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THE
 UNPARDONABLE SIN
 AGAINST THE
 HOLY GHOST:
 OR, THE
 SIN UNTO DEATH
 BRIEFLY DISCOURSED OF.

- I. *Proving what that sin is.*
- II. *That all other sins, how great and heinous soever, may be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST, shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.*

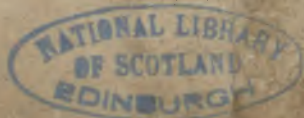
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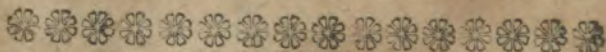
Some INSTRUCTIONS how a man may walk, and not commit this unpardonable sin.

MATTH. xii. 31. *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, except it be the sin against the HOLY GHOST.*

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EDINBURGH:
 Printed in the Year, M,DCC,LXXIV.





Of the Unpardonable SIN
 AGAINST THE
 HOLY GHOST.

John ix. 16. *There is a sin unto death.*

THERE is no mere man since the fall, that can live without sin; for all are sinners. But yet there are some degrees of sins; some sins in their own nature are small, others are more great, yea, heinous. Many sins there are that are great, yet pardonable; and one sin there is unpardonable, and whosoever commits that one sin, shall have no forgiveness, but must for ever bear the weight and punishment both of that and of all his other sins: There is such a sin as St John speaks of here in my text, that it is *a sin unto death*. And now I come to the explication of the words, from whence I shall raise this point of doctrine.

DOCT.

DOCT. that amongst all the sins committed by fallen Mankind there is only one sin that is a sin unto Death; and whosoever committeth that he hath no forgiveness neither in this world, nor in the world to come.

Now for my further proceeding on this subject. I shall lay open to you,

First. What the sin unto death is.

2dly, That all our sins, so great and heinous soever, may be forgiven.

3dly, That this sin alone shall never be forgiven.

4thly, The reason why that sin alone is unpardonable. And then,

Lastly. I shall conclude with a few words of application.

I shall begin first, with the description of this unpardonable sin, where I shall endeavour to make as plain a description of it as possible I can; and doing of it, I shall 1. Shew you negatively, what is not this sin. 2 I shall shew you positively, what it is.

1. I shall shew you negatively what is not this sin unto death: or in what degree a Man may sin, and yet not commit that unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

A 2

I. II

1. It is not every quenching of the Motions of the Spirit, that is that sin. It is true when the Holy Ghost comes with a still voice, and knocks at the doors of sinners hearts for entrance, he often comes and strives with them, and secretly woos and beseeches them to leave their sins, and be converted; yet they quench and stifle all his motions, and bear up their hearts against him, and will not be obedient to his heavenly calls. Now such, sin grievously against the Holy Ghost. But yet this alone is not the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; for men who have stood it out a long time, and have often quenched and grieved the Holy Spirit, yet at last they have been wrought upon into sincere conversion.

2. A man may commit many hainous and crying sins, and yet not be guilty of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; a man may be an idolator, a Whoremonger, a fornicator, a murderer, and work witchcraft, and sin with a very high hand; nay he may live in all manner of filthiness and lewdness and yet not be under the guilt of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. Thus we read, 2 Chron. xxiii. *That Manasses sinned with a very high hand; he was an idolater an inchanter and worked withcraft and dealt with familiar spirits, and wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord. And Mary Magdalane had seven devils cast out of her, Luke vii, 2. and both were pardoned.*

3. A man may sin presumptuously against great light and knowledge, and yet not commit this sin unto death; for Peter, when he denied Christ, he did it against great knowledge of Christ, he knew Christ to be his Lord and Saviour, he was one of Christ's beloved disciples, and for all that, how strongly denied he Christ, and that with an oath too? And yet for all that, Christ looked upon him with a merciful eye, and he repented, and was forgiven:

4. It is not every malicious sin that is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; for St Paul had certainly great malice in his heart, when he went on so furiously to persecute the church of God, and yet was converted; became a preacher of the gospel of Christ, which before he persecuted.

