

**Articles and Sermons :: spiritual pride****spiritual pride - posted by brothagary, on: 2011/12/2 3:06**

The first and the worst cause of errors that prevail in such a state of things is spiritual pride. This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of religion. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit, to darken the mind and mislead the judgment. This is the main handle by which the devil has hold of religious persons, and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces, to clog and hinder a work of God. —This cause of error is the main spring, or at least the main support, of all the rest. Till this disease is cured, medicines are in vain applied to heal other diseases. It is by this that the mind defends itself in other errors and guards itself against light, by which it might be corrected and reclaimed. The spiritually proud man is full of light already; he does not need instruction, and is ready to despise the offer of it. But, if this disease be healed, other things are easily rectified. The humble person is like a little child, he easily receives instruction; he is jealous over himself, sensible how liable he is to go astray, and therefore, if it be suggested to him that he does so, he is ready most narrowly and impartially to inquire. Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility, and so prepares the mind for true divine light without darkness, and so clears the eye to look on things as they truly are; Ps. xxv. 9. "The meek will he guide in judgment. And the meek will he teach his way." Therefore we should fight, neither with small nor with great, but with the king of Israel. Our first care should be to rectify the heart, and pull the beam out of our eye, and then we shall see clearly.

I know that a great many things at this day are very injuriously laid to the pride of those that are zealous in the cause of God. When any person appears, in any respect, remarkably distinguished in religion from others; if he professes those spiritual comforts and joys that are greater than ordinary, or appears distinguishingly zealous in religion; if he exerts himself more than others in the cause of religion, or seems to be distinguished with success; ten to one but it will immediately awaken the jealousy of those about him. They will suspect (whether they have cause or no) that he is very proud of his goodness, and affects to have it thought that nobody is so good as he; and all his talk is heard, and all his behaviour believed, with this prejudice. Those who are themselves cold and dead, and especially such as never had any experience of the power of godliness on their own hearts, are ready to entertain such thoughts of the best Christians; which arises from a secret enmity against vital and fervent piety. But zealous Christians should take heed lest this prove a snare to them, and the devil take advantage from it, to blind their eyes from beholding what there is indeed of this nature in their hearts, and make them think, because they are charged with pride wrongfully and from an ill spirit, in many things, that therefore it is so in every thing. Alas, how much pride have the best of us in our hearts! It is the worst part of the body of sin and death; the first sin that ever entered into the universe, and the last that is rooted out; it is God's most stubborn enemy!

The corruption of nature may all be resolved into two things, pride and worldly-mindedness, the devil and the beast, or self and the world. These are the two pillars of Satan's temple, on which the whole house leans. But the former of these is every way the worst part of the corruption of nature; it is the first-born son of the devil, and his image in the heart of man chiefly consists in it. It is the last thing in a sinner that is overborne by conviction, in order to conversion; and here is the saint's hardest conflict; the last thing over which he directly militates against god, and is most contrary to the Spirit of the Lamb of God. It is most like the devil its father, in a serpentine deceitfulness and secrecy; it lies deepest, is most active, and is most ready secretly to mix itself with every thing.

And, of all kinds of pride, spiritual pride is upon many accounts the most hateful, it is most like the devil; most like the sin he committed in a heaven of light and glory, where he was exalted high in divine knowledge, honour, beauty, and happiness. Pride is much more difficult to be discerned than any other corruption, because its nature very much consists in a person's having too high a thought of himself. No wonder that he who has too high a thought of himself, does not know it; for he necessarily thinks that the opinion of himself was without just grounds, he would therein cease to have it. Those that are spiritually proud, have a high conceit of these two things, viz. Their light, and their humility, both which are a strong prejudice against a discovery of their pride. Being proud of their light, that makes them not jealous of themselves; he who thinks a clear light shines around him, is not suspicious of an enemy lurking near him unseen; and then, being proud of their humility, that makes them least of all jealous of themselves in that particular, viz., as being under the prevalence of pride. There are many sins of the heart that are very secret in their nature, and difficultly discerned. The psalmist says, Psal. xix. 12. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." But spiritual pride is the most secret of all sins. The heart is deceitful and unsearchable in nothing so much as in this matter; and there is no sin in the world, that men are so confident in. The very nature of it is to work self-confidence, and drive away jealousy of any evil o

