way, without limitation or exception, that is to be approved, but the old way of holiness, and the fear of the Lord, which ought to be regulated by the word of the Lord; and which becometh vain and sinful when it is taught according to the traditions of men, Jer. 6.16. Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the

ways, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. Mark Sirs, It is not every old way that will bring spiritual peace, and lead you to everlasting rest, but the good old way. For most damnable corruptions may plead prescription of time, and in some sort their antiquity. There is the old way of sin and wickedness, which leads directly to the chambers of death, Job 22.15, 16, 17. Hast thou not marked the old way, which wicked men have trodden? which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood. Which said unto God, Depart from us, and what can the Almighty do for them? There is the old way of ignorance, and atheism, and error, and superstition, and profaneness: There is the old way of Popery, with its palpable blindness, blood-thirstiness, and idolatry. And indeed Sirs, if you will hold to this principle, To be of the Religion of your forefathers, you must return to the vomit of Popery with all its abominations: you must wallow in the mire of all their filthiness, and blasphemies; or else you must become Heathens and Infidels. For as Joshua speaketh unto the Israelites, Jos. 24.2. Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood of old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. The like may I say to you in this case, Your fathers of old time were Idolaters, they were drenched in the polluted waters of Popish darkness, Idolatry, and Superstition: within the compass of two hundred years, they worshipped God in a language they understood not; they gave heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of Daemons; they gave adoration to Saints and Angels; nay, they worshipped bread and wine, and dumb pictures and images. Or if you will go some hundreds of years higher into old times; then your fathers were downright Heathens, without the knowledge of Christ, or of God in Christ, that worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. Which then is the good old way, that we may walk therein? Why, It is the Scripture-way, the high-way of holiness, which God delivered unto his people in the

writings of Moses and the Prophets, those ancient records of the Church, which are of greater antiquity than any profane Heathen writings whatsoever. For the prophecy came not, in old time, by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost, 2 Pet. 1.21. The good old way, is the way of the Saints in the primitive ages of the Church; wherein they travailed towards the kingdom of heaven: the way of Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and other the servants of the most-High. And therefore when Peter calls them to the old times, it was to the times of Abraham the father of the faithful, 1 Pet. 3.5. For after this manner in the old time, the holy women also who trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands. Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham. The good old way, Sirs, is the way of righteousness, innocence, and integrity, obedience to the Law of the Lord, and subjection to his will: which can plead its antiquity beyond that of sin, which is but a novel invention of the devil (in comparison) and proceedeth from the vain imagination of man's heart, Eccl. 7.29. God made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions.

4. Are you resolved to be of the Religion of your fathers, and to walk in their ways, whatever they have been? Why, Remember, this was the very weapon, with which the unbelieving Jews fought against the Gospel. It was the very argument which they pressed against Christ and his disciples, and the way to heaven which he preached. So that if you had lived in the days of Christ, you would have persecuted him, as the Jews did; and would have opposed the Apostles, and sought to have rooted up the doctrines of life and salvation. How was Paul principled, when he was a persecutor? Why he was zealous against anything that opposed the traditions of his fathers; And that blind zeal made him mad, against the Church, Gal. 1.14. Phil. 3.6. Act. 26.11. What had they to object against Stephen for which he was

stoned? Why, the principal article of his charge was this, that he had preached against their customs, Act. 6.14.

5. This doth mightily enhance and aggravate the sinfulness of a sin, and tends to ripen the sinners for destruction, when iniquity doth descend from one generation to another; and persons continue to walk in those evil courses wherein their fathers have walked. For we should take warning from them, not to commit the like abominations. Their evil actions should be our admonitions, to keep free from the pollutions wherewith they were defiled. As hereditary diseases which come in a blood, and by descent from parents to their children, are the most dangerous diseases; so hereditary sins and transgressions are the most destructive. Mark how Nehemiah pleads against Sabbath-breaking on this account, Neh. 13.17, 18. What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this City? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath-day? God is wont to spare a rebellious people, till the measure of their iniquities are filled up; and then he sweeps them away, with the besom of destruction, Gen. 15.16. But, you will say, when is iniquity like to come to its full? Why, when one generation goeth on after another, to slight the Majesty of the Lord, and to trample upon his word. Then God will visit upon such a people their own sins, and their fathers also. He will visit their iniquity to the third and fourth generation, Mat. 23.31, 32. Ye are the children of them which killed the Prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. And Isa. 65.6, 7. Behold it is written before me, I will not keep silence: But will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together (saith the Lord) which have burnt incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom. So that I may fitly conclude this point with

the instruction of the Prophet Zechariah, Chap. 1.4. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former Prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord. That's the first case wherein it concerns us to use abundant circumspection.

2. In case of great men, and mighty men, that are set over us. When Magistrates and Rulers turn aside unto vanities, the people are ready to comply with them. And carnal reason is at hand to prompt arguments for it; because this is the way to be countenanced and respected by Governors: Here lieth the plain road to preferment. And herein sinners think they have something to say for themselves to justify their compliance, Must we not obey authority? and shall we not submit ourselves to them that are set over us? Have not they souls to save as well as we? and if they do thus and thus, why should we be so precise to scruple at it? So that, my Brethren, there needs special caution to keep ourselves pure in this case, Prov. 29.12. If a Ruler hearken unto lies, all his servants are wicked. i. e. They will be sure to suit their carriage, in a comportment with his corrupt humor: they will seek to ingratiate themselves, by being like unto him. The mistakes and miscarriages of private men are like a pocket-watch that goeth false, that deceives but one or two: But the sins of Princes and great men are like the ill-going of a Town-clock that deceives all the neighborhood. Therefore it is said of Jeroboam, that he did not only sin himself, but he made Israel to sin also, 1 King. 15.34. How did he make them to sin? Well he might force them to suffer, but he could not compel them to sin: many would not be made to sin by him, whose hearts were upright with Jehovah, but rather left their possessions and all that they had in Israel. The meaning then is this; Jeroboam, and his Princes, and Counselors, led them the way, and the people were soon wrought upon to conform to their example,

Hos. 5.11. Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment: because he willingly walked after the commandment; i. e. after the commandment of Jeroboam and his Counselors, whereby the worship of Dan and Bethel was established, and set up. See how the people plead from the practice of their Princes, and their forefathers together, Jer. 44.16, 17. As for the word that thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the Queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her; as we have done, we, and our Fathers, our Kings, and our Princes, in the Cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; q.d. What doth this man tell us so much of the word of the Lord? Have any of the Rulers observed such precepts? If they have worshipped the queen of heaven, why may not we do so likewise? Some Interpreters think the Text hath a special eye upon this, Thou shalt not follow a multitude, <H&G>, magnates, the mighty, so they render it; And the word may well take in both interpretations.

To quicken you therefore to caution in this respect, consider:

1. That God is the chief governor of the world, who hath an absolute dominion, and supremacy, over all people, and nations: and the greatest princes, and men in highest places upon earth, are but his deputies, and substitutes, and under Officers: they are but our fellow-servants in relation to the most-High. So that, in the first place, we must have regard to the voice of the Lord; and respect the examples of great men, no further than they are correspondent to his good pleasure and will. Let me clear it up to you by a familiar instance. If a King command me, upon a certain day, to appear at such a Town; and a Justice of peace require me at the same time to be at another place, far distant from it; whom must I herein obey?

You will all conclude, that undoubtedly I must obey the King, because he is the Supreme, and the Justice is but his Substitute; and so the commands of the King do supersede the others injunctions. Why Sirs, This is the very case: God is a great King, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lord's: and Magistrates and Rulers have their authority by deputation from him: they are his delegates, and act under him. So that first I must give obedience to the word of the Lord, who is the Sovereign. For the Kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the Governor [the supreme Governor, the alone absolute, and unaccountable Governor] among the Nations, Psal. 22.28. All others are accountable for the exercise of their power unto God. This is a point so clear, that the Apostles durst appeal to their very judges and adversaries, concerning it, Act. 4.19. Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.

2. Though Rulers, and great men, may give thee countenance and preferment upon the earth, yet they cannot save thee from the wrath of an incensed God. So that, do not provoke God to anger, to pleasure the mightiest man in the world; for he cannot uphold thee in the day of the Lord's indignation. When persons would employ us in any dangerous service, we are wont to say, Will you bear me out, and stand by me, and see that I shall sustain no damage by it? Pray think of it Sirs, To sin against the Lord is very dangerous service: and when thou art venturing upon it, to humor, and comply with great men, consider whether they are able to bear thee out in it, and can maintain thy cause, when the Lord ariseth to execute vengeance; whether they can keep thee from being called unto an account at the Judgment seat of Christ, and save thee from everlasting burnings. Alas, they are not able to save themselves. For he accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor: for they are all the work of his hands, Job. 34.19. He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead, v. 24, He

shall cut off the spirit of princes; he is terrible to the kings of the earth, Ps. 76.12. So that I will shut up this point, with that passage of Solomon, Prov. 29.26. Many seek the Rulers favor, but every man's judgment cometh from the Lord. Men may think it is a point of wisdom and policy, to please Rulers, and to keep in with them, though to the defiling of conscience, and robbing the Lord of his glory: But in the end it will appear to be gross folly and sottishness: For it is upon the God of heaven we have our constant dependence, both for this life, and eternity: And if God adjudge thee to hell, for thy sinful compliance; who can reverse the sentence, or can be able to deliver thee out of his hands?

That is the second case wherein special caution is required.

3. In case of near relations, and kindred, and intimate friends and acquaintance. Their practice hath a more than ordinary attractive influence. This is a snare of the devil, wherein many have been taken captive: an engine whereby Satan hath drawn abundance to destruction. Persons are apt to plead for themselves, that they must carry it fairly and courteously towards their relations and friends; and hold a familiar correspondency with them: so that if their relations be vain, themselves must be so too; and if they be wicked, how should they help it, but that they must sometimes partake with them in their wickedness? What would you have us to do, will they say? Would you have us cast off our dearest friends, and to separate from our nearest relations? This is given as the reason of the wickedness of Jehoram, His relations were sinners, and he joined with them: He had contracted affinity with a wicked family, and so drank of the cup of their abominations, 2 Chron. 21.6. He [Jehoram] walked in the way of the Kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord. And this was one of the

reasons why God did so frequently and severely charge his ancient people, that they should not make a league, nor join themselves in affinity with Idolaters: Because he knew it would be a strong incentive, to carry them into the like courses: and woeful experience proved it to be a truth, Deut. 7.2, 3, 4. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them. Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. As godly relations and acquaintance, that follow after holiness, may be a means to turn a man unto the Lord; or at least a great restraint to with-hold from open profaneness, and professed rebellion against the Lord: so it is upon the other hand, When most of a man's relations, and kindred, and acquaintance, are evil, it proveth a strong temptation to lead him unto evil with them, and to make him such as they are.

Now therefore to fortify your spirits, for the vanquishing of this temptation, let these following truths sink deep into your hearts.

1. That the best love you can manifest, and the most signal kindness you can show, to your dear friends and relations, is to endeavor to turn them from their sins; and so to be a means of promoting their deliverance from the infernal pit of perdition. And if you will walk humbly and seriously as in the sight of God and thereby adorn the doctrine of the gospel, and put a luster upon religion, to the practical condemnation of their evil deeds; who knoweth what effect it may have to their conviction, and consequently to their conversion, and the salvation of their souls? So that here is the question, Dost thou love thy relations indeed? Hast thou an affectionate desire of the welfare of thy friends? Why, here is the way to do them the greatest

office of love; by endeavoring to engage them in the way that leadeth to eternal life. If thou dost comply with them in sin, that will but further harden them, and help them forward to hell: whereas if thou art perfect and upright with the Lord: Peradventure thy counsels and example may win them over to the ways of holiness. As the Apostle speaks in the case of conjugal relation, 1 Cor. 7.16. What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thine husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? The like may I press upon you as to all kinds of relations. How knowest thou, but thou mayest be a means to convert thy friends and acquaintance? Or how canst thou tell but thou mayest save the souls of thy relations, at least of some of them? As thyself art a servant of God, so thou mayest possibly bring them into the same covenant with the Lord.

2. It is no point of incivility and discourteousness (however persons may call it) for a man to stop his friends or acquaintance in a course of ungodliness, and to pull them as firebrands out of the burning. This I add, to obviate the vain objections, and to prevent the carnal excuses that sinners commonly insist upon to shift off their duty in this respect. Alas, will they say, would not you have us, to be courteous towards them, and to deal civilly with them? Why man, it is the greatest incivility imaginable, for thee to see thy friend, or thy brother, or some of thy near relations, to be in danger every day of being everlastingly undone, and dropping down into hell; and for thee to look on and let them perish, without speaking a word in order to the prevention; and not to make use of any means for their deliverance; but rather to hasten their eternal ruin and destruction. Put the case, that one of your dearest friends or nearest relations were distracted and mad, and you should see him take up a sword into his hand that he might fall upon it, and destroy himself: Would you let him alone, and say; I am loath to disturb him, He is my dear friend. and I would not deal uncivilly with him? Or would not you

rather make hast, and snatch the weapon away, to prevent his killing? This is parallel to the case that we are upon. For Sirs, all impenitent sinners are mad, and besides themselves, they have lost the right use of their reason, Eccl. 9.3. The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart whilst they live. And by going on, and continuing, in any course of ungodliness they do murder and destroy their own souls. Hos. 13.9. O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, Ezek. 18.31. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will you die, O house of Israel? q. d. else you will perish unavoidably, you will die eternally: there is no other way to escape the damnation of hell, which is the second death. And art not thou a hard-hearted wretch, that canst stand by, and behold thy friend murdering himself, and never step in for his deliverance? Art not thou a very dissembler, a Judas under the name of a friend, that betrayest him with a kiss: that is, that lettest him destroy his soul in thy sight, and wilt not put in thy hand to save him, under the pretense of civility? It were the part of a true friend, to help him, what in thee lieth, out of his miserable and wretched estate, Psal. 141.5. Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head, Prov. 27.5, 6. Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend: but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. And what, if they do not so account of it at present, but take a loving reproof, for a high affront? Yet remember, if the Lord shall once bring them to a right understanding of their spiritual estate, they will acknowledge your faithfulness, and love you the better. For he that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favor, than he that flattereth with the tongue, Prov. 28.23. See the answer of the false prophets, when reclaimed from their error Zech. 13.6. And one shall say unto him, what are these wounds in thine hands? Then shall be answer, those with which I was wounded in the house

of my friends, q. d. O, they have dealt very friendly with me, I now acknowledge it as an act of eminent kindness, in that they stopped me in my course, and did not suffer, to run headlong into destruction.

3. Be very careful, and prudent, and exceeding wary, in the choice of relations, and acquaintance. Make no friendship with evil men: do not put yourselves by any contract of marriage, or service, into a wicked family: make no affinity with a wicked kindred. Indeed as to natural relations, as that of parents, or brethren, or sisters, or the like, our whole work lieth in a way of caution: but as to relations upon choice, there is a work to be done by way of prevention. And indeed Sirs, it is a point of extreme folly, for any person whatsoever that would save his soul, to join himself, by way of choice unto wicked relations. Herein is a particular, wherein the rich in the world, have a great advantage above others. They have commonly the choice of most of an inferior rank and condition, in point of marriage: and with a little more than ordinary cost, they may have the choice of all in respect of servants, and attendants. But their common neglect in improving this advantage, and usually preferring the trash and dung of the earth, before holiness and piety, in the choice of relations, is to me an undeniable practical evidence, How much this world is sought after more than the world to come. Take the resolution of David therefore as a copy to write after, Psal. 101.4, 5, 6. A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know awe icked person. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me. And take the Testimonial of Ahimalech concerning David, as an encouragement hereunto, 1 Sam. 22.14. Who is so faithful as David in all thine house? Who will be so faithful in their places and fill up their relations with the duties incident to them, so diligently, and conscientiously, as they that are in covenant with God, and have their hearts fashioned after his heart? From

whom can you expect so much comfort in this life, and so much furtherance in seeking after eternal life, as from the godly, who dare not wrong you, lest they should sin against the Lord? And, on the other side, if you do willingly join yourselves in affinity, or familiarity with the wicked, justly may the Lord give you up to follow their wickedness. For you can never comfortably expect, that God should preserve you from the commission of sin, unless you shun and avoid the occasions of it.

4. Seriously mind the articles of the covenant of peace, and reconciliation; whereupon Christ doth enroll persons amongst the number of his disciples, and doth undertake to conduct them unto the Father. Why, it is expressly upon this condition, that they follow him rather than their dearest relations; and cleave unto him, in all estates, though to the utter rejecting and casting them off, Luke 14.26. If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Not as if we were positively to hate our relations; for the doctrine of the gospel, is a great promoter of love: It commands us to love our very enemies, much more our intimate friends and acquaintance. But the meaning is this, if he do not hate them, i. e. if he do not love them, in a lesser degree than he doth Christ, which is comparatively a kind of hatred: If he be not ready to reject and cast them off, as we do that which we hate, rather than sin against the Lord, and reject his word: If he do not stop his ears against their solicitations unto sin, and stand fast against their enticements: If he do not follow Christ's command, and example, rather than theirs, when they come in a competition; he is but an hypocrite, whatsoever profession he maketh. See that strict and severe injunction, as to the Sin of idolatry, to the Israelites of old, Deut. 13.6, 8, 9. If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as

thine own soul, entice thee secretly saying, let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers: Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him. But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

That is the third case, that requires more than ordinary caution.

4. The fourth is in case of professors of religion, and such as make a show of godliness, and have, or seem to have good acquaintance with the Almighty. People are apt to think, that they are bound to conform to their pattern, and to swallow down whatsoever they embrace, though it be corrupt and liable to just exception; especially if they are persons of any note and eminency in Religion. Whom may we imitate, if not those that belong to the Lord, and call themselves his servants? Here is much danger of being defiled, wherein we see such as are accounted eminent professors to defile themselves. My brethren, as a godly man may fall foully into heinous transgressions, so a company of professors of godliness may join together in so doing: And in such a case it is an easy thing for a man or woman to slip insensibly into the same error, and to be entangled with them in the same pollution. For this you have a notable instance in the person of Barnabas, touching the religious observance of the ceremonial law. When the believing Jews came from James to Antioch, they would not eat with the Gentiles, as putting a holiness in abstinence from those things wherein Christ had purchased liberty: And the Apostle Peter and other Jews of Antioch, dissembled in the matter and joined with them in their separation. And when Barnabas saw such an eminent man as Peter and so many godly persons take that course, he was quickly led into the same error with them. And had not S. Paul withstood them boldly, and rebuked Peter to the face,

and stood up in the vindication of Christian liberty, who knows how far the Gangrene might have spread? See the history of it at large, Gal. 2.11, 12, 13, 14. They were men of repute for godliness, and believed in Jesus Christ; and this mightily prevailed upon Barnabas, and carried him away. And upon this account it is that the devil acts most powerfully, and doth greatest mischief, by transforming himself into an Angel of light, and when his ministers transform themselves into the ministers of righteousness. For he knows, that under a show of Religion, and in compliance with them that are highly esteemed for godliness, many will be wrought upon to such things as otherwise they would abhor, 2 Cor. 11.13, 14, 15.

To give you some preservatives against infection on this account, let me take the liberty to set before you these three Scripture truths.

1. That the examples of the very best, and choicest of the servants of God upon earth, are not absolute and unquestionable rules for the guidance of our practice: but they must be reduced unto the great example, even that of our Lord Jesus Christ; and no further owned, than they are conformable and consentaneous thereunto. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: He fulfilled all righteousness without defect, or imperfection: He was a Lamb without spot, or blemish: and therefore we may be concluded by his pattern. But the most eminent Saints have their spots and blemishes. Godly men and women do not always act their godliness, but sometimes vent their corruptions as well as others. The principle of grace Sirs doth always act like itself, but a gracious man doth not always act like himself, Jam. 3.2. For in many things we offend all. Eccl. 7.20. There is not a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not. So that their examples must be tried by the Law, and the testimony; they must be examined as to their answerableness to the great example. Indeed, in many cases, the practice of the Saints is a

good Expositor of the rule, and ought to be improved as an argument to quicken us to live up to the rule of the word of God: but it is not sufficient of itself to constitute a rule, nor to justify any action that is condemned thereby. And therefore, as we are commanded in one place to be followers of the Saints; so you have it restrained in another place with this limitation, as far as they are followers of Jesus Christ. Compare Heb. 6.12. with 1 Cor. 11.1. If a man were tied up in everything to follow the example of the godly, he might at sometimes act like the devil, and do that which tends to promote his interest, Mat. 16.23. He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

2. The very use that we should make of the failings and miscarriages of the godly, is not to encourage us to imitation, but to quicken us to the more heedful circumspection; that we may not fall into their sins. Thus should we reason with our spirits, If such or such eminent Christians have warped in this point, or the other; what need have we to watch and pray, lest we should enter into temptation? Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. See the pleading of Nehemiah from this Topic, Neh. 13.25, 26. Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon King of Israel sin by these things? yet among many Nations was there no King like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him King over all Israel; nevertheless, even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

3. As a preventive against falling by this kind of seduction, be very cautious, that you do not divide asunder into sects, and parties, in the business of Religion. For then this temptation is apt to work more powerfully and prevalently, when we are of a party, and the evil is practiced by men of the same confederacy and persuasion with us.

When one Christian is for Paul, and another of Apollos, and a third of Cephas: when believers are crumbled into divisions, and take upon them names of distinction and separation one from another: In such a case, it is easy to be misled and corrupted. People are apt to swallow down the tenets of that party to which they are joined, without weighing them in the balance of the sanctuary; and to write after their copy, without questioning the warrantableness of it. And truly Sirs, there is utterly a fault-amongst us at this day, concerning this matter. I am persuaded, there are many, who would seem to be something for godliness, can give you little or no grounds from the Scripture, for divers things which they maintain and practice; only they take it upon trust from the men of their way and persuasion. And therefore my counsel is that of our Savior, Mat. 23.8, 9, 10. Call no man father upon the earth, for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even Christ. i. e. Do not build your faith, upon any man's judgment or opinion, but search the Scriptures that you may know what is the mind of God: Do not make parties in Religion, nor impose upon men's faith, but teach them those things, which I have commanded you. It seems to be spoken in opposition to the corrupt usage amongst the Jews, who were miserably rent into Sects, and were ready to follow, some the dictates of one Rabbi, and some of another, who were the fathers or Ring-leaders of their Sect. But Sirs, all sincere Christians are of one society, and have but one master even Christ. His sheep hear his voice, and follow him, for they know his voice. But a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers, Joh. 10.4, 5.

So much for the fourth case that requireth such abundant circumspection, that we be not ensnared by the example of the multitude.

5. The fifth is, In case of men of excellent parts, and learning, and knowledge, above others. When many of that rank, such as are accounted wise, understanding, judicious persons, shall act sinfully, and turn aside into crooked ways; then the common sort of people think they may warrantably tread in the same path, when they have men of renown for knowledge, to go before them. Surely, will they argue, If there were any hurt in such things, so many learned Doctors would not approve of them. Shall we be so highly conceited of ourselves, as to think we are wiser than such great Scholars, and Teachers of the word of God? Herein seemeth to lie the force of the argument that was brought against the officers, who durst not lay hands upon Christ, because they took him for a Prophet, for that never man, spake like him, Jo. 7.47, 48, 49. Then answered them the Pharisees, are ye also deceived? Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people that knoweth not the law are cursed. As if they had said, do but observe Christ's followers, and you shall find that generally they are but a company of poor, ignorant, and illiterate people: you have hardly one learned man amongst them that owneth him. Do you think that if he were indeed the Messiah, the Pharisees would oppose him, who are men well skilled in the Law? Would not the Rulers close with him? will you be so proud and arrogant as to prefer your judgment before theirs?

To quicken you a little to be cautious in this respect, there are four things worthy to be considered in this behalf.