5. And lastly, It is not final unbelief, nor final impenitence, that is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, tho' some be of opinion that it is because that sin is unpardonable; and Christ himself hath said, Math. xii. 11. *That all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, except it be the sin against the Holy Ghost.* But you are to take the words of our Saviour in their true sense and meaning; it is all manner of sin and blasphemy committed within the compass of a man's life that shall be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; for sin of final impenitency and final unbelief is not completed until the very moment

moment of a man's death; and then you all know that there is no repentance; and consequently no pardon after death. for Christ saith, *He that sinneth against the holy Ghost, hath no forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* Now, why should Christ say *In this world,* if there be no space to be forgiven in this world? But a man may commit the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, even many years before his death. Besides, there are many thousands that die in impenitence and unbelief, and are damned, and yet never committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

Thus I have shewed you negatively, what is not this unpardonable sin; none of these sins in particular is that sin.

I come now to shew you positively what this *sin unto death* is, and wherein this unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost doth consist, now there are several opinions in the world about it some hold one thing, some another. But I have no time nor room to dispute concerning others opinions about it; but I will endeavour, through God's help, to lead you to the plain sight of it by the light of the holy scriptures.

Now in the first place, you must know, that there are two sorts of people that cannot commit this unpardonable sin.

1. The true believers cannot commit it, tho' many

many times for their tryal, God suffers them to fall foully into many gross sins; yet they being rooted in Christ are upheld by free grace and mercy, that they cannot fall into this unpardonable sin.

2. The grossly ignorant cannot commit it, because it is a sin against great light and knowledge. Indeed the greater part of the world shall be damned, yet amongst the greater part, there are but few of them that can commit that unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

Some have both light and grace, these shall not commit that unpardonable sin. Again, some have neither light nor grace, these cannot commit it. But there are some again that have light and no grace, these are they that are liable to commit that unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. Now, there must be two ingredients to make up this unpardonable sin; that is, light in the Head, and malice in the Heart; without these two, the sin against the Holy Ghost cannot be committed; for to sin against great light and knowledge is not that sin alone; nor yet to sin ignorantly, out of that malice, is not that sin; but they must join both together, to make up this unpardonable sin. Thus wee see by the example of St Peter and St Paul; Peter he denied Christ and forswore him too, and that grievously, against light and knowledge; for he knew Christ to be the-only begotten son of God, and he knew God in him, and was one of Christ's disciples

disciples, and one of his beloved ones too, he was taught of Christ, and had experimental knowledge of his love and favour, and yet he wickedly with an oath denied him. Now if Peter had done this out of malice and spite, then he had committed that sin unto death, for which there is no forgiveness; but Peter had no malice in his heart all this while, even when he denied Christ, as you may see, Matt xxvii. When Christ told him, *Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice*; he answered, *If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee*. And then denying him through infirmity and weakness of the flesh, when he considered what he had done, *He went out and wept bitterly*, ver. 75. And Paul, he had great malice and spite against the ways and people of God, as you may see, Acts ix. 1. Now, here was a great rage and malice in Paul against the ways and people of God, but doing it ignorantly, he at last heard a voice, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* and receiving a light from heaven, that it was Jesus that he persecuted, he was pricked to the heart, and trembling astonished, said, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Now, by these two places of scripture you may plainly see, that Peter sinned against great light, and Paul out of great malice, yet none of them both committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; but whensoever light and malice meet together in one man then there is a sin against the Holy Ghost. Now as all other sins, so this sin against the Holy Ghost may be committed in thought, word and deed.

In thought, that is, when a wicked man against his clear light and knowledge, doth but conceive a malicious thought or purpose towards persecuting the gospel of Christ, or of the saints of Christ, to hinder the work of the Holy Ghost in them.

This sin is thought to be the sin of the lost angels; for which cause they were lost without all hopes of Pardon. Now, some dispute whether their sin was a sin of the thought: But, I say, with all liklihood, it was; for the angels being only spirits, without bodies, and so have no use of bodily tongues, it could not be committed in words, nor yet could they commit it in action, because they were cast out of Heaven before they could bring it into practice, therefore it must be a sin of the thought.