f that kind. There is no sin so much like the devil as this for secrecy and subtlety, and appearing in a great many shapes undiscerned and unsuspected. It appears as an angel of light; takes occasion to arise from every thing; it perverts and abuses every thing, and even the exercises of real grace, and real humility, as an occasion to exert itself: it is a sin that has, as it were, many lives; if you kill it, it will live still; if you mortify and suppress it in one shape, it rises in another; if you think it is all gone, yet it is there still. There are a great many kinds of it, that lie in different forms and shapes, one under another, and encompass the heart like the coats of an onion; if you pull off one, there is another underneath. We had need therefore to have the greatest watch imaginable over our hearts with respect to this matter, and to cry most earnestly to the great searcher of hearts for his help. He that trusts his own heart is a fool.

God's own people should be the more jealous of themselves with respect to this particular at this day, because the temptations that many have to this sin are exceeding great. The great and distinguishing privileges to which God admits many of his saints, and the high honours he puts on some ministers, are great trials of persons in this respect. It is true, that great degrees of the spiritual presence of God tends greatly to mortify pride and corruption; but yet, though in the experience of such favours there be much to restrain pride one way, there is much to tempt and provoke it another; and we shall all be in great danger thereby, without great watchfulness and prayerfulness. The angels that fell, while in heaven had great honours and high privileges, in beholding the face of God, and viewing his infinite glory, to cause in them exercises of humility, and to keep them from pride; yet, through want of watchfulness in them, their great honour and heavenly privilege proved to be to them an undoing temptation to pride, though they had no principle of pride in their hearts to expose them. Let no saint therefore, however eminent, and however near to God, think himself out of danger. He that thinks himself most out of danger, is indeed most in danger. The apostle Paul, who doubtless was an eminent saint as any now, was not out of danger, even just after he was admitted to see God in the third heavens, 2 Cor. xii. And yet doubtless, when he saw in heaven of the ineffable glory of the Divine Being, had a direct tendency to make him appear exceeding little and vile in his own eyes.

Spiritual pride in its own nature is so secret, that it is not so well discerned by immediate intuition on the thing itself, as by the effects and fruits of it; some of which I would mention, together with the contrary fruits of pure Christian humility. Spiritual pride disposes to speak of other persons' sins, their enmity against God and his people, the miserable delusion of hypocrites, and their enmity against vital piety, and the deadness of some saints, with bitterness, or with laughter and levity, and an air of contempt; whereas pure Christian humility rather disposes, either to be silent about them, or to speak of them with grief and pity. Spiritual pride is very apt to suspect others; whereas an humble saint is most jealous of himself; he is so suspicious of nothing in the world as he is of his own heart. The spiritually proud person is apt to find fault with other saints, that they are low in grace; and to be much in observing how cold and dead they are; and being quick to discern and take notice of their deficiencies. But the eminently humble Christian has so much to do at home, and sees so much evil in his own heart, and is so concerned about it, that he is not apt to be very busy with other hearts; he complains most of himself, and complains of his own coldness and lowness in grace. He is apt to esteem others better than himself, and is ready to hope that there is nobody but what has more love and thankfulness to God than he, and cannot bear to think that others should bring forth no more fruit to God's honour than he. Some who have spiritual pride mixed with high discoveries and great transports of joy, disposing them in an earnest manner to talk to others, are apt, in such frames, to be calling upon other Christians about them, and sharply reproving them for their being so cold and lifeless. There are others, who in their raptures are overwhelmed with a sense of their own vileness; and, when they have extraordinary discoveries of God's glory, are all taken up about their own sinfulness; and though they also are disposed to speak much and very earnestly, yet it is very much in blaming themselves, and exhorting fellow-Christians, but in a charitable and humble manner. Pure Christian humility disposes a person to take notice of every thing that is good in others, and to make the best of it, and to diminish their failings; but to give his eye chiefly on those things that are bad in himself, and to take much notice of every thing that aggravates them.