1. That the promises for discovering the will and mind of the Lord, in reference to matters of everlasting concernment, are not made to men of great parts and learning; but to such as serve the Lord in simplicity, and integrity of heart. When a person is truly desirous to fear the name of God, and maketh it his study and principal design to commend his conscience in his sight; such a one, though he be but of

meaner parts and accomplishments, is in a greater likelihood to be clearly instructed in the things concerning the kingdom of heaven, then the greatest scholars, that are strangers to the sanctifying grace of the spirit, Psal. 25.12. What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him he will teach in the way that he shall choose. And v. 14. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. Mark it Sirs, it is not much learning in the head, but godly sincerity and the fear of the Lord in the heart, that doth entitle us to these promises of divine teaching. So that this is a poor argument of the goodness, or justifiableness of any way, because many great scholars and wise men walk in it. Besides, the Holy Ghost is express in this point, that most wise men after the flesh are strangers unto the power of godliness, and enemies to the way of salvation, 1 Cor. 1.26, 27. For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty. Some there are of all sorts that are gathered into the kingdom of Christ (for it is not the condition or state of life, but the constitution or frame of the heart, which is the hindrance unto salvation) But there are not many of this sort, namely, of them that are learned and wise after the flesh: The greatest number of such are usually adversaries to the truth. See the words of our Savior in his thanksgiving unto God, Mat. 11.25. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

2. Are they men of wisdom and understanding, whose examples are pleaded, in opposition to the commands of Jesus Christ? But how shall it be known, whether they are wise indeed? All is not gold, we say, that makes a glittering show: so, All is not true wisdom that

carrieth the face of it, and hath that name and title given to it. They alone are truly wise who keep exactly close to the word of God, and that dare not venture to do what is displeasing in his sight. Whatsoever hath a tendency to carry a man in opposition to the word, or to cause him to reject the law of the Lord of hosts, is but the appearance, and show of wisdom; it is indeed the greatest madness and folly. There are two places of divine writ for the confirmation of this point, worthy to be wrote on the tables of men's hearts as in letters of Gold, and as with the pen of a Diamond, that they may never be obliterated. The first is that, Deut. 4.5, 6. Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so, in the Land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom, and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. By contempt of the word of Christ we provoke to indignation the God of infinite power, against whom never man hardened himself and prospered. And is it not perfect madness to engage him to be our adversary? It is a point of the highest wisdom to keep in with the most high, and to get an interest in his favor? Obedience to the statutes of God hath the promise of a blessing annexed to it; and the contrary is attended with a curse, that will secretly insinuate itself into all a man's enjoyments, and eat out the comfort of them. It is by the word of Christ you must be judged hereafter, and sentenced to receive your everlasting portion; And therefore it must needs be an act of the highest wisdom, not to despise the word, nor to set up the dictates of men above the word. The other text you have Jer. 8.9. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?

3. God doth many times leave many learned, and wise men, unto themselves, to fall into errors and corruptions, to this very purpose, that others may be tried by them, whether they will follow their opinion and judgment, or stick fast to God's testimonies, Dan. 11.35. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try by them. We read it, to try them: But the words are, <H&G>, probandum per illos, to prove others by their example; They shall therefore be suffered to fall into many sins and corruptions, (for of that sort of falling it may well be understood) that it may be seen, who will cleave unto the word of God, rather than to the opinions of learned men.

4. Whereas they were wont to be charged as proud, arrogant, and self-conceited persons, that will not in all things subscribe to the judgments of learned men; but scruple such things as many understanding judicious persons make no bones of: You must remember as to this, that it is rather an act of the greatest pride and arrogancy in the most learned men, to set up their dictates in opposition to the commands of Jesus Christ. All that are truly humble will stoop to his precepts, and subject themselves to his guidance and governance, 1 Tim. 6.3, 4. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness: He is proud, knowing nothing, Neh. 9.29. Thou testifiedest against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments. Mark it, here are the proud and arrogant persons, that think themselves wiser than God, and will not submit to his instructions and counsels. This is pride indeed, and monstrous self-conceitedness. And therefore let me close this head with the advice of Solomon, Prov. 3.5, 6. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

6. The last case I shall mention, wherein especial care is to be taken, lest we be ensnared by the example of the multitude, is in case of the Inhabitants of the places where we live, and amongst whom we dwell: and (that I may comprise them together) in case of the persons with whom much of our business lieth in matters of the world, and with whom we often converse in our secular negotiations and affairs. I join them together, because there is a near cognation and similitude betwixt them, and the temptation works in both, upon the same ground and motive. People are willing to do, as their neighbors do: and to take the same course, as their ordinary companions take, and men of the same rank and outward condition with them. Will the tradesman be apt to plead, other men of my profession commonly sit and tipple at the alehouse, and tavern, and they say, they cannot make a good bargain without it; or they should lose their custom, except they humor their customers in their lusts; And why may not I do the same? Others say, they cannot live if they should speak the truth in their markets, and not take the liberty to dissemble or lie as to the price of their commodities; and why should I be more strict than they? Will the gentleman argue, other men of my rank and estate spend their time in hawking, and hunting, and carding, and gaming, and reveling; they never think of a calling, or how to be serviceable to God in their generations; and why may not I take the same liberty? Most in the town and parish neglect studying the word, and never pray in their families, nor instruct their children, and servants; and what reason is there that we should be more precise than all the neighborhood besides? As persons love to be in the common fashion, as to their garb and habit; So in respect of their moral actions and behavior: So much is clearly implied in the words of Joshua, cap. 24.15. If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord; choose you this day whom you will serve, either the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell. He knew, that men are inclined to

be of the same religion with the people of the place where they dwell, and to conform to the inhabitants of the neighborhood, that are round about them. And therefore the Lord doth warn his people to take heed of the sins of the Canaanites when they should come to dwell in the land of Canaan, Deut. 6.10, 11, 14. And it shall be when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land, which he swore unto thy fathers, &c. Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt; from the house of bondage. And v. 14. Ye shall not go after other gods of the gods of the people which are round about you, q. d. You have heard already of their abominations, and perhaps think you abhor them; but the danger will be when you come into their land, and to have your habitations amongst them: then you will be apt to do after their customs. Now to fence you against the prevalence of this temptation, let me beseech you to lay to heart this one particular. That by casting our lot amongst evil neighbors, and in the midst of a wicked people, God doth try us whether our hearts are sound in his statutes, or not; and whether we will deal faithfully, or falsely, in his covenant. And will not you be careful to be found upright, when you are upon the trial? If a master should leave a sum of money, scattered up and down in a room, as if it were neglected; and the servant knoweth that it is but purposely to try his honesty; and that his master hath told it exactly, and knoweth if any be missing; only he taketh this way to try his truth, and fidelity: Would not the servant be very careful and wary in such a case, when he knoweth he stands upon his trial? Why man, thus it is in this matter. Is thine habitation fixed amongst workers of iniquity? Doth much of thy business lie with those that are profane and ungodly? Why, now thou standest upon thy trial, and God doth order it to be so, to this very end, that he may try thy truth and fidelity, and the honesty of thy heart, whether thou wilt follow his word, or their examples. That's a notable text to this purpose, Judge. 3.1, 4. Now these are the Nations, which the Lord

left to prove Israel by them. And v. 4. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken to the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. God could have drove out all the idolatrous Nations together, and have utterly rooted them up at first before the face of his people: But he left some to be dispersed amongst them. To what end were they left? Why to this very end, that he might try his people, whether they would cleave unto him, with full purpose of heart, or not. So God could gather his Saints together, and destroy the wicked from amongst them: But he leaves them scattered up and down in the midst of the ungodly, and surrounded with them on every side, to this very purpose, That he may try them, whether they will fear and serve him, or be conformed to the wicked amongst whom they dwell.

And therefore it is worth your observing by the way, That there are three sorts of providential dispensations, whereby God doth especially set his people upon the trial.

1. By permitting errors, and heresies to be vented amongst them: By suffering men to vent their own corrupt notions, instead of divine truths; and to set up their own superstitious inventions, in the place of Christ's Ordinances. These are a great trouble and perplexity upon the spirits of the godly; and perhaps sometimes they are apt to wonder, that the Lord doth not take more care of his own worship and institutions, but suffereth them to be defiled with human devices, and sinful mixtures. Why Sirs, God is jealous of his truth, and worship; but he suffers these errors, and corruptions for a time, that Professors may be tried, concerning the soundness of their profession: whether they will be blown aside by every wind of doctrine, and be carried by every specious pretense, to follow the fancies of men; or will hold fast the truth and simplicity of the

Gospel, 1 Cor. 11.19. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved, may be made manifest among you.

2. God doth put his people upon the trial, by letting forth the rage of unreasonable men against them: and by exercising them under hardships and difficulties, upon the score of Religion. For times of suffering for righteousness sake, are discriminating seasons. The boisterous wind of persecution will drive away the chaff, and the wheat only will abide. And therefore such dispensations are called trials, because God's end therein is, that his people may be proved. He doth not give them into the hands of his adversaries, as if he did not regard their welfare, or sought their ruin, or delighted in their afflictions and sorrow; but his intent is to try them, 1 Pet. 4.12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as if some strange thing happened unto you, Jam. 1.2, 3. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

3. The Lord doth put his servants upon the trial, by dispersing them amongst the ungodly, and fixing their habitations in the midst of sinners. For God hath appointed before, the bounds of men's dwellings, here, as well as their eternal condition hereafter, Act. 17.26. And he could gather his people into a body together: But he hath scattered them up and down, here a person, and there a family, and the wicked are one very side: and it is done to this end, that they may be proved, whether they will go down the stream with the multitude, or walk in the narrow way of holiness, and the fear of God. And would not you be found faithful upon trial? Take the resolution of David as a pattern, Psal. 17.3, 4. Thou hast proved mine heart, thou hast visited me in the night, thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing: I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.

This is all that I shall speak under the third general Head, Touching the special cases that require most diligent circumspection, lest we be drawn aside into sin by following the multitude.

SECT. V.

The next Point to be handled is, the demonstration or proof of the Doctrine, The question is this.

QU. 4. What reasons may be produced, against compliance with the multitude in sin, which we may press upon our hearts, in order to abate the edge of that inclination that is apt to be within us, to follow their example?

ANS. I shall reduce all that shall be delivered in answer to this Question, unto four Heads. The arguments may be drawn from four Topics.

From

1. The spiritual estate, wherein the multitude are.
2. The concernment that lieth upon us, to prove our own spiritual estate, and condition.
3. The duties that are incumbent on us, in relation to the multitude, which are altogether inconsistent with our compliance with them.
4. The danger that will arise by following them.

1. The first Argument is taken, from the spiritual estate wherein most persons are, and the way wherein they travel, or the place whither they are going. Why Sirs, the greatest number of people are the children of the devil, and lie in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity: they go in the broad way that leads to hell and destruction. So that, if you will follow their example, it must of necessity end in the ruin of your precious, and immortal souls. If you will travel towards heaven, you must expect but few to bear you company, and to be of your society, and fellowship. The multitude take another course, and their journeying tends to another place, even to the chambers of eternal death, 1 Joh. 5.19. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. The whole world] that is, the greatest part of the world, the generality of people: the denomination is given to the major part. And will you follow them that lie in wickedness? that are wholly drenched in sensuality and ungodliness? Is their carriage a good pattern for imitation, that are altogether dead in sin, and even buried in it? that lie in sin as in a dead sleep, and are under the power and command of the prince of darkness? This is the reason which our Savior presseth, Mat. 7.13, 14. Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. It amounts to thus much, as if Christ had said, The whole world is divided into two companies, or societies, and they take different courses; some are travelling towards heaven, but, alas, they are but an handful, in comparison of the multitudes that flock together in the way to hell and damnation: Do not you therefore consort with them, but associate yourselves with the little flock, to whom the Father hath designed to give the Kingdom. If your hearts hanker after consociation, and fellowship with the multitude, you will be sure to find them in the way to eternal perdition.

2. Therefore you should take heed that you be not led by the multitude, that you may evidence yourselves to be the peculiar people of God, such as are taken into the bond of the Covenant of reconciliation with him, and that shall everlastingly dwell in his presence. Which you cannot do if you follow the multitude: for the children of God are a selected company, such as are called and picked out from the multitude, that they may drive on other designs, and take a way by themselves. Although believers are in the world, yet they are not of the world; but a spiritual body gathered out of the world, Joh. 17.16. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Psal. 14.3. Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself. How are such set apart for the enjoyment of God? Why, as in the designation and fore-appointment of the Father before time, so he doth set them apart in time, by the grace of conversion, whereby they are plucked out from amongst the generality, who are still suffered to walk in their own ways. This is an argument of great strength and efficacy, if rightly managed and improved: And therefore give me leave to open it more distinctly in three Conclusions.

1. It concerns us, as we tender our own spiritual comfort and welfare, not only to resign and give up ourselves to be the Lord's, but also to make it manifest, and evident that we are the Lord's: not only to become unfeignedly the servants of God, but to clear it up to our hearts, that we are indeed his servants, and that he hath made with us an everlasting Covenant. For herein lies the sweetness of Religion, and that which will put life, and comfort, into every condition and providence; when we can assure our hearts, that through grace we are beloved of the Lord. Then a person may eat his bread with joy, and drink his wine with a merry heart, he may partake of all his enjoyments with delight, and pass through every estate without any perplexity or trouble, when he knoweth, that God hath accepted him,

Eccl. 9.7. And moreover, the joy arising from this knowledge will wonderfully enlarge the heart, and minister strength to the spirit in running the steps of God's commandments. The love of God when it is thus shed abroad into our souls, will constrain us to love him again, and to put forth our utmost vigor and might in keeping his statutes. And therefore we are so earnestly called upon, To make our calling and election sure, 2 Pet. 1.10. And to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith? 2 Cor. 13.5.

2. The sure way to make it evident, without danger of being deceived, that we are the Lord's, and that he is our father, is by a serious reflecting upon our carriage towards him, and diligently observing the tenor of our conversation before him. If you would prove that there is a principle of grace in your hearts, it must be by the exercise of grace, in bringing forth fruits of holiness in your lives. 'It is by our conversations Christ will judge us hereafter; and therefore according to the tenor thereof we must pass sentence upon ourselves here. That is the way to prevent self-deception, and to put it out of question, that the root of the matter is in us, Gal. 6.4. Let every man prove his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. And v. 7. Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

3. To bring the matter home to our purpose, you must observe, That if your conversation be molded according to the example of the multitude, and if you walk no otherwise than the generality walk, it will never conduce to this end: nor be effectual to evidence that you are of the number of God's children. Common practices will not be evidential of special grace. It is a singularly righteous and holy conversation that must prove you to be partakers of a saving conversion. If you will make it appear that you are chosen out of the world you must not be conformed unto the world. For the children of

God are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people, 1 Pet. 2.9.

And therefore take notice by the way, that such a conversation, as is evidential of saving grace in the heart, and consequentially of the persons being translated into the state of grace, must have these three properties.

It must be

1. A spiritual.
2. A uniform.
3. A singular.

Conversation.

1. It must be a spiritual conversation, or obedience. When a man doth the commandments of God from the heart, and with the soul and spirit; out of an awful regard, that is within him, to the majesty of God; and a conscientious respect unto the law of the Lord. External duties may be performed by a hypocrite; and are no certain characters of a sanctified heart: But they are born of God, who do engage their very spirits to approach unto him. When a person doth serve the Lord because he loveth him; and doth obey his voice because he delighteth in it: when he doth act righteously in his life, and his heart goeth along with him in his actions: Here is the note of an Israelite indeed. It was this comforted Hezekiah, Issa. 38.3. Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.

2. It must be a settled and uniform conversation when holiness is a clew of thread, that runs through the whole of a man's course, and doth interest itself in his constant and continued practice. It is not a fit of affection, or some obedience tendered upon occasion, when the sinner is in a good mood; that will prove him to be a regenerate person: But when he doth wholly dedicate himself, and his time, unto the service of God; and bring all other affairs and concernments into a subordination thereunto. As it is not every particular act of sin, that will denominate the party offending to be an impenitent sinner; except he make it his way and course wherein he walketh: So it is not every particular act of righteousness, that will bespeak the person performing it a righteous person; except holiness be the high way where in he walketh, and he take it along with him into all conditions, and companies, into all his concernments and undertakings, Psal. 106. 3. Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness, at all times. And Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God: For he walked with God, three hundred years, i.e. He was in the fear of the Lord all his life time, Heb. 11.5. Gen. 5.22.

3. It must be a special, or singular conversation, such as is differenced from that of the generality of people. If you walk as they do, you will prove yourselves to be such as they are. How shall it appear that you are a peculiar people, unless your demeanor be answerable, i.e., a peculiar demeanor? It is upon this condition, that God doth accept of you as his, and maketh over himself unto you, That you do not walk as others walk, a Cor. 6.17, 18. Wherefore come out from amongst them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. And I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

That is the second argument, for demonstration of the doctrine.

3. A third reason that may be pressed against following a multitude in evil, is taken, from the duties that are incumbent on us in relation unto them, when they sin against the Lord, and do that which is displeasing in his sight. There are such duties required at our hands, as are not only inconsistent with confederating with them, and walking after their example, but diametrically opposite, and contrary thereunto, as light is to darkness. I might insist upon many, but shall content myself to instance in these four only.

1. It is our duty to pity them, and mourn over them, and to take up a lamentation on their account: To make it the grief of our spirits, to see the name of God dishonored, and his statutes contemned, and the blood of the Lord Jesus despised, and poor souls running headlong to destruction. This hath been the carriage of the Saints of God, in times of corruption and wickedness, Psal. 119.136. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law. As David was humbled for his own transgressions, so it was a heart-breaking to him, to see others transgress. And see how the prophet Jeremy was affected with the sin and misery of the disobedient, Jer. 13.17. But if not will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places, for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive. Now these compassionate workings, and godly sorrow, are a frame of spirit, at a great distance from compliance with the ungodly. And this is one particular that will render us conformable unto our Lord and master: As he loved his own unto the end, with an insuperable, everlasting, and unparalleled love; so his bowels were moved with pity and compassion towards his very enemies, that set against him, because of their folly and the wretched estate into which they had plunged themselves, Luk. 19.41, 42. And when he was come near, he beheld

the City, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. Mark the speech of Christ here, how it is made up of a kind of abrupt expressions, as proceeding from a spirit full of affection and tenderness, and seeking as it were, to ease itself in a passionate lamentation. If thou hadst known, q.d. Alas poor Jerusalem! thy desolation is approaching, because thou hadst not known the things that belong unto thy peace. Well had it been for thee, if thou hadst but known them! Would to God thou hadst been so wise, as to have taken them into thy knowledge and consideration; that so thy calamities might have been averted and prevented! O what a grief is it to my heart, that thou boast not known them! So that here is our duty, if God hath cast our lot amongst many wicked, that commit abominations in his sight, we should be so far from joining in a combination with them, that it should stir up a holy mourning in our souls, to see them trampling upon the word of God, and lightly esteeming the rock of our salvation. And these are the persons whom, in times of public judgments, the Lord is pleased to set a mark upon; namely, such as do not only cry out of their own sins, but are filled with sorrow for the abominations of the multitude. See it in Ezekiel's vision, Ezek. 9.4. And the Lord said unto him, Go thorough the midst of the City, thorough the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. Set a mark upon them, i.e. a mark of special and gracious observation, here are the people that are beloved of the Lord, unto such as these he will have respect: and secondly a mark for sure deliverance and preservation; when others fall at their right hand and at their left, the evil determined shall not come near unto them, as it is, v. 6. Come not near any man upon whom is the mark. You know the Angel could do nothing as to the overthrowing of Sodom, till Lot was secured. What was he above other men? See, 2 Pet. 2.7, 8. And he delivered

just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man dwelling amongst them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day today, with their unlawful deeds.

2. When others sin, it is our duty to reprove them, as we have occasion, and opportunity: and that plainly and faithfully, with Christian prudence and discretion. And this is utterly inconsistent with following their example, For thou art altogether inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest them that do evil, and doest the same: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself. He that would do good by reprovng another, must be sure to look warily to himself; that he be not involved in the same guilt: lest his words recoil into his own face, and be retorted unto his own shame and confusion. That is an excellent saying of the vulgar latin, and the original text, will well bear the translation, Prov. 18.17. *Justus primus est accusator sui: venit amicus ejus, & investigabit eum.* A just man before he meddle in the reproof of others, will diligently search his own Soul, and see to the cleansing and reforming of his ways. So that the duty of reprovng the ungodly, doth suppose we ought to keep free from the taint of their ungodliness. This is the Apostle Paul's way of argumentation, Eph. 5.11. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

3. Our duty in relation unto sinners is, what in us lieth, to convert them and win them over to the truth: To endeavor that of ignorant, they may become verst in the ways of God; and of wicked and sinful, they may become serious and holy; and of enemies of religion, they may be sure friends and assertors of it. And this is far from imitation of them: For if you comply with them in sin, that will harden them exceedingly, and make them more bold and venturous, and obstinate in their evil ways. They will argue after this sort, well may we take

this course, for such professors of religion join with us, and such as are accounted godly are men of our confederacy. It is charged upon the prophets of Jerusalem, that they committed adultery, and walked in lies, and strengthened the hands of evil doers, that none did return from his wickedness, Jer. 23.14. How did they strengthen their hands? Not only by their corrupt doctrine, and flattering sermons; but also by their wicked lives, and conversations. That did minister an argument to the evil doers, whereby to maintain their presumptuous hopes of salvation; and from whence to take encouragement not to repent of their abominations. This compliance with sinners, instead of helping to convert them, doth lay a stumbling block in their way. And indeed there is scarcely a greater obstacle in the way of the conversion of the wicked, than the sinful compliance of carnal professors.

4. It is expressly required as our duty, in relation to sinners, to withdraw from them, that they may be ashamed, Prov. 1.15. My son walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy feet from their path. So Prov. 9.6. Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the way of understanding, 2 Thes. 3.14. And if any man obey not our word by this Epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. And were this duty but strictly and conscientiously practiced by the body of professors of religion, to withdraw from such as walk disorderly, who knoweth what good effects it might produce unto their conviction, humiliation, and salvation? A remarkable instance we have in the Ecclesiastical histories. When Simeon a Bishop in Persia was led to prison for refusing to communicate in their idolatrous worship; As he was going, there was sitting at the gate of the Kings Court an old Eunuch that had been the Kings Tutor; called Ustazares, once a Christian, but now fallen from his profession: who seeing Simeon led by, rose up and did him reverence: On the contrary Simeon would not show him any respect,

but turned away from him with indignation, and rebuked him for revolting from the truth. And what effect had it upon the Eunuchs spirit? Why, immediately Usthazares burst forth into weeping, and laid aside his rich apparel, and sitting at the Court gate, he cried out, Woe is me, with what face shall I hereafter look upon God, seeing Simeon disdaineth to behold me? and presently he renounced his idolatry, repented of his former inconstancy, and died a martyr for the faith.

That's the third argument to strengthen the doctrine.

4. The last reason, which I shall mention, to dissuade from following a multitude in sin, shall be taken from the danger that will arise by so doing. If you sin with them, you must expect to be plagued as they are. If you will eat of their dainties you must also drink of their cup, i.e. the cup of the Lord's indignation, which he hath in store to put into their hands. There is no way in the world to avoid the fury of God, that is to be poured forth upon the wicked, but by withdrawing from them, and not daring to tread in their steps. For the Lord, in the execution of judgment, is no respecter of persons: He dealeth impartially and alike with all sorts and conditions. He will not spare professors, because of their profession, when he cometh to punish the inhabitants of the earth: But if their actions be alike, they shall receive the like portion also. See what the Lord saith to Judah, because they turned aside unto idolatry after Israel's example, Ezek. 23.31. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister, therefore I will give her cup into thine hand. Nay let me tell you, that profess religion, and yet follow the multitude in evil; you shall receive the greater condemnation: You will not only be chargeable with your own personal sins and impenitence; but with the sins of others, that were induced to follow them by your example; and with the impenitence of others, wherein they persisted through your encouragement. So

that if you would be free from a most certain and sore destruction; do not say a confederacy with the multitude in sin. Some indeed understand that place, Rev. 18.4. of a local separation; but I think it is rather meant of a spiritual separation from Antichristian pollutions: However, if that be included, this is not excluded: with which text I shall shut up this head, Rev. 18.4. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her my people that ye be not partaker of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

SECT. VI.