Now, their sin was this, their habitation being in the brightest heaven, next under God himself, they had exceeding great light and knowledge, they had more knowledge than all the men in the world ever had, and were happy above all other creatures; but when, not being contented with this estate, they thought to be as high as God himself, therefore maliciously sought to make war against the son of God and put him out of his throne; for which cause they were immediately thrust out of heaven, never more to see the face of mercy. Thus, their sin being of the same Nature with the sin against the Holy Ghost, they were excluded all hopes of pardon.

2. This

2. This sin may be committed in word too that is, when a man speaks blasphemously and maliciously of Christ and his holy ways: This was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees, Mark iii. 22. Therefore Christ saith unto them, as in ver. 28. and 29.

Now the reason of this speech of our blessed Saviour, is shewed in v. 30, *because they said he has an unclean spirit*; which plainly shews that these Scribes and Pharisees had spoken blasphemy against the holy Ghost. These Scribes were great learned men, and they could know no other but that Christ was the son of God, and they knew, that he cast out devils by the spirit of God; and yet out of spite to Christ, maliciously and blasphemously said, *That he cast out devils by Belzebub, the chief of devils*. Thus these Scribes committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, and that in word.

3. This sin may be committed in action too; that is, when a man being once thoroughly enlightned, and entered into a holy course of life, and tasted of the comforts of the spirit, and had some foretaste of the joys of heaven, and not only makes a profession of the gospel, but teaches it to others; he at last takes a dislike of these holy courses, and through spite and malice utterly forsake, opposes and persecutes these good ways of God which he before profess'd and taught. But to sum up this point, this unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost is fully describ'd by the
Apostle

possible to the Hebrews, chap. x. 27, 28, 29.
likewise, Heb. vi. 5, 6.

Now the sin against the Holy Ghost is brief-
ly this: *It is a wilful and malicious opposing of
the known truth, joined with final apostacy.*

This sin unto death is an opposing sin:
now, to oppose a thing is to contradict it, or
to say it: when a man says a thing is so and
he denies it, and says it is not so; when
a thing must be done, he says again, It must
not, nor shall not be done: But a man may
be an opposing man, and yet cannot commit
this sin. Therefore,

1. It is a truth that he must oppose, that
he must utterly oppose and reject Christ,
who said, *I am the Truth*. John xiv. 6. He op-
poseth all his threatenings, and will not believe
his promises, and counts him to be a seducer
of the people, and counts the blood of the co-
venant to be an unholy thing; nay, he al-
so opposes the Spirit of Christ, who is the Spi-
rit of truth; so that he will not obey his mo-
tions, and will not be led or guided by him;
but a man may oppose the truth, and yet do
so ignorantly. Therefore,

2. It must be a known truth that he oppos-
eth, he must be once enlightened: But you
must know, that it is not only a notional know-
ledge, and human learning; he may know
much of God, and of his will in the letter of
the word, and yet not capable of committing
this

this unpardonable sin: But he must be so far enlightned as to see the evil that is in sin, and the excellency of Christ; *he must taste of the heavenly gift, and be made partaker of the Holy Ghost, and taste of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and by the blood of the covenant, which he counts as an unholy thing, he is in part sanctified and cleansed from many sins; he must have sweet communion with God in his word and sacraments; he must have some taste of the love and favor of God, and comforts of his Spirit, and be refreshed by it; and taste of the joys of heaven, and have some foretaste of the happiness of the world to come.*

4. He must oppose the known truth wilfully, he must wilfully fall away after he hath received the knowledge of the truth; other sins are committed thro' infirmity, but this sin is wilful, the will is chief actor in it. And to compleat and make up this unpardonable sin, there is,

5. Malice in the heart: Without this, this sin cannot be committed; it must be a malicious opposing of the known truth.

Now, a man having gone this far, he comes in the last place to be an apostate: Now, for such a one, willfully, spitefully and maliciously to fall away, he so falls as never to rise more: it is true, the children of God fall, and that often, and yet rise again: But then they fall through weakness or infirmity, and not wilfully

and maliciously: But these wicked wretches
 will wilfully and maliciously, and so fall finally:
 against such, the door of mercy is ever shut.
 concerning such St Peter speaketh, 2 Pet. ii.
 1, 22. There is such another dreadful place
 of scripture against these apostates, that is,
 Heb. x. 26.