In a contrariety to this, it has been the manner in some places, or at least the manner of some persons to speak of almost every thing that they see amiss in others, in the most harsh, severe, and terrible language. It is frequent with them to say of others' opinions, or conduct, or advice—or of their coldness, their silence, their caution, their moderation, their prudence, &c.—that they are from the devil, of from hell; that such a thing is devilish, or hellish, or cursed, and that such persons are serving the devil, or the devil is in them, that they are soul-murderers, and the like; so that the words devil and hell are almost continually in their mouths. And such kind of language they will commonly use, not only towards wicked men, but towards them whom they themselves allow to be the true children of God, and also towards ministers of the gospel and others who are very much their superiors. And they look upon it as a virtue and high attainment thus to behave themselves. Oh, say they, we must be plain hearted and bold for Christ, we must declare war against sin wherever we see it, we must not mince the matter in the cause of God and when speaking for Christ. And to make any distinction in persons, or to speak the more tenderly, because that which is amiss is seen in a superior, they look upon as very mean for a follower of Christ when speaking in the cause of his Master. What a strange device of the devil is here, to overthrow

all Christian meekness and gentleness, and even all show and appearance of it, and to defile the mouths of the children of God, and to introduce the language of common sailors among the followers of Christ, under a cloak of high sanctity and zeal, and boldness for Christ! And it is a remarkable instance of the weakness of the human mind, and how much too cunning the devil is for us!

The grand defence of this way of talking is, That they say no more than what is true; they only speak the truth without minding the matter; and that true Christians who have a great sight of the evil of sin, and acquaintance with their own hearts, know it to be true, and therefore will not be offended to hear such harsh expressions concerning them and their sins. It is only (say they) hypocrites, or cold and dead Christians, that are provoked and feel their enmity rise on such an occasion. But it is a grand mistake to think that we may commonly use all such language as represents the worst of each other, according to strict truth. It is really true, that every kind of sin, and every degree of it, is devilish and from hell, and is cursed, hellish, and condemned or damned. And if persons had a full sight of their hearts, they would think no terms too bad for them; they would look like beasts, like serpents, and like devils to themselves; they would be at a loss for language to express what they see in themselves. But shall a child therefore, from time to time, use such language concerning an excellent and eminently holy father or mother, as, That the devil is in them; that they have such and such devilish, cursed dispositions; that they commit every day hundreds of hellish, damned acts; and that they are cursed dogs, hell-hounds, and devils? And shall the meanest of the people be justified, in commonly using such language concerning the most excellent magistrates, or the most eminent ministers? I hope nobody has gone to this height. But the same pretences of boldness, plain-heartedness, and declared war against sin, will as well justify these things as the others. If we proceed in such a manner, on such principles as these, what a face will be introduced upon the church of Christ, the little beloved flock of that gentle Shepherd the Lamb of God! What a sound shall we bring into the house of God, into the family of his dear little children! How far off shall we soon banish that lovely appearance of humility, sweetness, gentleness, mutual honour, benevolence, complacency, and an esteem of others above themselves, which ought to clothe the children of God all over! Not but that Christians should watch over one another, and in any wise reprove one another, and do it plainly and faithfully; but it does not thence follow that dear brethren in the family of God, in rebuking one another, should use worse language than Michael the archangel durst use when rebuking the devil himself.

Christians, who are but fellow-worms, ought at least to treat one another with as much humility and gentleness as Christ, who is infinitely above them treats them. But how did Christ treat his disciples when they were so cold towards him, and so regardless of him, at the time when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death—and he in a dismal agony was crying and sweating blood for them—and they would not watch with him and allow him the comfort of their company one hour in his great distress, though he once and again desired it of them? One would think that then was a proper time, if ever, to have reproved them for a devilish, hellish, cursed, and damned slothfulness and deadness. But after what manner does Christ reprove them? Behold his astonishing gentleness! Says he, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And how did he treat Peter when he was ashamed of his Master, while he was made a mocking stock and a spitting stock for him? Why, he looked upon him with a look of love, and melted his heart. And though we read that Christ once turned, and said unto Peter, on a certain occasion, Get thee behind me, Satan; and this may seem like an instance of harshness and severity in reproofing Peter; yet I humbly conceive that this is by many taken wrong, and that this is indeed no instance of Christ's severity in his treatment of Peter, but on the contrary, of his wonderful gentleness and grace, distinguishing between Peter and the devil in him, not laying the blame of what Peter had then said, or imputing it to him, but to the devil that influenced him. Christ saw the devil then present, secretly influencing Peter to do the part of a tempter to his Master; and therefore Christ turned him about to Peter, in whom the devil then was, and spake to the devil, and rebuked him. Thus the grace of Christ does not behold iniquity in his people, imputes not what is amiss in them to them, but to sin that dwells in them, and to Satan that influences them.