1. For Application of the Doctrine.

Having finished the doctrinal part of this point, I shall now proceed to the practical improvement of it; for our edification, and building up in knowledge and holiness, unto everlasting life. Let me therefore speak a little, to the usefulness of this lesson, By way of,

1. Information.

2. Exhortation.

1. By way of Information. There are three special inferences, that naturally flow from what hath been delivered.

INFER. 1. If a Christian must not be led by the example of a multitude, but must stand fast against their example and solicitations unto sin: then hence it followeth, That such as are indeed the servants of Christ, and will walk uprightly with the Lord, in the conscientious observance of his laws and precepts, they must of necessity be endued with a spirit of fortitude and courage. Why? Because in many cases they are to withstand the multitude; and to

walk in a way, that is opposite, and contradictory to that of the greatest number of persons: and this will never be done, without much courage and resolvedness. A man that swimmeth against the stream, and the tide, and the wind together, need to put forth the utmost of his strength, and to strike vigorously and strenuously; or else he will be carried away: Such is the course of every godly man. He must swim against the stream of corrupt nature, that would carry him headlong into evil, as the horse rusheth into the battle: He must strive against the wind of satanical temptations, and carnal reasonings; they would drive him back into the haven of ease and pleasure, or outward profit and greatness: And then he must contend likewise against the tide of the multitude, who come against him as so many tempestuous waves: So that if he do not act with all his might, and set himself with a full purpose of heart, to hold on his course; he will certainly be overborn by the violence of their opposition. A cowardly Christian is a contradiction in adjecto; for such a man will never be faithful unto God: because he is to bear up against the multitude. And therefore you shall find the Lord pressing his people to courage on this very account, 2 Chron. 15.7, 8. Be strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded. And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin. Mark, it was a time of general defection and apostasy, and therefore God doth exhort them to be valiant for the truth. There need to be a good measure of resolvedness, in the spirit, to stand fast against the enticements and provocations of some particular sinners: much more when a Christian is to walk in a contrariety to the most, and hath a multitude to contest and encounter with, Ezra 10.4. Be of good courage, and do it, Josh. 1.7. Only be thou strong, and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee.

That's the first deduction from the point.

2. If a believer must not act after the pattern of the multitude, then hence I gather, that such as will approve themselves unto God, and not deal falsely and unfaithfully in the covenant of God, they must be men of singularity. As they must walk regularly, so they must walk singularly, in a way by themselves: in respect to abstinence from sin, in regard of purity of heart, and holiness of life and conversation. They are not permitted a compliance with the greatest number of men, in any indirect course. As in respect to the grace of conversion and sanctification, though the servants of God are in the world, yet they are not of the world, but gathered, and culled, and chosen out of it, Jo. 15.19. Jo. 17.16. So must it be in relation to their practice also, though they abide in the world, yet they must not be conformed unto the world, but keep themselves unspotted from the pollutions of it. This is pure religion, and undefiled before God, and the Father, Jam. 1.27.

Some there are that plead against holiness, and for the countenancing of their corruptions: What, would you have us to be singular? Must we be more precise than others, and take a course by ourselves? Why Sirs, If you will be Christians in good earnest, and follow the Lord fully, it is the very thing which God requires and expects at your hands, that you be men of singularity. For the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself, Ps. 4.3. <H&G>, segregavit, divisit, signo aliquo excellenti separavit. He hath put a remarkable difference betwixt his own people and others, in respect of his blessings upon them; and therefore may justly expect that they should be singular in their carriage, and demeanor towards him.

I would not be mistaken in this point, and therefore must take liberty to distinguish of a threefold singularity.

There is a

1. Fantastical Singularity.
2. Affected Singularity.
3. Sober Singularity.

1. There is a Fantastical Singularity, in respect of opinion: When persons have odd crotchets and fancies of their own, wherein they differ from serious, and sober Christians, in all ages; and in the maintaining of which opinions, they sometimes excessively pride themselves, as if they had gotten some higher attainments than the rest. This is an evil, to which professors of godliness, amongst us, have been hugely addicted, in these latter days: When they have gotten some uncouth notion or expression by the end; they espouse its interest, and think they are somebody more than ordinary, in the matters of religion. When they have entertained a peculiar fancy of their own, contrary to the sentiments of all soberminded believers; hereof they will boast as of a higher degree of perfection. This sort of singularity commonly proceeds from a mixture of pride and ignorance. When persons have high conceits of themselves, and in the meantime have little clear and distinct knowledge of the principles of godliness; possibly they have some loose and broken insight into divine truths, but do not understand the mysteries of religion in their combination, as they are connected and knit together: In such case they are exceeding apt to run into these by-ways of their own. The Apostle seemeth to reduce it unto these two heads, viz. ignorance and self-conceitedness, 1 Tim. 6.3, 4. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness: He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strife's of words, &c. In reference hereunto the

faith of believers is the common faith, Tit. 1.4. Which was once delivered unto the Saints, Jude. 3. Upon this account, we should labor to be of one judgment, That with one mind, and one mouth, we may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. 15.5, 6. We should be very cautious of espousing any singular notion, without clear warrant from the word, and consulting the apprehensions of godly ministers, and serious Christians. And for prevention of this singularity, let every man study his own weakness, and think soberly of himself, least instead of Juno he embrace a cloud; least in the place of a more spiritual and refined truth, he fall into some dangerous and soul-destructive error. And the rather ought we, in this case, to give the more earnest heed; because when weak Christians are inconsiderately caught in this snare, it is a difficult thing to be delivered out of it. They think it concerns them in point of honor, and as they tender their reputation, to justify and maintain the notions which they have avowedly held, and professed: And this is a strong temptation to a settled continuance therein. And therefore, I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith, Rom. 12.3.

2. There is an Affected Singularity; as to a man's outward garb and ornaments of the body; as to civil salutations and courteous demeanor, and the like. When persons make it a part of their Religion, to abstain from that decency of habit, or gesture, or civility of expression, which is commonly used; and delight in this regard to act in a mode by themselves. And on the other hand, when others place Religion in using such habits and gestures, and the like fooleries, which God hath not required. This is that which renders Religion contemptible and ridiculous in the eyes of carnal people, and makes them think it is nothing but a kind of niceness, as to such

toys and trifles. So the Pharisees of old, neglected the power of godliness, judgment, mercy, and faith, and kept a great ado about washing of pots, and cups, and making broad their phylacteries, and many other things, which they had received to hold. They left the commandments of God, to follow the devices and imaginations of their own hearts, Mar. 7.4. Col. 2.20, 21, 23. These things may have a show of wisdom in will-worship; at least in the fancies of some, they appear to have it. Here is a fair pretense, of greater strictness than the rest: whereas true wisdom consists in fearing the Lord, and doing his commandments, Psal. 111.10. That wherein the Saints of God differ from the rest of men, is in the hidden man of the heart, in the unblameableness and holiness of the life; from whence will flow likewise a sobriety, moderation, and inoffensiveness in all particulars. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink (it doth not consist in contests, and disputes, and animosities, about such trivial things) but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men, Rom. 14.17, 18.

3. But lastly, there is a Sober Singularity; when men keep themselves free from the real corruptions of the times, wherein they live; and of the places, and persons, where their lot is cast, and with whom they converse. When they will not wallow in the filth and mire of the world, nor defile themselves with the abominations and defilements of the wicked; though in matters warrantable, and not dissonant to God's word, they do as the rest of men do. In this respect, all sincere Christians must be singular; they must not follow a multitude to do evil. When others are lukewarm in the service of God, they must be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, Rom. 12.11. Whilst others place their worship in shadows and ceremonies, and a pompous outside of devotion; they must worship God in spirit and in truth, Joh. 4.24. And glorify him both with their bodies and with their spirits, which

are God's, 1 Cor. 6.20. When others drink, and card, and dice, and are vain, and wanton; they must study to live quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty, 1 Tim. 2.2. To walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering & wantonness, not in strife and envying but putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and not making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, Rom. 13.13, 14. When others walk carelessly, they must be precise and circumspect, Eph. 5.15. You must not be afraid of being exactly conscientious, in God's way, or of bearing an awful respect to all, even the least of, his commandments, for fear of being singular, or so accounted. For that is the way which he hath chalked out for you. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to sin. So much for the second Inference.

3. If we must not follow a multitude to do evil, Then from hence we may draw this Conclusion, as an undeniable truth; That unity, and unanimity, and uniformity, wherein persons join together with one consent, and without any divisions amongst them, is not in all cases to be commended and approved: but only where they are exercised, and as far as they are employed, in the doing of good. For if people commit evil in the sight of the Lord, I must not sin with them for uniformities sake.

These very expressions of unity and uniformity have made a great deal of bustle in the world; and they are engines whereby poor ignorant souls are commonly deluded, and imposed upon. Will you break asunder the unity that ought to be amongst Christians? You ought to do thus or thus, were it but for uniformities sake. Such fallacious argumentations are usually pressed, to deceive the hearts of the simple. Whereas Sirs, uniformity, or a general and unanimous agreement is not a matter commendable, in all cases whatsoever, without limitation or restriction: but only so far, as the persons at

unity are engaged in following that which is good. If they be doing of evil, there must be no union or conjunction with them. We read of a great unity and uniformity, as is lightly imagined amongst a people that set themselves in open rebellion against the most-High, and for which very thing the Lord threatened to bring them to utter desolation, Jer. 44.15, 16, 17. Then all the men which knew that their wives had burnt incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that thou hast spoken to us, in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the Queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings to her; as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the Cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem. Mark it, Here was a great measure of unity, and a full consent and harmony, in their resolutions, and practices. But see the dreadful doom wherewith they are sentenced, v. 25, 26, 27. There is no society of men, but are subject to corruptions, and may be guilty of imposing some things to be believed and practiced, which are corrupt and sinful: And it is utterly impossible to prove, that Christianity obligeth a man to communicate, or comply with that which is corrupt and abominable. In such cases, the whole stress of a controversy lieth in the proof of the lawfulness, and warrantableness, of the matter enjoined and practiced; or else an argument from uniformity, is of no validity, and will signify nothing at all with judicious persons. For we must not join with the greatest number, to do evil.

A little to open this matter more distinctly, and to clear it up more fully to your apprehensions, let these four things be observed.

1. That unity and uniformity, a unanimous consent, and agreement, are of the number of those things, which borrow their goodness or evil, that are commendable, or to be condemned, from the nature and quality of the subject, unto which they are annexed. Just as it is in case of forwardness and activity of spirit: If men are vigorous and active in carrying on a mischievous design, in bring forth the fruits of unrighteousness, as some men commit wickedness with both hands, earnestly; Their activity of spirit is odious in the sight of God: But if men be diligent and industrious, about that which is good; then is their industry worthy of praise and honor. The like may be said, in case of unanimity, and general agreement. As Astronomers speak of the Planet Mercury, that he hath little distinct influence of his own, but is malignant, or auspicious, according to the nature of the other Planets with which he is in conjunction: So doth unity and uniformity accommodate themselves to the subject matter about which they are exercised. Uniformity, Sirs, will not justify a sinful action; But it is, the holiness of the action must commend the uniformity. And therefore it is not a bare unity, which the holy Ghost presseth upon Believers; But unity of the spirit, when persons, with one consent, hold the doctrines taught by the spirit, and are uniform in their subjection to the dictates of the spirit, and in following the guidance of the holy Ghost, Eph. 4.3. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

2. If this unity and uniformity be fixed upon, and conversant about, that which is holy and honest, it renders that holiness, exceeding amiable and lovely. It puts a luster and beauty upon men's fear and worship of the Lord; when they serve him with one heart, and in one way: And helps to prevent manifold mischiefs and inconveniences, which dissension and multiformity are apt to introduce into the Church of Christ. For difference in worship, is apt to breed distance and alienation in affection; and from thence arise animosities, and spiritual feuds, and perverse disputing's. So that I have not a word to speak against a Religious uniformity, in that which is excellent, and so far as it goeth hand in hand with the divine Institutions and appointments of our Lord Jesus Christ; and doth not intrench upon his royal prerogative, Psal. 133.1. Behold how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity! O the abundant benefit of the communion of Saints! as the contents of the Psalm seem to explain that passage, Psal. 122.1, 2, 3, 4. I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a City, that is compact together. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel: to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Psal. 42.4. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude of them that kept holy-day. For such united societies, and combinations of believers, God hath in store a peculiar blessing, and is wont to be amongst them with his especial favor and presence. For the Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob, Psal. 87.2. And therefore it is mentioned, as one of the great evangelical mercies promised, to make way for the conveyance of further grace and mercy, Jer. 32.39. And I will give them one heart, and one way,

that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them.

3. But when a people unite, and join together, in what is sinful; if their uniformity consist in the joint and unanimous practice of superstition and will-worship; or in anything that is contradictory to the Law and commandment of the Lord; In such case it becomes exceeding sinful and detestable, and a very great provocation of the wrath of God. This kind of uniformity is nothing else but a grand conspiracy against the God of heaven; a closely compacted rebellion against the King of Kings. Thus the Pharisees and all the Jews did uniformly practice their superstitious washings, and other ceremonious observances received by tradition from the Elders; There were no Schisms or divisions amongst them about such matters, Mark 7.3. But what saith our Savior in the case? See Mat. 15.9. In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And again, v. 13, 14. Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind: And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Such a kind of unity, was that of the High Priest and the people, in their martyring of Stephen, They ran upon him <H&G>, with one accord, They were all linked together in the same mind, Act. 7.57. And that of the Kings of the earth, and Rulers, that set themselves, and took counsel together against the Lord, and against his Christ, Psal. 2.2, 3. And in this case we must say as the Patriarch Jacob, Gen. 49.6. O my soul, come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, mine honor, be thou not united. I must not do evil to bring about uniformity, nor unite with any in that which is sinful.

4. Lastly, observe under this head, That the only way to settle and compass, such a kind of uniformity as is enjoined of the Lord, and

pleasing unto him, is to keep exactly close to the rule of God's word, to take heed of making additions thereunto, and not to be wise above what is written. Here is the ready way to prevent Schisms, and divisions, and the breaking a sunder into Sects and parties; when we keep up to this one, uniform, and perfect rule of Worship. My brethren, If persons be guided by tradition, and impose upon men's consciences, human inventions and traditions: that's a most sovereign way, to perpetuate Schism to the end of the Chapter. If persons will load the spirits of their brethren, with their burdensome ceremonies, under whatever pretext of decency or uniformity they are pressed: If they will force men's consciences to stoop under the weight of their Canons; here's a sure way to cause separations, and divisions, without remedy. But if you would indeed attain to such uniformity, as is according to the mind of God, To the Law and to the Testimony, Isa. 8.20. Traditions are multiform, and Canons of Counsels are multiform, vain customs urged under the specious pretenses of order and decency are multiform; and therefore will undoubtedly produce variance, and strife, and multiformity. Besides, coming into the worship of God, without the stamp of divine authority, they want a power and energy to settle the conscience: there is no firm footing, where a Christian may tread in such cases, without danger, or fear of pricking his feet among briars and thorns. But the word of God is uniform, and at perfect peace with itself, and lays a sure foundation whereon to bottom in all soul-concernments. And hereupon must you build all your superstructures, in order to the erecting and setting up of uniformity amongst Christians. This is very plain from former and latter woeful experiences. Look into primitive times; what a stir was there in the Church about the keeping of Easter? What tumults, bickering's, and heart-burnings, both here in Britain, and in many other parts? Why? Because they had recourse to tradition, and rested thereupon; and endeavored to impose one upon another, their own private sentiments and

practices: whereas the Scriptures would quickly have ended the controversy. When divisions were risen up in the Church of Corinth, particularly in the point of the Lord's Supper; what means doth S. Paul make use of, that the strife might cease? He puts them in remembrance of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and brings them close to the first institution. For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you. 1 Cor. 11.23. Mark them which cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learnt, and avoid them. Keep up Sirs, to the doctrines of the old and New Testament, and let them be the standard of peace and unity.

OBJ. All sorts of persons are pretenders to Scripture; even such as rest and pervert it to their own destruction. The vilest heretics will Father their erroneous doctrines upon the word, and profess to deduce them from thence. How then is it possible, that we should rationally expect unity and concord in the Church by this means? seeing the most notorious heretics will have this pretext; they will shelter their monstrous opinions under the protection, and patronage of the Scriptures?

SOL. This is a trite objection, much insisted on, by them that are contentious, and of an imposing spirit; and are loath to be concluded and shut up in the exercise of their power, within the limits and boundaries of the word of God. And therefore deserves to be answered more largely, than at present I can spare time to do. All that I shall speak unto it, which yet may sufficiently discover the vanity of this cavil, I shall gather into five heads.

1. There will be heresies maintained in the Church of Christ, amongst people that call themselves his disciples and servants, in all ages unto the end. It is a matter that will fall out unavoidably, and cannot be otherwise. As there will be men of corrupt lives, tares mingled with

the wheat, in the kingdom of the Son of man: so there will be men of corrupt notions and doctrines, that speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them, 1 Cor. 11.19. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved, may be made manifest among you. Mark, It must be, there is a necessity of it: Not a necessity of precept, God is a God of truth, he requires truth in the judgment, as well as integrity in the heart; he calls for soundness of mind, as well as fervor of affection: But in respect of the event, there is a necessity; it will certainly be so: and the Lord hath excellent ends to accomplish thereby; and therefore will suffer errors to be vented and spread abroad. But there were false Prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction, 2 Pet. 2.1. See also 1 Tim. 4.1, 2. Act. 20.30.31. This is no excuse unto the Authors and broachers of any cursed opinions: But it is a useful lesson or document for the servants of God, that they may be quickened to get their judgments principled with sound knowledge, and to beware lest they be led aside from the way, by the errors of the wicked, and so fall from their own steadfastness. That is pertinent on this account, which our Savior speaketh as to scandals in general, Mat. 18.7. Woe unto the world because of offenses: For it must needs be that offenses [heresies] come; but woe to that man by whom the offense [heresy] cometh.

2. The people of God have no just cause, to think ever a jot the worse of Religion and godliness, because of the heresies that sometimes abound in the Church of Christ. It should rather confirm us in the belief of the truth of the Gospel: Our Savior having foretold us that thus it will be, and we seeing it verified before our eyes. As the Apostle exhorts the Thessalonians, that no man might be moved by his afflictions, For (saith he) yourselves know that we were appointed

thereunto, 1 Thes. 3.3. And v. 4. For verily when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know. So may I speak in the case of errors and heresies. Let no man stumble, or be offended, at the ways of Christ, upon this account. Let not your faith be weakened, nor your progress in holiness retarded, because of these corrupt opinions, and heresies; For yourselves know, that Christ by his Spirit hath foretold of these things; that it must come to pass, as it is in all ages. And he hath therefore warned you of it beforehand, lest you should be offended, Joh. 16.1, 2, 3, 4.

3. When we speak of unity in Christian fellowship, and uniformity in the worship and service of God, it must not be interpreted of union and combination with such as are heretics: It must not be taken, as if it were meant, that we must unite, and go hand in hand with such persons. Our Lord Christ hath left upon record, sufficient directions in this case, how to purge his Church of such vermin, and to keep ourselves free from the taint of their pollutions; as well as in the case of those who are profane and disorderly in their conversations. A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject: Knowing that he that is such, is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself, Tit. 3.10, 11. From such withdraw thyself, 1 Tim. 6.3, 4, 5. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed, 2 John 10. See also Gal. 1.9. Rom. 16.17. Rev. 2.2, 20, 24, 25.

4. But then, as to sound and sober Christians, let this be observed: That the principles of the doctrine of Christ, which may be a sufficient ground for their uniting in the worship and service of God, are plainly delivered in the Scriptures, and to be clearly and easily deduced from thence. They are wrote in legible characters, that he that runs may read them. And why should not those things which

will declare a man a sound believer, capacitate him for communion with believers? These things are written plainly, as with the Pen of a diamond; and inculcated frequently, that they may be apprehended, by the meanest of the Saints, Isa. 45.19. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth. The oracles of God are not delivered darkly and obscurely: they are not folded and wrapped up in intricate and ambiguous sentences; as the devil's oracles, the answers of false gods, were wont to be delivered, in caves, and grottos, and corners under the ground. The truths of God are set forth perspicuously. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge, Prov. 8.9. For this commandment which I command thee this day, is not hidden, neither is it far off: It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the Sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thine heart, that thou mayest do it. Indeed, prating fools (as the holy Ghost calleth them), will seek nodum in scirpo; they will find matter to wrangle with the most undeniable principles; But the foundation-truths of Christianity are fully proclaimed in the ears of all within the pale of the Church, that will lend their ears attentively to the sound of the Gospel, and will diligently study divine mysteries. And the people of God are under precious promises of the Spirits instruction, to guide them into the knowledge of all necessary points, Joh. 16.13. 1 Joh. 2.20, 27. Psal. 25.12, 14. And why should not those, who are, under the conduct of the same truths, in the way of holiness unto eternal life hereafter, unanimously join together in the service of God here? Let us not fall out by the way, for we are brethren.

5. As to all other matters, that are more abstruse and difficult, and where in there is a great deal of variety in the interpretation of the

Scripture, even amongst sober Christians themselves; In such cases, unity and concord must be built upon the foundation of forbearance, and mutual tenderness of believers one towards another. If in order to peace and union in the Church, the judgment of some that are in power, be set up as the Standard, unto which the consciences of the rest, in the minutest affairs, are to be reduced; if peace and unity, I say, depend upon these ticklish terms, it is likely never to be attained whilst the world endures. As soon may you cut all men to the same stature, as bring their judgments in all things to the same size. But if we would follow after the things that make for peace and unity, let us with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering forbear one another in love. Eph. 4.2, 3. Shall not Christians forbear, where the God of heaven is pleased to forbear? Should not we deal tenderly with such, and give them the right hand of fellowship, whom God doth tender as the apple of his eye? Rom. 14.3. That is an excellent Rubric for direction in the Saints Liturgy, Philip. 3.15, 16. Let us therefore as many as are perfect, be thus minded: And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

So much for the first use of the point, by way of information.

SECT. VII.

2. For Exhortation.

If God hath given us strict charge, that we do not comply with a multitude in doing of evil, let us then seriously ponder and weigh this lesson in our thoughts, and endeavor to practice it in all the particulars of our conversations. Take heed lest Satan prevail upon

you, through this wile and artifice, of persuading you to that which is sinful, because a multitude embrace it. Take the example of Noah for imitation herein, Gen. 6.9. Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. Mark it, the generation wherein he lived was excessively corrupt, and sinful; it was egregiously profane and debauched; wickedness, as a deluge, forerunner of the other, had overspread the whole face of the earth: And yet Noah was upright, and kept close to the Lord, thereby condemning the world of the ungodly. Take the instance of Obadiah, who dwelt in Ahab's family, a man that sold himself to wickedness in the sight of the Lord, that there was none like unto him: He lived in days of such general Apostasy and Idolatry, that Elijah thought there had been none left but himself, who had any zeal for Jehovah, and had not dealt falsely in his covenant: And yet in such place and time, Obadiah feared the Lord greatly, 1 Kings 18.3. See the carriage of the Christians at Pergamos for encouragement herein. They dwelt where the Devil had his seat, where he was set upon the throne, and had many servants and followers: And yet they departed not from God, they would not say a confederacy with them in sin: They held fast the name of Christ, and did not deny the faith, though in days when persecution raged, and reached unto the death, Rev. 2.13. Hath God cast your lot in a wicked family, amongst carnal relations, in times of general atheism, corruption and debauchery? Labor as Obadiah, to fear the Lord greatly; do they entice thee to sin? Walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path, Prov. 1.15. Do they violently and furiously rebel against the Lord, and make a scoff of godliness, and oppose the professors of it? Do you study to serve him the more eminently, and to walk with God, as Noah, the more closely and strictly. Let no man deceive you with vain words: (Let not their enticements prevail with you, let not their presumptions embolden you to fin with them, let not their reproaches cause you to desist from your course) For because of these things cometh the wrath of

God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them, Eph. 5.6, 7. So keep yourselves free from any sinful correspondency with the ungodly, be they never so many, that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world: Holding forth the word of life, Philip. 2.15, 16.

In managing this use of exhortation, I shall speak something to you under these four heads.

1. By way of particular exemplification, or instance, wherein you should beware that you do not follow the multitude.
2. By way of special direction, what course you ought to take, that ye be not entangled with their example.
3. By way of motive or provocative, to quicken you to a closure with that course, and a diligent observing this counsel.
4. By way of Retortion, I shall show you what use you should make of the example multitude, seeing you must not join in combination with them.

1. By way of particular exemplification and instance. Wherein we should beware that we be not led into sin by the example of the multitude. For the better digesting whereof, and that the truths I shall deliver may be more easily imprinted upon, and firmly retained in your thoughts, and memories; I will cast them into five ranks.

1. The Ground of religion, whereon it is bottomed.
2. The matter of religion, wherein it is placed.
3. The method and order, wherein it is prosecuted.