*Objection. But what is the reason then,
 that this sin cannot be forgiven?*

*Ans. The reason arises from the nature of
 this sin; for this sin by whomsoever it is com-
 mitted, hardens the heart, and sears the con-
 science, so that there is no place for repen-
 tance to be wrought, neither for that nor any
 other sin. This sin is called a sin against the
 Holy Ghost, because it is a sin against the
 person of the Holy Ghost; so is all sin against
 his person; but it is called a sin against the
 Holy Ghost, because it is against the office
 and work of the Holy Ghost. Now, every
 one of the three persons have their particular
 works: The work of the Father is to create;
 the work of the Son to redeem lost sinners;
 and the work of the Holy Ghost is to enlighten,
 convince, sanctify, and convert them.
 Now, a man committing this unpardonable sin
 against the Holy Ghost, rejects all this work
 of the Spirit. Now, for a man to be tho-
 roughly enlightened by the Holy Ghost, that
 he comes to know the evil of sin, and of his
 lost and undone condition without Christ, and
 that none but the merits of Christ can save
 him; then for him wilfully and maliciously to
 oppose-*

oppose him and the work of his Spirit, and will not be beholden to him for salvation now for such a one to be forgiven, is utterly impossible.

Obj. But why is it impossible, nothing is impossible with God?

Ans. A man through ignorance may deny Christ, and maliciously fall from the profession of the truth into all wickedness. as did St Paul, and the Jews that crucified Christ, and yet not falling against light and knowledge, there is room for the Holy Ghost to work upon him to enlighten him and to convince him of his folly, and so make way for conversion. And besides, a man after he hath been enlightened, and yet falls back through infirmity and weakness of faith, as Peter did, and doth not fall wilfully and maliciously, then the Holy Ghost may work upon him, and work in him a deep sorrow for abusing so much love and mercy, and so carry on his good work unto salvation. But for a man when he is once enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and has had some taste of God's love and favour, and some foretaste of the joys of heaven; and then at last utterly opposing this illuminating work of the Spirit, and wilfully and maliciously to fall away, and so to reject the Spirit's renewing work: alas! then the Holy Ghost has done, he has nothing more that he can work in him, for this wretched creature has utterly rejected him, his enlightening work, his convincing work, his sanctifying work,

work, he hath utterly rejected Christ's pardon, heaven and all now, this poor wretch is past all hopes of mercy, all hopes of pardon, nay, for such a one we are forbidden to pray, as we see in the text, wherein my text is a part. Now Christ prayed for them who maliciously crucified him, Luke xxiii. 34. saying, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Alas! *they knew not what they were doing, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory,* 1 Cor. ii. 8. But if they had known, and yet crucified him, Christ would not have spent his breath to pray for them; for when a man has committed this unpardonable sin, neither the prayers in heaven or on earth can do him any good; for as the text saith, *there is a sin unto death.*

I shall conclude with a few words of Application.

1. Watch very diligently against all sin but above all take special heed of those sins that come near to the sin against the Holy Ghost; and they are these; hypocrisy, taking the outward profession of religion, and so dissembling and mocking of God sinning willfully against conviction of conscience, and against great light and knowledge, sinning presumptuously and with an high hand. These sins tho' none of them are the direct sin against the Holy Ghost, yet they will come very near to it: Therefore take special heed of them, lest they
through

through time should bring you to the committing of this unpardonable sin. And,

2. Labour to be sincere in religion: And by a true faith, ingraft yourselves into Christ for they that be with Christ, can never commit this unpardonable sin; for, know this that amongst all the sins committed by fallen mankind, there is one sin that is a sin unto death which is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; which, whosoever commits it, hath no forgiveness; neither in this world, nor in the world to come.

I desire you to take your bibles, and search the places of scripture here cited, and the Lord give you understanding in all these things

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