Spiritual pride often disposes persons to singularity in external appearance, to affect a singular way of speaking, to use a different sort of dialect from others, or to be singular in voice, countenance, or behaviour. But he that is an eminently humble Christian, though he will be firm to his duty, however singular—going in the way that leads to heaven alone, though all the world forsake him—yet he delights not in singularity for singularity's sake. He does not affect to set up himself to be viewed and observed as one distinguished, as desiring to be accounted better than others—despising their company, or conformity to them—but on the contrary is disposed to become all things to all men, to yield to others, and conform to them and please them, in every thing but sin. Spiritual pride commonly occasions a certain stiffness and inflexibility in persons, in their own judgment and their own ways; whereas the eminently humble person, though he be inflexible in his duty, and in these things wherein God's honour is concerned; and with regard to temptation to those things he apprehends to be sinful, though in never so small a degree, he is not at all of a yielding spirit, but is like a brazen wall; yet in other things he is of a pliable disposition, not disposed to set up his own opinion, or his own will; he is ready to pay deference to others' opinions, loves to comply with their inclinations, and has a heart that is tender and flexible, like a little child. Spiritual pride disposes persons to affect separation, to stand at a distance from others, as being better t

han they; and loves the show and appearance of the distinction. But, on the contrary, the eminently humble Christian is ready to look upon himself as not worthy that others should be united to him—to think himself more brutish than any man, and worthy of the society of God's children. And though he will not be a companion with one that is visibly Christ's enemy—but delights most in the company of lively Christians, choosing such for his companions, and will be most intimate with them, not delighting to spend much time in the company of those who seem to relish no conversation but about worldly things—yet he does not love the appearance of an open separation from visible Christians, as being a kind of distinct company from them who are on visible company of those who seem to relish no conversation but about worldly things—yet he does not love the appearance of an open separation from visible Christians, as being a kind of distinct company from them who are one visible company with him by Christ's appointment; and will as much as possible shun all appearances of a superiority, or distinguishing himself as better than others. His universal benevolence delights in the appearance of union with his fellow-creatures, and will maintain it as much as he possibly can without giving open countenance to iniquity, or wounding his own soul. And herein he follows the example of his meek and lowly Redeemer, who did not keep up such a separation and distance as the Pharisees, but freely ate with publicans and sinners, that he might win them.

The eminently humble Christian is as it were clothed with lowliness, mildness, meekness, gentleness of spirit and behaviour, and with a soft, sweet, condescending, winning air and deportment; these things are just like garments to him, he is clothed all over with them. 1 Pet. v. 5. "And be clothed with humility." Col. iii. 12. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." Pure Christian humility has no such thing as roughness, or contempt, or fierceness, or bitterness in its nature; it makes a person like a little child, harmless and innocent, that none need to be afraid of, or like a lamb, destitute of all bitterness, wrath, anger, and clamour; agreeable to Eph. iv. 31. With such a spirit as this ought especially zealous ministers of the gospel to be clothed, and those that God is pleased to employ as instruments in his hands of promoting his work. They ought indeed to be thorough in preaching the word of God, without mincing the matter at all; in handling the sword of the Spirit, as the ministers of the Lord of hosts, they ought not to be mild and gentle; they are not to be gentle and moderate in searching and awakening the conscience, but should be sons of thunder. The word of God, which is in itself sharper than any two-edged sword, ought not to be sheathed by its ministers, but so used that its sharp edges may have their full effect, even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow. Yet they should do it without judging particular persons, leaving it to conscience and the Spirit of God to make the particular application. But all their conversation should savour of nothing but lowliness and good-will, love and pity to all mankind; so that such a spirit should be like a sweet odour diffused around them wherever they go. They should be like lions to guilty consciences, but like lambs to men's persons. This would have no tendency to prevent the awakening of men's consciences, but on the contrary would have a very great tendency to awaken them. It would make way for the sharp sword to enter; it would remove the obstacles, and make a naked breast for the arrow.—Yea, the amiable Christ-like conversation of such ministers in itself, would terrify the consciences of men, as well as their terrible preaching; both would co-operate to subdue the hard, and bring down the proud heart. If there had been constantly and universally observable such a behaviour as this in itinerant preachers, it would have terrified the consciences of sinners ten times as much as all the invectives and the censorious talk there has been concerning particular persons, for their opposition, hypocrisy, delusion, pharisaism, &c. These things in general have rather stupefied sinners' consciences; they take them up, and make use of them as a shield, wherewith to defend themselves from the sharp arrows of the word that are shot by these preachers. The enemies of the present work have been glad of these things with all their hearts.—Many of the most bitter of them are probably such as in the beginning of this work had their consciences something galled and terrified with it; but these errors of awakening preachers are the things they chiefly make use of as plasters to heal the sore that was made in their consciences.