4. The time and season, when it is minded.

5. Sundry particular duties, wherein the multitude are prone to miscarry.

1. As to the ground of religion, whereon it is bottomed. The generality of people are wont to take up the principles and mysteries of godliness wholly upon trust: They build their faith upon the dictates and opinions of men. they believe that Christ is the Savior, and accordingly call themselves his servants; they acknowledge such and such ordinances, ought to be attended upon, and accordingly lend their bodily presence at them; and the like: But if you inquire into the ground and reason, why they believe and embrace this way of religion and worship; all they can truly say, is, because the Minister tells them it is so; or their parents bred them up in this way: They hold these things for truths, for they are points which they have held ever since they can remember; they were of this religion from their very childhood, and infancy; and were brought up in these performances. But do you my brethren, build your faith upon the infallible word of the Lord, and get an insight into the everlasting gospel: Search the scriptures daily, and diligently, and make use of the ministry of men to help you to get knowledge of the scriptures; that your belief may not rest upon the bare opinions of men, but upon the mouth of the Lord. That you may be able to say, not only, I acknowledge these doctrines to be divine, and practice this and the other duty, because men have persuaded me; But because I find them contained in the Law of the Lord, and that they are agreeable to his mind, and will: and that herein by the ministry I have been instructed in that which God himself hath revealed, and prescribed, who is a God of truth and faithfulness; upon whose living word I bottom my trust and confidence. Thus did the noble Bereans, and therefore many of them were converted, and savingly wrought upon.

They did not take matters upon trust, no not from Paul and Silas; but they would see, whether they taught them faithfully, what they received from above. And mark the note of excellency or asterisk that is set by the Holy Ghost, upon their heads; and the blessed issue of their enquiry, Acts 17.11, 12. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed. Do not think it enough, to receive information of truth; but examine whether they are indeed of heavenly extraction. Search the Scriptures, Jo. 5.39. They are appointed of God, to be the sure doctrinal foundation, whereupon our faith is to be bottomed, Eph. 2.20. Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

That I may awaken you to heedfulness, in this regard, let me beseech you to study thoroughly these three following considerations.

1. If your faith be not bottomed upon a divine testimony, even upon the word of the Lord, it can amount no higher, than a human faith: It cannot be a divine faith, which receives matters wholly upon trust, from the dictates of men. For Sirs, the nature of faith is not diversified by the quality of the principles and truths, that are believed; but by the grounds whereupon, and the reasons why they are believed. Then is it a human faith, when built upon human testimony: and then is it divine faith, when the testimony is divine, whereupon credence is given. Else a man may receive spiritual and supernatural truths, divine doctrines, by a mere common faith, a human faith; when he taketh them wholly upon trust from the credit of men. If you would see the difference betwixt these two, that text is full by way of illustration, Jo. 4.39, 40, 41, 42. And many of the Samaritans of that City believed on him, for the saying of the woman,

which testified, he told me all that ever I did. And many more believed because of his own word: And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Savior of the world, See also, 1 Thes. 2.13.

2. If you do not search into the word, and bottom your belief thereon, you can never be steadfast and settled in the ways of the Lord, nor in any of the truths of religion. You will be still in a wavering, inconstant, condition; and in danger to be turned aside from the faith. And the reason is apparent, because the dictates of men are variable, and inconstant. One man may press upon you this, as a point to be believed, and another may possibly instruct you in the contrary, as a truth. Nay the same persons at different seasons, may vent doctrines of a different nature: To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity; And therefore, if you build your faith upon their opinions, you must of necessity be left at great uncertainties. But the word of the Lord is fixed, and permanent, always consonant and agreeable unto itself. There you may rest as upon a rock that can never be moved. For every word of God is pure. Prov. 30.5. The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times, Psal. 12.6. Men are subject to mistakes and errors, but the word of the Lord will never deceive you; that cannot be mistaken.

3. Unless you try doctrines by the rule of the scriptures, and bottom your faith upon the word of the Lord, you do not give glory to God in believing: Unless you take it upon his word and receive it as proceeding out of his mouth, you do not give unto God the honor of believing the truth. If you receive the matters of religion, only upon the dictates of men, you rob God of his glory, and give it unto them. For this is a special part of our worship of God, and one of the

peculiar prerogatives, which he doth challenge unto himself, that we give up our judgments absolutely unto his guidance; and yield perfect credence unto his word, Jo. 4.20.21. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship, Jesus saith unto her, Woman believe me, &c. q. d. You are apt to pin your faith upon the sleeves of your fathers; whereas this is one of the glorious Royalty which appertain unto me, who am the Christ, to have the absolute command of your faith: you must try the doctrines and practices of your fathers; and all the opinions of men, are to be estimated, according to their consonancy unto my word. As in performance of duty, we should be careful to give unto God the glory of his Sovereign authority; which is, when we do the work of the Lord, because it is commanded to be done by him: So in our assent to the truths of the Gospel, we should give unto God the glory of his truth, and faithfulness: which is, when we believe what is spoken of the Lord, because we know the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. It is said of Abraham, Rom. 4.20. He staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Why Sirs, this is the way to give glory to God, when we set to our seals to the doctrines of godliness, because they proceed from the God of heaven: believing the things which are written by the Prophets and Apostles, those faithful Amanuenses of the Spirit of God, who spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost.

2. Take heed of being corrupted by the example of the multitude, in respect of the matter, and substance of Religion, wherein it is placed, and whereunto they confine it. For commonly people are wont to be too narrow and short upon this account.

QU. Wherein do the multitude for the most part, place their Religion?

ANS. I shall instance only in five things.

1. The generality of people place the whole of their Religion, In the reforming and ordering their lives and actions: But they seldom or never think of the necessity of sanctifying their natures. They sometimes consider what they have done, but never bethink themselves in what spiritual state they are. When their consciences are a little awakened, and fly in their faces, perhaps they consider, for that fit, what sins they have committed, and make resolutions against them: But then they proceed no further; They consider not at all how to be at peace with God, through the blood of sprinkling, nor whether they are in Covenant with God by the Mediator of the Covenant. They mind to reform their lives, to still the clamors of conscience: but few think they must be partakers of regenerating grace. Whereas the Law of God is the rule of our natures, as well as of our actions: It shows us what manner of persons we should be, as to habitual principles; as well as what we should do, in the right ordering our practices. You cannot possibly be saved, except you be sanctified. So that, be not like unto the multitude, in this respect. But examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith. See whether Jesus Christ be formed in you, 2 Cor. 13.5. Be earnest with God, to create in you a clean heart, and to renew within you a right spirit, Psal. 51.10. First endeavor to get into Christ, that you may then bring forth acceptable fruits of righteousness unto God. First get your natures sanctified, that you may walk in the ways of new and evangelical obedience, Ezek. 18.31. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart, and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel! Consider, in reference hereunto three things.

1. That the acceptation of a man's actual righteousness, and obediencial performances, doth depend upon his spiritual estate, and

the sanctification of his nature. First God hath respect to the person, and then to the duties practiced by that person, Gen. 4.4. If you remain in the state of nature, without the work of regeneration wrought within you, though you may do many things for the matter, which God hath required, yet all you do will be an abomination unto the Lord. For they that are in the flesh cannot please God, Rom. 8.8. If there be corruptions unmortified in the person, they will taint and defile the best performances. For, as our Savior saith, Mat. 12.33, 34. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good: or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.

2. The main enquiry of Jesus Christ, in the day of accounts, will be, into the nature, and quality, of men's spiritual state, and condition: And he will examine their ways and conversations, as an evidence of their estate. So that here is the great matter to be sought after, whether you are converted or unconverted; whether you are implanted into Christ, or belong to the kingdom of the devil, Mat. 25.32, 33. Before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

3. Unless your state be changed, and your hearts sanctified and renewed by the holy Ghost, you have no interest in the blood of the Covenant, nor can you plead any title to the death of Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the Covenant: whatsoever reformation be wrought in your lives. For it is by the Spirit, and faith, that persons are united unto Christ, and engrafted into him: without which there can be no saving interest in him, 2 Cor. 5.17. If any man be in Christ, he is a

new creature. Rom. 8.9. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

That's the first instance, as to the matter of Religion.

2. The generality of people confine their Religion only to spiritual exercises, and immediate worship: But they mind it not in their secular affairs, and civil negotiations, and employments. They think that Religion lieth only in hearing the word of God, and praying, and receiving Sacraments, and the like. But when they come to their particular callings, and places, and the businesses of this world, there they conclude they may take their liberty, as being things of another nature, wherein godliness is not concerned. Do not you follow their example in so doing: But labor to set the Lord always before you, Psal. 16.8. and to interest the glory of God, in all your undertakings. Thus in a measure it will be in the day of conversion, Zech. 14.20. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord: and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem, and in Judah, shall be Holiness unto the Lord of Hosts. In that day, i. e. When the Spirit is poured out upon the servants of God, Chap. 12.9, 10. When the people are washed from their guilt, in the fountain that is set open for sin, and uncleanness, Chap. 13.1. Then they will carry themselves in this sort, so as to interest Religion in all their concernments. To this purpose remember these two or three motives.

1. That the word of God, in its directive power and influence, is very extensive, and exceeding broad. It reacheth to all the particulars of a man's life and carriage. It is not only a rule for guidance in matters of worship, but takes in all our affairs in this world, within the compass of it, Psal. 119.96. I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad. How broad is it? Why, It is of as

great a latitude on the one hand, as the corruption of nature is on the other; which, you know, brings pollution and defilements into all our ways and affairs: It rides a large circuit; it is of the same extent with all the workings of a man's heart; It is of equal latitude and comprehensiveness, as a man's life upon earth. When thou goest, it shall lead thee: when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee: and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

2. Except you interest God in your secular concernments, and manage them in obedience to his will, and with a due subordination to his glory, How can you comfortably expect his gracious presence with you, and his blessing upon your affairs? Wherever you would have God to go with you, by the influence of his grace, you must study to walk with God in the exercise of your graces. If you would keep under the verge of his merciful promises, you must have a conscientious regard to his divine precepts. You cannot look that the Lord should succeed and prosper your business in the world, to your good; unless you manage it in a subserviency to his honor and glory, Prov. 3.6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

3. If you are earthly, and sensual, and do not walk with God, in your particular places, and callings, and then think to make it up by duties of worship, Such worship is detestable in his sight, and will not be received favorably at your hands. God will reckon all such acts of worship, but as the dissimulation of hypocrites, who pretend to love him, but are indeed his enemies, Jer. 7.9, 10, 11. Will ye steal, and murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other God's whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations. Is this house which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?

Behold I have seen it, saith the Lord. Do you think by religious exercises, and acts of devotion, to expiate the guilt of your unrighteous dealings and other crying enormities? Behold I have seen it, saith the Lord; i.e., not only with an eye of observation and knowledge, but with an eye of indignation and fury; I will recompense your ways upon your heads. Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God, 1 Cor. 7.24. Let pure Religion, and the fear of the Lord, go with you into your fields, and accompany you in your markets, and abide with you in your shops, and be closely impacted and interwoven, with all your civil affairs. As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. 1.15.

This is the second instance, as to the matter of Religion.

3. The multitude are accustomed to place their Religion only in external performances and outward acts of piety: But they little study to engage their hearts and spirits in the service of God. They give him their bodies and outward demeanor; but surely, think they, our thoughts are free; and they heed not to mortify vile and inordinate affections, provided that they break not forth into any overt acts of ungodliness, Prov. 21.2. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts; q.d. Men commonly neglect the consideration of their hearts; they think it enough to mind their outward actions, but little regard the workings of their spirits. But ye, my beloved, keep your hearts above all keeping: Give unto God your very souls and spirits, and see that all that is within you be employed in his service, Psal. 103.1, 2. Let us cleanse ourselves from all the filthiness, both of the flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. 7.1. And therefore be much in the study of these three considerations following.

1. The greatest number of transgressions, whereof sinners are ordinarily guilty, are sins of the spirit; and the most heinous impieties keep their residence and habitation there. As the heart of man is the cursed principle, from whence they flow; so it is the shop, where they are forged. These spiritual sins are the most devilish wickedness's, as carrying the greatest conformity and resemblance to the deeds of the Prince of darkness. And then, as I said, they are ever the greatest number, Prov. 26.25. When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. Seven abominations, i.e., a multitude of abominations, wickedness's of every kind. For one gross act of murder committed, there is much hatred, and malice, which are spiritual murder, in the sight of God. For one robbery done, there is abundance of envy, and covetousness. For one gross act of fornication or adultery, there is much sinful lusting, which is adultery in the heart. Now where sin hath its principal residence, there should a Christian be most vigilant and careful.

2. God doth judge, and pass sentence upon men's outward actions, according as the heart is engaged in them. So much of the spirit as is employed in duty, so much worth and excellency in the duty: and so much of the heart as is set upon the commission of a sin, so much malignity and sinfulness is therein, Jer. 17.10. I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings, Jer. 30.21. Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?

3. The God whom we serve, and with whom in all concernments we have to do, is such a being as we call a spiritual being, that is, incorporeal, and invisible. And therefore bare external acts of obedience carry no proportion, or suitableness to his nature and excellencies. That service which is acceptable unto God, must have in

some measure, an answerableness unto the nature and perfections of the God, that is served. It must be a walking worthy of the Lord, Col. 1.10. Now this can never be absolved by mere outward devotion. For God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth, Jo. 4.24. We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, Phil. 3.3.

That's the third instance, as to the matter of religion.

4. Most persons limit their religion to a freedom and abstinence from grosser acts of pollution, and heinous enormities: But they make nothing to swallow down lesser impieties, that make no such noise in the ears of the world. Provided they be not drunkards and swearers, and guilty of such other acts of debauchery; they think some lighter offenses are inconsiderable. What if they take liberty, now and then to talk vainly, and frothily, and wantonly? What if they defraud, and go beyond their brethren, if it be but in a small matter, wherein they receive no great damage or detriment? Surely, think they, we need not be so exact and precise as to these things. But, my brethren, do not you write after their copy; stand you in awe of the least of God's commandments. Whatsoever is the object of divine displeasure and indignation, let it be the object of your hatred and detestation. Take the prayer of David for your pattern, Psal. 119.133. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. These are the persons whom the Lord hath blessed, Who are undefiled in the way, that walk in the law of the Lord: These also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways, Psal. 119.1, 3. Isa. 56.1, 2.

Besides what I have mentioned in this case, in the doctrinal part of this subject, let me give you farther these three particulars.

1. Lesser sins, if they are maintained and allowed, and harbored in the heart; if they are customarily practiced in the life, they become,

upon that account, exceeding heinous. The greatest sums are made up of unites; the vastest mountains are made up of small dust and gravel, that will crumble between the fingers. Smaller iniquities continued in, will bring upon the soul a load of guilt, of weight enough to sink it into the pit of destruction. Is the matter little, wherein thou sinnest? and so thy transgressions small as thou imaginest? Yet the custom in sin is no small matter: and perhaps the aggravating circumstances may be very heinous, when thou sinnest against light, and knowledge, and under the means of grace, 2 Pet. 2.14. A heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children. Mark it, therefore vile wretches, accursed children, because accustomed to that which is evil. Hereby sinners are shut up as in a prison, fettered and manacled that they cannot get free, Jer. 13.23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

2. Lesser sins, as thou accountest them, will make way for greater; and serve the devil as an engine, whereby to carry sinners to the most horrid abominations. You read of the wiles, and methods of the devil. He carrieth on his work of deluding and destroying souls, orderly, and methodically. And this is one of his usual methods: He is not wont to tempt men to the height of wickedness presently, but first he makes way into the soul by smaller transgressions, that he may gradually bring him to comply with greater, 2 Tim. 2.16. Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness, Prov. 23.31, 32, 33. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Tippling and drinking's, will in a while become drunkenness and debauchery, wanton words and dalliances will bring forth adulteries. Forgetfulness of God will increase, till it grow

up into atheism. He that taketh liberty to allow himself in the smallest impieties, is like one that breaketh up a hedge, whereby an entrance is set open, for the whole herd of ungodliness.

3. The smallest sins, if continued in, will bring as certain damnation upon the sinner, as the greatest. Though the destruction of heinous sinners will be more sore, yet the destruction of such as live in lesser transgressions will be as sure and unavoidable. For salvation and damnation, according to the tenor of the gospel, do not lie in the smallness or greatness of the sins committed; but in men's repentance, or impenitence in a course of sin, Mat. 5.19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, Ezek. 18.30. Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

That's the fourth instance as to the matter of religion.

5. Lastly, The generality of people put much of their religion, in the observing of places, where the worship of God is performed. And they think it doth much add to the excellency of their worship, when it is tendered and discharged in such places. As if that were the main matter to be regarded: They look upon them as holy places. They little mind to make evangelical applications unto Jesus Christ, and to get into him; they seldom think of putting their offerings into his hands, who is consecrated to be our High Priest forever; or of presenting their sacrifices, by laying them upon that Gospel altar, appointed to sanctify all our spiritual duties: But if they pray in such a place, and hear the word in such a place, then they hope their prayers will be acceptable, and their hearing tend to their salvation. I am persuaded, these are apprehensions riveted in the hearts of the most, That the worship of God is far more acceptable and pleasing

unto God, if performed there, than it is in any other place whatsoever. But, my beloved, be not ye like unto them: But make sure your interest in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and make use in every place of his Advocateship, and intercession; and then you may come boldly unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and to find grace to help in time of need, Heb. 4.16. Mark that passage of the Apostle Paul to Timothy 1 Tim. 2.8. I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. Mind it Sirs, It is not so much to be regarded, in what place you pray, as with what spirit, and affections, with what holiness of heart, and with what faith and fervency you pour out your supplications. It is a corrupt notion and fancy (a Jewish fancy) to put holiness now in the days of the gospel in one place rather than another. It is a Popish and Anti-Christian notion. For they make pilgrimages for devotion, to this and the other holy place. And for my part I am apt to think, that if ever God shall please to suffer Popery with its pollutions and idolatries to prevail again in the Nations, out of which it hath been extirpated; this very principle of the Holiness of places, being riveted in the hearts of the vulgar, will contribute no little assistance, to the introduction and settlement thereof. Now to clear up the truth in this particular, more distinctly, let us first concede and grant, what is to be granted, in reference to places of worship. And there are these five things must be acknowledged.

1. That it is not only lawful, but commendable, to appoint and bestow public places and buildings upon the Churches of Christ, for their attendance upon the worship of God. Not to render the worship better, and more acceptable, because there performed; but for their commodiousness and conveniency in attendance thereon. It was an act of kindness in Philemon, to afford the Church, a room in his house, for their religious Assemblies. Philem. 2. Much more is it to erect an edifice, purposely to that end.

2. These places and buildings so designed and provided, are ordinarily to be preferred before other places; when the worship in them performed is according to Christ's institution, and the people of God join unanimously together in managing the service of God, according to his will. Not as if such a place did meliorate the worship, or contribute any real, intrinsic worth thereunto, more than if performed elsewhere: But only for convenience sake as before. Christians will commonly resort thither with greater freedom, and without those suspicions and jealousies, which sometimes are in their spirits, of being burdensome to the people, in whose habitations they convene. And unbelievers and such as are without, will easier be induced to come there, that they may hear the word, and understand what is spoken in defense of the doctrines of godliness: who may possibly be savingly wrought upon, to conversion, and carried further than ever was intended by them, through the powerful efficacy of Gospel Administrations, 1 Cor. 14.24, 25.

3. In such places, all things requisite for an assembly of Christians, ought to be fitted and disposed in a seemly and decent manner; and ordered to the best advantage of the congregation; That matters may be carried on in a comely way, with least disturbance, or cause of distraction, 1 Cor. 14.40.

4. All manner of irreverent, and unseemly actions, must be abstained from in such places, as any way reflect dishonor, or contempt, upon the worship of God, which is there performing or hath been performed; or that may render the place unmeet for religious services afterwards. Not as if the building were more holy than others; but because it is sinful by any means to cast disgrace upon holy duties; wherein our business consisteth in attendance upon the Great King, the Lord of hosts, whose name is dreadful throughout

the earth; and who is a jealous God, even a consuming fire, Deut. 4.24.

5. Lastly, let it be observed, That the opinion of the holiness of one place above another is, for the most part, but a fond conceit that hath obtained amongst the multitude of the most ignorant people; the tincture of which conceit hath, not improbably, continued from the very days of popery, as their addictedness to some other fopperies hath done. But it is an opinion exploded and rejected by the Protestant Churches. This is conspicuously evident amongst ourselves. 1. By the general permission of Schoolmasters and Writing Masters to teach in such places. 2. By the usual meetings there about all Parish affairs, as rating assessments, and giving orders for mending high-ways, and the like. 3. By the public order for private dwellings to be erected in several of such places in the great City, whereby they are converted to civil uses. For as for the papalizing doctrines and superstitious practices of some, whereby the vulgar are hardened, in their apprehensions, being but the offspring of their own brain, it is equitable they be laid at no door but their own.

These particulars being premised, let me lay down and confirm this plain position, further than decency, and conveniency in attendance upon the worship of God, there is no manner of holiness, now in the days of the gospel, in one place more than another, nor hath one place preeminence above another. This seems to be covertly intimated by our Savior. Jo. 4.21, 23. Where the question was, touching the place of worship whether upon mount Gerizim, or in Jerusalem. Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the father But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth. As if our Savior had said, the time is shortly at hand, the gospel state of the

Church, when all difference of places, as to the worship of God, shall cease: and the main things to be looked after therein, will be whether the worship of God be spiritually performed, and according to his own prescription and institution. This is a lesson and Instruction hardly learnt by some, who mind forms and ceremonies, more than the life and substance of godliness; and whose interest leads them to oppose such truths. And therefore give me leave to hint unto you these four things.

1. That the very synagogues, or places of public assemblies amongst the Jews, had nothing of holiness in them above other places; only they were appointed for convenience in the serving of God. They were places where their Courts of judicature met, as well as their religious exercises were performed. On the week days their civil courts were convened in them, and on the Sabbath day their religious assemblies. As if there should be a meeting of Christians in Guild-hall, or in Westminster-hall, where at other times the Judges sit. And therefore you read of Beating in their Synagogues, Act. 22.19. And punishing oft in every Synagogue, Acts 26.11. And Christ tells his disciples, that they should be brought unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, Luke 12.11. And that they should be delivered up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before Kings and rulers for his names sake, Luke 21.12. I any persons shall say that the Jews had two sorts of Synagogues, one for religious and the other for civil assemblies; their proof is expected. Bare unscriptural assertions weigh little in the balance with understanding Christians.

2. Whereas some fetch their arguments from the holiness of the Temple and tabernacle of old, and apply to places, now the passages that are upon record concerning the sanctuary, there needs little pains to be taken to show the weakness and invalidity of such

arguments. Who knoweth not, that they were places designed and set apart by God himself, and appointed as Symbols of his presence? 2 Kings 23.27. Heb. 8.5. Who knoweth not, that they were types and shadows of good things to come, and therefore to continue till the time of reformation? Christ hath put an end to these legal ceremonies. He came and tabernacled amongst us. He suffered death in the Temple of his body? Who knoweth not, that there were special promises of mercy annexed to worshiping in the temple, and towards the Temple? 1 Kin. 8.33, 38, 39. 1 King. 9.3. Let any of these be shewn concerning places of worship, now in the times of the gospel: else the arguments run a baculo in angulum. The promise of acceptance is made to the ordinances and institutions of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the persons that wait upon the Lord in those institutions, without any respect to the place. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them, Mat. 18.20. Superstition and will-worship, human inventions and observances of our own devising, are abominations in the sight of the Lord, in what place soever they are practiced: and religious duties of God's appointment discharged according to his revealed will, are pleasing unto the Lord, wheresoever they are performed. God is graciously present in the place, for his ordinance sake, and for his people's sake; and not a whit the more amongst them, for the places sake, 1 Cor. 1.2, 3. To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints, with all that in every place, call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. And mark that eminent prophecy of gospel times, Mal. 1.11. For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering: For my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. q. d. For the present, many parts of my solemn worship, are limited, and confined unto

certain places; but the time is at hand, when my glory shall be revealed unto all people, and then the distinction of places shall be done away.

3. The worship of God in the pure primitive times, was performed by the people of God, according to their conveniency, without being tied or restrained to certain determinate places. See the example of Christ in the first place; sometimes he preacheth in the house, where the people were congregated. Again, at another time, by the sea-side and out of a ship; And sometimes in the Synagogues: And when his audience was so great, that a particular building could not probably contain them, you shall find him preaching upon a mountain, Mat. 5.1, 2. Mar. 2.13: Mar. 4.1, 2. See the practice of believers, in scripture times, after the ascension of Christ. Then mostly they met in private houses. Because that was most convenient to avoid the fury of the adversaries, who persecuted them for their meetings. This is so plain and obvious, that he seems little to consult his readers patience, that shall spend much time or paper in the proof of it, Acts 2.46. Acts 12.12. Acts 20.7, 8. From hence, as I conceive, you have that common expression in some of Paul's Epistles, the Church that is in such a ones house, i.e. The Church that was wont there to assemble, and meet together, to partake of the ordinances of the gospel, 1 Cor. 16.19. Col. 4.15. Why else should the Apostle speaking of Priscilla and Aquila, greet the Church in their house? and presently after changing his expression, salute Aristobulus' household, and the household of Narcissus which were in the Lord? Rom. 16.5, 10, 11. Well then; the Church of Christ met in any place, according to their convenience: And in this respect those public buildings (which are commonly called Churches) are ordinarily to be preferred before other places, where there is freedom for the purity of the worship of God; as being best fitted, and ordered, for convenience.

