

are under the yoke of self-willed unreasonable husbands or parents. Such may be constrained to do, in some degree, what otherwise they would not. And they are blameless herein, if (1.) They use all possible means, arguments, entreaties, to be excused from it; and, when they cannot prevail, (2.) Do it just so far as they are constrained, and no farther.

VI. 1. And now brethren, what remains but that I beseech you who are not under the yoke, who are under God, the directors of your own actions, to set prejudice, obstinacy, fashion aside, and to yield to Scripture, to reason, to truth. Suppose, as some affirm, you acted on no higher motives than to please me herein, I know not that you would have need to be ashamed; even this you might avow in the face of the sun. You owe something to me; perhaps it is not my fault if you owe not your own souls also. If then you did an indifferent thing only on this principle, not to give me any uneasiness, but to oblige, to comfort me in my labor, would you do much amiss? How much more may you be excused in doing what I advise, when truth, reason, and Scripture advise the same? when the thing in question is not an indifferent thing, but clearly determined by God himself?

2. Some years ago, when I first landed at Savannah, in Georgia, a gentlewoman told me, "I assure you, Sir, you will see as well-dressed a congregation on Sunday as most you have seen in London." I did so; and soon after, took occasion to expound those scriptures which relate to dress, and to press them freely upon the audience, in a plain and close application. All the time that I afterward ministered at Savannah, I saw neither gold in the church nor costly apparel, but the congregation in general was almost constantly clothed in plain clean linen, or woollen.

3. And why should not my advice, grounded on Scripture and reason, weigh with you as much as with them? I will tell you why: (1.) You are surrounded with aints of the world, persons fashionably, reputably religious. And these are constant opposers of all who would go farther in religion than themselves. These are continually warning you against running into extremes, and striving to beguile you from the simplicity of the Gospel. (2.) You have near you still more dangerous enemies than these, Antinomians, whether German or English; who, when any Christian practice is enforced come in with the cuckoo's note, "The law, the law!" and, while they themselves glory in their shame, make you ashamed of what should be your glory. (3.) You have suffered by false teachers of our own, who undermined the doctrine you had received; negatively, in public, by not insisting upon it, by not exhorting you to dress as persons professing godliness; (and not to speak for a Christian duty is, in effect, to speak against it;) and positively, in private, either by jesting upon your exactness in observing the Scripture rule, or by insinuations, which, if you did not mind them then, yet would afterward weaken your soul.

4. You have been, and are at this day, "in perils among false brethren;" I mean not only those of other congregations, who count strictness all one with bondage, but many of our own; in particular, those who were once clearly convinced of the truth, but they have sinned away the conviction themselves, and now endeavour to harden others against it, at least by example; by returning again to the folly from which they were once clean escaped. But what is the example of all mankind, when it runs counter to Scripture and reason? I have warned you a thousand times not to regard any example which contradicts reason or Scripture. If it ever should be, (pray that it may not be, but if ever it should,) pray that I or my brother, my wife, or his, or

all of us together, should set no example contrary to Scripture or reason, I entreat you, regard it not at all; still let Scripture and reason prevail.

5. You who have passed the morning, perhaps the noon of life, who find the shadows of evening approach, set a better example to those who are to come, to the now rising generation. With you the day of life is far spent; the night of death is at hand. You have no time to lose; see that you redeem every moment that remains. Remove every thing out of the way, be it ever so small, (though indeed gay or costly apparel is not so,) that might in any way obstruct your lowliness and meekness, your seriousness of spirit, your single intention to glorify God, in all your thoughts and words and actions. Let no needless expense hinder your being, in the highest degree you possibly can, rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, till you are clothed with glory and immortality.

Our carcases will soon fall into the dust; then let the survivors adorn them with flowers. Meantime, let us regard those ornaments only that will accompany us into eternity.

6. You that are in the morning of your days, either your form is agreeable or it is not. If it is not, do not make your person remarkable; rather let it lie hid in common apparel. On every account, it is in your wisdom to recommend yourself to the eye of the mind; but especially to the eye of God, who reads the secrets of your hearts, and in whose sight the incorruptable ornaments alone are of great price. But if you would recommend yourself by dress, is any thing comparable to plain neatness? What kind of persons are those to whom you could be recommended by gay or costly apparel? None that are any way likely to make you happy; this pleases only the silliest and worst of men. At most, it gratifies only the silliest and worst principle in those who are of a nobler character.

7. To you, whom God has intrusted with a more pleasing form, those ornaments are quite needless:

Th' adorning thee with so much art
Is but a barbarous skill;
'Tis like the poisoning of a dart,
To apt before to kill.

That is, to express ourselves to plain English, without any figure of poetry, it only tends to drag them into death everlasting who were going fast enough before, by additional provocations to lust, or at least inordinate affection. Did you actually design to raise either of these in those who looked upon you? What? while you and they were in the more immediate presence of God? What profaneness and inhumanity mixed together! But if you designed it not, did you not foresee it? You might have done so without any extraordinary sagacity. "Nay, I did not care or think about it." And do you say this by way of excuse? You "scatter abroad arrows, firebrands, and death," and do not think or care about it!

8. O let us walk more charitably and more wisely for the time to come! Let us all cast aside, from this very hour, whatever does not become men and women professing godliness; whatever does not spring from the love and fear of God, and minister thereto. Let our seriousness "shine before men," not our dress. Let all who see us know that we are not of this world. Let our adorning be that which fadeth not away; even righteousness and true holiness. If ye regard not weakening my hands, and grieving my spirit, yet grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Do you ask, "But what shall I do with the gay and costly apparel, and with the ornaments, I have already? Must I suffer them to be lost? Ought I not to wear them, now I have them?" I answer,