Spiritual pride takes great notice of opposition and injuries that are received, and is apt to be often speaking of them, and to be much in taking notice of their aggravations, either with an air of bitterness or contempt. Whereas pure and unmixed Christian humility, disposes a person rather to be like his blessed Lord, when reviled, dumb, not opening his mouth, but committing himself in silence to him that judgeth righteously. The eminently humble Christian, the more clamorous and furious the world is against him, the more silent and still will he be; unless it be in his closet, and there he will not be still.—Our blessed Lord Jesus seems never to have been so silent as when the world compassed him round, reproaching, buffeting, and spitting on him, with loud and virulent outcries, and horrid cruelties. There has been a great deal too much talk of late, among many of the true and zealous friends of religion, about opposition and persecution. It becomes the followers of the Lamb of God, when the world is in an uproar about the, and full of clamour against them, not to raise another noise to answer it, but to be still and quiet. It is not beautiful, at such time, to have pulpits and conversation ring with the sound of persecution, persecution, or with abundant talk about Pharisees, carnal persecutors, and the seed of the serpent.—Meekness and quietness among God's people, when opposed and reviled, would be the surest way to have God remarkably to appear for their defence. It is particularly observed of Moses, on occasion of Aaron and Miriam envying him, and rising up in opposition against him, that he "was very meek, above all men upon the face of the earth," N

um. xii. 3. Doubtless because he remarkably showed his meekness on that occasion, being wholly silent under the abuse. And how remarkable is the account the follows of God's being as it were suddenly roused to appear for his vindication! What high honour did he put upon Moses! And how severe were his rebukes of his opposers! The story is very remarkable, and worthy every one's observation. Nothing is so effectual to bring God down from heaven in the defence of his people, as their patience and meekness under sufferings. When Christ "girds his sword upon his thigh, with his glory and majesty, and in his majesty rides prosperously, his right hand teaching him terrible things, it is because of truth, and MEEKNESS, and righteousness," Psal. xlv. 3,4. "God will cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth shall fear and be still, and God will arise to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth," Psal. lxxvi. 8,9. "He will lift up the meek, and cast the wicked down to the ground," Psal. cxlvii. 6. "He will reprove with equity for the meek of the earth, and will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips will he slay the wicked," Isa. xi. 4. The great commendation that Christ gives the church of Philadelphia is, "Thou hast kept the word of my patience," Rev. iii. 10. And we may see what reward he promises her, in the preceding verse, "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship at thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." And thus it is that we might expect to have Christ appear for us, if under all the reproaches we are loaded with, we behaved ourselves with a lamb-like meekness and gentleness. But if our spirits are raised, and we are vehement and noisy with our complaints under colour of Christian zeal, this will be to take upon us our own defence, and God will leave it with us, to vindicate our cause as well as we can; yea, if we go on in a way of bitterness, and high censuring, it will be the way to have him rebuke us, and put us to shame before our enemies.