But if the room of a private dwelling be large enough, for the company, that attend upon the service of God, and fitly disposed for orderliness, and decency, in their attendance thereupon; there is as great an excellency therein, and the duties there performed are as acceptable as in any other place whatsoever. For it passeth the reach of my understanding to conceive, how that crossings and holy water, and such superstitious devices with the rest of the pageantry used amongst the Papists in the consecration of Churches (where there are no footsteps in scripture, for direction in such a practice) should anything avail, to the putting a standing excellency in those places.

4. Lastly, let it be observed, that whereas ignorant people are wont to have a high reverence, and esteem, for such a place, and to think the worship of God is more acceptable therein, because (as they speak) it is the Church, and the house of God; this very thing is one sign and taken of their ignorance. For the building or structure is called the Church, only figuratively and metonymically, because the Church is accustomed there to assemble together. As we call one place in Westminster-hall the Court of Chancery, and another partition, the Court of common pleas; because there those courts are wont to sit for deciding of controversies. Else, it is the congregation of the faithful, that is the Church of Christ. The living members of Christ, & the servants of God are his house and temple. And wherever they are wont to meet together, though in an upper chamber, that's the Church metonymically as well as any other building, which we usually so call, Act. 12.5. Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him, and v. 1. Herod the King stretched forth his hands, to vex certain of the Church, 1 Cor. 14.12. Seek that ye may excel, to the edifying of the Church, Eph. 5.25. Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it. So that, look what is the object of the persecution of the wicked; by whom are prayers and supplications sent up unto the throne of

grace; Who are edified unto salvation, by the ordinances of the gospel; for whom Christ died and shed his precious blood; they are the Church of Jesus Christ, and the place no otherwise, then as there they congregate. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? 1 Cor. 3.16. For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are, v. 17. Christ [was faithful] as a son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end, Heb. 3.6. The persecutors and the profane who vilify the Saints and set against them, are the persons that are guilty of despising the Church, and of bearing no respect or reverence unto the Church.

So much for the second point, wherein it concerns us to be cautious that we be not led by the multitude; namely as to the matter of Religion wherein it is placed.

3. See to it, that you be not carried down the stream with the multitude, in respect of the method, and order, wherein religion is prosecuted. The most people pursue the interest of religion and the fear of the Lord in a secondary way; in a subserviency to the promoting of some carnal and worldly interest. Men profess godliness, that they may be well esteemed amongst the godly; that they may gain the favor, or friendship, of this or the other holy man, from whom they expect to reap advantage; that they may get the better credit among such with whom they have to deal; and so drive on their worldly designs with greater likelihood of success, or the like. At least they have some earthly and carnal interest, which they pursue in coordination, and conjunction, with the service of God. They think they may serve God, and the world together; that they may be true Christians, and yet mammonists also.

But, my beloved, be not ye conformed to the multitude. Serve the Lord in singleness, and godly simplicity of Spirit. Let all other concernments stoop to the matters of the kingdom of heaven. Serve the Lord only, and undividedly, and dedicate yourselves and all that you have wholly, and entirely, to the Masters use. Let godliness have the preeminence, and superiority, in all your affairs and undertakings, Mat. 6.33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof: and all these [earthly] things shall be added unto you. How should the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof be sought after in the first place? Why, there is a five-fold primacy, or priority, which they may justly [challenge,] and must of necessity be given them, if you will deal faithfully with God, and make sure work, in the working out your salvation. 1. They must have the priority, in respect of our thoughts and studies. This is the main business we should aim at the accomplishment of, and be plotting and laying contrivances, how to effect: That God may be honored by us, and that we may get an interest in his favor, and in the light of his countenance. We may lawfully contrive, how to manage the affairs of this world, with prudence and discretion: But our principal care must be, how to get a portion in the world to come, to lay hold on eternal life, 2 Tim. 2.15. Study to show thyself a man approved of God, Prov. 4.7. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting [or above all thy getting] get understanding. Look upon other matters as trifles in comparison of this, and lay them all aside till this be finished. 2. They must have the priority, or uppermost room, in our affections. These are the things which your hearts must earnestly pant after, and your spirits be restless and indefatigable in the pursuance of. We may love our relations, and comforts, in a secondary way; but the enjoyment of God and his glory, must have the top and cream of our love. Psal. 63.1, 8. O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, and v. 8. My soul

followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me. 3. They must be firstly and primarily sought after, in respect of the time of our lives, and pilgrimage upon the earth. We must give unto God the primitiae or first fruits of our being, Eccl. 12.1. Remember now thy creator, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. 4. They must have the priority, and precedence, in respect of the work of every particular day. The things of God should enjoy our virgin thoughts, in the morning; before they be adulterated and embased with any lower matters. How may I be instrumental to advance the excellencies of God this day? what special corruptions have I to watch against? and what special temptations am I likely to meet with? how may I fill up my place and relations with holiness and comfort to my own soul. Psal. 139.18. When I awake I am still with thee. 5. The things of God must have the preeminence, when they come in competition, with any other matters whatsoever. They must out all corruptions, that are incompatible therewith, and make all interests whatsoever, how down before them. They must have the whole man, and the whole strength, and the whole time of our lives, Mat. 22.36, 37, 39. God doth account a hypocritical religion, no better than atheism and infidelity; and a divided heart, to be a false heart. Religion indeed, and the fear of the Lord, is of that power and purity, that it will not mingle interests with any other design: it will be sovereign commander wherever it comes, Mat. 6.24. No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Besides, if you pursue any other interest in coordination with the interest of godliness, it is impossible you should be steadfast in the covenant of God. Providences may so concenter, that if you will not make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, you must cast all your outward enjoyments overboard; if you will hold fast the truth, you must part with all things besides it, even your very lives, Mar. 8.34, 35. Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up

his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: But whosoever will lose his life for my sake, and the gospels, the same shall save it.

That's the third point, I intended to touch upon.

4. Let not your demeanor be ordered after the example of the multitude, in respect of the time, and season, when religion is minded. Herein they commonly fault, and you must not be followers of them. This I shall branch forth into four heads.

1. As to the time in general, and the improvement of it. Most, even of those that in some sort abhor to spend their days in profaneness and open abominations, make little conscience of spending their times in idleness: If they should employ it wickedly in rioting, and luxury, and such inordinate courses, they think they should be worthily condemned: But they never regard the redeeming of time, or the right improvement of it, that it may be profitably managed, in the doing, and getting of good. My brethren, beware that you tread not in their steps. But see that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise: Redeeming the time, because the days are evil, Eph. 5.15, 16. And to this purpose, let me beseech you seriously to ponder in your thoughts, and press upon your hearts, these three ensuing particulars.

1. That the trade and employment of godliness, is a very busy employment, such as brings much work along with it, and hath abundance of affairs appertaining to it. If it be minded thoroughly and effectually, you will find no time to spare, to be spent unprofitably, or squandered away upon vanity; unless you bestir yourselves to purpose, your glass will be run out before your spiritual work is at an end: and then you are undone eternally, and irrecoverably. For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor

wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest, Eccl. 9.10. The reason Sirs why men are no more choice of their time, is because they are so little sensible of the weight and greatness of their work. Did they considerately mind, how many spiritual lessons must be learnt, how many strong corruptions must be mortified, what variety of duties there are to be faithfully performed, what several methods the devil hath whereby to deceive us in his temptations, that should be carefully inquired into, that he may not get advantage against us, together with the difficulties attendant upon each of these; would they trifle away their times as if they had nothing to do? Did we consult the scriptures, and see what is expected at our hands in order to eternal life; surely we should be ready to answer, when our sinful temper prompts us to slothfulness, or when any vanities and follies invite us to slacken our pace, as Nehemiah answered the adversaries, Neh. 6.3. I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: Why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? I am exercising myself in a busy business, of everlasting weight and moment, and it infinitely concerns me not to do it by half's, or leave it unfinished, and unperfected; even in laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that I may lay hold upon eternal life: Why should the work cease, whilst I spend my time in trifles? I have not an hour to spare, that may be passed away in idleness and negligence; in doing nothing or what is as good as nothing.

2. This was one of the sins of Sodom, for which they were destroyed in such a dreadful manner, by fire from heaven, and upon which account they are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; namely, the spending their time in idleness, and vanity, without taking care for the right improvement of it. And very probably this sin might be a means to carry them into those other horrid abominations, for which they are branded to all the

succeeding generations. For when men take liberty to spend their time in idleness, and make no conscience of laying it out, to the ends for which they are entrusted with it, they will soon be wrought upon to spend it wickedly. Through idleness and slothfulness (or that which is tantamount) vain delights and fooleries, sinners are obnoxious and exposed to all Satanical assaults, ready to run upon any of the devils errands. Whereas if Christians were exact, and conscientious, in filling up their time with duty, there would be no such room left open, for the devils suggestions to enter in at: Besides it's putting them under the verge of God's protection and safe custody, Ezek. 16.49. Behold this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom: pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters.

3. This is one of the Talents, for which you are strictly accountable, at the great and notable day of the Lord, viz. All the time of your continuance upon the face of the earth. You read, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a man travelling into a far country, who called his servants, and delivered certain Talents unto them, to be employed according to their several abilities. And after a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them. Now pray what are those Talents, which God will call us to a reckoning for? Why, as there are talents of grace, so there are talents of nature: such as strength of body, parts, and endowments of the mind, and the like. And amongst these, the time which is allotted to us is not the meanest, or least considerable. How hath that been managed, in the Masters service? What good have you done answerably to the time you have enjoyed? Rev. 2.21. I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. And mark it, my beloved, If you would come off with comfort at the day of accounts, and be found unto praise and glory, at the glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will not be enough to plead that you spent not your time

profanely, or licentiously: It will suffice to bring you under a sentence of condemnation, if it were spent idly, vainly, and unprofitably, Mat. 25.30. Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth. What millions of gold would sinners then give, for the least portion of that time to repent in, which now they throw away, as if it were not to be regarded?

This is the first thing I would note, as to the time of religion, when it is minded.

2. In respect of the special time, that is to be consecrated, and appropriated to the more immediate service of God. The multitude have been much set upon the observation of the days, of man's devising and inventing; but little concerned in the sanctification of the Lord's Day. If they spend two or three hours in the public exercises of religion, then they think themselves acquitted for the rest of that day: they find their own pleasures, and follow their recreations, and sports; they let their tongues loose, to vain and worldly discourses; if they have any visit to make, or merriment to be at, this is the day wherein they have best leisure for it. And yet, as the whore in the Proverbs, they wipe their mouths, and say, We have done no wickedness. But ye, my friends, be not acted with the spirit of the multitude: Give unto the Lord that which is due unto him. He hath graciously allowed you six days, for your own employments, wherein you may lawfully labor, and do all that you have to do; and he hath reserved a seventh day for himself, a whole seventh day, as he hath granted unto us the six. Do not grudge the Lord, and your souls, this equitable and merciful proportion. Be not as the rich man in Nathan's parable, who had many flocks and herds; and yet when the wayfaring man came to him, he spared to take of his own flock, but took the poor man's lamb, that lay in his bosom, and dressed it for the man that was come unto him, 2 Sam. 12. Thus, do the carnal

world deal with the God of heaven; He hath given to them a whole flock of days, and kept unto himself but one Lamb, the Lord's Day: And yet when they have a journey to take, or an errand to do, some mirth and pleasure to follow, or bodily ease to indulge; they spare of their own flock, and make bold with the Lord's. But, my brethren, be not ye like unto them; As you would expect a blessing upon your souls, and a blessing upon your labors on the six days, be careful of the spiritual and entire sanctification of the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath. For blessed is the man that doth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it, that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil, Isa. 56.2.

That you may be careful in the discharge of this great duty, and not fall short of the blessedness thereto annexed, suffer me to leave upon you a few words, by way of advice and counsel.

1. Study much the morality of the Law of God, concerning the weekly Sabbath: That it is a commandment which carries with it a perpetual and everlasting obligation. The ceremonial Sabbaths were observances that disappeared, upon the death of the Lord our righteousness: When the Sun was risen in his glory, the shadows vanished: But the weekly Sabbath was appointed to continue in the Church of Christ unto the end. Be well settled, I say, in this great truth: For if there be hesitation in your thoughts, of the obligation of the commandment, you will proportionably waver in your obedience unto the commandment. Wavering and unsteadfast obedience, is the usual product of fluctuating apprehensions. An unsettled judgment will usher in inconstant service. And therefore be well versed in the morality of the weekly Sabbath. 1. It was part of the Law given unto our first parents, in the state of innocence: when there was no ground for distinction of Jew and Gentile, Gen. 2.2, 3. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made. And God

blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. And our Savior, in his sermons, when he was upon the earth, endeavored to reduce the people unto the Institutions of God, as they were established from the beginning, Mat. 19.8. The argument, indeed, is pressed as to the ordinance of marriage; but the reason holds the same in relation unto the Sabbath. 2. It was not delivered by way of appendix, or additament: to another precept, but it is in itself, one entire precept of the Decalogue; One of those ten words which were wrote in tables of stone, by the Lord of hosts, Deut. 10.4, If the law of the Sabbath be abrogated, it will from thence follow, that there are but nine commandments; whereas the Holy Ghost expressly mentioneth them to be ten, Exod. 34.28. Deut. 10.4. And this precept is written, as one of them, Exod. 20.8. Deut. 5.12, 13, 14. When Christ was entering upon his discourse concerning the Ten Commandments, in vindicating several of them, from the false glosses and interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees, he delivered beforehand this doctrine of the perpetuity, of the obligatory virtue of the Law, Mat. 5.17, 18. Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. And the Apostle James treating of some of the Ten Commandments, bottometh his argument upon this, as an undoubted axiom that one of those commandments hath the same perpetual obligation upon us to obedience, as another. So that the reason is strong for the Sabbath upon the Apostles foundation: For he that said, honor thy Father, and thy Mother, said also Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Now if thou obey thy parents, yet if thou profane the Sabbath day, thou art become a transgressor of the law, Jam. 2.10, 11. 3. Let such as plead for the reversing, or repealing of the law of the Sabbath, now under the Gospel, show us cut of the Gospel, where it is repealed:

which they are in no wise able to perform; for though there be made an alteration of the day, yet there is not to be found any abrogation of the commandment. And therefore it is observable that even in the public like liturgy, this prayer is added at the close of the 4. Commandment as well as of the other, Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

2. Be well settled, in the grounds of the change and alteration of the day: from the Jewish Sabbath to the first day of the week. Clear convictions in the judgment, of the divine institution of the Lord's Day, will help to engage the heart unto the solemn devoting thereof to the Lord. Many considerations might be insisted on to this end. (1) The name, and title, which is attributed unto it of the Holy Ghost, The Lord's Day, Rev. 1.10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. What better reason can be given of that appellation, than that it was constituted and ordained of the Lord, in memory of his resurrection, and our redemption completed thereupon? Even as the Sacrament of the Eucharist is called the Lord's supper, because of the Lord Christ's appointment, and in remembrance of his passion. (2) The appearance of Christ to his disciples, after he was risen from the dead, several times, on the first day of the week, Jo. 20.19, 26. Why should our Savior pass by the Jewish sabbaths, and make choice of the first day of the week, and the Holy Ghost set such an emphatical note upon it, that it was indeed upon that day, but that he intended to intimate, that this was the day established for Christian-sacred-assemblies? (3) The practice of the Apostles, and the Church, after Christ's ascension, in observing the Lord's Day for their coming together, to partake of the ordinances of the gospel. When they were met together, on that day, with one accord, the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles, Act. 2.1, 2, 3, 4. And the disciples assembling on that day, is not spoken of as a practice newly taken up; but in such a manner, as may intimate, it was their usual course and

custom, Act. 20.7. (4) The ordination of Paul in the churches of Galatia and Corinth, that their collections should be made every first day of the week: which plainly supposeth, that then the believers kept their constant, stated, assemblies: And you know S. Paul professeth he received of the Lord what he delivered to his people; and that his established constitutions, were the same in all the churches of Christ, 1. Cor. 16.1, 2. Mark it, I say, every first day of the week: for so the words are to be rendered, <H&G>. Every first day of the week, one after another, as <H&G>, every month, qu. <H&G> in singulis verbis. Aristoph. <H&G>, oppidatim. <H&G>, vicatim. <H&G>, viritim. Many things might be added for the elucidation, and vindicating of these scripture considerations: But I shall choose rather to open three other texts, which are not so commonly dwelt upon to this end, wherein yet I have several of eminence, both for piety and learning to go before me. The first is that of the counsel of our Savior to his disciples, in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the sore calamities that were to befall the land of Judea. It is in the gospel written by S. Matthew cap. 24.20. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day. Not in the winter, because it would be troublesome to their bodies, to be then driven away from their habitations. It would expose them to manifold inconveniences, Tum ob frigoris rigorem, tum ob dierum lucisque brevitatem. Not on the Sabbath day, because it would be matter of grief and perplexity in their spirits, to be then forced to shift away for their lives, when they should have their hearts engaged in solemn attendance upon the Lord, and communion with him. So that (1) Here is full proof of the continuance of a Sabbath, to be celebrated by believers in the days of the gospel: That the law of the Sabbath was not to expire, and be annulled upon the death of the Messiah, but to be still observed and kept by Christ's disciples. Those sad times, where in our Savior speaks of their flying, were to fall out near upon forty years after his crucifixion and suffering: and

still there was to be a Sabbath. (2) The disciples of Christ (unto whom he gave this counsel privately, and apart by themselves, Mat. 24.3.) before this time of their flight kept their assemblies wholly apart from the Jews. and kept the Lord's Day, the first day of the week; having altogether cast off the Jewish Sabbath: whence we may conclude, that these words of our Savior are meant not of the Jewish, but of the Christian Sabbath, wherein his own people were concerned. Indeed sometimes we meet, in the Acts of the Apostles, with mention made of the seventh day Sabbath: The Apostles taking the advantage of that day, to preach to the Jews in their Synagogues, but we never find it mentioned after that meeting at Troas, Act. 20.7. So that long before the time of their flight, they wholly withdrew from the Jews, and kept their assemblies separated by themselves, on the Lord's Day. (3) It was an ordinary thing with our Savior, before his death and passion, to instruct his disciples, in many divine truths, which they did not rightly understand till after his resurrection, or ascension: When the Holy Ghost was sent to that end, to bring his words to their remembrance, and to teach them the right meaning of the same. See, Jo. 2.20, 21, 22. Jo. 12.16. Luk. 9.44, 45. Luk. 24.44, 45, 46. Act. 11.15, 16. This, if well observed, will take off the force of their objection, who plead that Christ's words must needs be meant of the Jewish Sabbath, because say they, his disciples undoubtedly so understood them. This I acknowledge as probable, that they took his speech, as meant of the Jewish, when yet our Savior intended it of the Christian Sabbath: It being usual with him to deliver many things unto them, which they did not rightly understand, till he was risen from the dead. Probably this very business of the alteration of the Sabbath, was one of the things which he had to say unto them, but they could not then bear them, Jo. 16.12. And one of those many things, touching the kingdom of God, which he taught them between his resurrection and ascension, Acts

1.3. See the words of Bishop Andrew's concerning this text in his Pattern of Catechistical doctrine, upon the fourth commandment.

All ceremonies were ended in Christ, but so was not the Sabbath: for Mat. 24.20. Christ bids his disciples pray, that their visitation be not on the Sabbath day: So that there must needs be a Sabbath after Christ's death.

Mr. Fenner in his treatise called the Spiritual Man's Directory, bringeth this in, as a special argument for a Sabbath now in the days of the Gospel, because (as he expresseth it)

Christ speaking of those days, when all the ceremonial law was dead and buried, showeth the Sabbath to stand still, quoting for it this text. Take the concurrent testimony of A. B. Usher.

Our Savior Christ willing his followers, that should live about 40 years after his ascension, to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath day, to the end they might not be hindered in the service of God, doth thereby sufficiently declare, that he held not this commandment in the account of a ceremony.

And lastly (which may abundantly show that it is not any novel interpretation) Mr. Palmer and Mr. Cawdrey give this paraphrase upon the words.

As if Christ said, unto his disciples, the Jews have charged me as a breaker of the Sabbath; but whatever disputes and reasonings you have heard betwixt me and them, concerning that subject, I would not have you to think, that I am an enemy to the Sabbath, or that I mean to put an end to that commandment: For I tell you there shall still remain a Sabbath day to be observed to God for his worship. In

token whereof I admonish you to pray, that your flight be not on that day.

The Second text I would touch upon, is that prophecy of the Psalmist concerning the resurrection of Christ, Psal. 118.22, 23, 24. The stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing: it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made: We will rejoice and be glad in it. From which words (as I remember) I have met with this close and formal argument. The day wherein the stone which the builders refused, became the head stone of the corner, that is the day which in the times of the gospel the Lord hath made, (i.e., which he hath appointed and set apart solemnly to be observed in religious duties, one of which special evangelical duties, viz. praise and thanksgiving, joy and gladness in the Lord, is instanced in.) But the first day of the week, or the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is that day wherein the stone which the builders refused became the head stone of the corner. Therefore, the first day of the week, or the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the day which, in the times of the Gospel, the Lord hath made, i.e., which he hath consecrated and set apart for the solemn attendance upon religious duties. The major proposition lieth fair and clear in the text. And the minor is bottomed upon the Apostle Peter's comment upon the text (which comment he made by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost) who speaketh of this Scripture as meant of the day of our Savior's resurrection from the dead. I leave therefore the conclusion to be considered. Wherein I have learned Dr. Ames his concurrent apprehensions. *Neque facile rejiciendum est, quod ab antiquis quibusdam urgetur [pro die Dominicâ] ex Psal. 118.24. Haec est dies quam fecit Jehovah: Eo enim loco agitur de resurrectione Christi, Christo ipso interpret, Mat. 21.41.*

The last Scripture I will name, on this account, is that of the Apostle to the Hebrews, cap. 4.9, 10. There remaineth therefore the keeping of a Sabbath [<H&G>] unto the people of God. for he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his works, as God did from his own. As if the Apostle had said, will you fall off from attendance upon gospel ordinances, and question the celebration of the Christian Sabbath, that you may return to Judaism again? Why, let me tell you, the Lord's-day-Sabbath which now remaineth when the other is abolished, is of God's own appointment and institution. David prophesied concerning it, for this is the day of rest which he spake of in the 95. Psalm: And besides, it is bottomed on a very equitable foundation. For as when God had ended the work of creation, which was peculiarly his work, he ordained the seventh day Sabbath in commemoration thereof: So hath Christ the mediator finished the work of redemption, and is entered into his rest, as God entered into his; and therefore hath appointed the Christian Sabbath for celebration of the work of man's redemption. I must not dwell upon all the particulars that might be insisted for the clearing, and vindication of this sense of the words, from the manifold exceptions that are likely to be made against it. Only let these few things be seriously weighed. (1) That the Hebrews unto whom the Apostle writes this Epistle, and with whom he dealeth in this place, were declining apace from gospel administrations, and ready to embrace again the Mosaical pedagogy: and probably their deserting the Lord's Day Sabbath and adhering to the Jewish was one special part of their apostasy. The first of these is plain to any understanding Christian that shall thoroughly study the whole scope and drift of the Epistle: And, I think, we may very probably suppose the truth of the latter also. What part of the old administration were they more likely to be zealous of, than the Seventh day Sabbath, in the observation whereof they had formerly been so excessively and rigorously superstitious? Mat. 12.2. Mar. 3.2. And therefore it may seem consonant to the

Apostles scope, as to set forth the vanishing and disappearing of the legal oblations and sacrifices; so to speak, as here, concerning the abrogation of their Sabbath, and substitution of the Lord's day in the room of it. (2) The Holy Ghost speaketh here of a certain day of rest: the celebration of a set, determinate day; and not of the whole season of the gospel indefinitely. And what set, determinate, day is there that may be fitly assigned as the time of a believer's rest, but the Lord's Day? See v. 7. Again, he limiteth a certain day, <H&G>, Saying in David, today, after so long a time as it is said, today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. And then it followeth thereupon, v. 9. There remaineth therefore the celebration of a Sabbath. (3) This determinate day of rest, which the Apostle calleth the Sabbath that is to be kept, is clearly to be meant of that day, wherein the people of Christ meet together in the worship of God, and provoke and quicken one another to hear the word of the Lord. For so it plainly appeareth from the 95. Psalm, from which portion of Scripture the Apostles argument is taken, and upon which his whole discourse of this matter is built. See the whole entrance of the Psalm: particularly the sixth and seventh verses. O come let us worship, and bow down: Let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Today, if ye will hear his voice.