Here some may be ready to say, "It is not in our own cause that we are thus vehement, but it is in the cause of God, and the apostle directed the primitive Christians to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." But how was it that the primitive Christians contended earnestly for the faith? They defended the truth with arguments and a holy conversation, but yet gave their reasons with meekness and fear. They contended earnestly for the faith, by fighting violently against their own unbelief, and the corruptions of their hearts: yea, they resisted unto blood striving against sin; but the blood that was shed in this earnest strife, was their own blood, and not the blood of their enemies. It was in the cause of God that Peter was so fierce, and drew his sword, and began to smite with it; but Christ bids him put up his sword again, telling him that they that take the sword shall perish by the sword; and, while Peter wounds, Christ heals. They contended the most violently, and are the greatest conquerors in a time of persecution, who bear it with the greatest meekness and patience. Great humility improves even the reflections and reproaches of enemies, to put upon serious self-examination, whether or no there be not some just cause; whether or no there be not some just cause; whether they have not in some respect given occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully. Whereas spiritual pride improves such reflections to make them the more bold and confident, and to go the greater lengths in that for which they are found fault with. I desire it may be considered, whether there has been nothing amiss of late among the true friends of vital piety in this respect; and whether the words of David, when reviled by Michal, have not been misinterpreted and misapplied to justify them in it, when he said, "I will be yet more vile, and will be base in mine own sight." The import of his words is, that he would humble himself yet more before God, being sensible that he was far from being sufficiently abased; and he signifies this to Michal, that he longed to be yet lower, and had designed already to abase himself more in his behaviour.—Not that he would get the greater length, to show his regardlessness of her revilings; that would be to exalt himself, and not to abase himself as more vile in his own sight.

Another effect of spiritual pride is a certain unsuitable and self-confident boldness before God and men. Thus some, in their great rejoicings before God, have not paid a sufficient regard to that rule in Psal. ii. 11. They have not rejoiced with a reverential trembling, in a proper sense of the awful majesty of God, and the awful distance between him and them. And there has also been an improper boldness before men that has been encouraged and defended by a misapplication of that scripture. Prov. xxix. 25. "The fear of man bringeth a snare." As though it became all persons, high and low, men, women, and children, in all religious conversation, wholly to divest themselves of all manner of shamefacedness, modesty, or reverence towards man; which is a great error, and quite contrary to Scripture. There is a fear of reverence that is due to some men, Rom. xiii. 7. "Fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." And there is a fear of modesty and shamefacedness in inferiors towards superiors, which is amiable, and required by Christian rules, 1 Pet. iii. 2. "While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear;" and 1 Tim. ii. 9. "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." The apostle means that this virtue shall have place, not only in civil communication, but also in spiritual communication, and in our religious concerns and behaviour, as is evident by what follows, 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12. "Let the women learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Not that I would hence infer that women's mouths should be shut up from Christian conversation; but all that I mean from it at this time is, that modesty, or shamefacedness, and reverence towards men, ought to have some place, even in our religious communication one with another. The same is also evident by 1 Pet. iii. 15. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." It is well if that very fear and shamefacedness, which the apostle recommends, have n

ot sometimes been condemned, under the name of a cursed fear of man.

It is beautiful for persons, when they are at prayer as the mouth of others, to make God only their fear and their dread, and to be wholly forgetful of men present, who, let them be great or small, are nothing in the presence of the great God. And it is beautiful for a minister, when he speaks in the name of the Lord of hosts, to be bold, and to put off all fear of men. And it is beautiful in private Christians, though they are women and even children, to be bold in professing the faith of Christ, in the practice of all religion, and in owning God's in the work of his power and grace, without any fear of men; though they should be reproached as fools and madmen, frowned upon by great men, and cast off by parents and all the world. But for private Christians, women and others, to instruct, rebuke, and exhort, with a like sort of boldness as become a minister when preaching, is not beautiful. Some have been bold in things that have really been errors; and have gloried in their boldness in practising them, though odd and irregular. And those who have gone the greatest lengths in these things, have been by some most highly esteemed, as appearing bold for the Lord Jesus Christ, and fully on his side; while others who have professed to be godly, and who have condemned such things, have been spoken of as enemies of the cross of Christ, or at least very cold and dead; and thus many, that of themselves were not inclined to such practices, have by this means been driven on, being ashamed to be behind, and accounted poor soldiers for Christ.