It is of this day, and the rest of it, which the text I am opening is to be meant: And what day is that, in the times of the gospel, but the Christian Sabbath? There is not to be met with any other day, wherein the Saints can be supposed, ordinarily, to exhort and quicken each other unto the worship of God. The other six days are appointed for labor. (4) A believers personal rest into which he enters by faith, was enjoyed by the Saints in the times of the Old Testament; For they were saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, even as we: But the Apostle treateth here, out of the words of

David, of a rest or Sabbath to be celebrated a long time after, even in the days of the New Testament for that Psalm is a prophesy of evangelical dispensations. As it is said in David, today, after so long a time. By the same reason that the Apostle proveth, that this day of rest must not be meant of the Jewish Sabbath, because that was instituted from the beginning of the world, Heb. 4.3. We may prove, it is not meant primarily of a believers personal rest by faith, because that was enjoyed by the Saints in all ages of the Church, before the days of David: But here he prophecieth of a privilege, that was to be conferred on the people of Christ, a long time after, (5) The Apostle is to be understood of the celebration of such a Sabbath, as is to be kept upon the like ground, in reference to the Lord Christ's ceasing from his work, as the Seventh days Sabbath was, in relation to God's ceasing from his work. For so it is in v. 10. which I mentioned. For he that is entered into his rest, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ our Redeemer, hath ceased from his work, as God did from his own. And therefore there remaineth a Sabbath for Christians to celebrate. I know the words are usually understood of a Believers ceasing from the works of sin. But let it be well considered, that the Holy Ghost speaketh of such a ceasing, as God's was, when the creation was finished: He rested the seventh day, and was refreshed; he looked on everything that he made, and beheld it was very good, entirely good, nothing but Good. This is justly attributable unto Christ's work of redemption; but cannot so fitly be applied unto the Saints: When they cease from sin, behold it appeareth unto them exceeding evil, and bitter, and they are filled thereupon with godly shame and self-aborrence Ezek. 36.26, 29, 31. Besides the Apostle speaketh afterwards, of Christ's passing into the heavens, as relating to somewhat that had been before delivered. And unto what can it refer, but unto his entering into his rest, which includes his passing into the heavens? So it followeth v. 14. Seeing then, that we have a great high Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let

us hold fast our profession. Mark, it is the same person, that is said to have passed into the heavens, v. 14. that is spoken of as entering into his rest v. 10. For seeing that he is passed into the heavens: And he that is entered into his rest, is the person that hath ceased from his work, as God did from his own: And upon this account, there remaineth the celebration of a Sabbath unto the people of God. Further yet; the Holy Ghost seemeth plainly to distinguish in that 10. v. between the works of redemption, which are ascribed to the Son, and the works of Creation, which are peculiarly attributed to the Father, and are therefore called his own works, as the Text is to be rendered. A believer upon his conversion is delivered indeed, from the dominion and power of sin, but not wholly freed from all remainders of pollution; still there is a Law in his members, warring against the Law of his mind, and leading him often captive, to the performance of his works, even to manifold sins through infirmity. So that it cannot so fully be said of a Christian, whilst in the body, that he hath ceased from his works: But of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is exactly verified, who upon his rising from the dead came forth as a victor from the conquest which he made; and entered into his state of exaltation. (6) The Psalmist treating of this day of rest, which the Apostle referreth to, doth instance in most of the Solemn parts of worship which are to be discharged on the Sabbath. 1. Singing of Psalms, Psal. 95.1, 2. 2. Prayer v. 6.3. Hearing the word, which implieth the Preaching of the word, v. 7, 8. All to be performed by the united companies of the people of God, on that day of rest. (7) The Psalmist urgeth to the practice of those duties, from the consideration, mainly, of God's work of Creation, v. 4, 5, 6, 7. Which is the reason given for the institution of a Sabbath: To the commemoration whereof, the Lord's Day fitly serveth, as being a seventh day; as well as to the celebration of the work of Redemption, being the Resurrection Day, the first day of the week. (8) The Apostle presseth the Hebrews to the observation of this rest, from two special

arguments, which may seem clearly to relate to the work of the Sabbath. 1. Because it would be a special means to prevent Apostasy, Heb. 4.11. Lest any man fall. And what duty is likely to be more effectual to that end, than a conscientious sanctification of the Lord's Day? 2. From the mighty influence and efficacy of the word of God, upon men's hearts, v. 12. q. d. Be very diligent and heedful to keep this day of rest, and to wait upon God in his ordinances, and to give attendance upon his word, for it is not in vain so to do: His word will cleanse your hearts, and consciences, from dead works, for it is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. I might add. 3. From the consideration of the omniscience and heart searching power of God, with whom our business lieth in all religious exercises especially. See v. 13. But I must forbear. Pardon this large digression or outleap; which yet will not be unuseful, if it may but serve to provoke some others, of greater abilities, to make a more diligent search into the Scope and drift of this Scripture. I will study brevity in that which doth remain.

3. To preserve you from infection by the example of the multitude, as to the neglect of the Sabbath, Be often meditating upon the manifold advantages, that will arise from a conscientious sanctification thereof; and the blessings entailed thereupon. This is the way to attain the most intimate acquaintance with God, and to get tastes of the sweetness of the way of holiness. There are many persons who complain of a strict course of religion, as a tedious, and burdensome way: Behold what a weariness it is unto their spirits! and they never found that sweetness, and that spiritual joy and refreshment, which believers are wont to speak of. Probably. the reason may be, for want of diligence and faithfulness in sanctification of the Sabbath: for thereunto is the promise of divine consolations annexed. Finally, it hath assurance of the mercies of this life, and of that which is to come. Be much in studying that pregnant text, Isa. 58.13, 14. If thou

turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure, on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor him; not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words. Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

This is the second thing to be noted, as to the time of religion.

3. The generality of people will cry unto God, and seem to be much displeased with their sins, only in the time of sickness and adversity, when the hand of God is upon them, and his rod upon their backs: But in the days of their health and prosperity, they forget the Lord, and perhaps entertain not so much as a serious thought of him, from one end of the day to the other. This the Prophet notes as a common evil, Isa. 26.10. Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. But let him be reduced into straits and exigencies, and bound with fetters of affliction, on the bed of sorrows; then he will at least seemingly lament and mourn, and be earnest in seeking unto God. For so it followeth v. 16. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee: they poured out a prayer, when thy chastening was upon them. This was the temper of the Israelites of old, and the multitude take the like course. Psal. 78.34, 35, 36, 37. When he slew them then they sought him, and they returned, and inquired early after God. And they remembered, that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant. My brethren you must not herein follow the track of the multitude: Labor as to improve afflictions, so to

spiritualize all your comforts, and to serve the Lord with the best of your strength, and abilities. Do not put him off with your sick-bed devotions, and some flittering promises of obedience when you are in distress; but manifest the sincerity of your hearts, by dedicating your most prosperous days, and enjoyments, unto his glory. That is the sure way to lay up in store a good foundation of support and comfort, against the day of trouble. Else what cause will there be to suspect, that your affliction-cries are but the howling of hypocrites? Hos. 7.14. How can you, with such confidence, address yourselves to the Lord, for succor in the day of tribulation and adversity, if you forget him in the time of your prosperity and peace? May not you justly fear least he should laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh? least he should refuse to answer any of your requests in mercy? least he should put you off to the world, which you served, and to the lusts which you satisfied, to fetch your comfort from thence, when you are surrounded with sorrows? And they would be sure to prove very miserable comforters: Instead of asswaging your grief, they would increase your anguish, and bring further horror and perplexity into your spirits. So he threatened that sinful people, Jer. 2.27, 28. They say unto a stock, thou art my father, and to a stone, thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not the face. But in the time of their trouble, they will say, arise and save us. But where are thy God's, which thou hast made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee, in the time of thy trouble. q. d. You would have none of me for your master; when the Sun of prosperity shone upon your tabernacles; and now you are reduced into straits and extremities, I will have nothing to do with you, except it be in a way of wrath and judgment. My brethren, if you be guilty of the like impiety, how justly may you fear the same dreadful dismissal. Often read and study that awakening scripture, Deut. 28.45, 46, 47, 48. Moreover, all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed, because thou

hearkenedest not to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments, and his statutes which he commanded thee. And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed forever: Because thou servedest not the Lord thy God, with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things. Mark it Sirs, if you do not labor to be holy in the time of your health and prosperity, there is a curse from the Lord of hosts gone forth against you, and who knows the power of his anger? what a dreadful thing is it to be a man or woman accursed of God? But we hope, may the sinner say this curse doth contain no great matter of evil; some curses indeed of the law are terrible, but others are less to be feared. Why but, O vain man, thou art under all the curses mentioned in the Law of Jehovah. Well, but these curses may remain unaccomplished, and we hope, God will not be so severe as his word. Nay, but they shall certainly be fulfilled and come to pass: All these curses shall come upon thee. If thou fly from them, they shall pursue thee: And if thou think to hasten thine escape, it shall not avail, for they shall overtake thee. And least thou shouldest expect to get from under them, they shall lie upon thee, and that perpetually, till thou be destroyed. If you will not fear the Lord, in the enjoyment of all things, therefore v. 48. Thou shalt serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things. And he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

That's the third thing to be observed, as to the time of religion.

4. The multitude neglect the present time, and are much addicted to procrastinate, as to the concernments of eternity. Most that call themselves Christians, will acknowledge a necessity of believing, and repenting, and minding the ways of holiness, in order to the kingdom of heaven: But they say in their hearts, these are matters to be

thought upon hereafter; for the present we may take our fill of carnal pleasures, and worldly vanities, and follow our worldly delights; provided that we repent and make our peace with God, before we die. At least we may give ourselves liberty, for a little longer, to satisfy our fleshly desires, and hereafter we will be serious in the working out our salvation. Time enough to think of that, for the future, before we depart hence, Ezek. 12.27. Son of man, behold they of the house of Israel say, the vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophecieth of the times that are far off. Take heed that you be not herein conformed to the multitude. Do not defer your repentance, and turning to the Lord a moment; upon any pretense of finding a more convenient season. For the time present is, in every respect, the most convenient season. 1. 'It is the only certain season; you cannot promise yourselves another hours continuance upon the earth. How many unexpected providences are the children of men subject to, that may take us away in an instant? So that man knoweth not his time, as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them. How many hidden diseases may lie lurking in the body, and inclinations unto diseases apoplexies, impostumations, and the like, which may break forth as in the twinkling of an eye, and carry the sinner irrecoverably to his long home? And then where is the promise of his repenting hereafter? Go to now ye that say, tomorrow or the next day, when this business is over, or the other season is come, we will return to the Lord, and be reconciled to him. Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even as a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away, Jam. 4.14. The time to come is God's to dispose of, and he hath allotted only the present to make sure of our salvation. 2. The present time is the season which alone hath the promise of acceptation. Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee, Job. 22.21.

Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation, 2 Cor. 6.2. If you put off the Lord till hereafter, and quench the present motions of his spirit, how justly may that come upon you which is spoken of by the prophet Zechariah, cap. 7.13. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear: so they cried and I would not hear saith the Lord of hosts. 3. The time present is the fittest season, in order to prevention of the farther hardening your hearts. The longer you lie in the state of sin, the more seared and secure will your consciences grow, and be more difficultly wrought upon to any cordial compliance with the right ways of the Lord. Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, Heb. 3.7. 4. The present season is the most convenient, because though you should through the longsuffering of the Lord live to repent hereafter, yet late repentance is seldom true, and evangelical. Thou mayest perhaps be filled with some legal sorrow for sin, and repent as Judas repented, and yet perish forever. And it is to be feared that this is the case of the multitude. For my part, I know not one passage of scripture, whereupon a sinner, that liveth under the means of grace, and being convinced of the necessity of repentance, shall break through those convictions, and put it off till hereafter, can bottom the least comfortable hopes, that his future repentance will be sincere and saving: But there are many places, from which he may have just cause to fear the contrary. *Qualis vita, finis ita*. Commonly as wicked men live, so they die, and perish without any saving change upon their hearts: and their death-bed repenting's prove but hypocritical and rotten, Job. 27.8, 9. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him? i.e. It will not be such a cry, as God will have any gracious regard unto, Prov. 5.22, 23. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden in the cords of his sins. But he may repent when he cometh to die, and then all his sins will be forgiven. I tell you, saith the Holy

Ghost, it will be otherwise. So it followeth, v. 23. He shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray, q. d. The promise of his future repentance, his deathbed repentance, will come to nothing, Prov. 29.1. He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Mark it, suddenly, i.e. in a spiritual sense, before he is prepared to give up his accounts, with comfort: So all impenitent sinners die suddenly, though not ever taken away by signal outward judgments, Mat. 24.48, 49, 50, 51. But, and if that wicked servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming. And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken [If he shall encourage himself in sin, and delay his repentance, upon hopes that he hath time enough to make his peace with God hereafter.] The Lord of that servant shall come in a day that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of. And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So much for the fourth general head, wherein we must be cautious that we follow not the example of the multitude; namely the timing of religion, when it is prosecuted.

5. Lastly, I shall instance in some particular duties, wherein the multitude are prone to miscarry; that I may not be over-tedious and burdensome, I will only name these eight.

6. Most persons think is enough, if they take a little care of their words, and external demeanor; but seldom or never mind the regulation of their thoughts They may rove and wander, whether they please; They may be working towards vanity, and folly; They may be customarily employed in sins of any sort; and men charge not themselves with guilt, upon that account. Contemplative wickedness

is as nothing in their esteem. It is an ordinary saying amongst them, that thought is free. Or at best, if their spirits rise up in any kind of detestation against horrid, blasphemous, murderous thoughts, and the like; yet they suppose themselves no way concerned in mortifying vain thoughts, and keeping their spirits free from fruitless, foolish and disorderly imaginations. Do you then, my brethren, keep sentinel upon your hearts, as to these matters. Let not sinful thoughts not so much as vain thoughts lodge within you, Jer. 4.14. See to it, that the imaginative powers of your souls, be rightly principled, and employed about that which is honest and good. For, remember, they are the first inlet to the suggestions of the devil: so that if you are careless and negligent in your watch there, you minister advantage to the Prince of darkness, to be tampering with you. And if the serpent get in his head, he will quickly wriggle in his whole body. If the way be set open for entrance, into your thoughts, the passage is obvious, from thence unto your hearts and affections. A Christian is much known, by the working of his imaginations. Therefore when the Lord sets forth the malignity and wickedness of the old world, this is the particular mainly insisted on, Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart, was only evil, and that continually, Gen. 6.5. And when David made a humble appeal unto God concerning his integrity, he specially mentioned the workings of his thoughts. Psal. 139.23, 24. Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me unto the way everlasting. One of the first steps to a sound and sincere conversion, is the rectifying of the Soul in this respect, and rooting up those false notions and conceits which are by nature riveted in the thoughts of sinners. As long as there be extenuating thoughts of the evil of sin, the heart will never be in bitterness for it. False apprehensions of the nature of God, will make men slight, and formal, and corrupt, in their obedience unto God. Flattering thoughts of a man's spiritual estate, will keep him from

pressing after deliverance. Unbelieving thoughts of the word of the Lord, will put a bar in the way of an awful regard unto the word, Isa. 55.7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will multiply to pardon.

2. The generality are wont to be defective, in looking to their words. If they abstain from rotten, filthy, and profane communication, they hope it may suffice; however they are addicted to talk idly, and frothily, and to multiply words without bounds. There are few that live as if they did believe our Savior, when he telleth us, That of every word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment, Mat. 12.36. Let not your practice herein be according to the multitude: but follow the example of David, in being earnest in prayer unto God, to set a watch before your mouth, and to keep the door of your lips? Psal. 141.3. Why is a watch set before the gates of a City? and to what end do keepers stand before the doors of men's houses? To apprehend suspicious passengers, and to examine such as are going in, whence they come, and whither they go, and what their errand and business is. How much guilt might be prevented, if you would but observe this course, to let no words pass without apprehending, and calling them to an account? Whence came you? From love or hatred, or flattery which is the worst sort of hatred? Come you from grace or corruption? What errand go you about? Is it for good or evil? Be not hasty to blatter out speech without due premeditation, and advise. The tongue is the hearts interpreter, and therefore should first take counsel of the heart. Shun not only wicked talk, but tattling also, and talkativeness. Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, Jam. 1.19. For in the multitude of words and many dreams, there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God. Eccl. 5.7. Think it not enough to speak truly, unless withal you speak seasonably and profitably. A Christian is not bound always to

speak of grace, but let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. Col. 4.6.

3. The greatest number of persons, even of those that will not be so vile as to raise a scandal, and be the first broachers of an evil report, yet if such a matter come to their cognizance, being raised by others, they are too apt to receive it, with both their ears, greedily. And sometimes their hearts are ready to leap within them, with a secret joy and gladness, when they hear others bespattered, and defamed. And the reason is, because men think it redounds to their own commendation, if they are free from the sins, wherewith others are charged. But do not follow their example herein. We say in the case of robbery, the receiver is as bad as the thief: The like may be said in the case of slandering and defamation, he that cherisheth and fostereth an evil report, is in some respect, as bad as the first parent and deviser. This I mention the rather, because I find it in the words immediately preceding the Text, Exod. 23.1. Thou shalt not raise or (as the word is rendered in the marginal reading) thou shalt not receive, a false report. They may be well coupled together, the raiser and the receiver: For they are both servants to the same master, and carry on the same devilish accursed design, to wound or destroy the reputation of their neighbor. It is said of the false witness, Prov. 25.18. He is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow. He doth a threefold mischief by one sinful action: As a maul, he beateth down the good name of his neighbor: He darts a lie, as with a sharp arrow, into the breast of him to whom he speaketh: And as with a sword, he destroyeth his own soul. And it is the receiver of false reports, by whom he is animated in his mischievous undertaking. Were there none that readily hearkened to lies, the slanderer himself would be discouraged. The Holy Ghost observeth it as the character of the man that feareth the Lord, That as he backbiteth not with his tongue, so

he taketh not up a reproach against his neighbor. <H&G>, He cannot bear it, to hear his brother defamed; It is a burden to his spirit: He is ready to chase away the slanderer with his severest reproofs, he cannot endure it, Psal. 15.3. Be not talebearers yourselves, and discourage them that are such. That is the way to maintain peace, and love, to prevent heart-burnings, and animosities; whence come debates and contentions, Prov. 26.20. Where no wood is, the fire goeth out: So where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth. In all sinful quarrels and contests, corruption within is the fire that burneth; The tale-bearer adds fuel to the fire, and the receiver and spreader of the false report, of the others framing, bloweth with the devils bellows, lest the fire should be extinguished. But I must contract my meditations.

4. The religion of the multitude consisteth wholly in open acts of piety and devotion, done in the face of the world, where they may be seen of men. But do you study to be accepted of God, who seeth in secret. Mat. 6.3, 4. Renounce the hidden things of dishonesty; and look well to your carriage, when you are alone in secret, where there is no eye upon you, but that of God, and your own consciences. Be serious, constant, and diligent in the performance of spiritual duties, where you are not in a capacity to receive applause from men: as closet prayer, frequent meditation upon the Scriptures, contemplation of the excellencies of God, Self-examination as to your hearts, and ways, sedulous evangelical mortification of inordinate passions and inward motions of the Soul to sin, dealing your bread to the hungry, where the left hand knoweth not what the right hand doth. These, and such like, are duties to which the multitude are strangers: But if you labor herein to have a due regard to the precepts of God, and to approve yourselves in secret unto him, your heavenly Father, who seeth in secret, himself will reward you openly.

5. The multitude are a generation of narrow and selfish spirits. Empty vines (as it is said of Israel) they bring forth fruit unto themselves. But little are affected with the concernments of others, or of the people of God. If they thrive in the world, they can rejoice; let public affairs go backward or forward, let the interest of the Church of Christ sink or swim. For all men seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's, i.e. Most of the children of men, are of this temper *Nota universalitatis ponitur pro plerisque*, Rav. Philip. 2.21. They drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, Amos 6.6. My beloved, labor ye, in a contradiction to the multitude, to be of public spirits. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be kindly affectioned one towards another, with brotherly love. And above all, lay to heart the suffering estate of the Church, and people of Christ. Be of the number of those, that are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, to whom the reproach of them is a burden: that the Lord may rejoice over you, to do you good, and may gather and save you, as he hath spoken, Heb. 13.3. Rom. 12.15. Zeph. 3.17, 18.

6. Most persons have an eye to the enjoyment of outward mercies, but they mind not the sanctifying of the mercies which they enjoy. But do you be more industrious to get the mercies, and comforts, sanctified, which you have, than to reach after more, which you seem to want. Better is a little with the blessing of God, upon it, than great revenues, and treasures, with a curse intermingled. So in ease of affliction, be more earnest with the Lord, that the trouble may be sanctified, than to get a bare, naked, deliverance from the trouble. Afflictions may be removed in wrath, but the Sanctification of afflictions is one of the choicest blessings. And if you be thus careful, and diligent, to get every condition sanctified, you will not only be

sure to obtain that mercy, but may also comfortably expect to receive outward mercies and deliverances, as far as they are for your good, 1 King. 3.11, 12, 13. And God said unto him, because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, neither hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment. Behold I have done according to thy word: Lo I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have given thee also that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the Kings like unto thee, all thy days.

7. The multitude take up their rest in avoiding such things, as are open faced evils; sins which are capable of no colorable pretense for their excuse, and cannot be gilded over by any artifice. But do you abstain also, from everything, that hath really the appearance of evil. 1 Thes. 5.22. Do not content yourselves to flee from open ungodliness, but keep at a distance from such things as are justly offensive, and carry the face of ungodliness. Indeed, as to principles of faith, and necessary duties of religion, you must hold them fast whatever offenses arise. *Si enim de veritate aut sanctitate scandalum sumatur, melius est ut scandala oriantur, quam ut ista relinquuntur.* But in all points of indifferency, meddle not, where it may prove a stumbling block to the weak. Though in no case I must betray my Christian liberty, yet in many cases I am bound to forbear the use of my liberty, rather than make my brother offend, 1 Cor. 8.9, 10, 11.12.13. Keep yourselves pure and untainted, not only from fouler blots, in matters apparently evil; but from the stain of anything that is of evil report; hating even the garment spotted with the flesh, Jude 23. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if

there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things, Phil. 4.8.

8. Lastly, the multitude are commonly like the corrupt teachers of old time amongst the Jews; they think they must love and deal kindly with their friends, and relations; but they cannot but hate and malign such as are their enemies. They will deal justly and fairly, with those who deal justly and regularly with them; but if any do them an injury, be sure they will be revenged on him. They will give railing for railing, and rapine for rapine, and injury for injury: And this they conceive is a matter justifiable, when they do but pay men in their own coin, and give them no worse than they brought, Mat. 5.38, 43. But Sirs, if you will act as Christians, do not follow the multitude. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you: That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. For he maketh his Sun to rise upon the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? [**<H&G>**; what extraordinary matter is it? what excellent thing do ye? wherein do you go beyond the multitude?] do not even the publicans so? Mat. 5.44, 45, 46, 47. Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me; I will render to the man, according to this work, Prov. 24.29. But you will be apt to reply, why should I not right myself upon him from whom I have suffered wrong? why should I put up an affront at his hands? If I do mine adversary a kindness, he will not thank me for it. Mark therefore what the Lord hath spoken, by way of encouragement unto this duty, Prov. 25.21, 22. If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat: and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. For thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord shall reward thee, q. d. Possibly thy Christian carriage may

overcome his rugged disposition; thy kindness may melt him into love, and cause him of an enemy to become thy sure friend: However thou shalt in no wise lose thy reward, for the Lord hath undertaken it, who is a sure pay-master.

Thus I have dispatched the first thing I designed under the use of Exhortation, by way of exemplification or instance, wherein we ought to be cautious not to follow the multitude.