Another effect of spiritual pride is to make the subject of it assuming. It oftentimes makes it natural to persons so to act and speak, as though in a special manner it belonged to them to be taken notice of and much regarded. It is very natural to a person that is much under the influence of spiritual pride, to take all the respect that is paid him. If others show a disposition to submit to him, and yield him the deference of a preceptor, he is open to it, and freely admits it; yea, it is natural for him to expect such treatment, and to take much notice if he fails of it, and to have an ill opinion of others that do not pay him that which he looks upon as his prerogative.—He is apt to think that it belongs to him to speak, and to clothe himself with a judicial and dogmatical air in conversation, and to take it upon him, as what belongs to him, to give forth his sentence, and to determine and decide. Whereas pure Christian humility vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly, and is apt to prefer others in honour. One under the influence of spiritual pride is more apt to instruct others, than to inquire for himself, and naturally puts on the airs of a master. Whereas one that is full of pure humility, naturally has on the air of a disciple; his voice is, "What shall I do? What shall I do that I may live more to God's honour? What shall I do with this wicked heart?" He is ready to receive instruction from any body, agreeable to Jam. 1. 19. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." The eminently humble Christian thinks he wants help from every body, whereas he that is spiritually proud thinks that every body wants his help. Christian humility, under a sense of others' misery, entreats and beseeches; but spiritual pride affects to command and warn with authority. There ought to be the utmost watchfulness against all such appearances of spiritual pride, in all that profess to have been the subjects of this work, and especially in the promoters of it, but above all in itinerant preachers. The most eminent gifts, and highest tokens of God's favour and blessing, will not excuse them.—Alas! What is man at his best estate! What is the most highly-favoured Christian, or the most eminent and successful minister, that he should now think he is sufficient for something, and somebody to be regarded; and that he should go forth, and act among his fellow-creatures as if he were wise, and strong, and good!

Ministers who have been the principal instruments of carrying on this glorious revival of religion, and whom God has made use of to bring up his people as it were out of Egypt, should take heed, that they do not provoke God, as Moses did, by assuming too much to themselves, and by their intemperate zeal to shut them out from seeing the good things that God is going to do for this church in this world. The fruits of Moses' unbelief, which provoked God to shut him out of Canaan, and not to suffer him to partake of those great things God was about to do for Israel, were chiefly these two things:—First, His mingling bitterness with his zeal. He had a great zeal for God, and he could not bear to see the intolerable stiffneckedness of the people, that they did not acknowledge the work of God, and were not convinced by all his wonders that they had seen. But human passion was mingled with his zeal, Psal. cvi. 32, 33. "They angered him also at the waters of strife; so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." Hear now, ye rebels, says he, with bitterness of language.—Secondly, He behaved himself, and spake with an assuming air. He assumed too much to himself; hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock? Spiritual pride wrought in Moses at that time. His temptations to it were very great; for he had had great discoveries of God, and had been privileged with intimate and sweet communion with him, and God had made him the instrument of great good to his church. But though he was so humble a person, and, by God's own testimony, meek above all men upon the face of the whole earth, yet his temptations were too strong for him. Which surely should make our young ministers that have of late been highly favoured, and have had great success, exceeding careful, and distrustful of themselves. Alas! How far are we from having the strength of holy, meek, aged Moses! The temptation at this day is exceeding great to both those errors that Moses was guilty of. There is great temptation to bitterness and corrupt passion with zeal; for there is so much unreasonable opposition made against this glorious work of God, and so much stiffneckedness manifested in multitudes of this generation, notwithstanding all the great and wonderful works in which God has passed before them, that

It greatly tends to provoke the spirits of such as have the interest of this work at heart, so as to move them to speak unadvisedly with their lips. And there is also great temptation to an assuming behaviour in some persons. When a minister is greatly succeeded from time to time, and so draws the eyes of the multitude upon him, when he sees himself followed, resorted to as an oracle—and people ready to adore him, and as it were to offer sacrifice to him, and as it were to offer sacrifice to him, as it was with Paul and Barnabas at Lystra—it is almost impossible for a man to avoid taking upon him the airs of a master, or some extraordinary person; a man had need to have a great stock of humility, and much divine assistance, to resist the temptation. But the greater our dangers are, the more ought to be our watchfulness, prayerfulness, and diffidence, lest we bring ourselves into mischief. Fishermen who have been very successful, having caught a great many fish, had need to be careful that they do not at length begin to burn incense to their net. And we should take warning by Gideon, who after God had highly favoured and exalted him, and made him the instrument of working a wonderful deliverance for his people, at length made a god of the spoils of his enemies, which became a snare to him and to his house, so as to prove the ruin of his family.