SECT. VIII.

3. Give me leave to add some few things, by way of direction, what course we must take to prevent seduction, by the example of the multitude.

DIR. 1. If you would not be led into sin, by the example of the multitude, be diligent in studying the word of God, and get a clear insight into the will of God therein revealed. This will be of great use, not only as a Chart or compass whereby to steer your course, when the wind and tide of their practice would carry you aside into evil: But will furnish you also with arguments, on all occasions, to oppose their solicitations, Rom. 12.2. Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable, and perfect will of God. Mark it, if ye will not be forced down the current of the world, you must be well versed and instructed, in the mind of God: that you may have the scripture in a readiness, wherewithal to answer their temptations.

DIR. 2. To preserve you from compliance with the multitude in sin, labor to be strongly fenced against the importunity of sinners. You must get a kind of stiffness and stoutness of spirit, that will not be

easily bent, or bowed, one way or other, by the humors of men. As you ought to be pliable, and yielding to the commandments of God; gentle, & easy to be entreated to the doing of good; so you must be strong to resist all incitation's to evil. Some are of that ductile, and facile disposition, that they are easily impressive of any form, and quickly turned aside into crooked ways. Such a one was King Joash, after his uncle's decease: First the Princes of Judah fell away to idolatry, and they came and made obeisance to the King, and he presently yielded his consent, 2 Chron. 24.17, 18. And it is a matter of easy observation, how that many are utterly ruined, by this soft, and ductile temper, which men falsely call a good nature. S. Paul was a man of another frame of spirit, when he was bound in the spirit, for Jerusalem, his companions beseeched him, and his friends wept over him, but he would not be persuaded, Act. 21.13, 14. Such a kind of holy obstinacy, must you get into your souls, if you will stand fast in the way of righteousness. For be sure your friends will reason with you, and your acquaintance will importune you, to join in their confederacy: So that you must be fixed, as a rock in the sea, that remains immovable, though all the waves and billows toss, and dash themselves against it. Remember, if sinners are importunate to induce you to sin, the God of heaven is importunate to keep you in the path of holiness; and whose importunacy should mostly prevail upon you, judge ye. Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding lift up her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way, in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the City, at the coming in of the doors. Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools be ye of an understanding heart, Prov. 9.1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

DIR. 3. In order to keep you from infection, by the practice of the multitude, Be sure to get your natures sanctified. Earnestly pray to the Lord, for the grace of regeneration. Do not content yourselves,

with any common endowments; but get the spirit of conversion, that other spirit, which the world cannot receive. For if your qualifications be no other than the world hath, your conversations will be alike also. What made Caleb remain upright with Jehovah, when the other Spies turned aside unto vanity, and lying? Because he was a man of another spirit. Num. 14.24. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and followed me fully. If you will follow the Lord fully, when the whole world wondereth after the beast (as the apostasy of the latter times is expressed, Rev. 13.3.) you must be otherwise spirited, than the world is. Common graces and endowments, will never be productive of a singular conversation.

DIR. 4. If you will not be led aside into sin, by the multitude's practice, Take heed of entertaining their principles; but endeavor to erect and to set up principles of holiness in the stead of them. For Mark it my brethren, as your minds are affected with right or corrupt notions touching the matters of religion, so will your conversations be regularly, or corruptly, ordered. If your judgments be distempered with rotten principles, they will certainly transmit answerable defilement into your lives. Therefore you shall find that it is one of the special works of God in the day of conversion, to eradicate, and pluck up these false principles, out of men's spirits: as being the strong holds of the devil whereby he keeps possession of their hearts, and some of the principal engines, where by he hurrieth them on to works of darkness, 2 Cor. 10.4, 5. For the weapons of our warfare, are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds. Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. So that you must beg instantly of God, that he would please to throw down these towering thoughts, and make your hearts sound in his statutes, as is the prayer of David, Ps. 119.80. It would be an endless task, to pass over all the rotten

principles that are in the hearts of the multitude. I will only mention the principal, and for methods sake, reduce them to seven heads.

1. The first principle of the multitude, concerns the nature of God, and it is this. That God is not so severe and exact in the observing men's ways and actions, as some precise ministers would bear them in hand he is. Surely think they, the Lord doth not make any such great matter, whether we be holy or not; he doth not so much stand upon strictness, and circumspection in our carriage; nor will he be so rigorous as to require it of us. Only these puritan preachers tell us stories of that nature, and they must say something, to fill up the time. Thus they reason themselves into wickedness, and the wicked one strikes in to promote these reasonings, Psal. 10.11. He hath said in his heart, God hath for gotten it: he hideth his face, he will never see it. Again v. 13. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his-heart, thou wilt not require it, Ezek. 8.12. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, the Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth. Mark it, they went on in sin, and idolatry, being acted by the influence of this cursed principle. Now therefore, this principle must be demolished, and thrown down: For men will never venture through the oppositions and reproaches of the multitude, that they may be accepted of God, unless they be fully convinced, that God mindeth their ways, and that holiness is pleasing in his sight, Gen. 17.1. Walk before me, and be thus perfect, Job. 31.4. Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? Prov. 5.20, 21. Why wilt thou, my Son, he ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.

In the room and place of this first rotten principle, let these scripture principles be erected.

1. That the conscience of a man is God's deputy, and substitute, set up in the soul to this purpose; that it may judge the sinner for his wickedness, and bind him over to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, Rom. 2.15, 16. Jo. 8.9. Let me therefore ask thee this one question. Doth not thy conscience sometimes smite thee, for thy profaneness and hypocrisy? Doth not that give thee, many a secret gripe at thy heart, and lie as a worm gnawing within thy entrails? Doth it not step in, now and then, in the times of thy joviality, and merriment, and spoil all thy sport? and warn thee of coming before a greater judge? Why, O vain man, doth conscience observe which God hath planted in thy breast? and doth not God observe more exactly, by whom it was planted? For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 1 Jo. 3.20. Understand, O ye brutish among the people, and ye fools when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall not he hear? He that formed the eye [this internal, reflective eye of the soul] shall not he see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity, Psal. 94.8, 9, 10, 11.

2. Settle this principle also in the place of the other, that all the dispensations of God towards the children of men, have a direct and natural tendency to lead them to repentance, and to quicken them to walk in ways of holiness. To this end he gave his word to instruct them, and his spirit to strive with them, and hath appointed his ordinances to be attended upon by them. Upon this account he doth wait in the exercise of his long suffering towards some, and sends his ministers to treat with them in his name. To this end, he executeth sore judgments upon others, and maketh them to taste the bitterness

of sin in the fruits of it. This is the proper end of all exhortations and counsels, of all commination's on the one hand, and promises on the other hand; of all mercies and afflictions, and providences of every sort. And can you be so sottish, as to imagine that the infinitely wise God would be at such cost and pains, to drive men out of their sins and to draw them to godliness, and yet not regard whether they are holy or not? You will not impute such folly to a considerate, sober man; that he would be at a vast expense in order to accomplish a design, and then not care whether it be accomplished or no? And darest thou to charge this folly upon God, whose wisdom is incomprehensible, and of whose understanding there is no searching out? Consider, O man, what expense the Lord hath been at upon thy soul. Sometimes he hath watered thee with his blessings from heaven, and again exercised thee under sharp corrections. Now he hath indulged thee the use of spiritual opportunities, and dealt with thee by inward convictions, and anon deprived thee of these excellent advantages that you might learn their worth by the want of them, if by any means you might be prevailed with to forsake the evil of your ways. And doth not he care, for all this, whether you forsake them or not? What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? [what cost or pains could be bestowed, that hath not been spent upon you?] Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? Isa. 5.4.

3. The account and reckoning unto which sinners must be called, at the tribunal seat of Jesus Christ, will be a very strict and exact reckoning, and his proceedings with them will be severe proceedings. For God will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, Eccl. 12.14. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, 1 Cor. 4.5. And if his eyes were not upon all the ways of man, how could he bring them to such a precise account? How could

God thus judge the world? He will sentence the wicked unto eternal burnings, unto intolerable torments, which shall never have an end, Mat. 25.41. Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels. And can it be imagined that he will do thus, for a matter that he doth not regard? Will he put his creatures to this inexpressible torment, for doing that, which he makes no account of? Is God unrighteous that taketh vengeance? God forbid. Let not such a cursed thought be harbored within your spirits.

4. Though the ungodly may be suffered to prosper for a while in reference to the things of this life, yet there are sore spiritual judgments inflicted on them here, and they are reserved also to the day of destruction. This is a principle needful to be riveted in men's spirits, in opposition to that of the multitude: For it is the want of a right understanding of this, which is the ground whereupon they embrace that. Why do sinners think, that God regardeth it not, whether they be strict or loose? whether they walk after the spirit, or according to the lusts of the flesh? Because they see the ungodly prosper in the world, and there is no difference put, in the providences of God, between the righteous and the wicked: all things come alike unto all, Mal. 2.17. Ye say, everyone that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, or where is the God of judgment, q. d. If God be so much displeased with sin, why doth he not punish the sinners? If he love the ways of holiness, why doth he not deal favorably, and kindly, with them that are holy? If any are fat, and in a flourishing condition, it is for the most part the workers of iniquity: and if any are in adversity, more than others, it is such as seem to be more strict and upright than others. Well, but mind it Sirs, As the Lord hath spiritual blessings, the choicest favors, hidden manna, which the world seeth not, to bestow upon his children: So he hath spiritual plagues, the sorest effects of his indignation in this life, which are poured out upon the ungodly. And the time of remarkable difference,

betwixt Saints and Sinners, is reserved till the end of this world, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all that forget God: and then shall the righteous shine as the stars forever in the kingdom of their Father, Job. 21.7, 8, 9, 29, 30. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Mark the answer to this query, v. 29.30. Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do not ye know their tokens? That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.

So much for the first great principle of the multitude, which concerns the nature of God.

2. The second principle of the multitude, whereby they force themselves into sin, relates to the quality of godliness, viz. That a man's heart may be good in the sight of the Lord, though he be not precise and strict in the avoiding of sin, and mortification of it; though he do not walk up to the rule of the word, nor is active and forward in the works of holiness. Thus they are ready, upon all occasions, to boast of the integrity of their hearts. It is true, they cannot deny, but that their lives are not so regular and orderly as they should be; they now and then take liberty to satisfy their carnal desires; but God knows their hearts, that they mean well, and love the Lord, and intend as much good as they that are more exact in their ways. It is true, they neglect prayer, and seldom study the scriptures, and comply with the corruptions of the times. But their wills are as good, as they that are most opposite to those corruptions, and make the greatest show of diligence, and faithfulness in the duties of godliness. They hope God will accept of the will, for the deed. Hath he not a special regard unto the heart? and he knows that their hearts are as good as others. Thus Jehu gloried in the goodness

of his heart, though he only carried on his own secular interest, and departed not from the sins of Jereboam the Son of Nebat, 2 Kings 10.15. Is thine heart right, as mine heart is with thy heart? And thus Saul pleaded that he meant well, however he kept not the commandment of the Lord, 1 Sam. 13.11, 12. My brethren, if you will stand fast against the seductions of the multitude, you must get rid of this rotten principle: and know, that if there be truth and uprightness in the heart, there will be a proportionable degree and measure of the power of godliness expressed in the life and conversation. According to grace within, so will be the tenor of your carriage without, 1 Jo. 3.7. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous. Again v. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, to keep you, from under the sway, and power, of this principle of the multitude, get these three contrary principles, riveted in your hearts, in the room of it.

1. That the heart of a man, as it is the seat of internal spiritual qualifications, so it is the well-spring of action. All external practices are but streams, that flow from that fountain; but fruit, that groweth upon that tree. So that if your conversations be vile and abominable, it is impossible but your hearts should be filled with wickedness, and abominations also. If the words be light and frothy, the heart cannot be serious: Because the mouth speaketh out of the abundance of the heart. If the carriage be wanton and effeminate, the heart cannot be chaste, for all that wantonness proceedeth out of the heart, and so I might instance in other cases, Mar. 7.21, 22, 23. For from within out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries; fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. Mark it, if there be any sin and

wickedness allowed in the life, it will of necessity follow, that the heart is corrupt and naught: That is the source and original from whence sinful actions are derived.

2. The new creature, which is formed in the hearts and spirits of all the children of God, whereby alone they are made good and upright, is in its own nature and tendency, an active principle. It will raise a man from earth to heaven, and keep him from sin and impiety, that he may be holy in all manner of conversation. Grace within is as the ointment of the right hand, that will discover itself. So that if you live in the practice of any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty, glory not, and lie not against the truth (as S. James expresseth it, cap. 3.14.) i.e. Do not boast of the goodness of your hearts; for it is a lie: They cannot be good unless your lives be filled with all goodness. If your hearts are right with the Lord, your ways will be replenished with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto his praise and glory. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things, Mat. 12.35. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him. And he cannot sin, because he is born of God, 1 Jo. 3.9.

3. The rule which Christ will observe, in his judicial proceedings, according to which he will pronounce the sentence of absolution or condemnation, and send the sons of men to their eternal estate, will be according to their works. He will judge of your hearts, by the tenor of your conversations: And then the foolishness of this pretense will appear. that a man's heart may be good when his ways are corrupt: For Christ will give to every man according to his ways, Rev. 20.12. And I saw the dead small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in

the books, according to their works. Again v. 13. And they were judged every man, according to their works. So that, Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. 6.7, 8.

That's the second principle of the multitude, of which you must beware.

3. The third principle of the multitude, which you must carefully avoid, that you may not be led by their example into the commission of sin, hath respect to the benefit arising from the service of God. The principle is this, That the following of the world brings visible profit, and advantage along with it: but there is no benefit or emolument that doth come by strictness in the ways of religion. The fear of the Lord seems a fruitless way, in their eyes. They cannot but confess, that God hath commanded them, to be much in seeking after him, to pray without ceasing, to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: But what good is there to be got by so doing? Where is the income of religion, that it bringeth along with it? What advantage do men get by setting apart so many days of fasting, and prayer, and the like spiritual exercises? Job. 21.14, 15. Therefore they say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him? And you find this principle in the hearts of those stubborn, and refractory sinners, Mal. 3.14. Ye have said, it is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? q. d. Men grow rich and wealthy by compliance with sin, but there's nothing to be gotten, at all, by walking humbly with God, and attendance upon his service. This false principle Sirs, must

be rejected, and disowned, if you will keep yourselves free from the taint of worldly pollutions: For by walking contrary to the multitude, by the straight line of pure religion, you may possibly be surrounded with many dangers, and suffer much loss; and that you will never willingly do, unless you see something in godliness, able to countervail those dangers, and to make reparation of your losses. Except you apprehend a good conscience to be a matter of considerable worth, and value, you will never be at any great cost and expense in order to keep a good conscience.

For the excluding therefore of these corrupt apprehensions, endeavor to fasten three contrary principles, upon your spirits in their stead; which I shall but just touch upon.

1. That walking closely with God, in the high way of holiness is a sure means to evidence that God hath made with you an everlasting covenant, and to keep you under the verge of his peculiar favor, and regard. And is it no profit, to have the Lord of hosts to be your fast friend, and portion forever? Is it nothing to be made a special favorite, unto the King of heaven? Why man, the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof: The heart of all men, even the Kings heart is in the hands of the Lord, and as the rivers of water, he turneth it whether he pleaseth. All the Armies of heaven, and the Inhabitants of the world, are at his beck, and under his guidance. And, is it nothing to be under the special care and protection of this Generalissimo? this sovereign commander? Is it a matter little to be regarded, to enjoy the smiles and tokens of his reconciled countenance? Are the consolations of God, become small in your eyes? Surely David put another kind of estimate upon them, Psal. 4.6. There be many that say who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, Psal. 34.2. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. I have sometimes read of one of the Kings of France, that when

the Spaniard sent to denounce war against him, and the Herald proclaimed all his masters titles, as King of Castile, Aragon, Sicelie, Naples, and the rest; The French King returned to every one of them distinctly, I am King, of France, I am King of France: thereby intimating, that by that one flourishing Kingdom of France, he was able to out boast the other in the multitude of his dominions. So may a believer by the enjoyment of one God, be able to outboast the worldling in all that he possesseth. Hath he abundance of riches? But I, may a sincere Christian say, have the eternal God for my portion, who is the giver of all things, from whom every good and perfect gift doth proceed. Hath the worldling the favor of great men, of Kings, and Emperors? But I have the friendship of God, who is the supreme King; and all Princes and potentates upon earth are but his vassals and subjects. Is he advanced to honor and great dignity? Well, but I am a son or daughter of the living God, which is far higher preferment than the mightiest men can confer on their favorites. All that the worldling possesseth, is but for a small pittance of time; but a believer hath interest in eternal mansions, in a crown and kingdom that cannot be shaken. And is the way to this kingdom an unprofitable way? Mind what the Psalmist saith in this respect, Psal. 84.10, 11. For a day in thy Courts is better than a thousand. I would choose rather to sit at the threshold, in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a Sun, and a shield; The Lord will give grace, and glory: No good thing will he withhold, from them that walk uprightly.

2. The profit and advantage of godliness, is principally spiritual profit, whereas the hearts of the unregenerate are earthly, sensual, and carnal; and therefore it is, that they are not able to discern the sweetness and excellency of religion. Not as if there were no such thing to be perceived, but their spirits are indisposed, and altogether incapable of the right perception thereof. For to a through

discerning of any excellency whatsoever, there must be always a proportion betwixt the excellency discerned, and the power or faculty by which it is discerned. To make it clear by a familiar illustration. If I discourse with a Husbandman, of some profitable way of manuring of land, or concerning the best method of ordering grain and tillage; he will easily discern the import of such discourse, and the benefit of such experiments, as are commended to him in that behalf. But if you should read to him the most admirable lecture, in Geometry, Optics, Metaphysics, or the like: He will not apprehend the usefulness of it. Why? Because there is a suitableness in his understanding, for the reception of the one, and not of the other. Thus it is in this case: If a man would discern spiritual excellencies, he must have a spiritual eye. If he would taste sweetness in the service of God, he must have a spiritual palate. But now the unregenerate are carnal, and earthly: Their spirits lie groveling upon the earth, and their minds are linked and fastened to things below, 1 Cor. 2.14. The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. If a blind man do not perceive the beauty and loveliness of the Sun; It is not from any defect in that glorious body: but through the defect of his sight. So if the wicked do not see the profit of godliness, it is not through any defect in religion; But because themselves are blind, and cannot see afar off, 2 Pet. 1.9.

3. The great reason, why persons go empty away from the service of God, and so bring up an evil report upon godliness, as if it were an unprofitable work, is because their hearts are not upright in the sight of the Lord, but they deal falsely in his covenant.

They do their work by half's, and in a slight and superficial way; and so fall short of their expectations in the performance of it, Isa. 58.3. Wherefore have we fasted say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore

have we afflicted our Souls, and thou takest no knowledge? Mark the answer that is returned to these groundless complaints. Behold in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? q.d. If you did not play the Hypocrites, in the obedience you tender; you should never have cause to complain of my unreadiness to reward you. If you were faithful in the observation of my statutes, I would in no case fail the expectation of your souls. But ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick: Thus you brought an offering: Should I accept of this at your hand, saith the Lord? Mal. 1.13. My brethren, the emolument and advantage of religion, is entailed upon the power of godliness: No wonder, that they find it not, who have only the form. For bodily exercise profiteth little: But godliness [real and substantial godliness] is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. 4.8. And therefore the Lord appeals to the very consciences of his people, whether ever they could say, that they had sought him in vain, when they did seek him in sincerity, Mic. 2.7. O thou that art named, the house of Jacob, Is the spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these his doings? Do not my words do good, to him that walketh uprightly?

That is the third principle of the multitude, to be rooted up, out of your spirits.

4. The fourth Principle of the multitude which you must utterly reject, if you will not be led aside by their error into sin, hath reference to the way of salvation, and the means of coming to the kingdom of heaven. That a person need not take so much pains, nor make so much ado, in order to the attainment of eternal life, as commonly Ministers press men unto: But a man may be saved well enough, without preciseness and circumspection over his ways. They

cannot but acknowledge, but that the Holy Ghost in the scriptures exhorteth men to be vigilant, and watchful, in everything to be circumspect, and not to come near to an evil matter: To contend earnestly for the faith, and to strive to enter in at the strait gate. And indeed, will they say, these things are not amiss in Ministers, that have nothing else to mind, but to inveigh against sin, and to study the word of the Lord: But they cannot believe, they are of absolute necessity to salvation; but that a man may do well enough, though he, now and then, indulge himself to satisfy his lusts. They will never be persuaded, that God will damn all that come not up to these rigid terms. Thus they harden their hearts against the fear of the Lord, and set open a door unto licentiousness. Deut. 29.19. I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. As if the sinner should have said, as carnal people in our days are wont to do. Do you think, Heaven was appointed only for a company of Puritans, that make more Scruples than they need? Why may not a man take his fill of pleasures upon earth, and yet come to the kingdom of heaven as well as others? surely God never intended, to tie us up in such narrow bounds as these Strait-laced Preachers would persuade us. Come, let us fill ourselves with strong drink, and take our freedom whilst we may, and yet our souls shall do as well as theirs. If you would see the farther workings of this cursed and Hellish principle, consult, Psal. 10.3. Isa. 28.14, 15. And Jer. 5.12.13.

My beloved, if you will keep yourselves unspotted from the world, great care must be taken that you give not the least reception or entertainment, unto these devilish dictates. For if once such libertine thoughts do but enter into your heads, they will quickly fall down, as a mighty Torrent, upon your hearts, and carry you headlong to all excess of riot. As the first point of wisdom is, to pitch upon the right end: So the next is, to take care of electing and closing with the sure and proper means, for compassing that end. If you fancy to

yourselves, an easy way to salvation, you do thereby tempt the tempter, to lead you in the broad way to destruction. Your spirits are thereby as a City without gates or walls, open to all the inroads of that wicked one, and of wicked men that are his instruments. And therefore to Antidote your souls against this Poisonous principle, let these three contrary principles sink deep within you.

1. That the Holy Ghost is express concerning it, that the way of salvation is a narrow, and difficult way: and that there are but few of those, that sit under the teachings of the word of God, that will arrive with safety at the kingdom of heaven. Mark it, I say, these are truths which are frequently inculcated and very clearly asserted. They are not dark notions, and conclusions, that are pretended to be drawn by far-fetched consequences, from the scripture; but they are delivered so plainly, that there is no way left for evading the force of them. Mat. 7.13, 14. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at. Because strait is the gate [or how strait is the gate?] and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Not only the way of holiness, in the utmost extent of it, is a difficult way; but the way that leadeth unto life; such holiness, as is of absolute necessity to conduct a sinner to salvation; And they are but a handful in comparison that walk in it. But this may be meant, will the carnal professor say, in relation to Heathens and Infidels, and gross Idolaters, that worship a false God, and never had the knowledge of a Mediator. We are Christians, and members of the Church, and hear the word of the Lord. Se therefore what our Savior saith in another place, Mat. 22.14. For many are called, but few are chosen. When are sinners externally called, by a common vocation, but when the word of God sounds in their ears, inviting them to repentance, and the Spirit of God deals by his motions with their hearts, admonishing and persuading them to come unto Christ, that

they may be saved? And few of this sort attain to eternal life. Look into the old world, and there were but eight persons saved from the deluge, whereof there was one, at least, a hypocrite; and the rest of the world were swept away, not only with the besom of temporal destruction, but into the pit of eternal perdition. Consider the state of Sodom, and there could not be found ten righteous persons in that populous City. But least you should say that these were professed Atheists, and Infidels, and so the case not parallel, with such as are called the people of God: Let us therefore make inspection into the body of Israel, when Elias made intercession to the Lord against them, who thought that only himself had been left alone faithful unto Jehovah. And pray, what was the answer of God unto him? See Rom. 11.4. I have reserved to myself, seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Mark it, but seven thousand in the whole kingdom of Israel, that consisted of ten of the Tribes. We read of eleven hundred and threescore thousand mighty men of valor, at one time, in the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, besides the soldiers that kept the garrisons: Now if you should reckon proportionably, concerning the ten tribes, and make but a reasonable computation of the rest of the people, men and women, What were seven thousand in respect of the whole? What an inconsiderable pittance? scarcely, one of a thousand. However the case is plain, there are but few in comparison that hear the word of the Lord, that will come to the state of blessedness in the enjoyment of the Lord. And, to bring this matter to a head, if the way to Heaven were easy, how comes it to pass that such multitudes perish? If men might be saved at a cheap rate, without strictness, and diligence, whence is it that the greatest number fall short of salvation? If the careless and sensual are in the way to heaven, who are the multitude, in the visible Church, that Christ tells us, shall be sent into the chains of darkness? Do not you tremble, when you meet with such passages in the Bible? I am afraid, Sirs, you dare not seriously study and

meditate upon such scripture-truths, lest they should make your hearts to ache, and awaken you out of your golden dreams.

2. Though there are degrees of grace, and different measures of holiness in the Saints and servants of God: and many persons that are saved never attained to that stature and pitch of godliness in this life, at which some have arrived: Yet there are such things of absolute and indispensable necessity to salvation, and to evidence that you are partakers of saving grace in the smallest degree, that will sufficiently manifest that Heaven is not to be got without much pains and diligence in the pursuance of it, Mat. 11.12. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. There is no getting into that City, except you storm it: unless you vehemently strive to lay hold upon it. Lazy wishing's and woulding's will never bring you thither. Lukewarmness and slothfulness will certainly fall short of it. The bare external and superficial performance of some duties whilst in other things you take liberty to indulge the flesh, will undoubtedly leave you still in the state of Damnation; whatever fond conceits you may have of the contrary.

Let us lightly pass over the mention of some particulars that are of absolute necessity to eternal life. (1) The whole nature must be cleansed from the power of sin, and every corruption mortified and brought into subjection, Rom. 6.6, 14. 2 Cor. 5.17. (2) The whole person must be devoted and consecrated unto the Lord; and surrendered into his hands, to be at God's disposal, and to follow him, at his feet, without reservation and exception of any part or faculty, Isa. 44.5. 2 Cor. 8.5. (3) All the time of a man's life must be dedicated to the service of the Most High; and to the employment of holiness, Luk. 1.75. 1 Pet. 1.17. (4) Every known sin must be actually abandoned and forsaken they must be utterly abandoned and cast off, never to be followed anymore, Ezek. 18.21. Galat. 5.19, 21. (5) All

the commandments of the Lord must be respected, and a conscientious regard must be had unto the due performance of every known duty, Psal. 119.6. (6) The whole flock of our outward enjoyments must be managed in a subordination to the glory of God, and eternal concernments: and be readily abandoned and rejected, even the dearest of them, when they come in competition with close walking with God: and the forest tortures and afflictions willingly submitted to, rather than be driven back into the ways of sin, Mat. 16.24, 25, 26. Heb. 11.35. Now let us cast our eyes back on these things, and see whether they can be done with a wet finger. The reason, why carnal people imagine, that they may come to heaven, without much circumspection and strictness, is, because they know not what real holiness is, nor wherein it doth consist, which is the only way that leadeth to heaven.

3. Let this principle also be erected and set up in your souls, that although no Christian doth attain to an absolute perfection of grace or holiness in this life; yet the meanest sincere Christian, every true believer, is still pressing after perfection. He doth not allow himself in the least iniquity, but is still cleansing himself further every day, and pressing forward in godliness, till he hath gotten to the Mark. He doth not content himself with any attainments received; but is ever laboring after more intimate acquaintance with God, and a closer fellowship and communion with him, Phil. 3.13, 14. Every sound Christian takes the life of Christ, for his pattern. And though sometimes it falleth out that he maketh blots and blurs in transcribing, yet he studieth to write as near as may be according to that copy, 1 Jo. 3.3. Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

So much for the raising of that fourth cursed and corrupt Principle of the Multitude.

5. The next Principle of the multitude, is touching the accommodations of this life, the good things of this world. That it is a point of the greatest wisdom, to make sure of all that can be gotten here, and let us trust God with our souls, for they cannot be left in better hands. They think Gold and silver are sure friends, upon all occasions; and make way for a man in any business whatsoever: And therefore they count such men fools and idiots, that know not their own concerns, who will part with these things upon the niceties of conscience; and will lose their worldly advantages, upon any ground whatsoever. For themselves, they had rather trust God with their souls, than men with their bodies and estates. So that whatever cometh of it, they will be sure to get, what they can, that they may have somewhat to rely upon, in the time of need, Prov. 18.11. The rich man's wealth is his strong City, and a high wall in his own conceit.

For the prevention of the workings of this soul-destructive principle, let these ensuing lessons be well imprinted on your spirits, and frequently weighed and pondered in your thoughts.

1. The God of holiness hath threatened to blast the endeavors, and bring the labors to naught, of such as eagerly and obstinately pursue the things of this life, and neglect to be diligent in laying up a good foundation for eternity. When they are earnestly set upon getting riches, and care not to keep undefiled consciences, the Lord is wont to send a curse upon their blessings, and to shrivel their gains into a very narrow compass. So that, what profit hath a man, in such a case, of all his pains and labor, whereby his heart hath been disquieted? Why Sirs, it is the blessing of God that maketh rich, Prov. 10.22. And what if that blessing be withholden from you? Then all your enjoyments will wither and crumble into dust, even as flowers fade at the departure of the Sun. And this is none other, than you may well

expect, if you follow this world to the neglect of the other world. This he is wont to execute, upon the children of men, when they wound their souls and consciences, to get the trash and dung of the earth: when they follow after this world and take no heed to walk in the steps of his precepts. Sometimes God bloweth upon their labor, and travel, that they weary themselves as in the fire for very vanity, Hag. 1.9. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why, saith the Lord of hosts? Because of mine house that is waste and ye run every man to his own house. Sometimes he suffers them to have much, but doth not give them a heart to enjoy what they have: They have no profit, nor can suck any sweetness, or comfort, out of their greatest abundance, Eccles. 6.1, 2. Sometimes he leaveth them to the swing of their lusts, to spend what they got for their bodies, to the ruin and destruction of their souls: So that all they have is too little, to satisfy those, insatiable, and untamed, lusts. Eccl. 5.13, 14. Prov. 1.32.

2. It is but yet a little while, and all the good things of this world shall not, in the least be able to do you good. They cannot support under the terrors of conscience, in this life; much less can they prevent the stroke of death, or allay the bitterness of that passage. They may add to the tortures of conscience, because of their evil getting, and misemployment; but cannot minister a dram of consolation to the departing spirit, Prov. 10.2. They may increase the punishment assigned, in the day of judgment: but no way prevail to the alteration, or revocation, of the sentence of the Judge. he will not regard thy riches, nor thousands of gold and silver. When a rich man dieth, he shall carry nothing away: His glory shall not descend after him. Though whiles he lived, he blessed his Soul; and men will praise thee, when thou dost well to thyself: He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light, Psal. 49.17, 18, 19. Now it is accounted a piece of the chiefest wisdom, to get much in this world,

however it be gotten. But in the end, the worldling shall be a fool, Jer. 17.11. i.e., Then it will appear what an egregious Dolt he was; his folly will be declared before men and Angels.

3. Whereas the Earthworm pretends, that he will trust God with his Soul, know, that the Lord will have nothing to do, in a way of mercy, with such: but will leave them to fall and perish by their own counsels. But will not God preserve those that trust in him? Yea, but this is not to trust in the Lord, but profanely to tempt him: And he will repay such as hate him to their face. Then do we place our confidence under his shadow, when our dependence is acted in the way of righteousness: When we give up ourselves, in integrity, to be his servants, and keep the way of the Lord, Psal. 4.5. Psal. 37.3, 7, 34. If persons live in sin, and mind earthly things, and yet say they lean upon the Lord: This very presumption will bring upon them a sore, and inevitable, destruction, Mic. 3.11, 12.

So much, to eradicate and pluck up that fifth Principle out of your hearts.

6. The sixth hellish principle espoused, and embraced, by the multitude concerns the evil of those sins, in which they live, and with the filth whereof they are wont to defile themselves. Their Tenent is this, that there is no great hurt in their irregularities and transgressions: nor are they such mischievous things, as many are pressed to believe. What harm is there (will they say) if a man talk idly and frothily? If they now and then revel, and tipple, in a way of merriment, and to pass away their time? They hope, nobody is the worse for it; they know indeed, they are actions condemned in the word, but what hurt is there in them, if they tend to no man's loss, or detriment? They pray God, they may never do worse, and the like. They cannot deny, but they are forbidden to add to the word of the

Lord; To introduce men's inventions into his worship; To set their Posts by his Posts, and their thresholds by his threshold. But what need men keep such a do against them, being innocent harmless things; especially if they are appointed for decency and edification? However they are confident, that if they do no good, yet there is no great matter of hurt in them. This I might instance in many cases: For it is the ordinary plea, which sinners produce, to justify much of their impiety, Ezek. 16.20. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, q. d. Surely it appears a small matter in your eyes. These are sinful apprehensions which are sedulously to be mortified, and subdued: For unless your minds are possessed with abhorring thoughts of sin, your souls can never be thoroughly humbled for it; nor will be at much pains or expense to escape the pollution. But I have spoken abundantly to this, in one or two places before. Only let me beseech you to put these two interrogatories, home upon your consciences.

QU. 1. Is there no hurt, in provoking the Lord of glory to indignation?

Is not he the life of thy life, and the strength of thy heart, and the Author and giver of all the mercies, which thou enjoyest? Cannot he strip thee naked, and leave thee desolate, in a moment? Is not he able to fill thy bones with sorrows, and thy Spirit with anguish, and to crush thee in pieces, with the least effects of his wrath? Did ever man or woman harden themselves against God, and prospered? And is there no hurt in that which stirreth up his fury against thy Soul? Do you provoke him to anger, and do not you provoke yourselves, to the confusion of your own faces? Jer. 7.19. Why man, God's wrath is incensed, by the smallest of thine abominations. See what order he gave in case of the profanation of the Sabbath, when the man gathered sticks in the wilderness on that day. Num. 15.35. The Lord said unto Moses, the man shall be surely put to death, all the congregation shall stone him with stones, without the camp. See how

Jealous he was, in the case of his instituted worship. When Nadab and Abihu Priests whom the Lord had consecrated, offered up incense before him. They were engaged in the service of the true God, and in the duties, for the main, of his own appointment: Only they took liberty to make use of strange fire, which God had not commanded. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Lev. 10.2. Observe how severely he dealt in the case of Uzzah, who did but touch the ark, when the Oxen shook it; probably out of a good intention. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the Ark: and there he died before God, 1 Chron. 13.10. Lastly, mind what dreadful commination's are denounced against the smallest presumptuous sins, (such as thine are, for which thou pleadest, as having no hurt in them.) Num. 15.30, 31. But the Soul that doth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord: and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment: that soul shall utterly be cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him. Mark it, the least presumptuous sin is a reproaching of God, and despising his word. It reproacheth God as a liar, as if he would not make good his threatening's: It reproacheth him, as a countenancer of wickedness: As unjust and unrighteous in his doings: and it exposeth the sinner to be utterly cut off, and to die in his sins. And is there no hurt in such things?

QU. 2. What apprehensions are you likely to have of these impieties, at the day of accounts? Then, when conscience is awakened, they will appear in their danger and loathsomeness. Then, when punishment is at hand, your souls will rue it, that ever you meddled with them: that ever you were so sottish, as to follow after lying vanities. For the day of Judgment will be a day of conviction, as well as of

recompense, Jude 15. O my beloved, lay these things to heart betimes, whilst you are yet in the way. It is a dreadful thing to be unconvinced of the bitterness of sin, till the torments of hell convince you.

7. The last principle of the multitude, which I shall mention, hath an eye upon the electing grace of God. Will they say, If God hath appointed to save us, we shall be saved; though we be never so great strangers to the ways of holiness: And if he hath appointed us to wrath, we shall perish; all our obedience and endeavors will be to no purpose, to withstand or alter his counsels. Thus the Devil hath taught ungodly men to reason, and the Semi-pelagians are his Ushers to instruct them more artificially to manage this wretched principle. This is one of the strong holds of Satan, whereby he keeps possession of the souls of the unregenerate. By thus arguing, they remove all hindrances out of the way, that they may give themselves up freely to lasciviousness, to commit iniquity with greediness. It is the very principle which S. Paul mentioneth to be in the hearts of the impenitent, and which he rebukes with such vehemency and holy indignation, Rom. 9.18, 19. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will. As if they should say, our salvation, we see, depends wholly on the will and pleasure of God; If he hath decreed to bring us to heaven, we shall get thither, however we demean ourselves: and if God hath decreed us to condemnation, we shall be condemned, whatever pains we take to walk in the strict ways of religion. For his will is arbitrary and unchangeable, such as cannot be resisted.

My brethren, these corrupt reasonings must be silenced? else they will cut the sinews of all vigorous endeavors, to please the Lord, and to be found faithful unto him. The doctrine of God's Prescience and

Decrees is no countenancer of slothfulness, no enemy to godliness, but a promoter thereof, if rightly weighed and considered. It mightily tends to the advancement of the Grace of God, 2 Tim, 1.9. To empty a man of himself, and to stop the mouth of all proud, carnal, gloriation and boasting, 1 Cor. 4.7. To quicken and provoke us to diligence, and exactness in the works of piety, that thereby it may appear that we are a chosen people whom God hath called according to his purpose, 1 Thes. 1.4, 5, 6, 7. And therefore, to stop the mouth of those sin-advancing, and soul-ruining reasonings, and to set your spirits right in this particular: Let these four contrary principles be well settled and fastened in your souls.

1. Whom God hath appointed to salvation as the end, he hath appointed to regeneration, and universal obedience in the life, as the means leading to that end. Whom he hath predestinated to partake of the kingdom of Heaven, by virtue of the Merits of the death of Jesus Christ, he hath predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, Rom. 8.29. These things are so inseparably connected together in God's decree, that they cannot possibly be parted. God hath not determined to conduct, such, or such, to eternal life, though they live in a course of sin, and lie polluted in their blood. If any plead from such apprehensions, let them know, that this is not the scripture doctrine of God's decrees, but a wicked slur and aspersion whereby the adversaries of free grace, endeavor to bring up an evil report upon the truth. The scripture doctrine is this, That whom God purposeth to save from the wrath to come, he doth purpose to sanctify, and cleanse from all their filthiness: and to guide them by his spirit in the way of holiness. What can be more plain, if ungodly men had not a mind willfully to pervert the words of the Holy Ghost, and to wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, 2 Thes. 2.13, 14. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth: Whereunto he hath

called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle, 1 Pet. 1.3. Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, Rom. 8.30. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Mark it, where the Lord hath decreed glorification for the end, he hath decreed conversion and holiness, and evangelical obedience as the necessary means to lead thither. And what God hath joined together, let no sinner be so hardy, as to pluck asunder.

2. The rule for guidance of our conversations, at which we are to take counsel for direction in all our actions, is not God's will of purpose what he hath determined to do: But his will of precept, what he hath appointed in his laws and statutes to be done by us. Our work lieth, in the diligent observation of his commandments. His counsels are secrets, reserved in his own breast and bosom, till by the uprightness of our hearts, and the integrity of our lives, we make it appear that we are chosen of God. A man may have a hand in bringing about much of the purpose of the Lord, and yet be a wicked rebel in so doing, Act. 2.23. So that, I say, our business consisteth in hearkening to his law, and conforming ourselves to the dictates and injunctions of the same, Deut. 29.29. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: But those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

3. Settle this as a principle in your hearts. That it is a point of egregious folly and sottishness, to be more earnest and heedful in the preserving our bodies, than in the saving our souls; and to venture our precious and immortal souls, and the affairs of the world to

come, in such a bottom, wherein we will not venture to put ourselves, as to the transitory enjoyments of this world.

This very consideration, if thoroughly laid to heart, will sufficiently show us the weakness and gross stupidity of the multitude in their reasonings. For none of them will be persuaded, thus to argue the case, in respect to their bodily health, and outward estate. My beloved, as God hath predetermined in the matters of man's salvation: So he hath fore ordained all things that come to pass. There is not the smallest concernment, that befallerth any of the children of men, but it falleth under the compass of God's decrees, Eph. 1.11. Being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things, according to the counsel of his own will. Now take the profanest sinner, and he will not plead, after this fashion, in relation to his outward man, and earthly comforts. When a wicked man is bound upon the bed of sickness, he will not say, If God hath purposed I shall have ease of my pains, then I shall be sure to have it, however disorderly I am: If God hath decreed to recover me, I shall recover, though I neglect the means: And if not, all my care and endeavors are to no effect. No, but saith he, send for the Physician; give me this potion, which is proper to my distemper, and that cordial, which is of use to strengthen nature: For I must use the means of health, if ever I would expect the blessing of health. Take an unconverted sinner in his trade, and traffic; he will not thus reason the case, If God hath purposed that I shall be rich, then I am sure it will come to pass, however idle, and negligent, I am in my calling: And if not, all my labor and industry will be unsuccessful. No, but he will buy, and sell, and trade, and traffic; he will look carefully to his shop, and live frugally, and look well to his business: For, saith he, as the blessing of God maketh rich, so it is the diligent hand, which he hath appointed as the means conducing thereunto. And, pray mind it Sirs, is it an equitable thing, thus to plead in the case of eternal

salvation, when as you will not be so sottish in the case of worldly accommodations? Methinks, if sinners had a mind to make experiments, they should begin with their bodies, and temporal estate, rather than with their Souls, which are of value infinitely beyond them. Let me speak unto you in allusion to the words of the Apostle, James cap. 5.7, 8. Be patient therefore brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it. The like argument may I use in this particular of God's decrees. Do not reason yourselves inso slothfulness, and impieties, from the fore-appointment of God. Behold the Husbandman will not be so senseless, as to reason in that sort: He will not say, if God hath decreed I shall have a good crop, and a plentiful harvest, it shall be so, though I sleep and be careless; though I neither plow nor sow: And if he hath decreed otherwise, all my travel is in vain. No, but he will plow all day to sow; he will open and break the clods of the ground: Doth not he manure the soil? and make plain the face of the earth? And cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye in their season For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. He knoweth, that drowsiness will clothe a man with rags: And that if he would attain the end, he must give diligence in the use of the means. Be ye diligent also, in working out your salvation, and that with fear and trembling.

4. As we must endeavor to walk by the rule of the gospel, so we must carry on the business of eternity, in the order and method of the gospel. And this is the order, not firstly to inquire into the counsels of God, whether you be elected or not; but in the first place to be earnest with God for the grace of conversion, and to press after purity of heart, and holiness of conversation, that from thence you may be able to prove your election, 2 Pet. 1.10. Give diligence to make your calling, and election sure. Mark it, first your calling or

conversion, unto God, and your election thereby. Else you begin at the wrong end.

Thus I have largely insisted on the fourth Direction. If you would not be led aside by the multitude's practice, Take heed that you entertain not their principles.

DIR. 5. If you will not conform to the practice of the multitude, make them not the men of your society and fellowship. Hold no familiar correspondency with them: But make the people of God the men of your counsel. If you familiarly converse with infected persons, you will be sure to catch the plague of them. If you have intimacy with them, you will learn their ways, and bring a snare to your souls, Prov. 22.24, 25. You have many professors think they have writ of exemption from contracting defilement, by the society of the ungodly: And therefore they make no bones of familiar correspondency with sinners: Only they are resolved not to comply with them, in anything sinful; but will hold fast their integrity. Alas Christians, this is but to cheat and cozen your own souls. Can a man carry fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can he intimately converse with the ungodly, and not receive a tincture, at least of their spirits? Be assured of this, if you do not some way or other defile yourselves, but deal truly and faithfully with the Lord, they will either leave their ungodliness, or quickly be weary of, and loath your society. The resolution of David is an excellent pattern, Psal. 119.115. Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. As if he had said, I shall be sure to deal falsely in the covenant of my God, and not keep his commandments, unless I break off society with evil doers. And v. 63. I am a companion of all them that fear thee: and of them that keep thy statutes.

DIR. 6. Lastly, if you would not be infected by the multitude, learn the great gospel lesson of self-denial. Self-seeking will expose you to be caught in every snare, Luk. 9.23.

Thus I have done with the second head, by way of direction.

SECT. IX.

4. To provoke and stir you up, to be watchful over yourselves, that you do not follow the multitudes example: I shall only put you in mind of three moving considerations.

MOT. 1. If you be led by the example of the generality, and walk in their steps: It will be a sure evidence that you are still the children of the Devil, and under his government. For this is one of the properties of such as are dead in sins, and trespasses, and are acted by the prince of the power of the air, being children of disobedience: That they walk according to the course of the world, Eph. 2.1, 2.

MOT. 2. If you live no otherwise than the multitude live, you will fall short of many that fall short of heaven. Sundry hypocrites have out-gone you. This the unjustified Pharisee could boast of, that he was not as other men, Luke 18.11. And if your righteousness be less than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, who are excluded from the kingdom of Heaven; how will you be able to escape the damnation of Hell!

MOT. 3. This argument from the multitude is commonly of no validity in respect of outward evils; and why should it prevail as to spiritual evils, which are the sorest, and whereby all outward judgments are pulled down upon our heads. The covetous worldling

will not cast away his riches, though all his neighbors are poor and indigent: But he labors to outstrip them in worldly goods. Take a man that hath his health, when all about him are sick, impotent or diseased; and he will not destroy his health, because he would be like unto others. Why then should you murder your souls, because others walk in the path of destruction? should we not be more stiff and resolute in laying up treasures in heaven, than earth-worms are to get honor and profits in the earth? They seek after but a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible, 1 Cor. 9.25.

4. Let me subjoin a few things by way of Retortion, and so shut up this discourse.

QU. 1. What use ought we to make of the practice of the multitude in doing evil; seeing we must not follow them, nor conform to their example?

ANS. There is a fourfold special use, to be made of their example; when a multitude combine in a course of sin.

1. Observe from hence the special providence of God, in the preservation and safeguard of his Church and people. Though they are but, <H&G>, a little, diminutive flock, a handful, in comparison of the great numbers of those that serve the Devil, and adhere to his interest: And though the wicked hate the righteous, with a perfect hatred; and seek to root them out from being a people, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance: Yet they are still kept from desolation and ruin. Hic est digitus Dei. Certainly this is the finger of God. If you should see a poor man wage law against a hundred, that are rich, and mighty; and be able to make his part good against them, spending penny for penny, and pound for pound; you would presently conclude, this poor man hath some others to back him; all his expenses come not out of his own stock, else he

were no way able to stand it out against them. Why Sirs, thus it is in reference to God's peculiar people and children: They are but a small number of poor despised ones, and yet they are enabled to hold out, notwithstanding the multitude of the wicked that plot their downfall. Surely there is a mighty one to back them, even the Lord of hosts: For the wicked walk on every side, and the vilest men are exalted. Well may the Saints of God speak in the language of the Psalmist, Psal. 124.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. If it had not been Jehovah who was on our side, now may Israel say; If it had not been Jehovah who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul. Then the proud waters had gone over our soul, Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us a prey to their teeth.

2. Learn from the wickedness of the multitude, what pravity and corruption is resident in your own hearts. Lay your hands upon your breasts, and say, this wickedness which they perpetrate, and this vanity which they follow, is radically and seminally in my soul: and if God had left me to myself, I should have been a partner with them in the same abominations. For my brethren, the vile actions of others, are evidences of the vileness of our hearts. There is not that horrid wickedness, committed in the life of any man, but it is seminally in the soul of every man. As in water face answereth unto face, so doth the heart of man to man, Prov. 27.19. How then cometh it to pass, that we are not actually guilty of the like abominations? Why, because the Lord hath restrained and kept you back. Deut. 18.14. For these nations which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and diviners: But as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do, q.d. If God had permitted, and left you to the natural inclination and bent of your own spirits, you would have been conjurers and witches and charmers and fortune-tellers: You

would have consulted with them, and have been in every respect, as notorious and execrable wretches, as any others in the world.

3. Endeavor from the consideration of the sinfulness of the multitude, to keep a holy jealousy and suspicion over your souls, lest you should miscarry in the way to heaven. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall, 1 Cor. 10.12. If the multitude go down the broad way to Hell, and perish through their unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it, Heb. 3.19. compared with Heb. 4.1.

4. Lastly, if God hath given you good hopes through grace, that you are converted, and taken near to himself by the blood of the everlasting covenant; take advantage from the perverseness and corruption of the multitude, to adore the unsearchable riches of the grace of God, and to magnify the abundance of his loving-kindnesses. Say as David, 2 Sam. 7.18. O Lord, who am I, and what have I deserved? that thou shouldest take me from amongst the multitude of the ungodly, and bring me hitherto, into a state of fellowship and communion with thyself? For, as it is, Deut. 7.7, 8. The Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you therefore he hath selected you, and taken you, into covenant with himself: Let his name be exalted, and the high praises of this God be in your hearts, and lips, and lives forever.

FINIS.

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