All young ministers, in this day of bringing up the ark of God, should take warning by the example of a young Levite in Israel, Uzzah the son of Abinadab. He seemed to have a real concern for the ark of God, and to be zealous and engaged in his mind on that joyful occasion of bringing it up. God made him an instrument to bring the ark out of its long-continued obscurity in Kiriath-jearim, and he was succeeded to bring it a considerable way towards mount Zion; but for his want of humility, reverence, and circumspection, and assuming or taking too much upon him, God broke forth upon him, and smote him for his error, so that he never lived to see and partake of the great joy of his church on occasion of the carrying up the ark into mount Zion, and the great blessings of heaven upon Israel consequent upon it. Ministers employed to carry on this work, have been chiefly of the younger sort, who have doubtless (as Uzzah had) a real concern for the ark; and it is evident that they are much animated and engaged in their minds (as he was) in this joyful day of bringing up the ark. —They are afraid what will become of the ark under the conduct of its ministers: they see it shakes, and they are afraid these blundering oxen will throw it. Some of them, it is to be feared, have been over-officious on this occasion, have assumed too much to themselves, and have been bold to put forth their hand to take hold of the ark, as though they were the only fit and worthy persons to defend it. If young ministers had great humility, without a corrupt mixture, it would dispose them especially to treat aged ministers with respect and reverence, as their fathers, notwithstanding that a sovereign God may have given themselves greater assistance and success, 1 Pet. v. 5. —“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another; and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” Lev. xix. 32. —“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear they God; I am the Lord.”

As spiritual pride disposes persons to assume much to themselves, so it also disposes them to treat others with neglect. On the contrary, pure Christian humility disposes persons to honour all men, agreeable to that rule, 1 Pet. ii. 17. There has been in some, who I believe are true friends of religion, too great appearance of this fruit of spiritual pride, in their treatment of those whom they looked upon to be carnal men; and particularly in refusing to enter into any discourse or reasoning with them. Indeed to spend a great deal of time in jangling and warm debates about religion, is not the way to propagate, but to hinder it; and some are so dreadfully set against this work, that it is a dismal task to dispute with them; all that one can say is utterly in vain. I have found it so by experience. To enter into disputes about religion, at some times, is quite unseasonable, particularly in meetings for religious conference, or exercises of worship. But yet we ought to be very careful that we do not refuse to discourse with men, with any appearance of a supercilious neglect, as though we counted them not worthy to be regarded; on the contrary, we should condescend to carnal men, as Christ has condescended to us, to bear with our unteachableness and stupidity.—He still follows us with instructions, line upon line, and precept upon precept, saying, Come, let us reason together; setting light before us, and using all manner of arguments with us, and waiting upon such dull scholars, as it were hoping that we should receive light. We should be ready with meekness and calmness, without hot disputing, to give our reasons, why we think this work is the work of God, to carnal men when they ask us, and not turn them by as not worthy to be talked with; as the apostle directed the primitive Christians to be ready to give a reason of the Christian faith and hope to the enemies of Christianity, 1 Pet. iii. 15. —“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” And we ought not to condemn all reasoning about things of religion under the name of carnal reason. For my part, I desire no better than that those who oppose this work should fairly submit to have the cause betwixt us tried by strict reasoning.

One qualification that the Scripture speaks of once and again, as requisite in a minister, is, that he should be (NOT ENGLISH) apt to teach, 1 Tim. iii. 2. And the apostle seems to explain what he means by it, in 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. Or at least there expresses one thing that he intends by it, viz. That a minister should be ready, meekly to condescend to and instruct opposers; —“And the servant apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.” 404

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